

Words of Truth



We Cannot Allow The Messenger To Be Elevated Above The Message

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Have you ever noticed that there are people who listen to so-called preachers just because they like the man? At the same time, there are others who will not listen to preachers just because they don't like the man. People, on both sides of the coin, often allow the messenger to stand above the message. Some allow this to occur in that they care more about the messenger than whether or not the message is truth. For others, they cannot stand the messenger and won't listen even if it is the truth (John 17:14). This is not a problem that is new to our age. As Solomon said, *"there is no new thing under the sun"* (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

Many people consider poor folks to be destitute of wisdom. The failed logic of these types of individuals rest in this idea: If he (or she) is poor, that is because they've made foolish decisions. Therefore, they conclude that this poor person has no wisdom to share. Well, there are a lot of reasons that is failed logic. For one, our Lord was poor in terms of how this world measures wealth (Luke 9:57-58 and II Corinthians 8:9). Yet, as far as wisdom is concerned, He is by far the wisest person to have ever walked in the flesh (Matthew 12:42 and I John 3:20; cf. Romans 9:1-5). Additionally, in regard to poor persons, salvation is very much in the grasp of he or she who is poor (Luke 6:20). You cannot call a saved individual unwise regardless of their physical condition in this world. What action displays more wisdom than the act of obeying God (Proverbs 10:8)?

Having said all of that, please consider the following point from the inspired pen of Solomon: *"This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me: There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: Now there was found in it **a poor wise man**, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. Then said I, **Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard**"* (Ecclesiastes 9:13-16). A poor wise man showed wisdom over a great king. Yet, as you just read, people despise the wisdom of a poor man based upon the fact that he is poor. Whether it is poverty or other things, people often have respect or lack thereof of messengers based upon worldly thinking.

Worldly Logic Causes Some To Elevate The Messenger Above (Or Beneath) The Message

The Apostle Paul, through worldly thinking, was considered by some to be weak in presence and to have contemptible speech. Notice: *"For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible"* (II Corinthians 10:10). Paul had previously counseled the church of Christ in Corinth to cease from worldly thinking (I Corinthians 1:18-31 and I Corinthians 3:18-23). However, those in Corinth continued to look at Paul through worldly glasses. They saw a man who was not excellent in speech. They were unimpressed with Paul's aura.

Like the church in Corinth, many today look at those who teach God's word based upon physical presence and ability to present God's word. People lose sight of the power of the message (Romans 1:16 and Hebrews 4:12). Sadly, tools that could be useful (ex. multimedia projectors) become abused because teachers realize that people are impressed by skillful presentations. The message is lost when presentation becomes the focus. Worldly wisdom says this: "The psychologist Jerome Bruner of New York University has described studies that show that people only remember 10% of what they hear and 20% of what they read, but about 80 percent of what they see and do" (<http://www.hp.com/large/ipg/assets/bus-solutions/power-of-visual-communication.pdf>). The question is, are we "sold" on the word of God or on worldly wisdom?

The Word Of God Says The Message Is More Significant Than The Presenter (Or Presentation)

We cannot be a people who get "awed" by skillful speakers or wonderful presentations (Romans 16:17-18, II Timothy 4:1-5, II Peter 2:1-3, and II Peter 2:17-22). Notice how much Paul's ability to present the word of God matters in God's sight: "*And I, brethren, when I came to you, **came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom**, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And **my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.** Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet **not the wisdom of this world**, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But **we speak the wisdom of God** in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. **Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.** But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But **we have the mind of Christ**" (I Corinthians 2:1-16).*

Conclusion

Ezekiel, though he didn't aim to become an entertainer, found himself exalted above the message (Ezekiel 33:30-33). Teachers cannot always control how we're elevated (Acts 14:8-18) or even abased (Matthew 13:53-58). What we can control is how each of us views those whom we learn from. We have to remember that teachers, whom teach the truth, are just telling us what God has already revealed in His word (Acts 15:35). The speaking skills of those whom teach are not what will save us (James 1:21). Thus, our preference needs to be the truth rather than the messenger!