

“Cherry Pickers”

By David Pyles

Some professing to be Christian do not regard all books of the Bible as authoritative. Instead, they choose among books and authors in a manner to minimize conflict with their preconceived notions. For example, many today reject the authority of Paul but pretend to be followers of the other apostles. Ironically, in the early days of the church, there was an infamous heretic named Marcion who did the opposite, claiming that Paul had authority but that the others did not. So this game of “cherry-picking” among scriptures is as old as the corruption of man.

Anyone who rejects the authority of Paul is clearly acting on prejudice. The Apostle Peter, whose legitimacy is questioned by almost none, spoke of Paul as his “*beloved brother*,” and implied that his writings were divinely inspired (2Pet 3:15-16). Also, any serious student of the Bible knows that no man did more to harmonize the Old and New Testaments than Paul, and that Paul masterfully did this around principles centered upon Christ and His doctrine.

Even more dubious are those who pretend to be followers of Jesus but not His apostles. The absurdity here begins with the fact that everything we know about Jesus was told us by His apostles or by those who wrote under their supervision. So anyone claiming to follow Jesus is either following a fabricated Jesus or the Jesus that is defined by the apostles. Since none will admit to the former, they have no recourse but to admit that apostolic representations of Jesus and His teachings are true. Those teachings of Jesus contained the following statements concerning His apostles:

He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. – Mt 10:40

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. – Mt 16:19

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things,

and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. – Jn 14:26

Clearly, these statements promised divine inspiration to the apostles, enabling them to be unquestioned representatives of Christ, and quite expectedly, they confer upon the apostles absolute authority. To the extent that anyone rejects any of the apostles, they to the same extent reject Jesus Christ.

Students of the Bible will know that the ancient church at Corinth became tainted with many errors. Paul diagnosed the root of their problem with the words:

Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. – 1Cor 1:12-15

Now Paul, Apollos and Cephas (i.e. Peter) were all sound teachers who corroborated and recommended each other. A man would do no wrong to carefully heed any of them. Obviously, there is no wrong in following Christ either, and, ultimately, we should follow only Him. The error occurs when a person claims to be following one of these men *to the exclusion of* the others. Such a person is almost surely posturing himself to defend erroneous, preconceived ideas. Even if he claims to be a follower of Christ, if he means to the exclusion of the others, then his claims are hypocritical. Indeed, such claims are so erroneous that Paul would not knowingly baptize any person who made them. Such a person is not yet fit to be called a Christian.

The history of the church has been blessed with many astute scholars of the Bible who were diligent to study it to every jot and tittle. Those scholars would attest that the Bible is like a huge jigsaw puzzle whose pieces are scattered across *all* of its books. As a consequence, when the Bible first strikes the eye, it can appear to be as disorganized as a jigsaw puzzle when dumped from the box to the table. However, as the pieces are correctly fitted, a work of art will evolve whose profundity surpasses anything that man could ever contrive. The Bible was written this way by

Divine design. God did not intend for it to be easy, and He did not intend for every man to understand it (Jn 9:39, Mt 13:10-17, 2Thes 2:11-12). Now when a man starts throwing out books and authors of the Bible, key pieces will be lost, and the puzzle will be impossible for him to solve. His confusion and ignorance will be the just retribution for his foolishness.

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