

Itching Ears?

by Wayne Goff

“For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths” 2 Timothy 4:3-4, NIV.

This is nothing new, brethren. Some consider “sound preaching” to be **hard, harsh, difficult**. But just go back and listen to Brett Hogland’s lesson Thursday night. He pointed out to all of us what the church had to endure in the first century to be “sound.” The church was convicted, committed and unwavering. We need that today. It is natural for brethren to want to shy away from that which is **difficult**. But in doing so, we may shy away from the truth!

Jeremiah lamented in Judah that *“The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way. ...” (Jer. 5:31)*. Nice, smooth, easy preaching and teaching. You know, the kind that “tickles the ears”!

God said about Ezekiel’s preaching: *“Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice” (Ezek. 33:32)*.

Even in Jesus’ parable of the Sower, 1/4 of the hearers were likened to the “good soil” that would hear, believe, obey and produce fruit (**Matt. 13:1-23; Lk. 8:1-15**).

Today preachers fill megachurches by telling people what they want to hear, by entertaining them with beautiful stories that require nothing of the hearer except a warm, fuzzy feeling, and by comforting them with a crowd. The sad truth is that the masses prefer myth to truth. Do you wish to hear “*the whole counsel of God*” (**Acts 20:27**)? I hope so. I hope I do too. But when we do choose **the whole counsel of God**, just remember that it is the road less traveled, it is the difficult and narrow way, and it will be rejected by carnal, selfish people.

Consider this comment by R. Kent Hughes on **2 Timothy 4:1-5**: “Paul’s focus, of course, was on his retiring, sometimes reticent protege, Timothy. And the heat of the apostle’s focus was intensified by the burning realization that he himself was in truth a dying man – ‘For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure’ (2 Tim. 4:6). The charge in verses 1-5 initiates the final thoughts of what is the old apostle’s ministerial last will and testament” [*Preaching the Word Commentary*].

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