

# "HEAR YE HIM"

## A Devotional Series For Radio

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World Headquarters: The Auditorium, Independence, Missouri

Program Number 239  
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The Sermon: DEMOCRACY IN GOVERNMENT

Scripture: Book of Mormon, Mosiah 13:35-48, 41, 42.

Now it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right; but it is common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right: Therefore this shall ye observe, and make it your law to do your business by the voice of the people. And if the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will come upon you; Yea, then is the time he will visit you with great destruction, even as he hath hitherto visited this land. ... And I command you to do these things in the fear of the Lord; And I command you to do these things and that ye have no king: that if the people commit sins and iniquities, they shall be answered upon their own heads.

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The burden (of government) should come upon all  
the people, that every man might bear his part.

Twice in our generation the United States has been involved in a great global conflict. There were many contributing reasons for these two world wars, but the great and underlying reason in each case was the preservation of our way of life, our freedoms, and our democratic form of government, against the challenge of totalitarianism.

The challenge of totalitarianism is still with us, and will probably always be with us. Not always does it assume the guise of a great totalitarian dictator who musters another nation against us in war. Sometimes it comes in the guise of the philosophy that people are too ignorant to know what is good for them, and that therefore they should turn over the business of government to the do-gooders, the social planners, the enlightened crackpots and bureaucratic bright boys who can guarantee perfect results without effort on our part. Sometimes it comes in the guise of the philosophy that most people have neither time nor capacity to become informed about the abstract principles or the practical aspects of government, and therefore should leave everything to a few experts. Sometimes it comes in the guise of the philosophy that man exists for the state, rather than that the state exists for the benefit of man. Sometimes it comes in the guise of religion, with the philosophy that the spirit of revelation and the ability to discern truth are denied to the common man --that the will of God can be revealed only through one source.

The question of totalitarianism will never be finally settled so long as there are people who are eager to grasp power and rule, or so long as there are lazy, indifferent, apathetic citizens who are willing to turn over all their rights and freedoms to political or ecclesiastical rulers, who agree to assume all responsibility. In any form of totalitarianism, no one has to vote, or to think, or to serve on a jury, or make any hard or difficult decisions.

Totalitarian rule is not fair to the ones in power, because it throws upon them the entire burden of making decisions, and bearing responsibility for those decisions, plus the burden of bearing the complaints of those who are ruled. Many a good king, as well as many an evil dictator, has been broken under that burden. On the other hand, totalitarianism and one man rule are not fair to the people either. Be it ever so benevolent and efficient, totalitarianism encourages the common people to evade their responsibilities of citizenship; it encourages paternalism and dependency, laziness and lack of individual initiative. The policy of the people that always leads to absolute monarchy or some form of absolutism is "Don't bother me; Let the government do it."

Even in a democracy such as we have in these United States of America, we can see this tendency to evade responsibility by asking the federal government to do what the individual citizen and the city,

county, and state governments ought to do for themselves. People demand more and more, but are willing to do less and less. As a consequence the federal government has grown large, unwieldy, inefficient, and expensive, because the people demand that it try to do by remote control from Washington the things which could better be done at home. Of course there are certain areas in which the help of the federal government is necessary because of the magnitude of the undertaking, and the fact that it transcends state interests and state lines. But a free people need to be eternally vigilant and on guard against the rise of costly and meddling government bureaucracy.

All of us are members of some group. We are citizens of a city, a county, a state, and a nation. We hold membership perhaps in a labor union, in a fraternal order, a social or service club, in a trade association. We own stock in a corporation, or we are members of a church organization. Who bears the responsibility for the corporate acts of these many groups? If the government, or a labor union, or a church, or a corporation commits an immoral or un-Christian act, who is to blame? Each member of that group must bear some of the responsibility for the decision that brought about the act.

Free moral will or agency implies both freedom to act as we choose, and responsibility for our decisions. Unless there is responsibility for choice, there is no point in being free to choose. This responsibility for choices made and acts committed applies not only to personal decisions and individual acts, but to group or corporate decisions and acts. Many people who vehemently assert that they value their freedom most highly are too busy or too unconcerned to vote in an election, to attend group meetings, or to take any action that would influence the decisions of others in their group. Not choosing is a form of choice. Not acting when action is imperative is a form of selling out to the enemy. It is a stay-at-home vote which decides every election.

Many people use the excuse that "My vote doesn't count." They say that the whole thing is already cut and dried, or that the opposing factions and forces are too strong to be dislodged. Enemies of

freedom and democracy as well as enemies of truth and righteousness always rely on the apathy and indifference of the common people to perpetuate their rule. Nevertheless, example after example could be supplied from history to prove that dedicated, determined individuals and minorities very often shape and control policies in any organization; and that the great changes in the moral, social, and religious thinking of the world have almost always been brought about by small groups. The outstanding example, of course, is Jesus Christ. Not by might or power or compulsion, but by love he drew to himself a group which revolutionized the world against impossible and overwhelming odds.

The prophets and statesmen of Book of Mormon peoples asserted many times that decisions should be made by the voice of the people; that the burden of government should come equally upon all the people, every man bearing his proper part. These same prophets and statesmen asserted that the people were usually to be trusted to choose that which is right; but right or wrong, they were obligated to assume responsibility for their decisions. It would not be altogether fair to bless a wicked people because of the compulsive laws and decisions of a righteous king. To do so would be a denial of the principle that evil lives bring evil actions, and that evil acts bring evil consequences. Therefore the burden of decision should come equally upon all; then if the majority of the people choose evil, or choose not to choose, and allow men to take over, then the judgments of God upon that people will have a just basis.

In a democracy such as ours, then, we have these responsibilities: (1) to keep informed, and to acquire knowledge which will aid us in making decisions. (2) To speak out -- to make our influence felt at the proper time and place -- to help in shaping an enlightened public opinion. (3) To cast our own vote in all matters which are referred to the people for decision. (4) To support and defend our nation with voice, hand, heart, property, and armed force if necessary, in order that every man might do his part, and the burden of democratic government come equally upon all.