



May 30, 2010

Scripture Salad

As Paul made his defense before king Agrippa and Festus the governor, he explained the reasons for his belief and openly stated his faith in Christ, declaring himself a witness of the resurrection. Festus, perhaps somewhat overwhelmed with the things Paul revealed, stated, "... **Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.**" (Acts 26.24). People have a tendency to react in one of two ways when a very wordy explanation of anything is presented. There are those who would view the speaker as disturbed, a know-it-all, or, someone who is covering up their ignorance. In the hail of words that swarms about the speaker there is sometimes little critical thinking that occurs to evaluate the content for accuracy. Some will listen for hours to those who know little about the scriptures clinging to their every word. Paul's speech was numbing to Festus. Agrippa on the other hand was familiar with the prophets and understood much of what was said. A careful reading of Paul's speech reveals the apostle was factual and rational relating the pertinent history. The apparent verbosity was calculated, ordered and goal driven. In short, it made sense. We have all experienced conversations where someone explained something but the explanation was so convoluted we were more confused than enlightened. Sometimes when folks don't understand something, but want others to think otherwise, their explanations can become verbal watersheds of information. Obscure or little known facts, edge documents and books, esoteric thinking and other influences are commonly relied upon to make one's point. When it comes to the Bible I have heard some incredible explanations of various passages. I have heard testimonials so strange Rod Serling wouldn't have been able to use them in the Twilight Zone. Profound statements about the meaning of scriptures and personal experience bring looks of amazement and wonder from others who don't know any better. Years ago I heard an explanation of love from 1 Corinthians 13. An analogy was made to a furnace and the justification of a charismatic doctrine was skillfully woven into the fabric of a veritable exploration of the entire field of HVAC and the local hardware store coupled with a wealth of scriptural references. The folks listening to this were in awe. They had never imagined such a glowing discourse to answer their questions and set them on the right track. Obviously they respected the individual who was expounding the depths of scripture to them. But, scriptures were taken out of context, meanings were highly subjective and demonstrated well intended but incorrect interpretations and applications of various passages. The entire rendering was a scripture salad. I couldn't help but wonder if anyone could have understood the passages being explained with the method of exegesis employed. I have talked to others who have demonstrated their rejection of scripture, opposition to truth and lack of true adherence by talking others into the ground. There have been times when I have conversed with individuals who refused to allow anyone to get a word in or had a problem with nearly everything that anyone else said. Solomon states, "**In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.**" (Prov 10.19). Sometimes when someone speaks in abundance we need to make sure there is substance to the speech. It may be necessary to have a lengthy conversation regarding a scripture but the quality of explanation lies in the clarity of thought. Solomon states, "**He that hath knowledge spareth his words...**" (Prov 17.27). Just because I talk a lot doesn't mean I know anything. Some have been fooled by the long winded and ample worded explanations used to prove false doctrine and erroneous practices. One thing is certain, God intended for us to understand the scriptures without pseudophilosophical or theological conundrums. God meant for us to take his word for what it says and be able to figure it out. We can do that if we want.

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