



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Articles

CAN IT BE THAT SIMPLE?

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“All the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord” because of Paul (Acts 19:10). Yet, many disciples in Asia had never seen him (Col. 2:1). The most sensible explanation for that is that those churches were planted and nurtured by others who had learned from Paul and took the teaching to the people back home. Colossians tells us as much (1:7; 4:12-13).

Acts 19:9-10 report that, when he left the synagogue, Paul “took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.”

A different manuscript tradition for v. 9, reflected in an ESV footnote, adds that his daily reasoning was done “from the fifth hour to the tenth.” That leads us to look again at verses 9-10. Whether or not he did it five hours a day, Paul taught in the hall of Tyrannus *every day for two years*. The result was that all Asia heard the word.

Obviously, he would have taught about the faith, but what specifics of the faith? Might the fact that he “took the disciples with him” suggest something, especially when noticed in conjunction with texts like Colossians 1:28-29? It certainly looks as if Paul was interested in teaching more than “first principles” and “the plan of salvation.” The Tyrannus Hall lectures were valuable disciple instruction time (see Luke 1:4; Acts 2:42; 18:25; 21:21; Gal. 6:6; *et. al.*).

That would explain how Epaphras could, in a relatively short time, become conversant enough with the teaching to be an effective church planter. Conversely, that we do not generally see teaching programs comparable to what Paul did today doubtless contributes to the struggle of many churches to replicate the positive growth we see in the first century. We can’t teach what we don’t know.

Michael Weed once perceptively observed that, “While Sunday schools and Bible classes provide an unending array of discussion groups, sharing sessions, and ‘meaningful experiences,’ biblical illiteracy and ignorance of basic Christian beliefs are reaching epidemic proportion among youth and adults” (“Why Johnny Can’t Pray,” *Christian Studies* [1992]: 11).

Weed’s words remain pertinent. The problem is one of both quantity and quality: when we don’t study often, or deeply, we know little of substance to share. It really is that simple.

August 2012
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