

Absolute or Relative?

- I. It is not unusual to emphasize important points by stating relative differences in absolute terms.
 - A. Consider how Jews and enemies described Paul's influence to create hate (Act 21:28; 17:6).
 - B. Paul's influence was relatively small, but his enemies exaggerated it for a strong response.
 - C. Be certain of this: the Bible is absolute truth, even when declaring a relative principle!

- II. When Scripture deals with an important subject, it may use absolute statements with relative force to drive a point home more strongly, given hearers needing to hear just one side.
 - A. This is neither exaggerating nor lying – it stresses a general rule by ignoring exceptions.
 - B. The lack of modifiers requires our diligent study and easily confuses the unlearned.
 - C. Consider the example we encountered on Sunday from our reading of Luke 14:12-14.
 - D. The commandment, “Thou shalt not kill,” seems plain enough. But is it absolute or relative?
 - E. James condemned swearing (Jas 5:12), but Paul himself swore (Romans 9:1; II Cor 1:23).
 - F. Does Scripture prohibit curling hair, gold jewelry, and clothing on women (I Pet 3:3-4)?
 - G. Does Scripture prohibit resisting any evil that might come our way in life (Matt 5:39)?
 - H. Jesus condemned planning (Matt 6:31-34), but Solomon taught it (Proverbs 6:6-8; 22:3).
 - I. James condemned worldly friends (James 4:4), but Paul allowed them (I Cor 10:27).
 - J. Did Paul justify anything to save the lost by being made all things to all men (I Cor 9:22)?
 - K. Will the right answer at the right time get you a kiss on the lips from every man (Pr 24:26)?
 - L. Sometimes you can cheer up a man with a word, but sometimes you cannot (Prov 12:25).
 - M. We understand universal terms with definite limits in obvious places (Acts 2:44; I Cor 6:12).
 - N. These statements can be synecdoche of the genus: universal words used for particulars.
 - 1. Universal words are put for a great part (Hosea 7:4; Matt 3:5; Mark 1:33; Rev 13:3).
 - 2. Universal words are put for all kinds (Joel 2:28; John 12:32; I Tim 6:10; Heb 13:4).
 - 3. Universal negatives do not deny particulars (Matthew 5:34; John 3:32; 18:20).
 - 4. Universal positives do not affirm particularly (Mark 16:20; Luke 18:1; I Cor 4:17).
 - 5. Eph 1:22 and Heb 2:8 have all things under Christ, but what of I Corinthians 15:27.