

How Shall They Hear?

Joe Slater

They were as different as night and day. Determined to wipe out the church not only in Jerusalem but everywhere, Saul of Tarsus was “*breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord*” (Acts 9:1). Cornelius the centurion, on the other hand, accepted what few things he knew about Jesus, primarily in regard to His miraculous healings and other good works (Acts 10:36-38), and was open to learning more.

Different though they were, Saul and Cornelius had quite a lot in common! Both sincerely wanted to serve God. Saul truly believed that he pleased God by beating, imprisoning, and killing disciples of Jesus (Acts 26:9-11). The devout Cornelius “feared God with all his household . . . gave alms generously to the people and prayed to God always” (Acts 10:2).

Both Saul and Cornelius needed to learn and obey the gospel, and God saw to it that both had opportunity to do so. In neither case, however, did the Lord personally reveal the way of salvation. Both Saul and Cornelius heard from another person what to do to be saved. Ananias, a disciple of Jesus, instructed Saul to “*arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*” (Acts 22:16). Peter commanded Cornelius and his household “*to be baptized in the name of the Lord*” (Acts 10:48).

People all around us are dramatically different from one another. Though some are overtly hostile to Christianity, others may accept a few truths, while still others know and follow quite a lot. Their common denominator is their need for salvation through faith and obedience to the gospel.

God will not whisper into their ears what to do to be saved. In Paul’s words, “*How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?*” (Romans 10:14). Before you excuse yourself by saying, “But I’m not a preacher,” hear again Acts 8:4 – “*Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.*” Now, who were those scattered disciples who preached? Verse 1 shows that they were the members of the Jerusalem church “except the apostles”! The very ones we might think ought to do the evangelizing stayed in Jerusalem! The ones we might excuse from duty preached the word.

In His providence, God brings you into contact with people who need to hear and obey the gospel. If you do not tell them, how will they hear? May God help us to take seriously our obligation to tell His story!

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FACTS DON'T CHANGE

Have you ever heard something similar to this? “Well, we were going to go with A, but then the facts changed, so we went with B.” Well, here’s a fact: Facts Don’t Change!

It’s either 32 degrees outside or it isn’t. Later, it may warm up to 50 degrees; but the measurement of the temperature at, say, 8:00 a.m., is what it is.

This is an important principle to teach young people . . . and worthy of reminding old people. We may not know all the facts; and so our understanding may be lacking. Conditions may change. But facts don’t change!

--Jared Jackson (Jackson, TN) via *Fortify Your Faith*

Does It Make Sense?

Joe does not believe in holding elections, but instead advocates rule by a hereditary king. Does it make sense for Joe to claim that he is a democrat? Sally advocates war as a means of both settling international differences and as an effective means of limiting population growth. Is she also right to claim that she is a pacifist?

In most areas of life we recognize that if a person denies the fundamental claims associated with a given name, that person no right to the name they are claiming. But when it comes to the faith, this reasonable assumption is contradicted. According to some people, we should accept anyone and everyone who claims to be a Christian, even if a person denies the fundamental teachings of Christianity. According to these same people, we should accept anyone who went to school and received a degree in science as a scientist, even if he spins theories that demonstrate a clear rejection of the scientific method.

Sorry to be non-PC, but I believe in calling things, and people, what they are. Those who deny the fundamental teachings of Christianity (things like the deity of Christ and his resurrection) are not Christians. Those who spin theories unsupported by actual scientific evidence are not scientists.

As long as these people do not claim to be Christians (in the one case) or scientists (in the other) I do not have a big problem with them. But when someone wants to have it both ways, when someone claims to be a Christian while denying fundamental Christian teachings, or someone wants respect as a scientist while demanding adherence to theories that cannot be proven, it is time to break out different labels. Such people are imposters. They are liars. These are not labels that should be used lightly, but are words that must be used when they clearly apply.

--Thayer Salisbury (Toledo, OH)