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Relevant Teaching

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When Peter spoke to the Jews on Pentecost, he talked to them about their actions and needs (**Acts 2**). He did not center his lesson upon the Gentiles, who were not there to hear his words. When he spoke the gospel to Cornelius and the Gentiles with him, he gave them information which they needed in order to please God (**Acts 10**). When Peter wrote his letter to those of the Dispersion, he taught them things relative to their needs as those set apart to God (I Peter). Note how many times the word "you" is used in these three passages. He was talking to his hearers about those things relevant to their obeying God and remaining faithful. He didn't talk in vague generalities so as to avoid hurting someone's feelings or "offending" some who then would go away and be lost.

When Paul preached to the Gentiles at Athens, his approach was suited to the needs of his audience (**Acts 17**). He did not spend his efforts talking to them about the sins and needs of the Jews. When he talked to pagans, he pointed out to them the errors and vanity of paganism (**Acts 14:11-18**). When he wrote to the saints at Corinth, he addressed their errors and told them what to do to correct what was amiss (1 Corinthians). Each letter he wrote was relevant to those to whom it was written: Romans to the saints at Rome, Galatians to the churches of Galatia, Colossians to those at Colossae, etc.

Our teaching today needs to be relevant to the audience before us. We need to say those things which will inform, encourage, and correct those who hear. The Scriptures are our text, handled aright (**2 Timothy 3:16,17; 4:1-5**). In warning about dangers and dangerous men, Paul named names and was specific (**1 Timothy 1:19,20; 2 Timothy 4:10,14,15; 2:14-18; 1 Corinthians 15:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12**). We, too, need to deal with specific truth specifically, so that people will know what we are talking about, what the Scriptures say, and what the responsibility of each one is. Preachers, do you preach so as not to make anyone uncomfortable, or do you, in love, tell your hearers what they need to hear in language that they will not misunderstand? How often do you use the word "you" in teaching others what they should do? Note **Acts 2:37;38**.

Cracked Pots

Paschall, Jeremy

A water bearer in India who had two large pots. They hung on each end of a pole that he carried across his neck, but one of the pots had a crack in it. While the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots of water to his master's house.

Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect to the end for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you."

"Why?" asked the bearer. "Of what are you ashamed?"

"I have been able, for these past two years, to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts," the pot said.

In his compassion, the water bearer said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path."

Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it some. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again it apologized to the bearer for its failure.

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of your path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

Everyone thinks of his or her flaws and questions his or her abilities from time to time. "Am I really accomplishing any good at my job?" or "Am I really making a positive contribution to this civic organization?" Sometimes that same mentality runs over into our spiritual lives. "Am I really able to do anything positive for the Lord?"

When we begin questioning our usefulness to the Lord (and who among us doesn't), we should think of what Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth. It seems that some were concerned about what abilities they did and did not have. Paul wrote, "If the whole body were any eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased" (1 Corinthians 12.17-18). In other words, if everyone had the same abilities, there would be jobs left undone. The Lord has determined that will not be the case.

There is a hymn, "Room in God's Kingdom." The chorus says, "There is room, there's a place in the kingdom of God for you; there is room, there's a place, there is work that we all can do."

The Lord has given us each different talents. We each determine whether we will use them or not. Paul admonished the Corinthians in this way:

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58)

May we all take this admonition to heart and determine to use the abilities with which we have been blessed in the service of our Lord!