



## **“Take Heed How Ye Hear”**

**Kevin Presley**

The Bible was given to us for us to know as much of the mind of God as He chose to reveal to us. It is God’s message to us. But take a radio or television broadcast, for instance. For a program to be relayed, there must not only be a working transmitter, but also a working and reliable receiver. A television tower can transmit the strongest signal and provide the most compelling and informative programming that anyone may ever want to see, but if television sets in the area are not working and tuned to the correct frequency, the signal is lost on the airways.

That’s the case with God’s message to man. God’s word accomplishes that which God intends for it to and it does not return to Him void, the Bible says, yet many receivers never receive it. They may not be listening at all or they may be tuned to the wrong frequency, so to speak. There may be interference keeping the signal from being clearly received and the message from being understood. Our Lord illustrated this in one of His great parables, the parable of the sower, in **Luke 8:4-15**.

A parable is an example or illustration, much like a speaker uses today when trying to get an important or difficult point across. Within this parable, Jesus is talking about what we do with His word when we hear it. He likens it to a farmer who goes to his field and plants seed. That seed falls on different types of soil—some is fertile, and some isn’t a very good place for growing a seed. Some falls on hardened ground where it cannot penetrate the soil and grow. Thus it is with those who hear, but have a hard heart. Just as the birds come to a field, the devil comes and plucks up and carries away the seed of the kingdom so that the person will never believe and be saved.

Then, some falls upon shallow soil that doesn’t allow the moisture needed for the plant to survive the heat of the sun. In that way, some hear the word and obey it, but have no real root in Christ, so when difficulties come along, they fall away and spiritually die. Still more seed falls on neglected soil where the weeds and thistles spring up and choke out the desirable plant. That’s how many allow worldliness and carnal concerns to choke out the word of God in their hearts and they wither and die as well. Lastly, some falls on good, prepared, fertile soil. It grows and produces an abundance of fruit. Jesus says those

are the good, honest, and noble hearts who hear the word, and it produces the fruit of salvation and sanctification in them.

So, what kind of soil is your heart? The Lord goes on with another brief parable to expand upon this.

**Luke 8:16-17** “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.”

Jesus says the purpose of the lamp is to give light, so it would be foolish to light the lamp and then cover it up. The person who could be described as good soil and as having a good and honest heart in the former parable will allow the light of truth to shine into their heart, and through them will give light to others. With all of that information in mind, Jesus narrows this down to a point in the following verse.

**Luke 8:18** “Take heed therefore how ye hear: 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 how you hear.* Whether or not we understand the word of God, discover its truth, and it results in salvation depends on whether we hear it and how we hear it. Today, we’ll look at some ways in which people often hear the word of God. Listen very closely and you’ll see what kind of hearer you are.

It’s quite a challenge to get people to stop long enough in this busy age to let someone talk to them about the Bible. There are even fewer who really listen when the word of God is spoken. But listening is a skill that we must acquire if the word of God is going to do us any good. You can read the Bible from cover to cover and hear a lifetime of sermons, but the fact of the matter is, until you learn how to listen to the word of God, it will do you no good. In fact, it can do you more harm than good if you don’t learn to listen to God when He speaks through His word.

That’s what Jesus is telling us when he warns us to *take heed how you hear*. Notice that Jesus admonishes us to be careful how we hear. Some contend that only those elected arbitrarily by God before the foundation of the world can be saved when God chooses to send the Holy Spirit to perform a direct operation upon their hearts so they can understand the word of God. But notice that Jesus says that we are to be careful how we hear. He places responsibility on the hearer. We can choose how we hear and receive the word of God. We can choose to read it and open our hearts to it. We can choose to understand and obey it, or we can choose to do otherwise. With that in mind, let’s consider how people hear the word of God today.

First of all, there are multitudes of people who hear the word of God indifferently. I suppose the word *indifference* sums up the days in which we live. That was certainly the case with a man that we know as Pontius Pilate. Here is a powerful man who held the Lord’s fate in his own hands. He was face to face with the Son of God, and he had to admit that there was no fault in Jesus. The Jews had trumped up false charges against Christ, and Pilate could see through all of that. The problem was, he didn’t really care. He was the governor in that part of the Roman Empire and he really cared nothing about the Jew’s religion as long as they remained in bondage to Caesar and paid their taxes. In Pilate’s way of thinking, Jesus was no threat to him. The idea that Jesus was a king who threatened the rule of Caesar and of Rome—to Pilate that was laughable. He just wanted the whole thing to go away. It was a bother to him

to even have to adjudicate such a thing. If it weren't for the concern of his wife regarding trying Jesus and being careful about the decision that he made, Pilate for sure would've been completely indifferent to the matter. You recall what Jesus said as He defended Himself.

**John 18:37** "Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

But Pilate was unimpressed, and with a shrug of his shoulder, he said, *What is truth?* Unfortunately, that's how a lot of people look at truth today when looking at the Bible. They don't believe that anybody has the right to lay claim to the truth, particularly where their lives and their beliefs are concerned. We hear a lot today about 'my truth' and 'your truth' as opposed to the truth, because it's in vogue today not to believe that there's any such thing as absolute truth. People are indifferent toward truth and therefore toward the word of God because it claims to be truth (**John 17:17**).

Pilate finally gave in to the demands of the Jewish leaders, handing over Jesus to the Roman soldiers to be crucified. Not because he had some vendetta against Jesus or because he thought Jesus had done anything worthy of being killed. Pilate just wanted the matter off of his hands. You recall as he made that decision how that he washed his hands in a basin of water, saying he was washing his hands of any guilt in the death of Jesus.

**Matthew 27:24** "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it."

But the blood of Jesus stained the hands of Pilate that day. One day, Pilate died, and one day, he will rise again to face the Lord in judgment. He'll be laden with the guilt of his cowardice and deadly indifference, and his hands will be soaked in the blood of the Son of God. Jesus stood in his courtroom that day, and Pilate had to make a decision concerning Jesus. Just like Jesus stands in the courtroom of your heart and you must render a verdict concerning Him. There is coming a day when Pilate and all of us will stand in Jesus's courtroom and He will render a verdict concerning us based upon what we did with Him. You may dismiss the word of God. You may think it's a nuisance or a bother. You may put it off to another time because it's just not pressing enough, and you have more important issues on your plate to deal with. Friend, if that's the way you're looking at things, you're making a tragic mistake because the word of God will determine where you spend eternity.

**John 12:48** "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

You and I can be indifferent about the stock market, politics, and anything else, but we are making an eternal mistake when we brush the word of God aside. There is not a more important thing that is worthy of your entire consideration today or any other day than what God has said. You need to listen to God's word in view of eternity, as though your life depends on understanding and obeying it because it does. No wonder Jesus said *take heed how ye hear*.

Secondly, some hear the word of God with a prejudiced heart. In other words, they filter what they hear with the traditions and prejudices of their own thinking, their own religious background or practice. It's very difficult to get any of us to just honestly clean the slate of our minds and hearts to listen to the

Bible and take it for what it says. A lot of us claim to do that, but truth be told, we allow the way we read and see the Bible to be influenced by what we are and what we want to think. To lay aside the preconceived ideas we have about the Bible is a great challenge, but it is a necessary one if we are to understand what the Bible says. We have to guard against this tendency because we can be blinded to the truth. The Jews of Christ's day did exactly that. The religion revealed in the Old Testament had undergone a number of radical changes by the time Jesus came into the world. Hundreds of years since Moses gave the law had allowed the traditions of the Jews to creep in and take the place of what God's law actually said. The result was that their religion was based on their own traditions rather than an actual sincere desire to do what God through Moses had commanded. They missed the whole point of the law because they had obscured, twisted, and covered it up by their own traditions. In fact, the law had been so polluted by their traditions that their religion was unacceptable to the Lord.

**Mark 7:7-9 "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."**

Jesus never condemned anybody for honestly trying to follow the law of Moses. Jesus kept the law of Moses. The problem is, they had replaced the law of Moses with their traditions. They twisted and perverted the law to make it fit and allow for their traditions and practices. They looked for loopholes in the law and criticized the Lord and His disciples because they actually honored Moses and went by the law instead of conforming to the later traditions of their elders. They so resented the Lord for His interpretation of the law that they rejected Him and plotted to kill Him. The reason they finally did crucify the Son of God was that they were blind to who He was. There were those who crucified Him knowing who He was. I believe these were those who were committing *the unpardonable sin* that Jesus spoke about on one occasion. But the fact is that many people were simply blinded.

The Old Testament prophets clearly said that a Messiah would come and deliver them. That a king would one day rise up in the stead of David and sit upon His throne and rule over them. That all sounded wonderful. They had looked forward to that for a thousand years! But there were a number of events that came to pass from the time those promises were made that changed the way they thought about it and approached the subject. The time of the powerful Davidic kingdom and Solomonic empire was long past. They had since gone off into Babylonian captivity and come back and had never been quite the same. Then you have the 400-year intertestamental period—the silent years where they had been passed from one empire to another until now they were in the hands of the Romans, resenting the heavy taxed placed on them. They had become so worldly and carnally minded that they now thought the Messiah would be nothing more than an earthly ruler who would come and conquer the Romans, restoring the sovereign Jewish state. That wasn't the mission of Christ at all. Jesus didn't come to be that kind of king.

**John 18:36 "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."**

When He came claiming to be their king but teaching principles like meekness, humility, turning the other cheek when smitten, loving your enemies, doing good to those who do evil to you...they saw Him as simply a blasphemer worthy of death. How dare a homeless, penniless pacifist reject from Nazareth claim to be the Son of God and a king of God's people! So, they killed Him.

**Luke 23:34 “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do...”**

Many of them really didn't. They were so blinded by their worldly ambitions that they failed to see the Messiah they had long awaited. For many of them, it took His resurrection from the dead and the confirmation of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost for them to finally open their hearts to the truth of the gospel. Some of them never did. Today, it's just as easy to do this when it comes to the Church that Jesus established. We may fail to recognize the Church of the New Testament because we're so bound to our own traditions and ways of thinking that have replaced the simple teachings and practice of the original Church. Christendom is filled with traditions that have come about in the last thousand plus years that you can't read anything about in the Bible. You see multitudes of people who take those traditions for granted until they reject what the Bible actually says, or they twist and mutilate it to make it fit their doctrine, or they just remain woefully unaware.

Let me give you an example or two to think about. Instrumental music was never used in the early Church or spoken of by Christ or His apostles. The Bible just teaches that they sang. The word *a cappella* means *as in the chapel* or *as is done in the church*. That comes as a surprise to many people because instrumental music is so prevalently used in the religious world. Read through the New Testament. It was not used in the early Church. In fact, church history bears this out. Instrumental music in so-called Christian worship actually began in the Catholic church 600 years after the apostles lived and the Church was established. You see, it's a tradition of man. One that most take for granted. Not a commandment of God. Infant baptism and sprinkling in place of baptism are also church traditions and not apostolic practice. Many of the things that constitute religious service and practice today are nothing more than human traditions and are simply not taught by the apostles or practiced in the first century church. What saith the scriptures? That's the question. And are we willing to listen to the scriptures and take the word of God for what it says? Or do we read it through the glasses of tradition and prejudice? We could be surprised to learn that what we believe and have taken for granted for a long time is simply wrong and steeped in human tradition and not in revelation. *Take heed how ye hear.*

Thirdly, some hear without conviction. They hear what the Bible says, but it doesn't move them to obedience. If the Bible doesn't move you to obedience, the Bible isn't going to do you any good. It will do you more harm than good if it doesn't move you to obedience, if it's not mingled with faith, if it doesn't produce conviction. There are many who acknowledge that the Bible is true, but they won't submit their lives to it.

**The book of Acts** tells of a man who heard the word of God without conviction. Paul was given the privilege of preaching to some noble men. Top of the list was Roman Procurator, Felix. Felix was an unscrupulous ruler. He really was a terrible person. Paul had to stand before him after he was arrested for disturbing the peace. In fact, he stood before Felix three times. The third time Felix called for him, he gave Paul the opportunity to make his case for the gospel.

**Acts 24:24-25 “And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”**

That's the way many react to gospel preaching today. It's not that they just flat-out reject it. Many just don't have time for it. They're just not convicted enough to do anything about it. Maybe they don't want

to give up their position in life. Maybe they don't want to give up their sin. Whatever the case, Felix died. We have every reason to believe that he died in a lost state, because if he was depending on a "convenient season," those never come. It takes conviction to become a Christian. You must be convicted enough by what the word of God says to give up whatever you have to give up, to rearrange whatever you have to rearrange, to crucify your pride, to let the old man die and to come alive to Christ, to surrender and submit to the teaching of His word. *Take heed how ye hear*--that you're not just hearing the word without conviction. I hope the word will move you to do what it says today and to be a faithful Christian.

Lastly, the category we all want to be in. Some hear the word of God gladly. Some of those who crucified Jesus that we talked about earlier heard Peter preach fifty days later, on the Day of Pentecost. After the resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, Peter stood to preach to them.

**Acts 2:36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."**

When their eyes were finally opened, the Bible says they were pricked in their hearts.

**Acts 2:37-38 "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."**

It's interesting that when Peter said that, a debate didn't break out as to whether a person had to be baptized to be saved or not.

**Acts 2:41 "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."**

*The same day!* That very day. That's what it means to *gladly receive the word of God*. You don't question, quibble, debate, or try to get around what God commands. In humility, you submit to what He says. You gladly receive His word and let it change your heart and your life. I hope you'll do that today if you need to become a Christian. God has plainly revealed the way of salvation through His Son within His word. If we'll place our faith in Jesus Christ, turn from our sins in repentance, be willing to confess Him before men, and be buried with Him in baptism for the remission of our sins, He has promised to remit our sins and add us to His church. That's how we're saved through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If you need to take those steps, I hope you'll hear the message of God's word today and have the conviction to act upon it.

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