



Apostolic Notes

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Do We Have Expectations or Are We Expecting?

In the previous edition of Apostolic Notes (Vol 1 No 5) we defined how tradition is one of the greatest hindrances to the operation of apostolic authority. Before we discuss specific traditions, lets look at how these traditions form our expectations, which in turn, affects our faith and determines many of our actions.

The dangers of man's traditions lie in the fact that we view the Lord, the church and our spiritual walk through a fixed or predetermined paradigm. A Paradigm is defined as: "A set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them." *American Heritage Dictionary (Dictionary.com)*. This traditional paradigm's view of reality, **results in our church attendance and spiritual involvement being determined by a certain fixed expectations.**

The word expectation is a noun, and means "that which is expected or looked for." Jesus addressed this attitude in Matthew 11:7-11 when He spoke to the crowd about John the Baptist. He states; "What went ye out ...to see?" Then He states what their expectations were: "A reed shaken with the wind?" "A man clothed in soft raiment?" "A prophet?" Jesus understood that they had come to see John with pre-determined expectations, affecting their ability to receive John's message.

This same problem is seen with church attendance, we come with predetermined expectations of what will happen during a service. (This is due to our traditional routine formats that we habitually develop.) Now the hindrance of these traditional expectations is that *we pre-determine how and when God will operate*. Obviously we do not consciously say this. However, our actions reveal what we believe or expect.

In John 11, we view Martha's interaction with Jesus when He arrived after Lazarus' death. This exchange reveals how Martha's expectations affected her faith, hindering her from seeing what Jesus desired to accomplish. In vs. 21-22 Martha comments that if Jesus would have been there, Lazarus would not have died. Yet she has faith and acknowledges that whatever Jesus asks, God would do. However, in vs. 23 when Jesus responds with: "Thy brother shall rise again," we see in Martha's response the limiting power of her expectations. She says in vs. 24: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Martha knew the promises of the Word and she had faith that one day Lazarus would live again. Unfortunately her expectations caused her to miss the point the Lord was attempting to make. His response was; "I am the resurrection." The Lord was saying I am here now, not the future. I can operate now if you will look beyond your predetermined expectations.

Expectation places God in a box of our design

Expecting frees God to operate as He designs

This is how many of us live. We have faith in God. We believe He can and will. Yet our expectations limit Him. We look for Him to operate in a way that we understand and is familiar to us, based on our traditional interaction with Him.

Expecting, on the other hand, frees God to operate as He designs. Expecting is a verb that is in the progressive tense which indicates an ongoing action or state of mind. Expecting frees us from our pre-determined paradigm of how it must happen and allows us to respond to the Lord as we see Him minister. Throughout scripture, we see many individuals coming to Jesus with simple faith of expecting. The woman with the issue of blood did not know how, she had faith compelling her to reach out and touch Him. The leper's simple faith of expecting; if you will, you can make me clean. These and many others received their miracles because they came expecting that He could and would and all they needed to do was get into His presence.

Expecting is a faith that does not have God limited by our traditions. We believe He can and will, therefore we seek to follow Him as He chooses to reveal Himself. The difference is that we have not pre-determined the how or when.

Food for thought - Do I come to church with expectations of how the service will be? If so, what are my expectations and how could they hinder my faith?

Till next time---
Martin

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