

Title: Heed How You Hear
Text: Luke 8: 18
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Luke 8:18: Take heed therefore how ye hear.

This is God, the Lord Jesus, speaking. He gives the same exhortation in Mark and Matthew. That means this is very important. Do you take heed to how you hear the gospel? Normally, I spend at least twenty-four hours preparing a message and in prayer seeking that word and asking grace for you to be able to hear it. Do you spend at least that much time hearing the word preached? Do we spend time before the message preparing to hear the gospel and asking God's grace to hear? Then do we spend time afterwards studying what we have heard and asking God's grace to understand and do the things we have heard?

Notice the word "therefore." Here are four reasons to take heed how we hear the gospel.

First, Christ had just given the parable of the sower—only one out of the four truly heard and brought forth fruit. A hearing ear is given by the grace of God. It is a rare thing to have the truth preached and even more rare to hear it with spiritual ears. He says, "Take heed therefore how ye hear."

Secondly, the Lord said that he gives us grace and light to teach others what he has taught us in the gospel—Luke 8: 16: No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. 17: For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. 18: Take heed therefore how ye hear.

Thirdly, as we hear Christ gives more grace but he takes from those who only seem to have but who have no real interest in their hearts. He said—Luke 8:18:...for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. "Take heed therefore how ye hear."

Fourthly, Christ says those who heed this word and do it are his true family. Christ was preaching—Luke 8: 19: Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press. 20: And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. 21: And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it. "Take heed therefore how ye hear."

FEW EARS TO HEAR

First, take heed how we hear because very few have been blessed by God with grace to hear. In the parable of the sower only one out of four heard—"And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: A sower went out to sow his seed." (Lu 8: 4-5)

The chief Sower is Christ and Christ sows through his faithful preacher whom he has sent to his people. The seed sown is the truth of the glory of God in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ and him crucified—"Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God." (Lu 8: 11)

We preach the truth that all sinners died in the first representative man, Adam. But before the fall, in eternity, God the Father chose a people in Christ the Last Adam. Christ came forth representing his people. He redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. The Holy Spirit regenerates and sanctifies each one to belief of the truth: granting faith and repentance. (Rom 5: 19; Eph 1: 3-9; Gal 3: 13-14; 2 Thess 2: 13-14)

Be sure to get this. It is through the preaching of the word, the gospel—that this incorruptible Seed is sown into the heart of his people giving us life where there was only death.

1 Peter 1:23: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. 24: For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: 25: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. 2: 1: Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, 2: As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: 3: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

James 1:18: Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

I have seen young people grow up and move out of mom and dad's house and cease coming to hear the gospel. Do not ever take for granted the fact that God has sent the gospel in your midst. Few have it! And do not ever forsake the preaching of the gospel. If God saves you this will be the means by which God does it from the first hour to the last, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Cor 1: 21) Come consistently and when you are here, take heed how ye hear! It is a rare thing to hear the gospel with spiritual ears. In this parable, one out of four kinds of hearers was given ears to really hear and believe and was saved. That means very few shall be saved.

WAYSIDE HEARERS

First is the "wayside hearer"—"A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it....Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." (Lu 8: 5, 12)

"Wayside hearers" are the most common. The Lord compares them to the path where the ground is hard because of so many passing this way. Sinner, is your heart hard against Christ because you would rather fit in with this world? Are you fearful of losing your worldly friends? Are you afraid what others may think? Don't be a man-pleaser. Don't go with the flow and be a dupe to Satan and this world! All the footsteps around you in the Broadway are hardening your heart more and more. You are afraid of man!

Therefore, the word falls on your ears but it never penetrates any deeper into the heart—"And the fowls of the air devoured it—then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." (Lu 8: 5, 12) This is sad but the majority to whom I preach will not hear in their heart and conscience. The wayside hearer tries not to hear! And as soon as the message is over you think you just forget. But Satan comes and carries away the word, lest you should believe and be saved. Sinner, does that not frighten you? Does it not wake you up?

Take heed therefore how ye hear. Be like Abraham, "when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away." (Gen 15: 11) Give your undivided attention as I preach to you. Look up these scriptures. Listen with earnest desire for God to give you faith and a true understanding. When the message ends, do not fill your mind with vain talk; instead, think on what you heard. Go search the scriptures more. Ask God to give you a heart to believe.

STONYGROUND HEARERS

Secondly, is the "stony-ground" hearer—"And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture...They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away." (Lu 8: 6, 13)

The word finds an entrance with these hearers—"they receive the word with joy"—but the word only goes as far as the natural judgment. Some receive any word whatsoever without any spiritual discernment. They could listen to the truth of redemption accomplished by Christ for his particular people or they can listen to the lie of universal redemption which declares Christ a failure to save some who they claim he died for. These receive any word and

do so with joy. Others hear the true gospel from childhood. They understand the doctrine of free and sovereign grace: total depravity, unconditional election, particular redemption, invincible grace, preservation and perseverance of the saints, the absolute sovereignty of God. These receive the truth, even with joy. They can argue doctrine. They can show others in the scripture. But “in time of temptation they fall away”—“when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word’s sake, immediately they are offended.” (Lu 8: 13; Mt 4: 17)

What is the problem? They "lacked moisture." (Lu 8: 6) The Holy Spirit has not made the doctrine of God distill in the new heart as the dew of life. (Deut 32: 2) “They have no root”; Christ is not formed within. (Lu 8: 13; Gal 4: 19) They have no new heart created of God in righteousness and true holiness. There is no new heart which has been ploughed with a sense of sin, guilt and need for Christ alone! The Word has not taken root. They do not have the love of Christ dwelling in their hearts!

So in time of temptation, they "wither away." They wither in various ways: some into free-will, works religion; some wither back to their sins; some wither with unbelievers; some continue to fill a seat but they wither into lukewarmness then coldness. But they all refuse to stand with Christ in the face of opposition.

Take heed therefore how ye hear. Beg Christ to accompany the word; beg the Holy Spirit to give you root and moisture; beg God the Father to plant you as trees of righteousness. Christ said, “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” (Mt 15: 13) I guarantee this makes the true believer take heed. We pray, “Lord, make me hear your word! Plant me, keep me and water me with your word, continually!” Except Christ abide in us and we in Christ then we have no Root, no Strength.

THORNYGROUND HEARERS

Thirdly, we see how the “thorny ground” hearers hear the word—“And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it....And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.” (Lu 8: 7, 14)

The “thorny ground” hearer lasts longer, sometimes much long. They may preach or serve some way. These even appear to bear fruit, but not to perfection. It is dead fruit. What is their problem? The thorny ground hearer attempts what Christ says cannot be done. They try to serve God and mammon.

What is mammon? Christ tells us in our text. Mammon is “the cares of this world.” These are true cares such as a spouse, children, an occupation, paying the bills, serving their community. Also, mammon is “the deceitfulness of riches.” They love money and they have “stuff-itis.” Some try to keep up with others. They are overcome with materialism. Then mammon includes “the pleasures of this life.” Pleasures like applause, acceptance, position, power and pleasing the senses.

Christ said, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Lu 12: 34) The treasure of the heart always wins us. If our treasure is Christ then these other things will take a backseat. But if our treasure is mammon then it chokes the word and suffocates the thorny-ground hearer. Christ said, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” (Mt 6: 24)

These three hearers make up the majority of all who hear: wayside ground, stony-ground and thorny-ground hearers. Believer, do you find yourself uneasy? We know what is in our old man of flesh. Sometimes, this is the best way to preach depravity. Those with spiritual discernment see depravity in our selves ever so clearly. God makes his child honest. Except God keep me I could easily fall into one of those three categories. It makes us take heed therefore how we hear!

GOODGROUND HEARERS

Here is a description of the true believer—“And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold...But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” (Lu 8: 8, 15)

The good ground is a new heart given of God in regeneration. Christ lights our candle with his Light. We hear with God-given spiritual ears. “By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast.” (Eph 2: 8-9) All their fruit is of God beginning with faith, repentance, love for Christ, love for his word, love for brethren, longsuffering, patience, and so on. They do not all bring forth the same amount of fruit but all bring forth fruit, and that by the grace of God.

One of the fruits of a “good-ground hearer” is that they take heed how they hear—“And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be?” (Lu 8: 8-9) His disciples asked Christ what this meant. They desired to know and understand; they desired the Master to teach them. So they went to him. They took heed how they heard.

Someone might say, “Preacher, how do you expect me to take heed how I hear? I don’t understand what you are preaching!” But do you listen? Do you open your bible? Do you go home and ask Christ to give you an understanding? Do you search his word after hearing the gospel preached? Do you even try to hear?

We have athletes in this room. Do you take heed to what your coach says? Do you take heed to the plays? Do you study off the field, as well as on? If you don’t then you wouldn’t expect to understand like those who do? Listen to what the scriptures say about the people from Berea when Christ sent the gospel to them:

Acts 17: 11: These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. 12: Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

Did you catch that word “therefore?” This was all of grace. Christ sent them the gospel by his grace and Christ gave them a desire in their heart by grace. But they did not know that at first. They merely walked in the light God gave them. They went to where the gospel was preached and they went eager to hear and received the word with all readiness of mind. Then they searched the scripture daily to see if what they heard was true. “Therefore” many believed. They honored Christ, walked in the light he gave them and Christ honored them, giving them more light, giving them a new heart and faith to believe on him. Sinner, walk in the light Christ has given you. You have the word preached in truth. Assemble with God’s saints. Come ready to hear. Christ has given you the scriptures. Search the scriptures to see if these things are true. It may just be that Christ will give you a heart to truly believe on him.

CHRIST GIVES AND TAKES AWAY

Remember this other reason Christ gives for taking heed how we hear, “for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.” (Lu 8: 18)

We have an example of this in our text. Notice, what Christ said of his disciple and what Christ said of the other kind of hearers, “And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.” (Lu 8: 10) The “good ground” hearers were given grace to hear.

First, let me apply this to you who have never heard the gospel with spiritual ears. We are empty vessels by nature. The only way we “have” spiritual ears to hear the gospel is by Christ giving us grace to hear. He does so through the preaching of the gospel. So, first, to you who have yet to hear the gospel, “Take heed therefore how ye hear.”

Then, to you who he has already given grace to hear, he gives more grace so that you shall hear and understand more. This he also does through the gospel. So take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given.

See, these disciples used the grace he had given and took heed to the word Christ preached. They came to him asking for understanding. And he gave them more understanding. But the others said, “We see! We hear!” They only “seemed to have”. Therefore, they did not take heed how they heard. They are those who take the gospel for granted; they take the written word for granted; they do not pray to Christ asking to see and understand. So Christ left them “not seeing” and “not understanding.” Eventually, he even took away what they seemed to have. Brethren, Christ used this as a reason why we should take heed therefore how we hear.

WITNESSES OF CHRIST

Another reason Christ teaches us to heed how we hear is because the Lord gives us light so we can bear witness to others, “No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. Take heed therefore how ye hear.” (Lu 8: 16-18)

Christ said to those who came to him in secret that the gospel will not always be spoken in parables. He was fulfilling prophecy at this time so he spoke in parables because God had turned many in Israel over to reprobation. They would not walk in the light God gave them so God promised he would never give them light. (Lu 8: 10; Is 6: 9-10)

But while Christ walked this earth, Christ said, “I am the Light of the world.” But he said to them that a day would come when they preach what he taught them from the housetops. (Mt 10: 27) Now he is arisen and he gave his disciples light and sent his disciples to preach in all the world, us included. (Mk 16: 15)

Concerning the gospel we preach, our Master said, “Freely you have received, freely give.” (Mt 10: 8) Speaking on this same subject, in Mark’s gospel, “he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.” (Mk 4: 24) Notice, how Christ said it shall be given unto you concerning giving, “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.” (Mt 6: 38) There he is speaking of giving, but it shows us the same phrase, showing us that Christ promises to add fruit to us as we walk in the light he gives and give his gospel to others.

As we take heed, applying ourselves to know more of Christ, not only does Christ give us more grace to hear, personally, not only does Christ grow us in grace and make us fruitful, personally, but included in our fruit are other redeemed sinners who Christ saves through the gospel we preach. But if we do not take heed to what we hear or how we hear then how can we mete it, how can we apply ourselves or bear witness to others? Take heed therefore how ye hear.

MY FAMILY HEAR AND DO

Lastly, Christ brings this home with one last reason for us to take heed. As Christ preached, his mother and brethren came from somewhere else but they could not get to him for the multitude of people. They were without—“Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press. And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.” (Lu 8: 19-21)

I take that to mean that those Christ regards as his true family are those who hear Christ declare, “Take heed therefore how ye hear” and not only do they hear the word of Christ our God, but they also do it. Those who are the true, sincere, born-again family of Christ our God and Savior are those who sit at his feet, hanging on his every word—when the gospel is preached, when they search the written word, when Christ speaks into their hearts from

his throne of grace, when Christ speaks in providence—and they do that which Christ guides them to do. That is Christ's true family. That is reason enough to take heed how we hear.

So these are four good reasons to take heed how we hear. First, few really hear—1 out of 4—but we have been given a great privilege to hear the truth. Secondly, those who heed his word shall be given more grace; but those who only seem to have shall have all taken away. Thirdly, Christ gives his child light for the purpose of bearing witness of him. I must heed his word and do it if I will bear witness of my Redeemer. Fourthly, those who hear his word and do it are Christ's brethren. Take heed therefore how ye hear!

Amen!