

The Old Fashioned Fundamentalist

by the late Dr. M.H. Reynolds, Jr.

DOWN THROUGH THE AGES, all of God's faithful servants have been fundamentalists. True, the name "fundamentalist" was unknown to those who lived before the turn of the twentieth century. But every true prophet, every genuine apostle, every obedient child of God has practiced the principles of fundamentalism in each generation. A fundamentalist believes all of God's Word and seeks to be obedient to that Word regardless of the cost. Every true Christian ought to be a fundamentalist. The fact that so many are not is a sad commentary on the spiritual condition of the Church. Laodiceanism (lukewarmness) rules the day at the very time when God's people should be on the front lines of the battle.

Admittedly, being a genuine fundamentalist is not easy. God never said it would be. However, believers are under orders - orders from God Himself! Those orders command us to declare "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:26-32). We are commanded not to "add unto the Word" nor to "diminish ought from it" (Deuteronomy 4:2). God says, "He that hath My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully" (Jeremiah 23:28). There is no question about our orders. The only question that arises is whether or not we will obey our orders!

The big problem, of course, is that when we deliver God's message faithfully and completely, the response from an evil world and a lukewarm church is immediate and virulent. By and large, the unsaved do not want to hear the simple Gospel message, nor do disobedient believers welcome words of warning and reproof. Thus, the fundamentalist is left to proclaim an unpopular message - a situation that is not easy! Now, some Christians who want to be known as fundamentalists at least as far as the basic doctrines (the "fundamentals of the faith") are concerned - are looking for ways to make the message more palatable to a greater number of people. So, they take God's message and disguise it, trim it, supplement it and revise it in a dozen different ways, after which they employ the latest psychological techniques to deliver it. The immediate results exceed their fondest expectations. People just cannot seem to resist this new revised message that is packaged so attractively. And, suddenly, rather than being the offscouring of the earth, they are honored by governors, presidents, kings and other prestigious individuals. "This new approach really works," they say. "Everyone should try it, even the old-fashioned fundamentalists. Otherwise, they will get nowhere in their ministry."

Thus, when a true fundamentalist comes along and proclaims a "thus saith the Lord" message with no trimmings or trappings, with no additions, deletions or abbreviations, his message and approach are ridiculed and maligned. Sadly, since the flesh does not like to be ridiculed and maligned, many fundamentalists who cannot accept the scorn of men opt for a weaker message and a softer approach.

Humanly speaking, such a reaction is understandable. When you have done your very best to deliver God's message succinctly and lovingly, it is not pleasant to be accused of being unloving, critical, judgmental or hypocritical. The accusatory questions are not easy to take either. "Do you think you are right and everyone else is wrong?" "Why do you have so few followers?" "Don't you see that if you would only emphasize the positive and just quit being so negative all the time you would have far greater success?" "You're always criticizing somebody, can't you ever say anything good?" And so the

accusatory questions keep coming, often followed by the statement : "You fundamentalists are just jealous of other leaders because their work is large while yours is small."

God's faithful messengers have never been in the majority. The Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles were never overwhelmed with popularity. They were tested by loneliness. People did not speak well of them or their message. They detested and persecuted the messenger. Rather than becoming angry with God Who composed the message, they poured out their wrath upon the faithful servant who delivered it. It has always been so. Therefore, it should be no surprise today when faithful messengers of God face the wrath of the majority.

If you are a fundamentalist in need of a good spiritual tonic and backbone strengthening, read the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a man who was not looking for the limelight or itching for a fight. When God called him, Jeremiah said he was like a little child. He could not speak and surely was not qualified to deliver God's message. But God set aside Jeremiah's excuses. God said, "Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth," and He even forewarned Jeremiah not to be afraid of peoples' faces when he delivered God's messages, promising, "I am with thee to deliver thee" (Jeremiah 1:5-9).

Dear Jeremiah! Had he not been walking by faith and recognizing the fact that he was under orders from his Lord, he would not have survived. He was soon to discover why God warned him not to be afraid of the faces of men. Not only were those faces angry looking, but also each face had a tongue like a sharp sword, which cut deeply. Of course, Jeremiah was not perfect, and neither are fundamentalists today. But he knew God had called him. He knew God had given him a divine message to deliver, and he began to deliver that message to one and all - kings, priests, prophets and individuals-whoever would listen. From the human viewpoint, he did not enjoy much success. It was obvious that he was out of step with the times, just as in Isaiah's day when the people wanted to hear "smooth things" (Isaiah 30:1). And when Jeremiah refused to change his God-given message to pacify the people, they conspired to put him to death. Finally, Jeremiah came to the place where he thought he could not take it anymore. So he said, "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name" (Jeremiah 20:9). Jeremiah must have presumed that he would be relieved from the pressures of his unwanted, unappreciated ministry if he just kept silent. After all, no one appeared to be responding to his message anyway. But, read the rest of verse nine. Jeremiah said, "But His Word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." As a true fundamentalist, Jeremiah could not remain silent. The pressure from God was stronger than that of men! No real fundamentalist enjoys being maligned and misjudged by ungodly people or unspiritual and uninstructed Christians, but we are soldiers under orders. We must run with patience the race that is set before us and press toward the mark. Someday, perhaps today, the battle will be over, and we shall meet our blessed Lord face to face. To hear Him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" will make it all worthwhile. Until that time, we should stand fast, cry aloud and rejoice! The battle may rage, but our victory in Christ is assured.