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“From the Pastor’s Desk”

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A TREASURE IN JARS OF CLAY

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” 2 Cor. 4:7

If there was one thing that the Apostle Paul was aware of throughout his ministry was the need to humble himself under the mighty hand of God. He did this lest he be exalted above measure for his outstanding ministry in helping the Church to expand through the world. There probably was no Apostle who worked harder than he did. Historians have given him much of the credit for the expansion of the Gospel message throughout the regions of the Middle East & Europe.

One historian wrote: *“Paul was a follower of Jesus Christ who famously converted to Christianity on the road to Damascus after persecuting the very followers of the community that he joined. However, as we will see, Paul is better described as one of the founders of the religion rather than a convert to it. Scholars attribute seven books of the New Testament to Paul; he was an influential teacher and a missionary to much of Asia Minor and present-day Greece.”* (“Ancient History” by Rebecca Denova.)

But one of the things that I appreciate about the Apostle was his humility, integrity and openness about his frustrations, confusion, and bewilderment at various times throughout his ministry. While he was strong in his faith, diligent in his study of God’s Word, fervent, and most zealous in protecting the Gospel message to the point of being at times contentious over some particular issue. He nevertheless realized that he needed the favor and support of his fellow brothers and sisters to continue to do the work of God.

This is revealed several times throughout his writings, but especially in one particular passage of which I was reading recently found in his second letter to the Corinthians. It was the time that Paul had come to Troas, to preach the Gospel. But when he arrived, to his disappointment, he did not get to see his fellow companion in ministry Titus. Paul had been expected to visit Corinth at the time. But Paul first needed more information as to how the people there had received his first Epistle to them.

You see, Paul had learned of the behavior of some of those who were part of the church there and he was not happy as to what was taking place in regards to the morality and standing up for the truth. So Paul wrote them a letter of correction and was most anxious to hear how that the church as a whole had responded to the message. He felt that only Titus who had been with them would know for sure in making a true assessment of the situation. But because he was unable to make contact with Titus he decided not to make his visit to Corinth. Please read his own words as to his personal reaction in missing to see Titus.

“Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.” 2 Cor.2:12,13

Please notice what Paul was saying in common ordinary language.... *“I was so concerned about you, though I love you dearly, that I **was so greatly distressed** because I did not find Titus who would be better able to give me an account of your **spiritual state and your reaction to my letter of disapproval** concerning you and your conduct.”*

In other words Paul was faithful to preach the whole truth, nothing but the truth, so help him God. He nevertheless was still human, fearful, and concerned about the very church he helped to establish as to whether the forces of evil that existed in their community had taken over and weighed in with greater influence to persuade them to follow another path than the one in which he had shown them to walk. In other words, who had the greater influence on how the people lived and behaved in this time of crisis.

NO COMPROMISE OF THE MESSAGE

Paul knew that he could not and would not compromise on the message. But he also knew that he loved these people and wanted nothing but the best for them, but in the final analysis it would be up to them to make that decision. We as pastors find ourselves in about the same situation in these days, with the Covid-19 pandemic. Right now the question is still out there as to whom our people are going to trust.

There will always be forces in this world competing with the Gospel message. And there will always be the temptation to trust the so called “*professionals*” in Science, government, and social institutions rather than the message of the Gospel. Science tells parents to get their kids back in school. But government tells them to stay at home. Politicians tell you don’t eat in restaurants, yet they do at the price of \$600 a plate. Black Lives Matter organization was allowed by the government to run rampage in major Democrat cities and destroy business after business....yet the church was told to close their doors so the people will not be exposed to Covid-19.

How is it that such influences over-ride sound teachings? Because of fear! But trust me on this....God still uses “**earthen vessels of clay**” to proclaim the Gospel message. This Gospel message often contradicts what is being said in the media; by government and by the medical establishment. There is no consistence in any of the messages out there except that of the Gospel.

So we as ministers of the Gospel find ourselves caught between the government – science – the media while in the meantime conditions do not improve. Even now some are saying these conditions will continue for another year. I just wonder how much longer is it going to take before the general public wakes up to the fact that they are being manipulated by the powers that be. I know that the fear of death can be overwhelming. No one wants to get sick. But, one of the things that is not being reported is the havoc that is taking place in the homes of ordinary Americans who are afraid to venture out of the house.

Like Paul, we all need the support, friendship, prayers of our fellow Christians. We need to see their smiles not their masks. We need to hear their singing because of the joy and comfort that comes in worshipping together. We need to hear a message from God’s Word in person because there are too many distractions in the home. We need the fellowship of our fellow countryman. Recently, in one of our Sunday evening services the song was sung, “God bless America.” Our daughter said she looked out throughout the auditorium while the people were singing and there was not a dry eye in the building.

I know that many who are reading this letter probably may be shedding a tear over what use to be in their life when they found themselves faithfully in the House of God, week after week. But now we have allowed the conditions of this old world to over-rule common sense. I know what it is to panic and live be in fear. But even before I got in my eighties I determined that I would not allow fear to rule my faith. Read my book again, **When Your Back is Against the Wall**. We have been in far greater dangers than this....throughout our lifetime.

You have a choice; live in fear and you will be afraid to venture out even after the government and medical profession give an all-clear signal. Covid-19 is no worse than any other major disease that comes along. It only has greater notoriety. And personally, I don’t trust the statistics of these diseases. I have received too many reports of false reporting on this. Yes, I know there have been some deaths. But that is not going to stop....it is appointed unto man once to die. I am going to die of something that is why I have already bought a grave and casket. But in the meantime I am going to be in God’s house. This is what I have been doing since the week I was born....and it is not changing now.

If after I passed they say I died of Covid-19 I want you to know I would not do anything different. You see I have a “**treasure**” hidden in an earthen vessel. Earthen vessels are known to break at times. Earthen vessels get old, wear out, and become unusable. I am getting there and soon my time of departure will take place. But be assured. I will have no regrets that I came to God’s house. I will rejoice to trade in my earthly dwelling for an eternal one. I don’t care for who this nation elected as their leader anyway. This world is not my home I am only passing through. Sometime I may need to go through the valley of death, but there is a light up ahead that I see which exceeds the valley of death. So I will keep pressing on until that day arrives.

Amen and Amen.