

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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Evan A. Fry, Radio Minister
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The Sermon: WITNESSES OF GOD

Scripture: Book of Mormon, Mosiah 9:38-41.

And it came to pass that (Alma) said unto them, Behold, here are the waters of Mormon: And now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light; Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times, and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life; Now I say unto you, If this be the desire of your hearts, what have ye against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?

Stand as witnesses of God, at all times, and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in.

When Jesus was on earth, he chose twelve men to be his companions as he taught and ministered among men, and to be the perpetuators of his mission and message after he was gone. They were to be his witnesses -- not only to his life, but to his death, and to his resurrection, and ascension. When he was about to ascend unto the Father, Jesus said to them: "...Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Obviously this promise or commission could not have been confined only to the original twelve apostles. In the first place, Judas was gone; there were only eleven left. In the second place, considering what the problems of transportation were in Jesus' day, no eleven or twelve men could possibly have taken the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. Many parts of the earth were completely unknown to the original twelve, and few of them ever travelled very far away from that little territory where Jesus lived.

The promise therefore must have been given not just to twelve men, but to those twelve men and all their successors who should be chosen as apostles in that or subsequent dispensations. Dead men can sometimes bear a very effective witness through their writings, but of the original twelve apostles, only three have left us any scriptural writings at all -- the gospels of Matthew and John, and two

short epistles from Peter. Dead men can sometimes bear an eloquent testimony through the record of their lives, but our record of the lives of the apostles is most sketchy and quite incomplete. Besides, writings and historical records are often called into question, their genuineness is often doubted. Living men need living witnesses who can be seen and heard and questioned, and whose testimony can be analyzed, weighed, examined, and evaluated.

Apostles were and are men sent, men whose mission it is to witness in a special way for Christ. The original twelve were not the only ones thus commissioned and sent. Mattias was chosen as the successor of Judas, and a little later Paul and Barnabas were chosen and sent to be witnesses. It is the responsibility of an apostle to testify that Jesus lives, that he is the Son of God, and that his gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The responsibility of witnessing is not exclusively confined to the apostles, however. What better witness is there of Christ than the man whose life has been transformed by Christ? The responsibility for witnessing is shared by every man who has been called and commissioned to represent Christ as his minister and priest. It is shared likewise by every man and woman who has named the name of Christ.

Whenever anyone, in any station of

life, has received some gift, or some knowledge, or some skill which properly used would enable him to save the life of another, it becomes his responsibility to use that gift or knowledge or skill in such a way as to bring about that salvation. A doctor who had the knowledge and skill which could save a man's life, but who unconcernedly stood by and did nothing while the patient died, would be guilty of one of the worst forms of malpractice. If a soldier somehow acquired knowledge that an enemy attack was about to be launched against his position, and did nothing to warn his superiors and his comrades, he would be guilty of treason. If you should see a child in grave danger, and you did nothing to warn him, or rescue him, or notify those responsible for him, you would be at least partly guilty of his death. By the same processes of reasoning, if you know Jesus, if you have a testimony of what he has done for you, and if you see a life about to be destroyed because of ignorance of Jesus and his saving power, you have a responsibility for witnessing in such a way as to save that life.

Witnessing for God and Christ does not mean that one has to make a general and perpetual nuisance of himself. Sometimes people become so obsessed with the idea of witnessing that they neglect their home, their children, their daily work, their own cleanliness and personal appearance, their own education, their children's education, and even their own health, and spend all their time either talking or handing out tracts to people who don't want them and who can see nothing particularly appealing about the life of the one who talks so much about his love for Jesus. It is important that we seek out opportunities for witnessing to what the Savior has done for us. It is important that we know when to speak, how to speak, and what to speak. But it is equally important that we know when to keep still and let our lives be a silent witness.

The Book of Mormon verse we have used as a text says: "Stand as witnesses of God, at all times, and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in." Our daily work or trade or profession should be carried on at such a standard of excellence that it will witness for Christ. Our homes, our families, our children should be living witnesses of the power

of Christ. Our patience, kindness, gentleness, charity, and love, and our regard for the rights and the personalities of all men should bear witness of what Christ has done for us. Our cheerful faces and dispositions can be made to bear witness for Christ. Our honesty, integrity, industry, morality, and general good citizenship will witness for Christ. Our neatness, cleanliness, and appropriateness of dress and appearance will witness for Christ. All of our education and culture can be used in such a way as to constitute a witness for Christ. The way you spend your money, take care of your financial obligations, and conserve and share your physical assets and resources should be a witness for Christ. Our conversation should be a witness for Christ; and sometimes even a silence can be an eloquent witness for Christ.

The man who would witness for Christ does not have to quit living in the world or to withdraw from the world like a hermit. He must be in the world if he is to witness to the world; but although he remains in the world, his quality of life must be different, so that at all times, in all things, and in all places, he may bear witness for Christ.

What if our witness goes unheeded? Several Book of Mormon writers faced that problem; likewise many prophets of Biblical times. Nearly every great prophet has had to bear his witness to a heedless and unconcerned people. But if you knew that your city was about to be attacked by an enemy you wouldn't give up your attempts to warn the city simply because you could not get the first man you warned to pay any attention to you. You still owe an obligation to witness for Christ, so long as there is one man left who has not heard that witness, or so long as there is one man left who might change his mind and yield to your persistence. If even one soul is saved from sin and degradation and eternal death because of your witness, what happiness and joy will be yours! But if one who might have known Jesus never knows him because of your failure to give any witness, some of the responsibility for that man's loss must rest upon your shoulders. Therefore, "notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently," and stand as witnesses of God at all times, and in all things, and in all places, even unto death.