

THE UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS MESSENGER

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“We Are All Here Present Before God To Hear”

Greg Litmer

Gospel preachers get a lot of compliments. If a man works hard, puts a lot of time into the preparation of his sermons, present them with enthusiasm, and does the best he can, those who make up the local congregation are generally very generous in their praise. I don't know of a single preacher who does not appreciate the kind words and uplifting sentiments. However, over the years I have learned that a man can preach a wonderful sermon, filled with Scripture and all of it used contextually and in the right way. He can present it with zeal and fire, but if there is no audience to hear, what has he accomplished?

Equally as important as the preacher is the audience. Equally as important as the enthusiasm and attitude of the preacher is the enthusiasm and attitude of the audience. I suspect that preaching broken down into its three most basic elements involves: the Word of God, the presentation of that Word, and the hearing of that Word.

This brings to mind Acts 10 and the opening of the kingdom to the Gentiles as Peter comes and preaches to Cornelius and his household at Caesarea. We read about this event in Acts 10. Let's turn our attention to verses 30-33. **“And Cornelius said, Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining garments, and he said, Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Send therefore to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon the tanner by the sea. And so I sent to you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.”**

I want to focus on the last statement of Cornelius, **“Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.”** Included in this sentence are the marks of a good audience. Consider the following with me briefly: *“We are all here”*-Who was here? In v. 24 we find that Cornelius had called together his relatives and close friends. In v. 27, Peter entered the house and found many people assembled. The point that I am making is that Cornelius was interested in others and he went out of his way to bring others in to hear all things commanded by God.

This tells us something about the attitude of this man. He was intensely interested, not just for himself, but for others as well. We can most certainly learn from that. As I read Acts 10, I see promptness there, certainly a characteristic of interest. When Peter got there a number were already gathered. When he prepared to speak, the statement was *“we are all here.”* There was a respect there, a reverence for all things commanded by God. They wanted to hear and none were late. Promptness is the mark of a good audience, a reverent audience. When we are really interested in something, we will be there and we will be on time. Did you notice, *“we are **all** here?”* The whole group was present. How often can that be said of us-when all who could be here are here?

Continuing to examine Cornelius' statement, notice that he said, "**we are all here present BEFORE GOD.**" The ideal audience understands that when they come together to hear all things commanded of God, they are in His presence. Even though there is no visible outward sign, no visible manifestation of His presence, His here, He is with us. That makes such an occasion very special indeed. Psalm 89:7 says, "**God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him.**" The best audiences are those who are aware of what is taking place in our assemblies, aware of the presence of God in our midst, and subsequently approach it with the appropriate kind of reverence. All of the things that we come up with to distract our attention from what is happening really just ought not to be.

Continuing our examination of Cornelius, we find, "*We are all here present before God to **HEAR** all that you have **BEEN COMMANDED BY THE LORD.***" Remember that in Luke 8:18, Jesus said, "**Therefore take care how you listen...**" Jesus was talking about the second vital step in effective communication. It is never just a matter of hearing a sound, it is a matter of comprehension, a matter of putting to use what we have heard. An individual may be the most eloquent speaker in the world, but if those listening are not taking care "how they listen," no communication will take place. In our worship assemblies the same holds true. Whoever gets in front of us to preach-if he presents his own ideas and stories instead of God's Word, then by all means don't listen. But if what is presented is true and is the Word of God, then we must be like Cornelius and his household and be present to listen.

It really is a two-fold obligation. The preacher has the obligation to preach the whole counsel of God. The audience has the obligation to take care how they listen. Put those two together, and you have communication of His Word as God intended.

In Need of Prayers	Information
<p>Sharon Tirey continues her cancer treatments.</p> <p>Taylor Osterling is home and currently stable. There will be ongoing treatments. The family is grateful for our continued prayers.</p> <p>Lilly Fitzwater (Bill Morelan's mother) is probably not going to be able to leave the care facility.</p> <p>Jim Parsons has a damaged tendon in his left arm.</p> <p>Jackie and Jacob are doing well.</p> <p>Amanda and Weston Chandler are doing great! He decided to come just after 5 am Friday morning. Congratulations to the Chandlers!</p>	<p>Remember Ron Catchen, Chuck McDavitt, and David Blakeman.</p> <p>Our Gospel Meeting with Brother David Lanius (Overland) starts today! There are still some invitations in the back to pass around to folks. Let's make this a great week of Bible study and praise!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">University Height Church of Christ 445 Columbia Avenue Lexington, Ky 40508 859-255-6257 www.uheightschurch.com</p>