

Drifting — Drifting!

by Robert L. Craig

In 1909, J.D. Tant, pioneer gospel preacher, began to warn about what he considered to be a drift away from Bible teaching. He continually warned against it and made his now legendary statement: “brethren, we are drifting” in 1915. Along with that statement was a question “whither are we drifting?” The drift he was deeply concerned about (among others) was the tendency of preachers to water down the gospel message and the attitude of many churches to demand more sensational preaching and younger preachers, and no debating, rather than the older preachers who still demanded a “thus saith the Lord.” Showmanship seemed to be the order of the day and Tant was frightened, not for himself, but for the purity of the church. He, as an older preacher, still had many requests for meetings and debates, but they were diminishing. Reason: because he was getting older (wiser) and because he was too plain.

He saw also, along with this noted tendency, an attitude of being more tolerant toward the denominational world. Fellowship meetings and membership in ministers’ groups of first one kind and another were flourishing. This was a time when the “preaching societies” were dividing churches; and on the heels of the societies came the organ controversy. Some of the preachers could preach it either way; some said we ought to just let it alone and perhaps it would run its course. With those attitudes, the estimate was that about 90% of the people, and with them, church property, went to the digressives (Christian Church). Soft, inept, non-committal, compromising preaching, according to Tant, and others, was the cause.

Drifting is dangerous. The apostle said in Hebrews 2:1, *“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.”* The American Standard, the New King James and most other translations say, in regard to that verse: *“Lest we should **drift** away from them.”* If a person commits fornication, we can see that immediately and take immediate steps to correct the situation, or else have no fellowship with that evil person. Drifting is insidious. It works slowly and, sometimes, we are not even aware of our drift. Hear a parable: “I have been fishing and since they never seem to bite for me, no use wasting time; I take a nap. I awake and find that I have drifted out into the middle of the lake, am caught in the current and swept into the rapids and over the falls.” If I been alert, this would never have happened.

That is the reason Tant, taking his lesson from the apostle, constantly warned of the danger of drifting. Unless we are constantly alert, we will drift. At first we do some “little” thing for which we have no authority, but it is a little thing. Ezekiel prophesied against Jerusalem: *“Your elder sister is Samaria, who dwells with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who dwells to the south of you, is Sodom and her daughters. You did not walk in their ways nor act according to their abominations; but, as if that were **too little**, you became more corrupt than they in all your ways”* (Ezekiel 16:46-47). What was this little thing? They had intermarried with the various nations left in the land and that action had caused them to completely drift away from God and was the cause of God allowing them to be carried into captivity.

Things that may be little in our sight may be the very thing that starts us drifting into that from which there is no turning. *“There is a way **that seems** right to a man, but its end is the way of death”* (Prov. 14:12).

Brethren, we are still drifting. It all begins with a departure from the very heart of the work of an evangelist and incompetent elders that allow such to happen and, on many occasions, encourage such. Paul, by the Spirit of God, gave ...

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