

We Are Drifting!

Quotes from J.D. Tant

J.D. Tant (1861-1941) was not impressive by the standards of many. He was not a large man. He stood 5' 7" and never weighed more than 160 pounds. He was not eloquent. Fanning Yater Tant acknowledged, "Tant was no orator. The rolling periods, the fine alliterative phraseology and the great swelling crescendos of the professional speakers of his day were foreign to his nature as they were unknown to his intellect" (*J.D. Tant – Texas Preacher*, p. 30).

However, he was a spiritual giant. He baptized more than 8,000 men and women. He debated at least 13 different denominations, and had over 300 debates. He wrote hundreds of articles which appeared in various periodicals. In these articles, especially in his later years, he warned, "**Brethren, we're drifting.**" Let's consider a couple of his warnings, and one additional point.

1. **Firm Foundation, June 15, 1915:** "U.G. Wilkinson is slow of speech, deep, logical. He is an able teacher, yet it takes him about one hour to preach a sermon. But you have heard something when he is through. David Lipscomb is on the same order. Each of these men have forgotten more than I'll ever know; yet I can take two twenty-year-old boys with me, and let each of them preach a twenty-minute sermonette, give the church the choice, and nine out of ten of them will want the sermonette boy!... **Don't forget, brethren, we are drifting**" (*ibid*, p. 360).

QUESTIONS: Do we "*hunger and thirst after righteousness*"? (**Matthew 5:6**). Can we say, "*As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God*"? (**Psalms 42:1**). Do we value the word, saying sincerely, "*More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb*"? (**Psalms 19:10**). Or, "*I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food*"? (**Job 23:12**).

Tim Perkins tells a joke about a church that tells a preacher, "You are a perfect fit for us. We do not like much preaching, and you're as close to that as we could find." Why is it brethren that some can sit at a sporting event or in front of the TV for hours, but have trouble sitting through a sermon?

2. **Firm Foundation, August 8, 1933:** "Well, I'll admit that I have not the good English that N.B. Hardeman has. Neither can I measure up to G.C. Brewer's law of culture and refinement... I preach in my shirt sleeves, and put my pencils in my outside pocket. And if my brethren don't like it, they can go to the devil, and I'll stay here and preach the Gospel to people that want to hear it... one of the ablest preachers we have in Arkansas lost his located job, not because he was not preaching the Gospel, but because one of the influential sisters in the church could not listen to his old-fashioned language. She did not like his Arkansas grammar, and thus could not invite her denominational friends to hear him... I doubt if the poor thing could tell whether Jesus was crucified at Calvary or shot at Bunker Hill... when brethren condemn me on account of my rough manners and plain speech, I shall not be too upset about it, but shall speak kindly of them and pray for them. And after life's battle has been fought and we come before God to be judged, I may not be able to produce much refinement and education, but I will say, 'Lord, I have done the best I could'... Each one of us should strive to fill our own corner and not throw rocks at his brother in another... don't forget we are drifting" (*ibid*, 433-434).

QUESTIONS: Do we place style above substance? Do we try to learn and apply the message, or do we just criticize? Remember some criticized Paul's speech (**2 Corinthians 10:10**). He replied, "*Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge*" (**2 Corinthians 11:6**).

— via Bryan Hodge's blog

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