

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA. 55: 10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

Otis Q. Sellers, Bible Teacher

HOW THEN SHALL THEY HEAR?

The subject of this study deals with a very important truth which has to do with the unique period of which the Book of Acts is the history.

Apart from the knowledge of and acceptance of this truth, I do not believe that the character of that dispensation can ever be understood. It is set forth in Paul's letter to the Romans, the last of six epistles he wrote during this time. It would be of great value to those who love the truth if they would familiarize themselves with Paul's words in Romans 10:13-15.

As we look upon earth's teeming millions today we very much desire that everyone living upon this planet could hear the pure, unadulterated gospel in a message that declares who Jesus Christ is, what He is, what He is now doing, and what He stands ready to do for those who will submit to Him, receive Him, even to those who believe on His name (See John 1: 12).

There are many indeed who say this can be done in any one generation if God's people will send out the messengers and provide the means for their continued support. And since this should be done, they have set themselves to do it. Worldwide missionary programs abound, and those engaged in such activity are prone to make much use of the passage cited above in Romans, especially that part which says: **"How then shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?"** On the basis of these statements these promoters declare that it is our divine duty to supply the funds so that their boards can send out the preachers; otherwise men cannot hear the gospel and believe.

It is my conviction that this is both a misuse and an abuse of this portion of Scripture, since it has nothing to do with supplying passage money for missionaries and providing further gifts for their support once they are on the mission field. To use

it in such manner serves only to negate an exceedingly important truth that belongs to the Acts period. It begins with a great declaration: **For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.** Rom. 10:13.

The word "call" here is *epikaleomi*. It indicates an appeal that is based upon some established right. It could be better translated "invoke." This passage does not set forth a plan of salvation for the sinner, and it should not be cited when telling a sinner what he must do to be saved. This has to do with the call of a believer for help in facing up to certain dire circumstances, a fact shown by Paul in his next question, **"How then shall they call upon Him in Whom they have not believed?"**

Many witless people believe, and tell others, that if one cries out in anguish often enough times, "O Lord, save me," that in time God will "soften up" and pour out His salvation upon the one who is pleading for him to do so. This is the old "mourners-bench" routine. It is preposterous nonsense, an absurdity which is compounded when a passage such as this is cited in support of it.

The declaration, **"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,"** is first found in Joel 2:32, where it is prefaced by the words, **"And it shall come to pass."** The time of its application is clearly established as being the years immediately preceding the second coming of Christ, that is, the time of the great tribulation. It was still in the future when Peter quoted it on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2:21. A situation that is to come to pass cannot be a present truth. And it is in view of this truth that I am prompted to say that I do not have the least qualm or fear in regard to being on this earth during the time of the great tribulation. In fact, I welcome the prospect. Therefore, in that day, if a thousand enemies should confront me, each one bearing a loaded rifle, and all of them aimed at my heart or head, I will simply invoke the name of my Lord and ask the question: "Would you destroy one who belongs to the Lord, one who is identified with Him?" I am confident that if I do, every rifle will drop and I will move away safely, rejoicing in the fact that I established the right to invoke His name back in the days of God's dispensation of grace.

As we continue to examine this chain of questions, it becomes all the more clear that the right to invoke the name of the Lord is one that must have been previously established and is the privilege only of the believer. Thus another question is asked by the Spirit of God:

How then shall they be invoking One in whom they do not believe? Rom. 10:14.

There is only one possible answer to this question: "They cannot, and they will not." Furthermore, they have no right to invoke the name of One in Whom they have not believed, One in Whom they have no confidence, One Whom they have rejected. This

brings us to another question in this chain, setting forth another impossibility.

And how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? Rom 10:14 Again the answer to this must be: "Impossible. They cannot!" How can anyone believe (exercise faith) in another of whom he has not heard? Both confidence and faith in an individual is wrought in only one way: the person himself must awaken it in us. This is why Jesus Christ is said to be the Author of our faith, and it explains why the voice of God says: "Hear ye Him!" And even when someone tells us the truth concerning Christ, our faith must be transferred from the one reporting to the One of Whom he tells us. The fact that men cannot believe until they have heard brings forth another link in this chain of questions.

And how shall they hear without a herald? Rom 10:14. The word for "herald" here is *kerussin*. It does not mean "preacher" and it was wrong to so translate. And to maintain this erroneous translation just to get some aspect of a "church" program into the Word is wickedness. The word *kerussin* is the name of one who acts as a herald, one who publicly announces the message of a king or commander, or anyone else in authority. The true and faithful herald announces no word more or less than he has been given to say; he alters nothing, revises nothing, paraphrases nothing. He merely lends his voice to the voice of his superior. In the Acts period no one could believe until he came in contact with a divinely appointed herald, one appointed not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ. No man took this honor upon himself. It was conferred by the Lord.

One more important fact fastens to this chain as a golden pendant. He asks them:

And how shall they herald except they be commissioned with authority? Rom. 10:15. In this question are two mistranslations in the KJV that stultify the truth being set forth by the Spirit of God. *Kerusso* means "to herald" and does not mean "to preach." Preaching, that is, giving a message with all kinds of oratorical flourishes and proper gestures, did not belong to and had no place in the apostolic fellowship. Oratory was brought in by the Greek fathers. Note the simple four-minute message of Peter on the day of Pentecost for a true example of apostolic heralding (Acts 2:14-36).

The word *apostello*, translated "sent" here, has nothing to do with sending, except it could be that the one commissioned to perform a certain service may be required to perform his service in some other locality. The Greek word for an ordinary sending is *pempo*. I would recommend that every sincere Bible student write the word *apostello* in at everyone of its 133 occurrences in the New Testament.

The answer to this final question in the chain is that no man can herald except he be commissioned. A self-appointed herald is a contradiction of terms. To herald without a commission is a crime among men, and to claim to be God's herald is a sin against Him. From this we learn, although many will reject it, that in the thirty three years of

the Acts period, the proclamation of Jesus Christ, that is, the heralding of God's salvation-bringing message, was done only by those commissioned by God so to do. The heralding of Jesus Christ was an activity limited to such men, and if others had attempted to do it they would have come under condemnation spoken in Jeremiah 23:21: **"I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: "I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied."**

"But," someone is sure to ask, "what about the directive given to us in 2 Tim. 4:2 to herald the Word? Does not this make every believer a herald?"

It most certainly does, and it places every believer on the basis of absolute equality. Furthermore, it limits us to the heralding of God's written Word, which is given equally to all. This heralding has no connection with our sermons, our ideas, our interpretations, our experiences, our amusing stories, or our interesting anecdotes. And we should ever remember the admonition: **"The prophet that has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that has My Word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD"** (Jer. 23:28).

The heralds of the Acts period were given their messages each time they spoke the Word of the Lord. It was an official secret until they opened their mouths to speak it. One herald did not get his message from another. Therefore, all who heard could receive it as being the Word of God and not the words of a man (1 Thess. 2:13).

In the Roman epistle, the last letter Paul wrote in the Acts period, he comes to a point where he directs his words to the Gentiles (men of the nations) who were then believing (Rom. 11:13), and declares himself to be an apostle (God's commissioned one) to the Gentiles, and adds that in view of this he will magnify his office (place of service). This being true, then Paul was the only man who could speak God's salvation-bringing message to a Gentile in the Acts period.

This truth must not be obliterated by the fact that Peter did herald Christ to a God-fearing, righteousness-working Gentile household (Acts 10:2, 35). The facts are that Peter was commissioned with authority to this household, and that was the limit of his commission. Furthermore, the constantly asserted idea that someone or some company of believers went to Rome and evangelized the Romans before Paul ever wrote to them is as false as any teaching can be false. There were foreigners from Rome in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, but these were Jews (Acts 2:5, 10), and it is clear that these devout men became believers, and may have gone back to Rome as God-commissioned heralds to the many Jews in Rome, but if they were commissioned to the Gentiles, then for Paul to make the claim he did in Rom. 11:13 is nothing more than pretense, pomposity, and vanity.

End Issue No. SB148

