

Apostolic Advice

February 4, 2010
Apostolic Affirmation

Apostles have the heart of a “father”. As such they look for ways to affirm their disciples and spiritual sons and daughters as we see in Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians. We read in 1:2-3 how Paul takes time to list the spiritual qualities of the saints he birthed in that region as he mentions their “*work of faith*”, “*labor of love*” and “*patience of hope*”. Apostles look for signs of maturity to affirm, unlike religious leaders who may affirm ones outward characteristics, spiritual gift or achievements in an attempt to please the hearer. Affirming such things has the tendency to produce an unholy pride in a person, whereas the affirmation of the right qualities emphasizes the spiritual growth of an individual into Christ likeness. Apostles have the goal of maturity in mind always as indicated by Paul in Gal. 4:19 when he speaks of the laborious prayer required to see “*Christ formed*” in a believer.

I have advised my natural children to avoid affirming the looks of our two precious granddaughters (although they are beautiful), because doing so will make them self conscious and expectant of more of the same from everyone. They will expect to be accepted and approved because of outward characteristics and not inward ones. Satan was lifted up in pride because of his “beauty” and we are admonished that young believers can fall into the same trap if we call too much attention to their “beauty” and “giftedness”. The “charismatic movement” (of which I was part) affirmed outward qualities more than the inward qualities of holiness and righteousness which has resulted in the substandard leadership that has plagued the Church for the last 25 years. The apostolic reformation is placing the value on the right things that will result in a mature leadership who can bring “*many sons to glory*”. Glory is associated with maturity in the Christian life, we go from one “*degree of glory to another*” as we have Christ formed in us. Christ in you, the hope of glory.

In the text above, Paul cites the three characteristics of a mature believer as found in 1 Cor.13:13 which are “*Faith*”, “*Hope*” and “*Love*”. He says that the Thessalonians have reached a level of maturity that has caused them to be examples to the whole of the region. This is the function of leadership, to be an example to the flock of God by demonstrating the qualities of “*faith, hope and love*”. Here we have an example of how an apostle identifies, affirms and places value on the inner qualities that can only come from a surrendered life that is lived in the power of the Spirit and according to the Word of God. As a true apostolic father, Paul establishes the pattern for us to follow as we seek to raise another generation of disciples.

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