

HE WHO HAS EARS, LET HIM HEAR (Matt 11:15)

Joke - Man takes wife to psychiatrist. Explains that she goes around the house all day long talking to herself.. Doctor asks if she is aware of the problem? Husband replies: “No! She thinks I’m listening to her”.

Illustration - Man moves into house next to railroad track. Three trains go by every night. House shakes, dishes rattle, and the man wakes up every time. Years later - same trains go by, but now the man sleeps soundly all night long.

Conclusion - Humans have the capacity to tune out things that we could and should be able to hear!

The expression “he who has ears, let him hear” is found many times in the Scriptures (Matt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mk. 4:9, 23; Lk. 8:8; 14:35; etc.) It is repeated as a mantra to all the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). The problem is so pervasive that Isaiah wrote about it centuries before Christ: **“In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: ‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’” (Matt 13:14-15)**

Recognizing this truth can help believers cope. The men who stoned Stephen, for example, had “covered their ears” (Acts 7:57). There was, however, one man who would later find it hard to “kick against the goad”. Stephen had planted a good seed. Note! **“Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.” (Acts 7:58)** While Saul had “covered his ears” on that day, later he would encounter Christ and have “ears to hear”! Pray about it so you won’t waste your time! Preaching to some is like throwing pearls to pigs (Matt. 7:6).

Saul’s “ears were opened” on the Road to Damascus. His remarkable conversion is repeated three times in the book of Acts (chapters 9, 22, and 26). Obviously the Holy Spirit wants us to learn from his experience. As you know, when Jesus spoke to Saul on that day he understood every word. Those with Saul, however, heard sounds, but didn’t “have ears to hear”(Acts 9:7; 22:9). While everyone fell to the ground, only Saul was blinded. Perhaps this was the key to opening his ears. Someone said that God whispers to us in the good times, but shouts in times of trouble.

Based on his own experience, Saul (who became the Apostle Paul) did not waste his time preaching to those with “covered ears”. Remember! Jesus told him: **“Quick!’ . . . Leave Jerusalem immediately, because they will not accept your testimony about me.” (Acts 22:18)** Later, at Antioch , when the Jews rejected Paul, he rejected them (Acts 13:46). At Corinth Paul said to an unresponsive synagogue: **“Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” (Acts 18:6)** A similar thing happened at Ephesus. When the Jews there “refused to believe” Paul took the disciples with him and continued to teach those “with ears to hear” in the lecture hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9) Etc.

The point is, that recognizing this simple truth can save the children of God lots of wasted effort. Paul, for example, was once kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching in the province of Asia (Acts 19:6). Paul’s anxiety could be calmed by trusting Christ. The Good Shepherd knows best! Not now, but later! Later the fields in Asia would be ripe and the Ephesians would “have ears to hear”. Later, in a brief span of only two years, everybody in Asia would “hear” the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks (Acts 19:10). How beautiful it is to “wait” on God!

Let us, therefore, but sensitive to His leading, believing that when the time is right, God will not only open doors for us , but also “open the ears” of those to whom we preach!