

Two Men Disagree With the Preacher

Two men disagree with the preacher. They have both been taught that they are not just to "swallow" everything the preacher says; that they are to think for themselves. They are to be commended, therefore, for their careful evaluation of what is taught.

The key words with the first man, however, are, "It seems to me." All teaching is judged according to his own thinking, as to whether or not it makes sense to him.

The key words with the second man are, "What does God say about it?" He desires truth and knows that truth can only be found in God's word (John 17:17). If he disagrees with the preacher, he does so because he is convinced the preacher has misused a passage of scripture or has failed to consider a scripture that might affect his conclusion. He comes with an open Bible and an open mind, prepared to defend his position or to yield if he sees that it is indefensible.

The first man exalts self. He places too much confidence in his own thinking. He may do so unconsciously, but in reality he makes his own intellect and experience his god. His thinking is reflected in the words of Naaman, "Behold, I thought," words that would have taken Naaman to a leper's grave had it not been for the admonition of his servants (2 Kings 5:1-14).

The second man exalts God. His confidence is in what God says in the scriptures. He recognizes that his own intellect and experience fade into nothingness when placed in the brightness of the light of truth. A "thus saith the Lord" ends all controversy with him. His thinking is reflected in that of the Bereans who "were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they... searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Unless the first man changes his attitude he is hopeless.

He is susceptible to all manner of false ideas. He cannot come to know God and His truth through his own wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:21). He must throw his own wisdom, intellect, and experience aside; he must become poor in spirit, meek before God, mourning, hungering and thirsting for righteousness; he must bow in submission to the Lord and to His word. He must say with Paul, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" (Romans 11:33-34).

The second man is a blessed and fortunate man in-deed, for he will learn the truth that will make him free (John 8:32). Unfortunately, he is a rare man in the twentieth century. But he does exist—and he can exist even in the man who is presently reading this article. What a challenge to each of us! After all, it is one thing to disagree with a preacher, but quite another thing to disagree with Almighty God!

- by Bill Hall

The Truth Sometimes Hurts

How much do you appreciate the truth? The truth is easy to hear when it is flattering, encouraging and uplifting. However, the truth can sometimes hurt. Do you always desire the truth from those around you, regardless of whether it is favorable or not? Do you always demand the truth from those who preach and teach the gospel of Christ?

The truth pleased the rich young ruler until Jesus told him the one thing he lacked (Mark 10:17-22). Some would call such a declaration of truth unloving, but the Spirit called it love (note verse 21). How do we feel when someone courageously and honestly points out our shortcomings (Prov. 27:6)?

Some of the Jews who heard Peter on Pentecost appreciated the truth, though it indicted them. They chose repentance and baptism (Acts 2:36-40). Whereas, those Jews who heard Stephen speak that same truth hated what was spoken. They responded by stoning Stephen to death (Acts 7:54-60). How do we respond to the truth?

The Galatians loved the apostle Paul—so much that at one point they were willing to pluck out their own eyes and give them to Paul. However, in the very next verse, Paul was compelled to ask if he had become their enemy because he told them the truth (Gal. 4:14-16). Do we despise those who tell us what we need to hear?

Simply stated, unless we have a love of the truth, we will never appreciate the truths that hurt (2 Thess. 2:10-12). Unless we are willing to accept painful truths, we cannot know the sanctifying power of truth (John 17:17). Unless we obey the truth, we will be condemned (Rom. 2:8).

How much do you appreciate truth? The answer is painfully obvious when we are confronted with agonizing truths that require change in our lives. Change hurts, but the truth saves. How will you respond the next time you are confronted with the truth?

- by **Jonathan Perz**

Of Behaviour at the Church

In 17th century England a book entitled *The School of Manners* was widely circulated. It was designed as a training aid in teaching young people how to behave in various social settings. We thought you might be interested in the chapter that deals with "Behaviour at the Church." Here are the instructions:

1. Decently walk to thy seat or pew; run not, nor go wantonly.
2. Sit where thou art ordered by thy Superiors, Parents, or Masters.
3. Shift not seats, but continue in the same place.
4. Lend thy place for the easing of anyone that stands near thee.
5. Keep not too long a seat lent thee by another, but being eased, restore it.
6. Talk not in the Church, especially in the time of prayers or preaching.
7. Fix thine eye upon the minister; let it not wildly wonder to gaze upon any person or thing.
8. Attend diligently to the words of the minister; pray with him when he prayeth, at least in thy heart; and while he preacheth, listen, that thou mayest remember.
9. Be not hasty to run out of the church when the worship is ended, as if thou wert weary of being there.
10. Walk decently and soberly home, without haste or wantonness.

Times have changed, and some of these admonitions are not needed so much now as then. For instance, we typically have plenty of comfortable seats for all worshippers. But, I especially like instructions number 7,8 and 9. The fact that those instructions were needed back then and are still needed today makes me think that times haven't changed that much after all!

- by **Greg Gwin**