

Those “Arrogant” Apostles

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Some statements of the apostles may sound downright arrogant to the casual reader. To the Corinthians Paul wrote: “If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37). To the Galatians he wrote: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8). Peter wrote: “Wherefore I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things.... That ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles” (2 Pet. 1:12; 3:2). John’s claim is unmistakable: “We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6).

For ordinary men to make such authoritative claims smacks of unmitigated arrogance, but were these “ordinary” men? In the sense that they were human beings with natural human appetites, yes, they were. However, in another sense, these men were not “run-of-the-mill,” everyday men. Even the enemies of Christ recognized this difference in them and identified it: “they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). The authority given to the apostles by the Son of God, who has all authority (Mat. 28:18), removes any trace of arrogance from their statements of doctrine and from their forceful, dogmatic claims to preaching and writing infallible Truth.

There is no plainer statement of the authority vested in the apostles of Christ (and in the infallibility of their teachings) than His promise of Matthew 18:18: “What things soever ye shall bind on the earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” The verb tense in this pivotal passage indicates that Jesus was telling the apostles that they would be able to bind or loose on men only those things **which had already been settled** in Heaven. This promise is an absolute guarantee that the message of these men would be the perfectly true, inerrant will of God.

To those who understand and believe this, the apostles are not arrogant at all. Their authoritative words came from the Lord. They were merely human, “earthen vessels” through whom the Word of God flowed (1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Cor. 4:7; 1 The. 2:13). Men err who seek to distinguish between the authority of the teaching of Christ and the teaching of the apostles.

Men can hear/read their words and live or reject them and perish (Mat. 7:24-27; 10:40; John 12:48).

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