

DEEP OR MUDDY?

Through the years there have been individuals, usually preachers, who feature themselves as being "free thinkers" who present "thought provoking" lessons that are usually attacks upon what they call the "traditionally held" views. The "in depth" lessons presented by these individuals usually leave many in the audience wondering just what they have said and thinking that the preacher is so "deep" in his thinking and presentation that they do not understand simply because they do not have the knowledge or ability the preacher has.

These men have at times caused confusion and strife by their preaching and when questioned about their teaching they usually reply, "You just don't understand what I am saying." Again, the implication is that any problem that may exist is due to the lack of knowledge or ability on the part of the hearer to comprehend the "deep" things taught by the preacher.

I think it is time to start putting the blame where it belongs. Are these men the "deep" thinkers they want us to believe they are? I often think of a statement I once heard made by an old country fellow. He said, "Just because you can't see the bottom of the river doesn't necessarily mean the water is deep, it may just be muddy." I am convinced that this is the case with some of these "deep" thinkers. They have the ability to present their thoughts in such a confusing manner that they just "muddy the water."

The apostle Paul said that he wrote the things revealed to him by the Holy Spirit so that *"when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ"* (Ephesians 3:4). One of the characteristics of faithful gospel preachers through the years has been their ability to present the truth of the gospel in a way that made it easily understood by those who heard. If these men who fancy themselves as being such "in depth" students of the word really have the knowledge and ability they want us to believe they have then why don't they just teach what they believe to be the truth in a simple understandable manner. If we are misunderstanding what they are teaching then we plead with them to use their "superior" ability and present their teaching so that we "inferiors" can understand. The gospel of Christ remains the same today as when first preached on the day of Pentecost. When someone has to preach something that has never been preached before or preach it in a way no one else has ever preached it we had better beware.

I certainly do not want to discourage any study of God's word nor do I condone those who become satisfied with "the way we have always done things" and will not change even when change is necessary to conform to God's word. However, I do not approve of those who seem more concerned with impressing men with their ability to be "deep thinkers" rather than helping men understand the plain and simple teachings of God's word. All preachers need, from time to time, to ask themselves the same question Paul asked in his epistle to the Galatians; *"For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men?"* (Galatians 1:10). Paul said, *"if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."*

I have often said that the two greatest compliments that could be paid to one preaching are: (1) "He preaches the truth" and (2) "He presents it in such a way that all can understand." When we become more concerned with "making an impression" than we are with "preaching the word" we are making a grave mistake. Our concern must always be the salvation of souls and not self-glorification. If the gospel is preached souls will be saved and God will be glorified.

Don't be intimidated by those who try to make you feel inferior in your ability to understand truth. Their teaching may not be "deep," it may just be "muddy."

✍ *James Hahn*