



April 26, 2009

The Real Power

In the first century we find that Christians were actively teaching everyone they came into contact with. The early days of the church were good at first as the believers found favor with the people (**Acts 2.47**). That changed in a short time as persecution began against the church. Peter and John were arrested for teaching in the temple (**Acts 4**) and were later threatened and beaten when they did not comply (**Acts 5.40-41**). Stephen, confronting some of the Jews, who were intent on causing trouble, became the first disciple to be killed for his stand for truth (**Acts 6-7**). This ushered in a time of persecution (**Acts 8.1-4**) which served to spread the Gospel as they taught in the places they went to avoid the persecution. When we read such accounts we find that the power of God was working in the message and was being confirmed by the signs and wonders that were performed. Today, teaching the Gospel may seem to be a daunting task for many as we all have a tendency to discount our own abilities to engage the lost in conversation about the Bible and their souls. One reason for reluctance in spreading the word may be that we do not have a proper perspective concerning our capabilities. We may find ourselves wondering how we can convince one who is lost that they need to study with us. We may be overwhelmed with the excuses that we encounter, or the general aversion on the part of some to discuss anything of a religious nature. Paul stated that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation (**Rom 1.16**) and in this statement is a reminder that we often overlook. Paul told the Corinthians that the word was entrusted to Christians as stewards and as such emphasized the need for faithfulness. Paul described the role of the Christian as an “*earthen vessel*” (**2 Cor:4:7**) charged with the task of spreading the word. Our own abilities may pale when compared to the apostles, preachers and teachers of the first century but we need to remember that they were people like us. How is it that they were able to carry God’s word to the Jews, who rejected Christ and his teachings through the church, and to the Gentile world filled with paganism? Was it the natural speaking ability and personality of the one teaching or

was there something else that made the difference? The difference is in the fact that they taught when the opportunities presented themselves and they did so realizing that the truth was the real power and force behind the conversions that took place. Things have not changed in our world. The Gospel is still the power of God to save and the truth that is taught will cause a recipient to take notice when presented. The only abilities that we need to cultivate are the desire to reach the lost and then put that into action as often as we can. It is possible with all of the strategies and marketing gimmicks employed to reach the lost on the part of false teachers, that people have lost sight of what true service and worship are all about. Faced with the enormous presence of megachurches and charismatic speakers, some will turn away from the plain Gospel presented in a simpler setting and manner. The truth however is still the real power in this and when we teach, speaking as the oracles of God (**1 Pet 4.11**) it will have the effect that God wants it to achieve. The writer of Hebrews states, “*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*” (**Heb 4.12**). We may find it unpleasant when someone reacts with discomfort to the word of God. I have heard several individuals who had been exposed to the teachings of various religious organizations comment that they never knew some things were in the scriptures, or, that some things they had been taught were not in the Bible. As Christians all we have to do is present the word and allow the power of God to do what it was designed to do. We don’t have to worry about being good speakers. We only have to present the truth accurately. God will do the rest.

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