

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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The Athenian Effect

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Acts 17:21 states, “For the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.” There are times where the attitude of the Athenians in their incestuous desire for novelty can describe some of our approaches to biblical study.

There are times when brethren have asked why we continue to study particular texts or topics if “everyone already believes the truth on it,” or since “we have heard this a hundred times.” Without being mundane or a hobby horse, we must understand that it is necessary to continue teaching and reviewing truths that we have learned in the past.

The New Testament writers urged for the review of truth in several areas. For example, Paul wrote the Corinthians saying “For this reason I have sent Timothy to you who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church” (1 Cor. 4:17). The word “remind” means to “cause to remember or put in mind of some-

thing.” Paul also exhorts Timothy to “put the brethren in remembrance” of sound doctrine (1 Tim. 4:6, 2 Tim 2:14).

Peter also echoes these sentiments in 2 Pet. 1:12 “For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things though you know and are established in the present truth.” Here Peter states that even though these Christians knew the truth it was his objective to bring their minds to recall the truth. Peter further emphasizes his purpose of the epistle in 2 Pet. 1:15; 3:1, by repeating the significance of reminding these brethren of truth.

Even though there are several passages that establish the practice of reviewing or being reminded of truth that was previously learned, several brethren do not see the importance of such practice today. While vital fundamentals of truth—authority, conditions of salvation, baptism, fellowship, and many others—need to be taught today, several brethren think that these topics have been worn out and they seek a more “novel” message.

This effect can have disastrous consequences: from producing a

generation that has forgotten fundamental areas of truth, to stretching scripture to say things it does not teach.

For example, instead of teaching on authority shown through the Bible, some men have labeled the topic of authority as “church of Christ tradition” and have sought a new hermeneutic. This has happened at the same time brethren have been complaining that authority has been over taught, while assuming that everyone believes the same thing. This neglect of instruction has led to a development of false teaching on authority and is the root of the current battle of instrumental music and other departures among some of our brethren.

If we are not constantly reminded of the truth, we lay the foundation of an apostasy. We must not merely seek things that are “new,” but only strive to seek that which is true. If we do not do this how can we be surprised if we fall from the truth? We must not be like the Athenians, who just desire the new, but we must always desire to be reminded of truth.