

"Hearing the Gospel"

God gave us ears to hear. Are we listening to Him? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. This is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." And today we're going to explore the importance of listening to God.

Welcome to In search of the Lord's Way. We want everyone to hear and know the Lord. We know the true way to know the Lord is through a study of His Holy Word, the Bible. We can't count on feelings or the thoughts of men. Let God speak for Himself in the Scriptures. We'd love to hear from you and want to be a part of your life each week.

"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord GOD in Amos 8:11 and 12, "When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the LORD. People will stagger from sea to sea And from the north even to the east; They will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, But they will not find it." For many today, there is a famine for the Word of God. We don't lack Bibles; we lack Bible students.

While the Bible is the bestseller of all time and most Americans revere the Bible as sacred literature, many simply don't read it or know what it teaches. In a recent report by the American Bible Society, a majority of Americans are curious about the Bible, Jesus or both. But sadly, many still know little about God's teaching on sin, the soul, salvation, or the judgment. If we want to live with God eternally in heaven with joy and peace, we must hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now if you want to study more about this topic, we offer the information on this program free. If you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program free on our website at www.searchtv.org and on YouTube.

Larry Owsley will lead the Edmond church in our worship in song, we'll read from Isaiah 1:18 to 20, and explore the need for hearing the gospel.

Our reading today comes from the prophet Isaiah chapter 1:18 to 20 and emphasizes the need to really pay attention and to listen to God and to do His will.

"Come now, and let us reason together,"

Says the LORD,

"Though your sins are as scarlet,

They will be as white as snow;

Though they are red like crimson,

They will be like wool.

"If you consent and obey,

You will eat the best of the land;

"But if you refuse and rebel,

You will be devoured by the sword."

Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

God means what He says and we need to take Him seriously. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that Your love can be abounding upon us whenever we are following You. Help us Heavenly Father never to take You for granted but always take You seriously as we listen to Your word and obey it. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Proverbs 1:5 says, "A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel." You know from our earliest days in school, our teachers encouraged us to listen

and to follow directions. Well listening, really listening, may be one of the hardest tasks of life. We may hear words, but have we learned to listen and to receive the message that we heard? Have we sought God and treasured up His words in our hearts?

The Bible everywhere emphasizes the importance of listening to God's word. The psalmist sang in Psalm 119:10 to 11, "With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You." Psalm 1 verses 2 to 3 speaks of the man who is blessed: "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He'll be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers."

Some say they don't like rules, but the psalmist saw great value in the rules that God gave. In fact, he meditated on them, he stored them up, and he considered them significant! He didn't want to forget them or wander away from them. They were his treasure against sin. I hope that you seek the Lord with all your heart and love God's Word like that.

Now every parent who loves the Lord wants to see his children follow God's ways and His wisdom. Solomon said in Proverbs 2:1 to 5, "My son, if you will receive my words And treasure my commandments within you, Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding; For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding; If you seek her as silver And search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will discern the fear of the LORD And discover the knowledge of God." Solomon knew how important knowing God and His word was to his children. Do you? Have you made the Word of God a priority in your home, mothers and fathers?

The Lord Jesus more than once said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 13:9). In the book of Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, we can read seven times that: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." God wants and demands to be heard. God spoke from heaven to Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration about Jesus. And He said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased. Listen to Him" (Matthew 17:5). The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 4 and verse 4, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Now we need all that Jesus says, not simply select passages. So little things that we like.

Now the Scriptures record the parable of the sower. And it describes how hearts respond to the teaching of Jesus. Matthew 13:18 to 23 says: "Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one (the devil) comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom the seed was sown beside the road. The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.

And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

Now the seed in this parable is the word of God, the gospel. The first group is like the soil beside the road. Matthew 13:19 explains, "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road." Just as the seed never quite breaks into the soil, so the

word never quite breaks the hardened heart. Some never take the word seriously, never believe, and lose their opportunity to become Christians.

John 1:11 to 13 tells how Jesus “came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” Now Satan came and stole the Word from them, so they never heard what was necessary for them to know the truth and to be saved. And many today never have the Word planted in their hearts, never truly hear the gospel, and never know the truth about Jesus.

The Jesus they think they know and the Jesus of Scripture are two different people. Satan is a deceiver. He doesn’t want people to have the truth in their hearts, so he substitutes a mythical Jesus for the real one. This is a Jesus that never challenges them to repent and would never condemn anyone. He is very attractive to worldly people but He’s not the Jesus of Scripture.

Then, there’s the rocky soil. These folks hear the message and believe quickly; but when temptation comes, they fall away because they lack deep spiritual roots. Their shallow, superficial faith isn’t strong enough to sustain them. They only believe for a while. Trials or persecution cause their faith and their commitment to Christ to dry up. Oh, they heard the good news of salvation but didn’t treasure it up in their hearts, so they leave their faith behind.

Third, Jesus tells of the thorny soil. They hear the word, but they let other things choke the word out of God out of their hearts. They don’t have room in their hearts for God, for His word, because they let the cares of the world, their delight in riches, or the pleasures of this life become their focus.

Colossians 3:1 to 4 says, “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (and) When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.” That is where our hearts must be, where we remain if we wish to live with Christ in glory. The psalmist said in Psalm 119:10, “With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me wander from Your commandments.” When we need that way of thinking we need it all of our lives, otherwise we too might have hearts filled with distractions that take us away from God.

The fourth soil is made up of “good and honest hearts.” They hear and understand the Word. And rather than argue with God, they accept it and they hold fast to it. And in the end they bear fruit with patience, some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some a hundredfold. Oh, a good and honest heart is willing to be in subjection to God because He loves Him and is willing to be honest about himself. Many hearts lie to themselves about their need for God or about their need to change. Many hearts would rather argue about what is sinful than listen to what God actually says. An honest heart will listen to God and take what He says seriously. They will repent and turn to the ways of the Lord.

God can produce fruit in good and honest hearts, because His Word is firmly fixed there. If you’re not willing to listen to God, God cannot help you; but if you’re willing to listen, God can do great things in your life! Many want to claim the promises of God in the Word but are unwilling to let God’s Word be their moral and spiritual authority. You can’t have the promises of God if you’re unwilling to accept the rest of what He says. God is God, and we are His creatures. We don’t know more than He does. And we’re not wiser than He is. We must listen to Him rather than think we can tell Him what we ought to believe.

Listening to Him means that we regard His Word as the final authority. And instead of going with our “gut feelings” or listening to other voices in this world, we listen to Him. Listening means we quit

trying to rewrite what the Bible says, quit trying to remake God in our own image, and quit thinking God must change to please our culture. God is God. And He was God before He created the world, and He'll be God after this world comes to an end. He doesn't change, and His Word, His bible, doesn't change. Psalm 119:89 says, "Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven." What was true when Jesus spoke in the first century is settled in heaven and has not changed. The Lord Jesus said in John 10:35 that Scripture cannot be broken. You can't change it, you can't edit it, or dispose of it. It stands written.

The book of Galatians reminds us there is only one, unchangeable gospel. The gospel of Christ is not a cafeteria, where people can choose what they want and then leave the rest. No. No, the Lord determines what the gospel is, and our task is to hear all He says and then to be obedient.

Paul wrote in Galatians 1:6 to 9, "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; (no) only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ (twist it up). But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! (yes accursed) As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, (that is from the apostle Paul in scripture) he is to be accursed!" We must follow the one, true gospel. We must not imagine any other gospel will do.

The one, true gospel points to Jesus Christ, crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. 1 Corinthians 15:1 to 4 says, "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

Now why is all this important? Because we can be deceived, and many have been. If we believe a gospel that has been tampered with, we'll be following a lie. We must hear and obey the one, true gospel. The Lord Jesus said in Mark 4:24, "Take care what you listen to." A false gospel will only destroy those who follow it. The devil likes to counterfeit the gospel and then to deceive people. He likes to make people think they are saved, even when they are following a lie. He is your enemy friend. And so we must, we must, we must be careful not to fall into his trap and then lose our souls. We're going to spend this month looking at what God desires from us to obey. And it's that one, true gospel. Please study with us each week. And learn what we must do to be right with the living God.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're so grateful for Your love Your grace Your mercy your compassion on us each day. And Father we know that You have given us Your word to assure us of the truth and to help us to know what we can count on. Father help us to be good bible students. To love Your word. To love the truth. To love what is right and to stay and hold fast to Your word so that we may be able to live with you forever one day. Father we love You help us to love You more and to love others. And help us to do Your will. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:24 to 27, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."

The Lord defines a wise man as one who hears and does what He said. He doesn't add to the gospel, or take away from it. He doesn't claim what God said in the first century doesn't apply today or try to rewrite the gospel. He simply hears and obeys the words of Jesus. On the other hand, the foolish man hears, but he doesn't do what he's heard. He does something else. He builds a house but not a house built on the solid foundation of the words of Jesus. So, when the time of testing comes, the one who listens and obeys survives, but the one who ignores what he hears and does what he wants is ruined.

Hear the Lord and obey Him; become a Christian today! Put your faith in Christ and confess Him, repent of your sins, and be baptized into Jesus Christ and into His death. When you're baptized, the Lord will wash away your sins (Acts 22:16) and raise you up to walk in newness of life (Romans 6 verse 4). And today is the best day for you to hear the Lord and respond to His message.

We hope that today's emphasis on listening to God has challenged you to think. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of our message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now our programs appear on our website at www.searchtv.org and on YouTube. We offer Bible Correspondence courses that we believe will help you to learn more about God's will. And if you want one, let us know. Now we won't ask you for money. We won't put you on a list.

But we do ask that you please worship with a church of Christ in your area. You need a church family to stay strong spiritually and to stay faithful. And if you are looking for a healthy church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Churches of Christ love and they want guests, and you'll be glad that you attended. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about the program. And always God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.