

Two Young Men

by Robert Turner

A friend of mine, discussing a sermon she had heard and enjoyed, said she was surprised that this particular preacher did so well, because “he had a good education.”

That’s no misprint. She was surprised that a sermon of value could come from one highly educated. Nor is my friend a victim of ignorant superstition. She values secular education. But experience had taught her that “degrees” have a way of pushing into the foreground, so that sermons become pedantic and real spiritual concern for lost souls is overshadowed. Plain, old-fashioned Bible preaching is not good enough for Dr. Reverend; and what suits him doesn’t stir the heart of the man who needs salvation.

Several years ago on a Sunday when a sore throat would not permit me to speak, two college boys were invited to “fill in.” I heard both sermons, and later the two boys came to my office and asked for my criticisms.

One boy (we’ll call him Joe) had the makings of an after-dinner speaker. He had personality — plus, a few jokes, illustrations from current events and sports, and just enough emotional appeal to make his “talk” sound like preaching. I knew he had “gone over great” with the crowd. The other (call him Dan) showed “stage fright” and spoke in a halting, half-stutter. But he had compiled a fine list of scriptures on his subject, and used his time reading and explaining them, and making direct application to the hearers.

I tried to make a fair and encouraging report to the boys; but told Joe that he was on the wrong track. I urged him to use his talents to present the Word, not himself; to warn people of their sin and damnation, and make them know his concern. Joe thought this was “out of date.”

Both boys graduated from an outstanding “Christian” college, married, and chose secular jobs. But Joe has now joined a denomination, where fun, frolic, and “youth devotionals” are substituted for Christianity. Dan is teaching a Bible class in a sound church, preaches as he has opportunity, and grows stronger day by day.

Fault of the college? Not per se. But one boy succumbed to the modern “social gospel” concept of Christianity, and one had faith in God’s word.

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