

*Let's sound forth the word of the Lord
in every place! (1 Thessalonians 1:8).*



Tom Rainwater
126 Jay St.
Chittenango, NY 13037
(315) 687-9135
therainwaters@verizon.net
February 17, 2010

Dear brethren in Christ,

Hello from the Northeast! The weather today is consistent with the usual pattern for February: cloudy with light snow flurries. We haven't had any large accumulations at once like many have in areas to the South, but we've had the colder temperatures. Our snow season usually continues into April, and it won't feel like Spring until May. Meanwhile the children will keep making snowmen and snow forts, and the adults will continue snow blowing the driveways.

The work here in central New York continues to go well. Everyone's attitude is very upbeat for the future. My family and I just returned from a two-day trip visiting with brethren from other congregations in northern NY, and they are likewise optimistic about the way things are going. With fully supported preachers in Canastota (me), Manchester (Jeff Smith), and Watertown (Lee Tosti), there is stability and leadership for growth. Each congregation has plans for evangelism in 2010 that are being put into practice, so we pray that such efforts will be productive in reaching people who need the gospel in those areas. (Those other congregations are 1 1/2 hours away from where we meet in Canastota). We're very encouraged by the zeal and enthusiasm of the brethren here in NY.

This past month in Canastota we haven't had any new Bible studies in addition to what we're already doing. We've studied with the Roys (Waterloo, NY); and our neighbors: Colleen, Jodi, and Helen. We also are having home studies with some of our members (Linda Farrell, and the Holmes family this coming month) in order to influence others (their family or friends) to be present for them. Also studies have been held in the local library hoping that someone there will take an interest in what we are doing. We're hoping and praying that our advertising and other methods mentioned in my last letter will give us more leads for contacts soon.

Remembering that Jesus told his disciples He would make them "fishers of men," I outlined in my last letter the various ways a fisherman may try to catch fish. Below are attributes a fisherman needs in order to be successful:

(1) **Patience.** The fisherman who quickly pulls his line from the water when he doesn't get immediate results won't catch much of anything. He must be willing to wait, however long it takes, for the fish to start getting hungry. Sometimes when we try to teach people the gospel, they, for whatever reason, aren't ready to receive it yet. They're just not hungry for truth. Don't give up on them, but leave the door open for the future and try again at a later time. In the meantime, move on to the next person, but don't forget about them. Everyone has moments in their lives that they are shaken by something (perhaps the death of a loved one), and they may be softened over time by your sincere kindness and consistently good example in the Lord. Many people these days carry with them layers of suspicion and doubt, and often it takes time to peel away those initial fears and concerns. For a contact to want to obey the gospel at the first Bible study is wonderful, but that person is rare. Most need repeated studies, lots of encouragement and tons of patience.

(2) **Persistence.** A fisherman must "keep at it" in order to bring fish home. Repeated casting is necessary. A Christian must keep putting the Word of God out in order to receive any response. It does no good to try something once and give up. I've spoken to brethren in other areas about what they're doing to reach the lost, and in some cases they're not doing anything because everything they tried "just didn't work." They lacked persistence. A few brethren who came up to the Northeast last year to help us go door-to-door were discouraged when their assistance didn't result in a conversion or Bible study. It was the first time they had done anything like that. As a result they are sour on door-to-door and on the work up here in the North. Persistence understands that when you do something to try to spread the gospel, sometimes you will get positive feedback from people and sometimes you won't. Using the Lord's Parable of the Sower as an illustration, everything that is done to disseminate the truth is like spreading seed. (Luke 8:4-15). It must be spread everywhere and over the same ground each planting season. Since the Christian's planting season never ends, we must "keep at it" and continue to sound forth the word of the Lord "in every place." (1 Thessalonians 1:8).

(3) **Never take it personally.** Nobody likes rejection. But when someone appears to reject you or turn you away because you teach the truth, understand that they are not really rejecting you; they are rejecting God. (1 Samuel 8:7). It would be silly for a fisherman to take it personally when the fish aren't biting.

The devil wants to discourage you from doing that which does him the most damage. He doesn't want lost souls to hear the gospel of Christ. Don't let him tempt you toward emotional self-pity. Choose to be sad for the soul of the one who rejects the truth. And don't be tempted toward self-righteousness. For instance, James and John wanted to send fire down on the Samaritans when they wouldn't receive Jesus. (Luke 9:51-56). But many of those Samaritans became Christians just a few years later in Acts 8. The Lord hadn't given up on them. We must remember that we are not the Judge; we are only His messengers with a duty to do, no matter how uncomfortable it is at times.

(4) **Prayer.** Both the humble farmer and fisherman who depend on their trade for a living understand the need for prayer. There is only so much they can do before waiting the results. Likewise the Christian must rely on God to give "the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). In teaching the lost, we're doing the will of God on earth. Since He is very much interested in accomplishing His will, shouldn't we more earnestly pray to Him? There is much to pray for. For instance: the opportunities to find those searching for truth; the opportunities to convict the hearts of those not currently searching; the wisdom to recognize those opportunities; the courage to act upon them; the boldness to speak in face of opposition; etc. And we should pray for people by name with whom we are studying or with whom we would wish to study. Never neglect prayer or underestimate its power. Fervency of prayer is absolutely essential in evangelism.

Thanks again for your prayers and your support. Without you the work would not be able to continue here in central New York. The brethren here in Canastota send you their greetings. May the grace and peace of God be with you as you labor for Him!

Your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tom Rainwater". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Tom Rainwater