

What Difference Does It Make?

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What difference does it make? That seems to be a question that's on the minds of numerous people. Some things truly are more important than others. As human beings, we're created in God's image, but as David points out in Psalm 39, we're just a vapor, a hand breadth—you measure things by a hand breadth and in the grand scheme of things we really don't amount to a whole lot in the flesh.

There's no way on earth we can bridge the gap between flesh and spirit by human effort. Some people live longer than others—my mother lived to almost 92, and that's great, but my father died of cancer at the age of 35. So if you take the average between the two, I'm living on borrowed time, but we're all living on borrowed time to an extent. My daughter, who once was an Iron Man triathlete, died from complications of a brain tumor at age 45. So if we focus on the flesh, let's face it, we run out of steam, we just perish, we don't exist, we fail to go very far if we're just in flesh and blood. Flesh and blood indeed cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. So at the risk of being redundant let's review the important information. Let's start in 1 Corinthians chapter 1. The Apostle Paul, a powerful instrument in God's hands and to His work—you're familiar with the concept described here—verse 26 of 1 Corinthians chapter 1:

1 Corinthians 1:26 *For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. (NKJV)*

Why is that? Usually the mighty, the rich, the noble, etc., [have the attitude] I don't have a lot of use for God, I mean, I made this without God's help, so what's the point? Even in some cases where the people acknowledge God, as Paul wrote to Timothy, oftentimes they deny the power of it. God, it says, in verse 27,

27) ... has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise ...

Interesting concept—that's going to be an interesting day, isn't it?—when the wise, the mighty and the noble of this world have been reduced to begging for mercy, and the foolish things of this world will be lifted up and given glory because they chose to go God's way.

27 continued) ... and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; (NKJV)

Human reason would say, we don't have enough influence to amount to the proverbial

hill of beans. But it's not the flesh that's going to make the difference. It's how we yield to God. He will do the work.

28) *... and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, [Why?]*
29) *that no flesh should glory in His presence.* (NKJV)

No flesh is going to glory in God's presence—none at all.

30) *But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God* (NKJV)

Jesus Christ has come from God and He represents true wisdom.

30 continued) *... and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.* (NKJV)

Then in verse 31 he quotes from Jeremiah 9.

31) *that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."* (NKJV)

It's been pointed out at the Feast that when you see a quote in the New Testament from the Old Testament, it always pays to go back there and see the whole story, because this whole section of scripture, in principle, that we just read—verses 26-31—is found in Jeremiah 9. We're going to come back here to 1 Corinthians but we'll go to Jeremiah 9 and take a quick look here. We ask the question, what difference does it make? Let's go ask the nation of Judah what difference it made. Maybe we can learn something. Jeremiah's ministry precedes the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and the people being carried off into captivity. Things have deteriorated considerably.

Jeremiah 9:1 *Oh, that my head were waters, And my eyes a fountain of tears, That I might weep day and night For the slain of the daughter of my people!*
2) *Oh, that I had in the wilderness A lodging place for travelers; That I might leave my people, And go from them! For they are all adulterers, An assembly of treacherous men.* (NKJV)

Sad state of affairs. A rather short summary and a rather tragic one. The first step toward descending into this sort of a pit: What difference does it make? That's the first step. If nothing makes any difference, if you can decide for yourself whatever you want to do, this is where you end up.

3) *And like their bow they have bent their tongues for lies. They are not valiant for the truth on the earth. For they proceed from evil to evil, And they do not know Me," says the LORD.*

What difference does it make? Well, if you don't know Me, the LORD—YHVH is the term in the Hebrew—if you don't know God, the true God, what happens to you? You're just one step on your way to the sort of thing that's described here. They do not know Me, says the LORD. You mean it makes a difference?

4) *“Everyone take heed to his neighbor, And do not trust any brother; For every brother will utterly supplant, And every neighbor will walk with slanderers.*

5) *Everyone will deceive his neighbor, And will not speak the truth; They have taught their tongue to speak lies; They weary themselves to commit iniquity.*

They weary themselves to commit iniquity? What a description.

6) *Your dwelling place is in the midst of deceit; Through deceit they refuse to know Me,” says the LORD. (NKJV)*

Says YHVH, Jehovah. What difference does it make—evidently it makes quite a little difference. So verses 7-21 follow the same basic theme but we'll pick it up now in verse 22. This is the section that Paul refers to and quotes in his first letter to the Corinthians.

22) *Speak, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Even the carcasses of men shall fall as refuse on the open field, Like cuttings after the harvester, And no one shall gather them.’”*

23) *Thus says the LORD:*

It's important to pay attention to who is speaking here—this is the LORD, this is YHVH. You see, “LORD” is not a shared title; YHVH is the name of the true God.

23 continued) [This is where Paul was quoting from] *“Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches;*

24) *But let him who glories glory in this, [Does it make any difference? What is it that we should glory in?] That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD [YHVH, the Eternal], exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,” says the LORD. (NKJV)*

Does it make any difference? Oh yeah, it makes a big difference. It makes a big difference for sure. Let's go back to 1 Corinthians then. Brethren, I think you've come to understand that there is (how do I put it) a movement afoot, I'll put it that way—we're coming to a deeper and fuller understand of who the one true God is and His relationship to Jesus Christ, and there will be a lot of things that will need to be adjusted as we re-establish and firmly establish the foundation of God's Word. It does make a difference and we need to stay tuned to the scripture and to look to God for guidance. Let's notice what Paul says here. Chapter 2 of 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 2:1 *And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.*
2) *For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*
3) *I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.*
4) *And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,*
5) *that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*
(NKJV)

Paul didn't come because of his great academic skills and knowledge and understanding, attempting to make some kind of impact on the Corinthians. He came in the power of God through the leadership of God's Holy Spirit to present the material. People who are then attuned to God, who are being led by the Spirit of God will hear and understand. As Jesus said, the sheep will hear My voice and they will know—they will comprehend.

6) *However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.*
7) *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,*
8) *which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*
9) *But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (NKJV)*

Is it important that we attend to those things which God has prepared? Does it make a difference? I think it does. Just put yourself—go back in history to the time when you were first being called, you were first beginning to understand. Then what happens? If your attitude is one of it doesn't make a difference or what difference does it make, you never received the Holy Spirit because you weren't repentant. At this stage of the game if we say to ourselves, what difference does it make, I'm happy doing what I'm doing, we have to ask ourselves, is Jesus Christ a credible witness? Is He?

What did He say? What was His witness? Briefly, He said, this is eternal life, that they would know You, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent. Yes, brethren, it does make a difference.