

# How Shall They Hear?

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All faithful members of the church of Christ are concerned with the fact that lost souls are dying everyday. God entrusted His people with the duty and obligation of taking His saving message to “all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16). Many faithful and sincere individuals have questioned whether they are doing enough to fulfill that responsibility. Certainly, ensuring that the entire world hears the Gospel would be an unconquerable task if it were left to only one individual. However, it is not left to just one person, “for the body is not one member, but many” (1 Corinthians 12:14). The Bible clearly teaches that each individual is to do his/her part and by doing such, the whole body is edified.

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love (Ephesians 4:15-16).

This Bible principle is further explained when paralleled with the work of elders in the Lord’s church. An elder is placed in charge of

Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake (Titus 1:9-11).

Logically, no one would expect one elder to convince all the gainsayers of the world. Nor would anyone espouse that one elder must stop the mouths of all false teachers. Paul told Titus, “for

this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders *in every city*” (Titus 1:5, emphasis mine). God’s plan, in organizing the church, is that a plurality of elders oversee the local congregation of which they are members. Thus, the eldership, made up of more than one elder, makes decisions for that local congregation and is in charge of protecting the flock which they oversee. If every eldership does its job as God has designed, then each congregation, and therefore all of the flock of God, will be protected and fed spiritually. The grave responsibility of overseeing the children of God was not given to just one man nor just to one eldership. Each individual eldership, doing its part, “maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:16). This is the reason there is no need and would be sinful for a man-made organization to serve as a board of directors or “super overseer” of the church. It is the reason there is no need and is sinful for a man-made service organization, like the so-called Churches of Christ Disaster Relief, Incorporated, to do the work of benevolence and disaster relief on behalf of the church. It is the reason there is no need and would be sinful for a humanly devised earthly headquarters – each eldership oversees its own locality and answers to only one head, Jesus Christ. This parallel being made, one can understand that spreading God’s word to the whole world is not the responsibility of one man nor one congregation, rather a responsibility of all Christians working together in their local communities. If each congregation will do its part in spreading the word of God, the word of God will be spread. Those who claim that the local congregations of the church of Christ are incapable, inadequate, and unsatisfactorily equipped to do the works commanded by God blaspheme the holy bride of Christ – the church for which He died!

Some have taken this question, “how shall they hear?,” and have implied that without

them, the goal of preaching the gospel to every creature cannot happen. They are wrong. If every individual Christian and each individual congregation will do the work of evangelizing their own communities, the word of God will be taken to all parts of the globe. Many false teachers spread their poison over the airwaves and through electronic technology and beg people to send them donations. This plea seems to work because these televangelists are still on the air. Why? They have successfully convinced many that without their program, the word of God (as they pervert it) will not get shared to the rest of the world. With that stated, it is important that the church of Christ also take advantage of modern technology to defend the truth and to counteract the damage being done by denominations who are using these same mass media. However, the church does not need televisions nor radios to spread the Gospel to all the world. The church must also always be careful only to do such things as are authorized by the Bible. I spent nearly seven years working in local television news as a photographer. I had the opportunity to meet and work with individuals who truly wanted to inform the public of the day's news, fairly and accurately. Unfortunately, I also met and worked with individuals who simply loved seeing their face on television. Their only purpose was to be seen by others, to become known, to be famous. Sadly, I fear that some in our brotherhood today fall in that latter category. They are using television and radio for their own glory and not for the glory of God. On the other hand, many faithful preachers and congregations have had great influence and results in their local areas by using television and radio. Electronic mail and telephones have made it easier to contact those who are sick or erring in an extremely expedient way. Modern technology, therefore, is a very valuable tool to be used for the cause of Christ. Nevertheless, it is not, never has been, and never will be the best way to convert the lost, restore the erring, nor to

edify the saints.

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (Romans 10:14-15).

God's plan, from before the foundation of the world, was that men "be sent" to preach the Gospel to others. Though television and radio are expedient methods for spreading God's word, it is not the best way and must not be considered the only way. The best method for converting the lost is for a Christian to make a personal visit to that individual and teach him face to face. The best way to help the erring is by going to him and teaching him personally. The best way to edify the church of Christ, the body of the saved, is to teach and preach to them in person. Otherwise, why assemble on Sunday when one could flop down in front of the tube to hear a sermon. God's design was not for electronic media to do the job of a preacher. His design was for preachers to do the job of preachers.

Some want to scare us with numbers and statistics, and want to claim that there is no way to spread the Gospel to the whole world merely by having each local congregation evangelize its own community. The Holy Spirit of God disagrees, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went *into all the earth*, and their words *unto the ends of the world*" (Romans 10:17-18, emphasis mine). In the first century, the word of God was proclaimed to "all the earth" without television and radio. Jesus sent twelve men to preach that the Kingdom was at hand "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5ff). That was a profound undertaking, but they succeeded. The

first Gospel sermons were preached by twelve men on the first Pentecost after the death, burial, and resurrection of the Christ (Acts 2). Some three thousand souls were added to the church that day (Acts 2:47). As those three thousand dispersed back to their homes, they taught others and the church prospered. Even when Satan attacked children of God with persecution, the church prospered because “they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). It wasn’t the work of one man nor one congregation that successfully spread the word to all parts of the earth, rather it was by the work of each and every Christian. The word of God didn’t have a problem being spread in the first century without electronic media, therefore, it should be no problem today.

How shall they hear? They shall hear the same way they have heard since the beginning of time – by the mouths of men.

God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2).

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Holy men of God preached God’s message to the world. Today, men who have studied the inspired words of the Bible, which God’s men penned and has been providentially preserved for us, preach that same saving Gospel to the world.

Let us resolve to study God’s word and “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15). The word of God spoke the world and all that is in it

into existence (Genesis 1:1; Nehemiah 9:6).

By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: He layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast (Psalm 33:6-9).

The word of God still stands and the word of God will continue to be preached around the world not because of the efforts of one individual or group, but because of all faithful Christians and the congregations of which they are members doing their part for the kingdom of Christ. “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9). Let us not be frightened by the call to evangelize the entire world. Let us all fulfill our roles as members of the body of Christ.