

Where Are We Headed? (2)

Where Have We Been?

In the first article in this series we noticed what our attitude ought to be toward the word of God. we saw the road we need to be on. Now, the question is: Have we been on that road?

The answer is that we have been right where we ought to be. We have been on the right road that was pictured in our first article. But, let's develop that through a little further.

Some of the descriptions below will bring memories back for some readers who have been in the church for a while.

1. The word was our standard. We (as the people of God --as a whole) have been on the road where the word of God settled all questions, all issues and all problems. We were called "people of the book" because we not only knew the Bible, but we lived the Bible. The word was viewed as final and authoritative. If the word said it, it was right.

If there was a discrepancy in our lives and the book, we changed our lives to fit the book. We did not try to change the book to fit our lives. There is a big difference in that!

2. We deplored sin. Like Lot we were sick and tired of sin (2 Pet. 2:7-8). We hated it. We certainly had not toleration for wickedness. We well understood the principle that association with evil destroys our good morals (1 Cor. 15:33).

Preachers have for years used illustration about the movie "Gone With The Wind." When that movie was produced, many were outraged. Especially God's people were bothered because at the end of the movie there was one curse word. Today, I here people recommending movies that are filled with gutter language. I have asked people who have already seen a particular movie if there is any bad language. I

some times hear, "Oh, it's clean. The language is not bad. There are only about four spots where several bad words are used. But other than that it's a good movie." Brethren, have we changed? What happen to our hatred for sin?

David said, "Your word have I hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against you" and "Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way" (psa.119:11, 104).

3. We were people of conviction. In time past, we stood for something. We defended our faith. Even in the denominational world there were people who pointed to the book in an effort to defend what they believed and practiced. Many of them in days gone by would debate with gospel preachers when challenged. To say the least, they had some conviction.

One reason others were needing to defend what they believed was that God's people were questioning, challenging and teaching those who were our religious neighbors. We were set for the defense of the gospel (Phil. 1:27).

4. We were carrying the gospel to the lost. We thought that was the purpose of preaching--to convict men of their sin and lead them to Christ. Field reports sent into the journals years ago tell of men in meetings preaching about such things as obedience, hell, denominationalism, Bible authority, etc. and many being obedient. Preachers and other Christians alike viewed anyone who was not a member of the church of Christ as lost and in need of the gospel. If they were not members of the Lord's church they were prospect (Eph. 2:16; 5:23).

Yes, we know the road we need to be on. And, yes, we have been on that road. It is a familiar road to most of us. In our next article we will raise the question, "Where are we now?"

These articles first appeared in the Guardian of Truth in 1995. They are written by a dedicated gospel preacher, brother Donnie V. Rader.

Brother Rader has brought some very timely questions, they should stir us as individuals, and collectively as the Lord's church in this area. James, declares: "Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves. 23 For if any one is a

hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: 24 for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 25 But he that looketh into the perfect law, the [law] of liberty, and [so] continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing (James 1:21-25).

My beloved brethren, listen to what the Holy Spirit has declared:

"for, Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 and how shall they preach, except they be sent? even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things! 16 But they did not all hearken to the glad tidings. For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? 17 So belief [cometh] of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. 18 But I say, Did they not hear? Yea, verily, Their sound went out into all the earth, And their words unto the ends of the world. 19 But I say, Did Israel not know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy with that which is no nation, With a nation void of understanding will I anger you. 20 And Isaiah is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I became manifest unto them that asked not of me. 21 But as to Israel he saith, All the day long did I spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. (ASV)

I did not identify the above Scripture on purpose. Why? Because I feel that our beloved brother Rader has made a very good point, that is, early Christians knew the scriptures and were ready to defend them. Does God expect any less of us?