

RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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Matt. 11:15 – “*He who has ears, let him hear.*”



HE WHO HAS EARS, LET HIM HEAR

Four times in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus makes the statement, “He who has ears, let him hear.” Why? What is His purpose? He does so because He recognizes that there were many who were following Him who were unwilling to hear the truth. There were many who were unwilling to change, unwilling to alter their comfortable lifestyles.

God does not change. And God will not change. It is we who must change. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). **That means, of course, that we need to hear the message today in the same manner that He spoke it 2000 years ago.** It wasn’t the particular message that He was referring to when he made the statement, “He who has ears, let him hear.” It was the total of all the messages he preached. **It was a statement of the condition of the hearts of those who did not hear.**

To the statement that Elijah has already come, his spirit having filled John the Baptist (Matt. 11:12-15), Jesus said, “He who has ears, let him

hear.” Regarding the parable of the sower and the seed (Matt. 13:8-9), He said, “He who has ears, let him hear. In explaining why He spoke in parables (Matt. 13:13-15), He said, “If they heard with their ears, they would understand and I would heal them.” Regarding the parable of the weeds (Matt. 13:41-43), He said, “He who has ears, let him hear.”

It was not the information regarding John the Baptist, nor was it the parable of the sower or the parable of the weeds about which Jesus was concerned. He knew that if they didn’t hear one, they wouldn’t hear the other, either. It was a general statement imploring them to get hold of the truth even though He knew many would not. When He said, “He who has ears, let him hear,” He knew that many would fall away; **and so the statement was made to those who really did have ears and who did hear, too. He didn’t want to lose them.**

Luke 8:9-10-*His disciples asked him what this parable meant. He said, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables ...”*

Jesus’ disciples were radical disciples. Unquestionably! And when they asked him to explain the parable, he granted them an understanding of truth not available to all of His followers. And the same thing holds true today. **Radical disciples have been given the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God, the illumination of the deep, hidden secrets of the word of God. Others hear only parables.**

The wealth of the kingdom of God is intrinsic in the word of God. This great wealth is available to all who have entered into the death and resurrection of the Son of God. But if our ears do not hear, then our eyes also cannot see the hidden riches of Heaven.

Jesus knew that then, as well as now, there would be many who would not hear His word. Oh, it would go into the left ear okay, but it would come, immediately, out of the right ear, without having accomplished anything. His word was not retained then and for many, today, it is not retained, either. Why? It is because, though we say we love the

Lord, we do not. John's gospel says over and over, "If you love Me, obey My commands." If you obey His commands, you have ears to hear. Which commands? All of them.

We live a comfortable Christianity and as long as no one, including God, interferes with our comfortable lifestyles, we'll just keep on loving Him (or so we think) and convincing ourselves that we are true disciples. But we are not. We are convenient, capricious Christians. **As long as no one, including God, tells us to do something that interferes with our convenience, we, too, will continue to deceive ourselves into thinking that we are serving Him.** We are not. We are powerless, ephemeral Christians. We don't often think about that because we don't want to admit that there is no power in our lives, or that our Christianity is tepid and insensate; but it is true, isn't it? We'd like to have more power but we're not willing to give up anything in order to get it.

In the time in which we live, Christians who do not have ears to hear are open to the deceit of the enemy. At a time when we so desperately need God, they will not be able to hear Him. They do not have ears that can hear.

You see, in reality, we do have ears but we don't hear. Selfishness and obedience don't mix well.

Jesus never taught a comfortable gospel. He never taught a convenient gospel; and He definitely never taught a powerless gospel. Jesus didn't bring peace. He brought a sword. Jesus taught radical discipleship.

"Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me." Matt. 16:24.

"Anyone who loves his father or mother ... his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Matt. 15:37.

"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain." Matt. 15:8-9.

"If you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Matt. 6:15

We do not have the option of glossing over these or any other Scriptures. They are all God's word. **Jesus made radical disciples out of common men by instructing them to obey every word He spoke.** And many of His un-radical disciples turned from Him. Why? They turned from Him because they weren't willing to pay the price of radical discipleship. They said they loved Him but they didn't love Him. They were selfish, much like us. When those disciples turned away from Him, look at what the true disciples said:

"You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked.

Simon Peter answered him. "Lord, to whom should we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the holy one of God." John 6:67-68.

We know that too, don't we? But are they just words or is it truth? Have we learned the lingo, or do we mean it? When we read a portion of Scripture that cuts to our heart, do we turn away from it, or do we answer as Peter answered?

Look at what God says about those who serve Him half-heartedly:

Since they show no regard for the works of the Lord and what his hands have done, he will tear them down and never build them up again. Ps. 28:5.

Are you going to justify that Scripture away, too? I wouldn't if I were you. It is a warning from God to those who think they hear but do not. It is a warning from God to those who are willing to serve God only on their own terms. It is a warning to those who operate in their own strength and refuse to yield their self to the Lord for healing. It is a warning to comfortable Christians, to convenient Christians, and to powerless Christians. He who has ears, let him hear.

Do you have ears? To what are they listening? What are they hearing?

DISCIPLINING THE EAR

To hear is a discipline. To hear is different from just listening. You can listen to the radio and hear nothing. You can listen to the pastor on Sunday morning and hear nothing. But Jesus said, "He who has ears, let him hear." Have your ears been disciplined? Don't you own them? Do you allow your hands do to whatever they want? Do you allow your feet to go wherever they want? If you are a Christian and if you do not drink alcohol, it is likely you will not allow your feet to take you into a bar. Why? It is because you have control over your feet and you will not allow your feet to lead you into sin. If you are a Christian and you do not do drugs, you will not allow your hands to receive a bag of dope from someone. Why? It is because you have control over your hands and you will not allow them to lead you into sin.

But what about your ears? Do you discipline your ears? Or do you allow them to listen to whatever they want – garbage on TV, garbage at the movies, garbage music, garbage language and jokes? **And then you wonder why your ears cannot hear when Jesus speaks to them.**

Discipline your ears. Control them just as you control your feet. Don't let them lead you into sin. Then

when you read the word, you will more likely hear with your ears and be healed. But if you are selfish, greedy, and self-centered, you have a much bigger problem. Throw yourself on the mercy of God and let Him heal you. Then, you will be able to hear with your ears. Without hearing all of the truth of God's word, your growth will be stunted. Without hearing all the truth of God's word, you will miss much of what God wants to do with you. **Without hearing all the truth of God's word, you will not receive the deep illumination of His word that propels you forward in spiritual growth.**

A Christian without ears to hear is like a lion without teeth or an elephant without a trunk. You are missing a vital part of your Godly makeup – and you don't even realize it.

God's word is all we need to become all that God wants us to become. But every command in the Bible must be obeyed. If you do not have ears to hear, you will skip over those opportunities for obedience and your growth will stagnate. And if you can't solve the problem soon, you, like the disciples who turned away from Jesus, will turn away, too.

"Oh, no," you say, "I would never turn away from Jesus." That is not a statement of fact. That is a statement of

wishing and hoping. If you do not hear God's word, and if you do not obey God's word, and if you can then state, unequivocally, that you will never turn away from the Lord, then the Bible is not true. His word speaks differently. You are trusting in yourself. That is a dangerous thing to do. You need to trust in Him.

"Oh, but I do," you say. "Oh, but you don't," I answer. You cannot refuse to hear God's word and refuse to obey God's word and then say, "I trust in Him." Those two things are not congruent, one with the other. **Trust comes from following Jesus with all your heart. Trust comes from obeying God's word.** Trust is an extension of faith. Faith gets strengthened through obedience. If there is little or no obedience, faith does not get strengthened. If faith does not get strengthened, there is no trust.

EARS AND FAITH

Many do not realize it but the Christian who does not have ears to hear cannot have faith. Faith comes by hearing; hearing the word of God.

If we have ears that do not hear, then we are going in the opposite direction of faith. And without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6).

We simply do not recognize the correlation

between hearing, studying and understanding the word of God by revelation and faith. **If we do not have ears to hear, we do not have faith.** And we wonder why there is no power in our Christian lives.

Run to God, dear friend. Run to Him with all that you have within you. He can heal this sin of spiritual lethargy. And He desires to do so. God is not angry with you. He is patient. But please understand, time is running out. Run to Him now while you still can.

A final comment on the matter: The disciples (those who stayed and those who fled) heard Jesus' words and those words were accompanied by multiple miracles. It is hard to understand how a disciple (one who follows Jesus) could see those miracles and still turn away from Him. It is because they didn't like what He was saying. I would think that almost all Christians would agree, "If I saw miracles, too, that would be enough for me to never turn away." Sorry – not true!

If you do not have ears to hear, even the miracles won't change you. If your ears are undisciplined, so are your eyes and so, unfortunately, is your heart. If you are a comfortable, convenient, powerless Christian, and God's words prick your heart, you have turned toward Jesus. Run, run, run after Him. But, if you refuse to

allow God's words to prick your heart, even seeing a miracle won't change you – not for the long haul.

The first line of Psalm 44 says "We have heard with our ears, O God. Can you say that, dear Christian friend, or are you too busy getting upset at what was said.

To those that are grinding their teeth at this message, I say only: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Please join us at the Radical Discipleship meetings every other Monday at New Life Foursquare church, 5913 Jefferson Pike, Frederick. We meet next on Monday, June 16, 2008 at 7:00 PM.

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