

“HEARING THEY HEAR NOT” Continued from page 1.

they deserve (compare with Romans 6:23). But will a just God allow all such wrongs to go unpunished? He most certainly will not. “*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*” (Genesis 18:25). He most certainly will. And the Lord has revealed that He will and how He will:

“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds” (Romans 2:56). Revelation’s depiction of the Judgment Day should serve as a sobering reminder to forsake the paths of wickedness: *“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”* (20:11-15). Who can hear such things and not turn from their wicked ways?

Many hear there is salvation, but they do not hear. Some wallow in self-loathing, believing they could never be saved. Others assault what they believe to be a tyrannical God. But do they not hear what God says? God has offered salvation to all: *“And [Jesus Christ] is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world”* (1 John 2:1). To receive a Presidential pardon, one must usually be a personal friend of the President. However, God offers salvation to His worst human enemies: *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life”* (Romans 5:8-10).

Tyrannical? Not remotely. *“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him”* (Acts 10:34-35). Anyone can be saved from his sins and become an heir of eternal life, if one will hear what God calls him to do.

The Lord has blessed mankind with the capability to see and hear (compare with Psalm 94:9). He has blessed mankind with faculties capable of discerning and acting upon the greatest spiritual truths. Yet too often, *“hearing they hear not.”* When God has revealed to us crucial spiritual truths, yet we fail to discern and act upon them, the failure lies with the hearers themselves: *“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”* (Matthew 13:15). Let us not close our ears to the most important things we will ever hear.

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BELVEDERE BEACON
Ye are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14)
Volume 10 Number 29 July 19, 2009
A PUBLICATION OF THE BELVEDERE CHURCH OF CHRIST
535 Clearwater Road, Belvedere, SC 29841-2574
(Greater Augusta, GA area)
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“HEARING THEY HEAR NOT”

Jesus said of His fellow Jews, *“[T]hey seeing see not; and hearing they hear not”* (Matthew 13:13). One could translate this, “While they see, they do not see; and while they hear, they do not hear.” How can this be? One either sees or does not see; one either hears or does not hear. But so many people with good perceptive abilities fail to use those abilities as God has given them. Thus, it can truly be said of such people that “hearing they hear not.”

Many hear there is a God, but they do not hear. There are those who hear the word of God, or at least hear enough portions of the word to have testimony to God’s existence. They have heard *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”* (Genesis 1:1), which remains the best and only viable explanation. They have seen with their eyes evidence of God’s existence: *“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world...”* (Psalm 19:1-4).

People have the ability to hear and see these things, they surely **do** see and hear these things—yet it as if they never do. They pay no attention, as a deaf man will pay no attention to the sounding horn of an automobile rapidly approaching him They do not live as though they are aware- -that there is a God who is aware of their every move and every thought.

Many hear there will be a Judgment Day, but they do not hear. There are those who claim to believe in God, but continue to stroll leisurely down the pernicious paths of immorality, selfishness, and manmade religion. They see that all accounts are not settled on earth. Job asked, *“Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?”* (Job 21:7). The wicked often remain unpunished throughout their lives, and are certainly not punished to the degree

Continued on page 4

SHOULD THE CHURCH CHANGE?

We here a lot today about change and the need to change particularly as it applies to the political realm. From time to time we also hear calls for change in the church. There is nothing wrong with change, in and of itself. Further, there is nothing wrong with having changes in the church provided that such changes do not violate the authority of God's Word. Sadly, because of ignorance of the truth, some would seek to introduce things into the church that violate the authority of God's Word. Changes of this kind will only weaken the church of the Lord and cause it to lose its distinctiveness.

A number of years ago, a church building in south Texas was destroyed by fire. Because of the actions of members of the congregation, the preacher's library was saved. Among the last books to be brought out was a book entitled "How To Set The Church Afire." This book was written by Wayne Dehoney, a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention. In that book he made some observations regarding the Lord's church that are interesting:

"A closer look at the churches of Christ would hardly reveal that their brand of religion is on the downgrade! This fast-growing group is one of the most potent missionary and evangelistic forces in the country. Their congregations are flourishing, and new churches are continually being established. A profile of faith and practice contradicts practically every 'solid conclusion' by the authorities of the main-line denominational establishments about the renewal the church must experience to 'survive'. The churches of Christ are anti-ecumenical in their relationships; conservative in their theology; autonomous and democratic in their congregational practice without any semblance of a denominational super-structure; they make rigid moral and ethical demands on their members in such matters as social drinking; they are not 'social-action' oriented; they have a 'messianic complex' of being the true people of God and the true church! All of these factors combine to give them a high motivation, an unquenchable zeal, and an inescapable compulsion to win the world to an acceptance of their convictions and beliefs. And they are growing rapidly!"

These words were written back in the 1960's when the Lord's church was growing rapidly. When we look at what he has written, we see why the church was growing. Sadly, many of the things that he notes as distinguishing the church from other religious groups have changed. Has that change been good? When we realize that such changes have taken away the distinctiveness of the church, it is clear that they are not pleasing to God. Further, the church has not continued to grow. We need to think carefully about bringing about changes in the church to be sure that any changes we make do not violate the Lord's will.

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Keep in your prayers the following: Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett, Lavonne McClish, Linda Chumbley, and Rachel Fitzpatrick's aunt (Eula Baker) who has cancer, Maomi Aaron' sister who is having health problems, Myrtle Grimsley, Lanny Niver together with his daughter, and Tim Smith. Myrtle Grimsley is still not doing well.

It was good to see Lanny Niver as he was able to be out for the first time in several weeks.

Also Steven Wilson was out Sunday following his surgery. He continues to recuperate.

Rachel Fitzpatrick's sister, Rebecca, had had surgery in Texas. She is home and recuperating.

Kathy Treadway made it home safely from her vacation in Hawaii and other places.

Ron Wilson was not well Wednesday night.

(The following was on a page with an article attributed to Franklin Camp. I'm not sure that it is a part of his article. There is no acknowledgement of its author. – JZG)

A Great Difference

"An English writer has said, 'The early Christians did not go around saying, 'Look what the world is come to.' Rather they went out with great joy and said to all men, 'Look what is come to the world!' There is a great difference between these two attitudes. Yes, the world is in bad shape; but read the second chapter of Romans and you will find that the world was in an awful condition in Paul's time. Nearly all thoughtful men agree that man is in a terrible predicament, but the unique Gospel of Jesus Christ offers solutions to man's problems."

Certain, in our time, the world is not much different than in the time of Noah, Jesus, and Paul. What was needed these times, and what is needed in our time, is the preaching of righteousness. Noah was a preacher of righteousness, "And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly" (2 Peter 2:5). Jesus certainly was a teacher of righteousness. Also, Paul followed in the same pattern, "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25).

While the world is in bad shape, the gospel of Christ is what is needed to fix man's problems. Let us be optimistic rather than pessimistic, and see Jesus as man's answer and not that the situation is hopeless. The story is told of two shoes salesmen that went to a place, and they saw that no one was wearing shoes. One salesman wrote back to his office, "No one is wears shoes down here, am returning home." The other salesman, seeing the same condition, wrote back to his office, "No one wears shoes down here, what a golden opportunity." Do we see Jesus or the world?

Beloved, Jesus said, "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it" (Luke 8:21). May all of us "hear" and "do" God's word.

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