

# Where Are We Headed?

## Where Are We Now?

In this series we are asking some basic questions about our attitudes towards the word of God. We are asking the same questions one would ask as he travels. He will ask (1) what road he needs to be on and (2) whether or not he has been on that road. The next question he asks is (3) where he is now.

In the first two articles we saw the road we needed to be on with reference to our attitude toward the Bible and that we have been on that road. Now, let's consider the road we are on now. Just because we know that right road and have been on it doesn't mean that we are always going to be on it.

What is said in this article is not to indict all or even most of the brethren. But to say the least, some of our brethren fit the descriptions below. So where are we now?

1. We are drifting and changing. J.D. Tant use to say, "Brethren, we're drifting!" Tant died in 1941. I wonder if he were alive today if he wouldn't change that to say, "Brethren, we have drifted!"

Apostasy comes slowly and gradually. We are urged to give heed to the things we have learned lest we "let them slip" (KJV) or "lest we drift away" (NKJV). The footnote to the KJV says "run out as leaking vessels." The danger of a leaking faucet is that you can lose a lot of water without realizing it because it is so slow and gradual. Damage is done before you know it. Changes in our faith and practice come the same way.

As society changes (getting more and more liberal minded), the religious world follows behind. Oh sure, there will be some distance between them. However, the religious world changes too (getting more liberal all the time). As the religious world drifts, the same is happening to our "liberal" brethren. They just don't go as far as the denominational world. Not yet, anyway. We don't need to be so blind as to think the same is not happening to us. Yet, we haven't gone as far as our

institutional brethren.

One reason we may not take note of our drifting is that we compare ourselves by such "moveable" and "changeable" standards as our own brethren and the denominational world. We may think that we are not drifting or getting liberal since we are not as liberal as some of our brethren or the denominations. And, as long as there is a "gap" between us and them, we will think we are still on the right road. This is a little like trying to keep the boat from drifting by making sure it stays beside a stick floating in the water. As long as you are by the stick, you think you haven't moved. All that means that you and the stick go over the falls at the same time. Just as we must find an immovable standard with the boat (like a rock or a tree), we must use the Bible as the standard to see if we are drifting or changing.

(2) We are in a transition period. We like to think that we still hold to the principles (and we do to some degree). But that does not suggest that we are not changing.

Evidence that we are changing can be seen in that we are sometimes tolerant of contradictory things. We tolerate preaching against sin while at the same time we tolerate the practice of sin in our midst. For example, we may not only tolerate but commend preaching on social drinking, immodesty, mixed swimming, and dancing. And yet, we may not do anything about those who practice those things.

In some places the preaching can be taken hard or soft, round or flat--just anyway that it is dished out. One preacher may come from a meeting and deliver the "old Jerusalem gospel." The brethren (including the local preacher and elders) commend him for the fine preaching and tell him that were not hearing enough preaching like that. Then, in there next meeting the preacher may have very little substance to his message. His "stand" may be weak and soft. These same brethren may commend him just as strongly as they did before telling him that this is the kind of preaching we need.

Some of the readers may disagree over how widespread the problem may be. But, most will have to agree that some of the brethren are in a transition period moving in a more liberal direction.

3. We are facing a single problem with many symptoms. The problem we have is a growing lack of respect for the word of God. All of the issues and trouble spots

are mere symptoms of the problem.

It is like a pain in the arm. The pain is not the problem. It is simply a symptom of a problem elsewhere. It may be a pinched nerve in the spine. To take pain killers only treats the symptom. When the medication wears off the pain returns because the problem has not been corrected. Now, if the problem is addressed and corrected, the symptoms will also be corrected.

This may explain why some of our preaching has little effect when we preach on some of the questions of the day (like social drinking, immodesty or apathy). It may be that we are addressing the symptoms (which need to be addressed), when the real problem is that those involved are lacking in their respect for what the word says.

What are some of the many symptoms of a growing lack of respect for the Bible? A lack of evangelism, apathy and indifference, the impact that the women's movement is having on the church, immodesty, social drinking, loose language, fornication, being tolerated of sin (such as in movies, TV, and among our own), divorce and remarriage for unscriptural reasons, being loose on fellowship, compromises on such questions as church discipline, the soft and social approach to the gospel some are making, the divisive and party spirits within local churches and the fact that some allow their tempers to flare, are rude, mind other people's business and are arrogant and not even bothered by such violation of the text.

The one thing these all have in common is lack of respect for God and his word.