

# "HEAR YE HIM"

## A Devotional Series For Radio

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World Headquarters: The Auditorium, Independence, Missouri

Program Number 159  
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The Sermon: EVERY MAN WALKETH IN HIS OWN WAY

Scripture: Doctrine and Covenants, Section 1; Paragraph 3.

Wherefore the voice of the Lord is unto the ends of the earth, that all that will hear may hear; prepare ye, prepare ye for that which is to come, for the Lord is nigh; and the anger of the Lord is kindled, and his sword is bathed in heaven, and it shall fall upon the inhabitants of the earth; and the arm of the Lord shall be revealed; and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people; for they have strayed from mine ordinances, and have broken mine everlasting covenant; they seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall.

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Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made.

What is idolatry? Are we guilty of it today in Christian America? More than a century ago Joseph Smith proclaimed the word of the Lord and said: "They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god .... whose substance is that of an idol ....." Was that statement true? Is it true today?

We are guilty of idolatry when we relegate God to second place for any cause whatsoever. The commandment is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The song of the Christmas angels was "Glory to God in the highest." The song of unregenerate man has always been, "Glory to man in the highest." If we ignore God, his moral law, and his commandments; if we selfishly cater to our own appetites and lusts, if we habitually choose what we want, rather than what God wants, we are guilty of idolatry. If we place upon any man, or upon any man-made thing, the trust, the confidence, the dependence which should rightly be placed only in God, we are placing the created above the Creator. This is always idolatry.

The first idolater was Eve, and soon after her, Adam. Their idolatry had nothing to do with idols or images of other gods. They simply decided to go their own way rather than God's way. They chose what they wanted rather than what God had

commanded. By this choice they proved that they were in rebellion -- that they regarded themselves (the creatures) more highly than the Creator. This is the essence of idolatry, whether it involves any physical and tangible idols or not.

Human nature was made to go God's way, to be joyfully and obediently cooperative with the Creator and all the laws and principles and forces which he has placed in the world. Save for a few notable instances, the human race has usually chosen, both individually and collectively, to go its own way rather than God's way. This is rebellion, sin, idolatry. This is the fall of man, for if God is supreme, no one who ignores or defies or flouts his laws can ever have peace or happiness or permanent success. There can be no peace to a world or to a race of men in which "every man walketh in his own way."

The world and man were made to be God-centered. When each of the two and a half-billions of people in the world becomes self-centered instead of God-centered, he automatically separates himself from all his fellows, and becomes guilty of the sin of idolatry. With two and a half billion centers in the world instead of one, it is inevitable that there should come what Paul in his Galatian letter calls the "works of the flesh --

adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witch-craft, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." When self-centered men group themselves together in self-centered races, nations, geographical sections, culture groups, classes, economic or social groups, or religious organizations, that only multiplies the false centers, and takes more allegiance away from the Creator who made all things and all men to center in himself.

Every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god! Harry Emerson Fosdick in his book "Successful Christian Living", suggests that although we do not make images of them any more, we still worship the old gods of Greece and Rome. Too many Christians still maintain a nominal church membership, but give allegiance to Bacchus, the god of wine. Others are devout worshippers of Venus, the goddess of physical love. Millions of Americans go to the theater to worship Apollo, the god of physical beauty. Other millions worship at the shrine of Minerva, goddess of wisdom, in the hope that if man can just learn enough, he can be saved by wisdom. Partly by necessity, and partly because of man's befuddled choices in the past, every one of us pays many times more tithes to Mars, god of war, than he does to the God of peace and good will to men.

We stake our economic security, not on our obedience to God, but on stocks, bonds, real estate, and money in the bank, forgetful of how quickly all these things have lost their value in all the ages of the past, and how quickly they can again become worthless to people who are self-centered rather than God-centered. We stake our national peace and security on nuclear fission bombs, airplanes, battleships, tanks, radar equipment, airfields, fortifications, and countless other military and naval paraphernalia. In a predatory world such as the one in which we live today, we need all these things, but we also need to remember that all of our frantic guarding of ourselves by man-created things is useless and vain unless as a God-centered people we also call on God to guard.

When Joseph Smith said that "every man walketh in his own way," he aroused a storm of antagonism and protest. The world was getting better. Christianity was advancing all over the world. Missionary societies were flourishing. There was every prospect of peace. The era of steam power and scientific invention was just dawning. There was every reason to expect the world to get better and better until man by his own cleverness ushered in the golden age. But Joseph Smith predicted increasing calamity. He warned that the day was coming when those who would not put God first should be cut off from among the people.

Today's world has been blessed as never before with material things, with wealth, with scientific know-how, with means of lifting men's burdens, supplying their wants, and cementing their friendship. But in spite of our material prosperity, we live more and more in mortal terror of each other, because every man still walks in his own way -- self-centered instead of God-centered. Even organized Christianity is divided, and cannot agree on the methods to be used to bring men and nations back into peace and fellowship with each other. Few people are willing to listen for the voice of God today. Men do not believe that God speaks any more. In the early New Testament church the voice of Christ came through the Holy Spirit to settle the quarrel between Peter and Paul, and between would-be Judaizers and Christians.

But today men in their self-centeredness are more intent on proving themselves right than on setting themselves right. To prove themselves right they appeal to tradition, to ecclesiastical authority, to ecumenical councils, to secular power, to ancient creeds, to written scripture, to everything but the voice of the living Christ.

The world will know no peace until men are willing to listen to the voice of God and heed what he says. Unless self-centered man forsakes his idols, he and all his wonderful achievements will sooner or later be destroyed together with all the idols of Babylon the great, which shall fall, that God may be all in all.