



Where Are We Headed— One Man's Viewpoint

By Keith Greer

One of the papers recently ran a series of articles, from writers with differing backgrounds, on this subject. While I read some of the articles, I did not read them all. During the past few months, I and several of my preaching friends had a number of discussions concerning “signs” and the direction in which many brethren are moving. Sadly, some alarming things appear on the horizon. Allow me to share with you some of my concerns. Remember, these are one preacher's perspective from his vantage point.

Biting and Devouring. “But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” {Galatians 5:15} During the past few years, a number of issues have been raised among brethren. To name a few – Christ's Deity and Humanity; Romans 14; Fellowship; Number of Days of Creation; Mental Divorce; Brotherhood Watchdogs; Signs on Buildings. I've read many articles on these issues, attended and watched video tapes of debates among brethren, and had some discussions with preachers with whose conclusions I disagree. There will always be issues that arise and need to be discussed; this is the only way to establish truth. But why are we not discussing the issues that are dividing us?

I see two extreme positions. One – everyone who disagrees with me is a false teacher! Two – we can understand truth differently and still maintain our fellowship. Both positions are wrong! Where is the balance in our approach? Why can't we sit down with open Bibles, open hearts, and with attitudes that seek to understand one another?

In Acts 15, there was a discussion concerning circumcising the Gentiles who converted to Christ. “But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, It is

necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them..." {Acts 15:5,6} The apostles and elders came to discuss their differences with the Pharisees. Why can't we do the same? I've heard: "I don't trust them;" "It won't do any good;" "They're not worthy of my time." What happened to brotherly love?

"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." {1 John 3:14,15} Souls are at stake – we'd better be concerned! Why do we have this atmosphere of distrust? We ask the worldly who are in religious error to open their Bibles and discuss with us our differences. Don't our brethren deserve the same treatment? I know preachers who "hate" other preachers! How can one get into heaven with hate in his heart? Someone has failed to apply the truth properly!

As brethren, we need to remember that we are part of God's family. From time to time, we disagree, and to settle these matters, we talk. Why don't we show proper love and respect for one another? Please be aware: unwillingness to forgive a brother, whatever the reason, will keep one or both of us out of heaven! "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." {Matthew 6:14,15}

Character Ambush Via the Computer. To be perfectly honest, many preachers need to be rid of their computers. The computer is a wonderful tool, but not when it is used improperly. Please understand. I'm not opposed to the Internet, brethren lists, and exchanging biblical information on different subjects. But I have removed myself from many of the "lists." I see a mean spirit and brethren who are more concerned with winning arguments than discussing differences in truth. Why would one brother write about another brother concerning a subject about which they'd had no discussion? Sometimes I wonder if preachers just "surf the net" to find something written by another preacher so they can warn the rest of us about the "false teacher" among us.

Before you read too much into my statement, allow me to explain. Truth can never be compromised, and a false teacher cannot be given free rein to lead souls into error. But it is possible for one to misunderstand what the other writes or says? Could he have said something that seems to be wrong because he failed to fully express his conclusion? Sadly, I believe many among us desire to think the worst, rather than the better. If I write something you believe to be false, the sure-fire way to know what I mean is to ask me.

Allow me to illustrate. A number of years ago, a well-known brother wrote an article on gambling. In this article, I believed he made a statement that contradicted his own teaching. The editor of the paper wanted to write another article challenging the truthfulness of the brother's conclusion. He also thought the statement was sending the wrong message. What should I do? Should I write an article to show the brother's error? I telephoned the brother. After a 45-minute telephone discussion, he saw the point of difference we had discussed and corrected it. Isn't that simple?

I'm afraid we have some brethren who are more interested in "regulating the brotherhood" than in doing their jobs as evangelists. Some preachers spend vast amounts of time on the computer. Who is doing their local work? Now some smart preacher may say I'm against calling names. Not so! But there must be a reason and purpose for doing so.

A well-known preacher went to a small community where the local congregation had done much work to bring their friends and neighbors to hear the gospel. To begin the meeting, he wrote on the board the names of those among us who are false teachers on the subject of fellowship. How does this teach and edify those who need to hear the message of the cross? Some preachers attempt to regulate the brotherhood by going all over the country with a set of sermons on the "issues" among us. They have become "hobby preachers." Yes, we must teach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26,27). Where is the balance?

Finally, I'm afraid we are in danger of fragmenting if we don't get back to open discussion and proper love for one another. Let us not forget – we be brethren!!!!