

Titles of Christians (1)
Fishers of Men
Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan

Brothers, sisters and friends, in the past few months we have been studying an important topic in the Bible: “The Kingdom of God and Eternal Life”. I have put all the 14 messages on this topic on the website: www.gospelandsalvation.com. You can go to the website to read all those messages; you can also download a PDF copy of the messages that you like. Today we begin to look at another important topic: The titles of Christians in the Bible.

Many years ago, when a Christian sister heard the term “Titles of Christians,” she said to me, “What? Christians have titles?” She was very surprised to hear the term “Titles of Christians.” Oh yes, Christians have many titles in the Bible. We know that Yahweh God has many different titles, and that the Lord Jesus Christ has many different titles, but people don’t talk much about the titles of Christians. Indeed Christians have many different titles too, and each title carries a different meaning.

But why do I want to study the titles of Christians? Because when we understand the meanings of these titles, we will know what we should do and how we ought to live our lives in this world. We have to always bear in mind that if we live a life according to the teaching of the Bible, we will bring glory to our Father in heaven and to our Lord Jesus Christ, and the people in the world will praise Yahweh God and our Lord Jesus.

The first title that we will study today is: “Fishers of men”.

The meaning of “Fishers of men”

^{NAS} **Matthew 4:18-20** And walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” ²⁰ And they immediately left the nets, and followed Him.

Here the Lord Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, and he saw two fishermen brothers: Simon Peter and Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea. The Lord called them to follow him, telling them that he will make them fishers of men.

The big difference between fishermen and fishers of men

When the Lord Jesus called these two fishermen to follow him, he changed the term “fishermen” to “fishers of men”. There are similarities between literal fishermen and fishers of men, but there are also big differences between these two terms. We now look at their differences first:

- Literal fishermen go fishing in the sea;
- Fishers of men fish for people, or call people from the world.

But the big difference between fishermen and fishers of men is that fishermen catch the fish for food or sell the fish for money. But when fishers of men go fishing for people from the world, it is not for their own benefit, but entirely for the salvation of those people.

This is the first point, that Christians are fishers of men, and we go into the world to call people to follow Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus so that they can be saved, and we do this not for our own benefit.

After we are saved, we have to go to save other people

In verse 19 of the above passage, the Lord Jesus said to Simon and Andrew: “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Here the Lord was calling them to follow him, and he immediately told them that he would make them fishers of men.

That is the second point we have to remember: After we are saved, we don’t just sit there to enjoy the love of our Father in heaven, waiting for the day to enter into the kingdom of God. No, no, it is definitely not like that! After we are saved, we are free from the power of sin, and then we have to go into the world to help other people to follow Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ so that they too can be saved. That is the second point.

- The first point is that when we fish people from the world so that they can have salvation, we do this not to gain benefit for ourselves.
- The second point is that after we ourselves are saved, we have to go out to save other people; we don’t just sit there to wait for the day to enter into the kingdom of God.

What should we do?

So what should we do now? Many people may say: “I am not eloquent in speech, I don’t know how to preach the word of God, how can I call people to follow the Lord Jesus?”

We don’t have to be eloquent in speech, I am not eloquent by nature. I have mentioned this point many times, that it is also not necessary that we must preach a sermon. If in the future we

grow into spiritual maturity by the grace of God, and we are able to preach from the word of God, that is definitely good; but it is not that we must preach a sermon. We can do many other things to help people to follow Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

For example, I think every Christian has experienced the grace and the help given by Yahweh God, so we can share with people about those wonderful experiences. We all can witness for Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ with our own life experiences.

We can share our life experience with people. After they listen to it, if they are interested, then we can explain to them about the word of God. Of course the more we know about the word of God, the more accurately we can explain things to people. If we know more, we can speak more; if we know little, we can speak little. That's why it is important for us to know the word of God deeper.

These are just some examples of how to witness to people in the world. Actually, if we truly obey the teaching of the Lord Jesus, then just our own life quality and the love between Christians are already sufficient to witness for Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus.

All these are just some examples of what we can do to witness to people in the world. Indeed if we truly want to obey the calling of the Lord Jesus to fish people from the world, then Yahweh God Himself will lead us and teach us what to do. In the beginning He may entrust us with some minor task, and if we fulfill it well, then He would give us more and more important work to do.

The technique, the skill, the eloquence in speech, all these are not the most important, the most important is to have a right attitude:

- First of all, we fish people from the world in order to follow the Lord Jesus. We do this not for our own benefit, but for their benefit so that they can have salvation.
- Secondly after we are saved, we have the responsibility to help other people to be saved. "We love, because He first loved us. (1Jo 4:19 NAU)"

If we have the right attitude and the deep concern for people's salvation, Yahweh God will grant us the wisdom to do the work of fishers of men.

The life quality of fishers of men

Now we look at the life quality of fishers of men. If we want to become fishers of men, what kind of qualities do we need to have? I am not talking about eloquence in speech, nor high

education, nor skills to convince people etc; I already said that these are not important. I am talking about the life quality of fishers of men. What life quality do fishers of men need to have?

1. Willing to suffer

The first quality is being willing to suffer for the sake of preaching the gospel. All fishermen want to get more fish, the more the better, and the bigger the fish the better, because with bigger fish they can sell them at a higher price. In order to get more fish and bigger fish the fishing boats have to go out to the ocean, they can't just stay near the shore. Nowadays fishing boats are equipped with modern engines, and quite often they would go out to the ocean for many days or even weeks. When the fishing boats go so far out into the ocean, the fishermen will have to endure hardship and danger. Quite often they encounter storms, and many fishing boats have been sunk or destroyed. Sometimes when a fishing boat goes into the waters of other countries, the boat and everyone on the boat may be detained. Many years ago a Spanish fishing boat went into Canadian waters and was detained by the Canadian navy; only after quite some time it was finally released.

We are fishers of men of Yahweh God, we have to be ready to endure hardship and take risks in order to fish people from the world. For example: When I share with people about the love of Yahweh God, quite often I would be ridiculed or even hated by people. I think many faithful Christians have experienced similar things. That's only a small thing, but we rely on the grace of Yahweh God, that when we are insulted, we don't argue or fight back; we don't seek revenge; the more they insult us, the more we love them; the more they hate us the more we pray for them.

In the book of Acts in New Testament there are stories of the apostles going to many places to preach the gospel, and they endured dangers and persecutions.

^{NAU} **Acts 4:1 – 4** As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple *guard* and the Sadducees came up to them, ² being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴ But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. (Act 4:1-4 NAU)

This passage talks about the incident of apostle Peter and apostle John preaching the gospel, and many people believed. But that made the priests, the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees very angry. They arrested the two apostles and put them in jail until the next day. When they were put in jail, were they afraid?

^{NAU} **Acts 4:18 – 20** And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; ²⁰ for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.” (Act 4:18-20 NAU)

Here it says that the next day the priests and the Sadducees summoned the apostles and commanded them not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. But the apostles asked them to ponder whether it is right to obey God or to obey them. The apostles determined to continue to preach the Lord Jesus, because they could not stop speaking about what they had seen and heard; they were willing to suffer for the sake of preaching the gospel.

^{NAU} **Acts 13:49 – 52** And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region. ⁵⁰ But the Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. ⁵¹ But they shook off the dust of their feet *in protest* against them and went to Iconium. ⁵² And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. (Act 13:49-52 NAU)

This passage talks about the works of Paul and Banabas, by whom the word of the Lord Jesus was spreading through the whole region, but the Jews in that area incited the powerful people to drive the apostles out of the city.

^{NAU} **Acts 14:19 – 20** But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. ²⁰ But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe. (Act 14:19-20 NAU)

This passage records an even more violent incident against Paul. When Paul was preaching to the crowds, the Jews came and persuaded the people to stone him. They thought he was dead, and dragged him out of city. But when the disciples stood around Paul, he got up and entered into the city again. Paul was not afraid at all. He might have something he had not finished yet, that’s why he needed to go back into the city despite the danger. The next morning after he had arranged everything properly, Paul and Barnabas went to Derbe.

The above four passages show that when we preach the gospel to people, we will certainly run into many oppositions. If we rely on our own strength, we would be very discouraged and afraid, and eventually we would give up. That’s why we need to always rely on the grace of Yahweh God, we need to ask Him to help us to stand firm and remain faithful to Him to the end.

The fishermen of the world are willing to endure hardship and danger just for money, but because we are fishers of men for the Lord Jesus, we all the more need to be willing to endure danger and hardship not for money, but for the salvation of the people in the world. This is the first quality that the fishers of men need to have.

2. Faithful in prayer

The second quality of the fishers of men is faithfulness in prayer. We need to always ask guidance from Yahweh God, we don't do things according to our own intelligence.

^{NAU} **Luke 5:4 – 7** When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.”⁵ Simon answered and said, “Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say *and* let down the nets.”⁶ When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets *began* to break;⁷ so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. (Luk 5:4-7 NAU)

Here is the story of the Lord Jesus telling Simon Peter to put out into the deep water and let down the nets to catch fish. Simon said that they had worked all night and didn't get anything; but because he respected the Lord, they simply obeyed what the Lord had told them to do. The result was that they got so much fish that their nets began to break, they had to call their partners in the other boat to come help them. In the end, both boats were filled with fish and began to sink.

Usually fishermen would go out to fish at night because there are more fish in the sea at night time, but there are fewer fish at day time. Simon Peter was an experienced fisherman, and he fully understood this. When the Lord Jesus asked Simon to put out into the deep water and catch fish, it was day time; if Simon had relied on his own wisdom instead of obeying the Lord's instruction, he would have told the Lord that it was unreasonable to try to catch fish at day time. But Simon Peter obeyed the Lord's instruction, and in the end he caught so much fish that the boats began to sink.

A fisher of men has to always ask for guidance from Yahweh God. When He gives us guidance, we have to obey His guidance. If we do things according to our own understanding instead of following Yahweh God's guidance, we will fail. But if we follow the guidance of Yahweh God we will fish a lot of people from the world.

We need to pray a lot; we pray not only for guidance for ourselves, but also pray for the people in the world. When we preach the gospel to people, we need to ask Yahweh God to change their hearts to be receptive to the gospel, we ask Yahweh God to open their eyes so that they can see the glory of God. We are just servants carrying out Yahweh God's commands, we don't have the power to change people's hearts, only Yahweh God can change their hearts. Therefore when we preach the gospel to people, we need to ask God to tell us what to do. Not only that, we also ask God to change the hearts of people.

To be faithful in prayer is very difficult thing to do. It is easy to pray for someone once in a while, but to pray for people faithfully requires genuine love for people. Here is a true story. There was a mother who prayed faithfully for her rebellious son. This son was not just rebellious, he was also violent. He liked to go out with his gangster friends. When the mother asked him not to go, he would beat her up and kick at her chest. But his mother did not give up, she kept on praying for him faithfully. At the end he became a Christian. Not only that, he even became a pastor. I heard his testimony from his own mouth.

We need to ask Yahweh God to give us the endurance and the genuine love so that we can faithfully pray for people.

3. Fishers of men need to cooperate with one another and help one another

In the above passage we see the fishermen helping one another, otherwise their nets would break. The fishers of men also need to help one another, we should never compete against one another, that would disgrace the name of Yahweh God. We have to remember that everything we do is not for our own benefit, but for the salvation of the people.

A fisher of men need to have these three qualities:

- Willing to suffer
- Faithful in prayer
- Cooperating and helping one another

Conclusion

Today we have studied the title "Fishers of men". Every Christian has to be a fisher of men to call people from the world. That is our responsibility. We love because God loved us first.