

DO YOU HEAR WHAT YOU SHOULD HEAR?

It is not our intention to try to sell hearing aides to those with hearing impairments. What we are talking about is what one hears when the gospel of Christ is taught. It is understood that many that sit upon church pews each Lord's day do not hear the truth because the speaker is not preaching the gospel. However, when there is a sound gospel preacher proclaiming God's word from the pulpit, what do you hear? Not all hear the same thing. In Acts two, Peter preached the gospel and those hearing him were "pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do" (Acts 2:37). In Acts chapter five, the same preacher preached the same gospel and when the people heard it "they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them" (Acts 5:33). In Acts seven, a different preacher, Stephen, but the same gospel message and "when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth" (Acts 7:54).

Jesus quoted Isaiah saying, "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matt 13:15). This pretty much sums up the great discrepancy in the way different people hear the gospel. In Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, he said, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (I Thess. 3:13). It is of absolute necessity that we hear God's word as God's word. It is not just something the preacher has to say, but if he is indeed preaching the word of God, it is what God has to say.

Once we have embraced the truth of the origin of the word of God, what should we do with it? James tells us, "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:21-22). It is incumbent upon us to do as the noble Bereans, "in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). Make sure it is truth and then obey it!

Robert

THE GLORIOUS CHURCH

Many are the times we have heard folks say that the church was not really important. After all, it is Jesus that saves, not the church, right? Some will say that they don't think it matters which church you're a member of so long as you are a member of a church; one's as good as another.

In the book of Ephesians, the inspired apostle Paul wrote that the Lord gave himself in order to sanctify and cleanse the church, "That he might present it to himself a glorious church..." (Eph. 5:25-27). It is a fact that not all churches are "glorious churches" in the sight of God. Jesus said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13). Even among congregations of the Lord's church, there are those that are not glorious in God's sight. In the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation seven churches receive letters from the Lord. To Ephesus he says, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of this place, except thou repent" (Rev. 2:5). To the church at Pergamos he writes, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev. 2:16).

But, what makes the church of the Lord so important? First, note that the church of our Lord originated in the mind of God before the world began (Eph. 3:8-11). Now, how can an institution planned by God be unimportant? The church was built by Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Matt. 16:18). Now, just how can an institution build by the Son of God be unimportant? Also, the church was purchased with the blood of the Son of God (Acts 20:28). Again, how can an institution which Jesus died for be unimportant? Jesus is the head of the church and she is His body (Col. 1:18). Don't tell me you think the body of Christ, she over which He is the head, is unimportant. The church is made up of all the saved (Acts 2:47). Since all the saved are added to the church by the Lord, there are no saved outside of the church! If there is no saved outside of the church, then one must be in the church to be saved. Oh, Jesus saves, but where does He save? **IN THE CHURCH!!!**

Friends, the church is the most important institution ever established. The question is not is it important but are you in it? *Tillis*