

"THOU ART THE MAN"

Our readers will recognize our title as being the words spoken by the prophet Nathan to king David when he rebuked David for the grievous sin he had committed in taking another man's wife and eventually having the man killed. Even though Nathan had proclaimed a parable that set forth the truth, David was unable to make a personal application to himself until Nathan said, "*Thou art the man.*" (See 2 Samuel 12:1-7).

Many today have the idea that you should preach the truth in such general terms that no one listening will think that he needs to make a personal application of that which he hears. Even though many have this idea, very few have ever been converted by this kind of preaching. So many are like David; they are unable to recognize their personal condition or to realize their own needs until someone is able to impress upon their mind that "thou art the man."

It is so easy to see the needs in the lives of others while being blinded to the same needs in our own lives. We all need the kind of teaching that will not only help us to know the truth but will also impress upon us the need for personal application. The preaching of truth is of little value unless we are willing to apply it to our own lives.

Even though we are made to realize the need for plain and specific preaching by the example of Nathan's words to David we must avoid a misuse of this example. It disturbs me to hear some use Nathan's words as justification for a harsh and abusive approach to people. There is no comparison between Nathan's approach to David and the approach that some use today in being harsh and personally abusive in their speech.

Nathan had set forth the truth to David (and David recognized it as such) and THEN he made the personal application to David. Many today want to tell someone that he is "going to hell" but will make no attempt to sincerely set forth the truth to the individual before making such a declaration. Such an approach is not to be compared to the teaching done by Nathan.

We must speak the truth in love. This does not mean we can compromise the truth or that we should be "wishy-washy" in our teaching, but it does mean that my primary concern must be love for the truth and love for the soul of the one I am seeking to teach. As a friend of mine once said, "There is nothing wrong with telling one who is wrong that he is going to hell if you do it with tears in your eyes instead of a smile on your face."

Let us learn the difference between plainness of speech and just plain rudeness; between specific preaching and personal abusiveness. They are not the same. Some who oppose plain preaching of the truth try to pass it off as rude or abusive teaching while there are others who try to justify their rude, harsh and abusive approach as being plain speech such as was used by Nathan. Both are wrong. Yes, let us be specific in our preaching, but let us NOT use Nathan's teaching to try to justify attitudes that are wrong.

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