

HEARING WITH HEED

NO. 2512

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 11, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
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“And 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.”

Mark 4:24.

IN these days we have many instructions as to preaching, but our Lord principally gave directions as to hearing. The first part of our text, “Take heed what ye hear,” may be viewed as a note of discrimination. Be careful what you hear—hear the truth and only the truth. It does seem to me as if some people say, “Here is a place of worship. There is sure to be a sermon, let us go in and hear it.” Ah! but all that is preached is not Gospel and it is not all hearing that will be valuable to your souls.

Especially at this present time it is incumbent upon Christians to learn how to use the discerning faculty with regard to what is, and what is not, truth. Would you eat all meat indiscriminately without tasting and testing its quality? If so, would you not soon be ill? Does a man take any drug that may happen to be upon the chemist's shelves? Does he not expect great care to be exercised in the doctor's dispensary, lest he should be taking poison where he hoped for a salutary medicine?

Remember what the apostle John says, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.” And when you know what the truth is, be not ready to listen to that which is contrary to it, or you will rue the day in which you lent your ear to the deceiver. Ulysses was not unwise when he sealed the ears of his sailors while they passed by the rocks of the sirens, for they sang so sweetly that they tempted mariners to run their ships upon the rocks where they would be wrecked. So dear friends, with sealed ears, pass by those who have nothing to communicate that can tend to your spiritual edification, and thus carry out our Savior's words, “Take heed what ye hear.”

This command is also a very clear note of warning. We take heed what we eat and what we drink. Every person who desires to have health does that, and shall we be careless of what we hear? May we not, by hearing error and falsehood, engender disease in our spirit and bring our soul into sin, and sorrow, and eternal ruin? Time is too short for us to be listening to every babbler. Heaven and earth are too important for us to be running any risk concerning our eternal state by giving heed to the speculations of evil men.

But I am going to use the text in another sense, namely, as a word of arousing to you who are hearers. I do not think that I need to say to the most of you, “Hear the Word,” for, if ever there were people who loved to hear, they are to be found in this congregation, willing to come, not only on the Sabbath, but on week-nights, too, to hear the preaching of the Word. May you, as well as the city of Glasgow, flourish by the preaching of the Word! May your souls be fat and flourishing as you are willing to hear the Word!

But, alas! there are many to whom it is needful to give an exhortation even to come and hear the Gospel. It is getting far too commonly so in London—the vast proportion of our population does not care about hearing preaching. There is a good deal of the preaching that they need not care much to hear, especially poor people who cannot understand the Latinized English, whereas, if our glorious old Anglo-Saxon mother tongue were used, I guarantee you that we would find people coming to hear much more numerously than they do.

Notice, dear friends, that there is in our text, first, a *precept*—“Take heed what ye hear.” There is, secondly, a *proverb*—“With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you.” And there is, thirdly, a *promise*—“And unto you that hear shall more be given.”

I. First, here is a PRECEPT which ought to be dear to our souls. If God commands anything, we ought to wish to know what it is that He commands.

Take heed, then, what you hear. That is, *hear with attention*. Do not hear heedlessly, for that is not really to hear. There is a mode of attending a place of worship which cannot be of much service, because the person attending is three parts asleep. He is not sufficiently asleep for his neighbor to nudge him, but he is quite sufficiently asleep to require to nudge himself and wake himself up. A great many persons, when they come to a place of worship, are like what I sometimes find upon my garden wall. It looks like a chrysalis, but when I take it up, I find that the living thing has flown away.

Here is the chrysalis of a man, but where is the man himself? Oh, he is at home. He is planning what he is going to do tomorrow, or he is thinking about what he did not do on Saturday. How often is it that a hearer’s ear is nothing better than a mere trumpet—what is said goes in and goes out again, and nothing remains.

I like that kind of hearing of which I heard concerning a boy who was noticed always to be drinking in what the preacher said. He would lean forward, and listen with eyes, and ears, and mouth all open. His mother said, “John, what makes you so attentive?” “Why, mother,” he answered, “I heard that if there was any part of the sermon that was likely to be blessed to our souls, it was just then that the devil would try to make us inattentive. So I made up my mind that I would hear every bit of it so that God might bless me by it.” If we always had such hearers as that boy, we would be sure to have faith wrought in them and God would be glorified in their salvation.

“Take heed what ye hear,” so as to *hear for yourselves*, with a personal application of the truth. “Friends, Romans, countrymen,” said the orator, “lend me your ears.” If anyone makes the same request to you, tell him that you cannot lend your ears, for you want them yourselves.

A man said once, “While I was at the service this morning, I was hearing for a man whom I saw in the aisle. I wondered what he was thinking of the sermon.” Never you mind the man in the aisle—breathe a prayer to God for a blessing on him, but hear the Word of the Lord for yourself, hear it personally.

See, there is a group of ten or a dozen people met in a parlor and there is a legal-looking gentleman with a document in front of him. He is reading somebody’s “last will and testament.” It is very dry reading. If you could listen through the keyhole, I do not think you would stop long to hear it. It is about freeholds, and leaseholds, and hereditaments, and messages, and I know not what—but just look at the attention of the hearers. Do you see that brother of the testator? The lawyer has just read the clause about one hundred pounds that is left to him. The old man has his ear-trumpet up to his ear till he hears that piece. And now that the will passes on to, “my nephew Thomas,” down goes the ear-trumpet, for the old man does not care what is left to Thomas.

There are two young people in the corner who have been expecting something and they are getting very eager, for the will has gone through a number of items and it has not mentioned them. Now see their attention, how they brighten up, and look at one another as the lawyer reads, “To my dear grandchild Jane and her husband, I leave ____.” Now they will catch every syllable. I am sure they will, and when it is done, they will say, “Would you mind reading that piece over to us again?” It is so deeply interesting to them because it concerns them personally.

I want that illustration to abide with you, for that is the way to hear the Gospel preached—waiting till it comes to the piece that specially concerns yourself, and till that comes saying, “I dare not claim that promise, I must not take that comfort, for I am not the character described.” When, at last, there comes the portion that is your own, then just drink it in and say to yourself, “I would like to hear that again, for it means me, there is something in that just suitable for me.”

O men and women, you have not heard the Gospel aright unless you have heard it as your own Gospel—unless you have discovered in it a finger pointing to yourself, and your own name, and your own character, written there!

Then, dear friends, if you would take heed what ye hear, *hear retentively*, endeavoring to remember the truth. It is a good thing to carry home as much as ever you can from the preaching of the Gospel. Eat it on the spot. Probably that is the best way to carry it away with a certainty. What a man eats at the table will not be stolen from him by a thief on the road home. And if you take in every word, as you hear it, into your very soul, saying, “O God, bless it to me now!” you will retain it to a certainty.

But do take heed that the sermon shall not be finished when the last word is spoken. Let not our *finis* be your *finis*, but let our ending be your beginning. Ministers ought to finish up with the practical application—and that is where the hearer ought to begin, and he should continue to make the practical application to himself through all his life.

Then, dear friends, hear *desiringly*. What a blessed kind of hearing that is when a man hears with longing, wishing, hungering all the way through the sermon! When the fish are hungry, then is the time for fishing, and when souls hunger and thirst after righteousness, then is the time for preaching.

Over there is a broken-hearted sinner and he is saying, “Oh, that I could hear something about a Savior!” Yonder is another soul that has been crying and praying for mercy, and has not found it, and he is saying, “Oh, that I might discover the way of mercy!” I try with all my might so to preach that souls may not miss the way of salvation.

When I was here, last week, and saw some eight friends who came to confess their faith, I was a little disappointed that out of that number there were only two who had been blessed under my ministry, but a brother to whom I mentioned it said, “Well, sir, I can bear witness that I have heard sermons from you of late of which I have said that, if I had been unconverted, I must have been brought to the Lord through hearing those sermons, for they did so earnestly press sinners to come to Christ, and they did set the Gospel so plainly before the hearers.” I felt that I could conscientiously agree with what that good brother said, for, if I have not preached the Gospel, I have meant to do it, and if I have not made you understand it, I have tried to make it as plain as ever I could.

If I liked to do so, I fancy that I could preach a very fine sermon—one that would please gentlemen who are fond of oratory—but that high-flown style of preaching seems to me to be wicked so long as souls are perishing. And I am determined, as far as ever I can, to preach the Gospel plainly and simply so that everybody may understand it. If occasionally I make you smile, I do not mind, because sometimes I can get the truth into your heart that way when I cannot get it in any other way. If you only get to Christ, it does not matter to me whether you come laughing or crying so long as you are really brought to Him.

We long to bring our hearers to the Savior and therefore we want them to so hear that they shall hunger and thirst after the living God. And when they do that, they will be sure to find Him ere long.

One thing more. Take heed that you *hear obediently*. That is to say, put in practice what you hear, for it is no use to hear unless you do so. You say to a man, “You have need of such-and-such a diet in order that you may be restored to health,” and he says, “I thank you,” but he never uses that diet—and then complains that he is not any better.

Another says, “I have been to such-and-such a doctor, and I have paid him a guinea for his advice, but I am no better.” The doctor sees the man, and he says, “Did you take the medicine that I prescribed for you?” “Well, no, sir, I am not partial to medicine.” “And what have you been eating?” When he tells him, the doctor says, “Why, those are the very things that I said you were not to touch! Have you taken so-and-so?” “No, I did not like the taste of it, so I have not gone on with it.”

If he is a sensible doctor, he says, “Why did you come to me? If you are no better, can you blame me?” “But I had your prescription, sir. I took it home with me and put it in a cupboard. I should have been greatly distressed if I had lost it on the way home.” “But you have not taken the medicine?” “No, sir, no, I have not, but I have your prescription all right.”

So people say, “I hear the Gospel regularly. I would not be absent on the Sabbath, and I go out on a Thursday evening and listen to the preacher.” “But they have not all obeyed the Gospel,” wrote Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, and that is what we still have sorrowfully to say—so many remain hearers only, but not doers of the Word.

II. Now I am going to turn to the second part of the subject, which is, A PROVERB. The text says, “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you.” You shall have your corn measured back to you with your own bushel.

What does this mean in reference to this subject? Just this—the hearer of the Gospel will get measure for measure, and the measure shall be his own measure. For instance, *those who have no interest in the Word find it uninteresting*. A man comes to listen to the Gospel without any interest in the Gospel—he does not care an atom what it is or what it is not, and consequently, he finds nothing interesting in the Gospel.

If he reads the Bible with no concern at all in it, he finds nothing in it that strikes him. He may read it as a blind man passes through a picture gallery, and he may hear the voice of the minister as a deaf man hears music. That is to say, there will be no true seeing or hearing—seeing, he shall not perceive—and hearing, he shall not understand.

Come to a service without any interest in it and there shall be nothing interesting to you in it. You have no longing to be saved, no wish to escape from the guilt of sin, no desire for heaven, no care about God. So, of course, the dullest thing to you in all the world will be a service where Christ is preached. You shall get it measured back to you with your own measure.

Next, *those who desire to find fault, find faults enough*. There are some persons who attend even the house of God with a view simply of finding fault. I have great pleasure, generally, in obliging people who wish to find fault—they shall always have faults enough to find if they want them. There shall be a fault in style, a fault in this, a fault in that, and a fault in the other. If you want to find fault—if it is any source of pleasure to you, well, it is no trouble to us, so you can proceed.

The critic of the Gospel will find so much to object to in it that he will almost think it was meant for him to object to, and so it was in a measure. The offense of the cross has not ceased. It is still a stumbling block to you that believe not, and you shall stumble and fall and be broken to pieces by it. Therefore, deceive not your own souls over that matter—with your own measure it shall be measured back to you. What you fish for, you shall catch.

On the other hand, *those who seek the solid truth learn it from any faithful ministry*. Here is a person who comes to hear the Gospel with attention. He says, “I would like to know all about this Gospel. I want to be taught the truth concerning sin and its remedy, concerning the Holy Spirit and the work that He performs in the heart. I want to hear about the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice, I want to know about the life of a Christian, his comforts, his trials, his joys, his duties.”

Well, if you hear attentively, desiring to know and to be taught, you shall find much that is worth knowing, much that will attract you, much that will call you to a yet closer attention, much that will make you want to know still more, much that will make you eager to be taken behind the scenes that you may wonder what the parables mean, and what the Holy Spirit intends to teach you. I am sure there never was a person who attentively considered the great plan of salvation in its details, who did not find much that was well worth his most careful consideration.

Further, *those who hunger find food*. Here is another man who comes, not merely with attention to know, but with a hungry desire to receive the benefit of the Gospel into his own sou. And dear friends, if you come hungering, you shall be filled, for this is our Savior’s declaration—“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” What a blessed thing the Gospel is to the man who really wants it! It is a blessed thing to be empty, because then you understand the fullness of Christ.

I was standing, one day, under one of the great beech trees in the New Forest, marking with delight the various twists of the branches. The beech tree always has a special charm to me and I thought to

myself, “This beech tree greatly interests me.” But there was a squirrel running along one of the boughs, and he stopped and looked at me—and as I was quite still, he looked till he did not want to see any more—and he passed round the trunk, and then came in sight again as he worked his spiral way right up to the top. And I said, “Ah, little squirrel! this beech tree is more to you than it is to me. To me, it is only a thing that I look at with curiosity and interest, but to you, it is your home, it is your granary—you get your beech nuts and hoard them away, and here you live and here you have your young. Winter and summer this is your place of abode. In the summer to sport in and in the winter to hide in. This beech tree is everything to you.”

Now, to the mere hearer, the Lord Jesus Christ is just like what that tree was to me. The mere hearer looks at Him with some interest, but to a poor hungry sinner, Jesus Christ is everything. He is a home for his desolation, raiment for his nakedness, food for his hunger, light for his darkness, liberty for his bondage, joy for his despair. He is his heaven upon earth and his heaven in heaven.

Dear friends, this is the way to hear the Gospel—with a great craving hunger of soul, for as much as you really want, that you shall have. If you bring a great measure of need to the sanctuary, the truth shall be measured out to you so as to fill it. Your utmost desires shall be exceeded, for God is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think.

Then, next, *those who bring faith receive assurance*. I will suppose that there is a poor soul here that comes to Christ and says, “I heard the Gospel and I believe it.” Very well, then, you shall have more faith given you, and when you have twice as much faith, if you come with that and say, “Lord, I believe more firmly and truly than ever,” you shall have as much faith again given you. And then when you come and say, “Lord, I feel confident of it,” you shall have twice as much confidence given to you. And when you get that double quantity of confidence and then come and say, “Lord, I am assured, I do believe. I am saved, I am sure of it,” you shall have a double quantity of assurance given to you, till you get to “full assurance of faith,” for, “with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you.” If you measure out an immense amount of faith in Christ, you shall have an immense quantity measured back to your faith.

Is not this a delightful proverb of the kingdom of heaven, that every hearer shall receive according to what he brings? If he brings great desire, great attention, great faith—he shall receive just in the same measure, according to the abundant grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. But remember that no man gets saved by an inattentive hearing of the Gospel. No man gets saved by a careless hearing. No man gets saved by a forgetful hearing. No man gets saved by a fitful, occasional hearing of the Gospel, but it is God’s usual way to save men by their using the means of grace, by their constantly, attentively, intensely, earnestly hearing the Word of God.

There is no merit in merely hearing. There is no merit even in faith in and of itself, but God has appended the blessing of faith to hearing and the blessing of salvation to faith. Therefore, give a large measure to God in your hearing that He may give a large measure back to you according to the proverb, “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you.”

III. Now I have to finish with A PROMISE—“Unto you that hear shall more be given.”

This is a very great and very gracious word, but I will not speak long upon it. “Unto you that hear, shall more be given.” More what? Why, first, *more desire to hear*. It is the man who has heard the Gospel who loves to hear it. I think that the best preaching of the Gospel is when the preacher himself enjoys it—when he himself is heartily in love with it—that is a part of the unction that God gives to go with it.

When a cook is preparing a dainty dish, I think he smiles as he sends it up to his lord’s table, and he has some enjoyment of it himself. I love to preach a Gospel of which I feel the sweetness in my own soul. So, dear hearer, if you begin to feel the sweetness of hearing the Gospel, you shall feel more of it. Those who are tired of preaching are those who do not often hear it. If it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ and you have often heard it, you want to hear it again.

You will be like the Duke of Argyll in Rutherford's day, when Rutherford preached about Jesus. The Duke stood up and said, "Ring that bell again, for I love to hear the music of that sweet name." That bell can never be rung too often in the ear that knows its melody, "Unto you that hear shall more be given"—more desire to hear, more delight in hearing, will God bestow upon you.

"Unto you that hear shall more be given." That is, *more understanding of what you hear*. At first a man does not understand much of the Gospel. He gets as far as the A B C of it and that saves him. But "unto you that hear shall more be given." There are certain parts of God's Word that we do not yet fully understand. I am speaking for myself and most people. Ought we, then, to read them? Yes, certainly. If you do not understand them, keep on reading them. Why? Because if you were a child and your father wrote you a letter, and there was a part of it that was beyond your comprehension, if you were a sensible child, you would say, "Well, I do not catch my father's meaning, but I shall read his letter again." So, beloved, say to yourself, "I cannot fully comprehend this Scripture, but I know that my heavenly Father meant something by it, and I love Him so much that I like to read His very words, even if I do not catch His meaning,"

As you keep on reading, you will say to yourself, "I understand that sentence, which was not plain before. I have not learned the meaning of all the letter yet, but I shall read it again." You read, and read, and read, and at last, by the reading you read yourself into the understanding of it. I am sure it is so with the study of God's Word. If the Lord had written the Bible all so very plainly, it would have been meant for us when we were merely babes in grace and there would have been nothing for us as we advanced. Therefore He has written some part of it a little less simply and some way farther on there are greater difficulties still, on purpose, that when our senses have been exercised by being used, we may come to the fullness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus. If you do not understand the Word that you hear, then hear it again and again till, at last, the light breaks in upon your soul, for, "unto you that hear shall more be given"—more understanding of what you hear.

So also, with hearing, shall be given *more convincement of the truth of what you hear*. Those who reject the Bible are generally people who have never read it. Those who read it usually receive it, and those who read it more receive it yet more firmly. Those who hear the Gospel again, and again, and again, get more and more sure that it is true.

At first they hope it is true. Then they think it is true. Soon, they believe it is true. Farther on, they know it is true. Yet farther on they are so delighted because it is true that they feel that they could die in the defense of it. "Unto you that hear shall more be given"—you shall become more and more sure of the truth of what you hear.

"Unto you that hear shall more be given." That is, *more personal possession of the blessings of which you hear*. You shall get a firmer grip of it for yourselves. You shall get a clearer view as to your own interest in it. Once, when Jesus passed by, I touched the hem of His garment with my finger and I was made whole. But when Jesus came nearer, he that had touched His garment's hem came nearer still, and laid hold upon His hand, bowed at His feet, and held Him and said, "I constrain Thee to abide with me." As he went further, he came to lean his head upon the bosom of his Lord. The more you know of Christ and the more you hear about Him, the more shall you feel sure that He is yours, and the more shall you abide in Him, trust in Him, and find joy and peace through believing in Him.

"Unto you that hear shall more be given." That is, *more delight while hearing the glorious Gospel*. No one of us knows how much God can give to a man. There is a cornucopia, in the hand of God, that is infinitely full of delights to the man who is willing to receive them. He who is a little Christian has little joy. He who gets but little of Christ and hears but little of Christ, has but little comfort. But he who will go into this business heart and soul, and invest his whole capital of body, soul, and spirit in it—he is the man who shall be rich to all the intents of bliss.

"Unto you that hear shall more be given," and yet more, and yet more, and yet more—you shall become holier, stronger, more useful, more happy, more heavenly. That word, "more," is so big that when you have thought about it as much as you like, it is still "more." And then, when you have

expanded your conceptions of it, it is still “more.” And when you seem to have gone to your utmost imagination, it is still “more.” And when you fancy that you have exaggerated, yet still it is “more,” for, “more” must be always more than he who has the largest powers of thought shall ever be able to compass.

Wherefore, beloved, I say to you, in conclusion, let us give to the Gospel that earnest kind of hearing which I have tried to describe, and let us so give it that we get a blessing from the Master as the result. And first, *hear the Gospel*. You who do not often hear it, I pray you, hear it. It must be wisdom to hear what God has to say. It is so sweet to our souls that we want you also to hear it. It has done us so much good that we entreat you to hear it.

Do not waste your Sabbaths—there are few enough of them in any lifetime—and you will soon be in the place where the tolling of a Sabbath bell will never be heard. Do, dear friends, you who do not often go to the house of God, do hear the Word. It is the happiest, the wisest, the most profitable way of spending the Sabbath day.

And you who do hear, *hear well*. The Word deserves good hearing. It comes from God. It is about your immortal soul. It is about heaven and hell. It is about Him who died for sinners. Do not count that a trifle which cost His life’s blood. The story deserves most solemn hearing. Remember, if you are an unconverted person, the Gospel is your only hope—you cannot expect to find salvation by going anywhere else than by going to hear the Word. The way of salvation is by faith in Christ, but “faith comes by hearing.” It is while you are hearing the Gospel that you are led to believe it. Its evidence lies in itself. The cross enlightens men by its own light. Therefore, do hear all you can about it.

Let me further say to you, dear friends, *hear often*. I find that when any of those who have regularly come to this place of worship begin to stop away, they do not improve spiritually. A dear brother who came to see me this week, had been absent for a year and a half. I should have liked you to have seen the joy with which he told me that, though he had been obliged to be away through poverty, he could not longer endure what he had been doing to try to make a living. He had given it up, cost what it might, because he felt that if he did not come to hear the Gospel, he would starve. And he was quite right. I am sure that you cannot absent yourself from the frequent hearing of the Word, if you are a Christian, without being like a man who goes without his meals.

If you miss your regular meals, you cannot keep well. You may say, “I ran into such-and-such a place and had something to eat.” But it does not do, either for the body or the soul, to have just a little mite of meat here and there. You must especially get your spiritual meals regularly and have them where your soul is really fed. Do not go where it is all fine music and grand talk and beautiful architecture—those things will neither fill anybody’s stomach, nor feed his soul. Go where the Gospel is preached, the Gospel that really feeds your soul, and go often.

Lastly, if you have heard well, and heard often, try to *hear still better*. Expect more out of the Gospel. Nay, more than that, *come to Christ Himself* and get at one stroke the choicest blessing you can ever have, namely, immediate and full salvation by faith in Jesus. Then go on to know more and more of what that treasure is and glorify your God, world without end.

May the Lord’s blessing rest upon you all, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

MARK 4:1-25

Verse 1. *And he began again to teach by the seaside: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.*

You can easily picture that scene—the Master sitting down in the vessel, with a little breathing space of water between Himself and the crowd. And then the multitude on the rising bank, standing one above

another, and all gazing upon the Teacher who sat down and taught them. It ought to reconcile any of you who have to stand in the crowd here when you remember that the hearers all stood in those days, and only the preacher sat down.

2-3. *And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine, Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow.*

He did not go out to show himself, to let people see how dexterous he was at the art of sowing seed. But he “went out to sow.” And every true preacher should go out with this one design—to scatter broadcast the good seed of the kingdom, and to try to obtain for it an entrance into the hearts of their hearers.

4. *And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.*

He could not help that. It was not his fault, but the fault of the wayside and of the fowls. So, when the Word of God is denied entrance into men’s hearts, if it be faithfully preached, the preacher shall not be blamed by his Master—the fault shall lie between the hard heart that will not let the seed enter in, and the devil who came and took it away.

5. *And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth.*

Persons with shallow characters are often very quick in receiving religious impressions, but they also lose them just as quickly. Those who are hasty and impulsive are as easily turned the wrong way as the right way.

6-8. *But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.*

Thank God for that! There were three failures, but there was one success, or perhaps we might more correctly say, three successes. There were three sorts of ground that yielded nothing, but at last the sower came to a piece of soil that had been well prepared, and therefore was good ground which yielded fruit, though the quantity varied even there—“some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.”

9. *And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

Some people have ears, but they have not “ears to hear.” They have ears, but they close them to that which they ought to hear. When a man is really willing to listen to the truth, then may God help him to listen with all his heart, and spiritually!

10-12. *And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.*

This judicial blindness had happened to the Jews. They had so long closed their eyes to the light that, at last, God closed them and they were blinded. They had refused to heed so many messages sent to them from the great God that, at last, this sentence was pronounced as the punishment of their sin—that they should die in their sins and that even the preaching of the Word by the mouth of the Lord Jesus Himself should be of no use to them. That is one of the most awful judgments that can ever happen to anyone, when God puts a curse even on a man’s blessings—and when the Gospel, which should be a savor of life unto life, becomes a savor of death unto death.

13. *And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how, then, will you know all parables?*

“For this is one of the simplest of them all. If you do not understand this parable, what will you understand?”

14-15. *The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the wayside, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.*

There is always a bird where there is a seed lying on the road, and there is always a devil where there is a sermon heard but not received into the heart. “Satan cometh immediately.” He is very prompt. We may delay, but the devil never does. “When they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.”

16-17. *And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word’s sake, immediately they are offended.*

These are the people that trouble and grieve the hearts of earnest ministers. And there are some revivalists who never go to a place without getting quite a lot of persons to come forward and say that they are converted. Why, I know a town where, according to the accounts that were put forth by certain preachers, there were so many professed converts every night that all the people in the town must have been converted, and a good many more from the surrounding villages. But nobody can find them now. Were they converted, then? I think not. But that is the style in which much has been done by some whom I might name. Yet there is some good even in their work.

The sower in the parable is not blamed because his work was so evanescent—how could he prevent it? As the soil was so shallow, the apparent result was very quick and the disappointment was equally quick. I do trust, dear friends, that you will never be satisfied with temporary godliness, with slight impressions, soon received and soon lost. Beware of all that is not the work of the Holy Ghost. There must be a breaking up of the iron pan of the heart, there must be a tearing out of the rocks that lie under the soil, or else there will be no harvest unto God.

18-19. *And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.*

The seed cannot grow in such soil as that. The man is too busy, or he is wholly taken up with pleasure. The women are too proud of themselves, or even of the clothes that cover them. How can there be room for Christ in the inn when it is crowded with other guests?

20. *And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred.*

All converts are not equally good. I am afraid that in our churches there is a large number of the thirty-fold people. We are glad to have them, but they are not very brilliant Christians. Oh, for some sixty-fold converts—some who are fit to be very leaders in the church of God! And when we get up to a hundred-fold—when it is not merely one hundred per cent, but one hundred gathered for every one sown—then are we indeed rejoiced. When everything that is good is multiplied over, and over, and over, and over, and over again, a hundred for one, and when each one of that hundred bears another hundred—that is the blessing we long to see. This hundred-fold seed has in it the capacity for almost boundless multiplication. At the first sowing, we get a hundred-fold return. But what comes of the next sowing, and the next, and the next? God send us this style of wheat! May we have a great quantity of it!

21. *And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?*

So this wheat, then, is meant to be sown. The Word of God is intended to be spread. “Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed?” If it were put under a bed, it would set the bed on fire and so, if you have true grace in your heart, there is nothing that can smother its light—the fire and the light together will force their way out.

22-23. *For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither anything kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.*

Tell out, then, what God has told you—and let everybody hear from you the truth as you yourself have heard it. See the compound interest that there is to be in this blessed trading for Christ?

24-25. *And 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. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.*

When the Gospel is not received, when a man refuses it, it becomes a positive loss to him. There is a way by which it so works that, what a man thought he had, disappears. Some have been made worse by the preaching of that Word which ought to have made them better. May it not be so with any one of us!

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