

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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The Circle

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When I first became a Christian, one of the lessons that really stuck with me was “the circle”. The preacher would draw a circle on the board with a bunch of little “X’s” in the middle, representing individuals as Christians. Then on the outside of the circle he would list the social sins facing us at the time.

For the younger set, there were activities such as smoking and drinking, immodest dress - every summer, dancing - every spring as the prom approached, X rated music, and R rated movies. Then, for us older folks, he would list things like abusive language, lying, covetousness, and activities that would keep one from attending services. As a warning, he would list any issue that he felt we could easily and ever so slowly gravitate towards until we found ourselves stepping out of the circle.

Knowing the things competing for our time and attention, He would warn how we need to be wary of the little things that could bring us closer to the circle’s edge. He would remind us how small the circle was and how sinful the world was. He would

comment on how close to the line we were, and we needed to take a step back. He would say, “And what happens when we step outside the circle?”

Today, we need to revisit the circle. We need to re-examine the social sins that face us, re-evaluating where we stand on these issues.

Let’s see if the circle has gotten bigger. Have the boundaries of the circle been extended to accommodate a few of the social sins that were on the outside of the older circle? As the world has grown, has our circle grown too? Are we following after the world, just at a slower pace, a few steps behind? We read in Romans 6:14, “*for sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*”

We should be aware that as the world around us views more sins as being acceptable, we have to resist such thought and avoid being drawn closer to the circle’s edge. Give Satan no quarter. “*Put on the whole armor of God*” to

stand, and then firmly “*withstand*” (Ephesians 6: 13).

Have we allowed the world to become an ever present companion and guide for our daily lives? We have to live in the world but not as the world. Are we standing so close to the edge of the circle that we can easily put a foot on the other side of the ring? We must judge how close we have come to the edge. We need to recall what was on the outside of that long ago circle. We need to determine if our circle has expanded with the world, and where we stand on the social sins of the past and present. If we are not standing with the Lord, we need to remember Matthew 22: 13-14: “*Then the king said to his servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and throw him into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few chosen.’*”

Is your circle still that small one from the past, or has it grown to accommodate the world of today? How close to the edge do you stand? And should we stand that close?