

"They Have Not All Obeyed"

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The title for this article is taken from the tenth chapter of the book of Romans, verse 16. It is quoted from the King James Version. In the American Standard Version the passage reads, "But they did not all hearken to the glad tidings." It is a sad verse, no matter which version you consider.

We are well aware of the power of the Word of God. Scripture is replete with passage after passage which exalts this Divine truth. In the creation account of Genesis 1 and 2 we see, "And God said ..." a number of times. We also see that everything that God said came about. When we consider the salvation of the souls of men, we learn very quickly that it will not come about without the Word of God. James told us the Word of God is able to "save our souls" (Jas. 1:21). Peter said the Word of God is essential to the new birth (1 Pet. 1:23). The power of God's word is magnificently proclaimed by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 10.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

Yet, as powerful as God's Word is, it cannot penetrate certain kinds of hearts.

In Luke 8 Jesus spoke what is commonly known as the "Parable of the Sower." As we learn in the explanation of the parable (vs. 11-15), it focuses upon the hearts of men. Of the four kinds of soil only one ultimately benefits from the power of God's Word. We are reminded of the words of Jesus when He was questioned concerning His use of parables. In Matthew 13 the disciples questioned, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" (v. 10). In answering the question Jesus taught that it was so men could be divided. That is to say those who had a desire to know truth would be separated from those who did not. Jesus said, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (v. 11). The difference is seen in verse 15. Jesus said,

For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them (Matt.13:15).

The truth is that not all men will avail themselves to the soul-saving Word of God. Not all will see the value in obedience to those things revealed in the Word (Matt. 7:13,14). There will be those who reject the "good news" even when they have the opportunity to obey and be saved. Paul's answer to those who rejected the Word was, "ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life" (Acts 13:46).

On the other hand, there will be those who are lost because the people of God lost their evangelistic zeal. Paul wrote, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost" (Rom. 4:3). Jesus said to go and make disciples. When we fail to do such, we fail in glorifying our God. Ezekiel spoke of the responsibility of the watchman in Ezekiel 3. A failure to warn and provide opportunity for men to obey is to fail in our primary purpose of our existence—to glorify our God. It is a sad tragedy that not all men will be saved. In fact, it is magnified by the fact that a majority of the people that traverse the paths of this world will be lost. But it will be in spite of God's desire for "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). God has provided the power for our salvation in Christ Jesus. He has revealed that plan and power in the Word of God, the Bible—or more specifically, the New Testament. If we fail to hear and to

obey, then the loss of our souls is in our own hands. Let each of us meditate on these sobering truths as we study our Bible more and more.