

Wisdom from Above

John Dos Passos wrote an essay in 1941 entitled, “The Use of the Past.” In it, he declared:

Every generation rewrites the past. In easy times history is more or less of an ornamental art, but in times of danger we are driven to the written record by a pressing need to find answers to the riddles of today. We need to know what kind of firm ground other men, belonging to generations before us, have found to stand on. In spite of changing conditions of life they were not very different from ourselves, their thoughts were the grandfather of our thoughts, they managed to meet situations as difficult as those we have to face, to meet them sometimes lightheartedly, and in some measure to make their hope prevail. We need to know how they did it.

He went on to talk about how the delusion of the “exceptional Now” can so easily block good thinking. It certainly seems that we have the same problem today. We have the same tendency to think that our generation (the exceptional Now) is so much wiser than past generations.

Though Dos Passos was talking about the learning of history, the problem is just as evident in the learning of spiritual truths. Even as Christians, we may sometimes question whether or not God’s Word is sufficient for the changing times. We follow the world’s wisdom, but we find that it really is not adequate. James tells us in chapter three of his letter that is because the wisdom of the world leads to bitterness, jealousy, and selfish ambition. But in verse 17 he says, “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.”

God has a way of bringing us up short when we follow the wisdom of the world because He wants us to see that His wisdom leads us in a different direction. It leads to holiness. He wants us to know that His wisdom never changes. His Word is just as profitable today as it was when it was written, and if we are willing to follow the wisdom of God, it is wholly adequate to lead us where He wants us to go.

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