

Hearing the Gospel

1 Peter 1:22-25

God gave us ears to hear, but are we listening? We are going to examine the topic of the importance of listening to God this morning.

In Amos 8:11-12 God declares, ***“Behold, the days are coming when I will send a famine on the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it.”***

Even though the Bible is still the #1 best seller of all time, and even though the Bible is highly revered in America, people simply don't read the Bible to know what it really says. In a recent report by the America Bible Society, 79% of the people surveyed said they believed in the Bible and were knowledgeable about it. But only 45% could identify, which four books make up the gospels.

Sadly, many people know very little about God's teaching on sin, the soul, salvation, or about the judgment day. So many are not aware that if we want to live with God eternally in heaven with joy and peace, then we must hear the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4; 2 Thess. 1:6-10).

Proverbs 1:5 says, that ***“A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel.”*** From early on we are taught to listen. Parents want their children

to listen and pay attention to them. In school, teachers expect you to listen and pay attention to them. And for a relationship to properly work, the partners must learn to listen and pay attention to one another. And you know what I have found out from my own experience? **To listen, to really listen, is one of the hardest tasks of life.** We often hear the words, but have we learned to listen and receive the message that was being sent. Have we sought to listen to God and treasure up the words in our hearts?

The Bible everywhere emphasizes the importance of listening. The psalmist sang in Ps. 119:10-16, *“With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes! With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.”*

I hope you heard what the psalmist rejoiced in? He rejoiced in the ordinances or rules that God gave. He understood that they were for his own good, and he considered them important – important enough that he meditated upon them. He wanted to understand them and be able to apply them to his life. He did not want to sin or fall away from God.

Every parent who loves the Lord wants to see his children follow God’s ways and wisdom. In Proverbs 2:1-5 Solomon told his son, *“My son, if you will receive my words, and treasure my commandments within you, and make your ear attentive to*

wisdom, and incline your heart to understanding; for if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; and 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, how utterly important knowing God and His word was to his children. Dads and moms have you made the Word of God a priority in your home?

More than once the Lord Jesus said, “*He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*” And in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 we can read seven times: “*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. He said, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him*” (Mt. 17:5). Matthew, Mark and Luke all record the parable of the sower – though one called it the parable of the soils. Mark’s explanation of that parable is found in 4:14-20, let’s read it together, “*¹⁴The sower sows the word. ¹⁵And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. ¹⁶And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. ¹⁸And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, ¹⁹but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²⁰But those that were sown on the good soil are the*

ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”

In this parable, the seed is the word of God, the gospel. The first group is like the soil beside the road. Mt. 13:19 explains that ***“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and he doesn’t understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what’s been sown in his heart. And this is the one on whom the seed was sown beside by the road.”*** Just as the seed never quite broke into the hard soil, so the word never quite breaks into the hardened heart. Some never take the word seriously, never believe, and they lose their opportunity to become Christians.

John 1:11-13 tells about Jesus ***“¹¹He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”*** Satan came and stole the word from them, so they never heard what was necessary for them to know about the truth to be saved. Many today never have the word planted in their hearts, never truly hear the gospel, and never know the truth about Jesus.

The Jesus that they think they know and the Jesus revealed in the Bible are really two different people. Why? Because Satan is a deceiver. He doesn’t want people to have the truth in their hearts, and so he substitutes a mythical Jesus for the real one. This is a Jesus that never challenges them, that is Satan’s Jesus, that never condemns anybody, that Satan’s Jesus. He is quite attractive, but he is a phony. He is not the Jesus of the N.T.

Then there is the rocky soil. These folks hear the message and believe quickly; but when temptation and trial comes, they fall away because they lack the deep spiritual roots that they need. Their shallow, superficial faith isn't strong enough to sustain them. They only believe for a while – trials and persecution cause their faith and their commitment to Christ to just dry up. They heard the good news of salvation, but they did not 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 worldly things choke the word of God out of their hearts. They have made room for God's word in their heart, but they also left lots of room for worldly cares and worldly pleasures, which crowd out the word of God.

Colossians 3:1-4 says, ***“¹If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”*** You see that is where our hearts must be, where we must remain if we wish to live with Christ in glory. The psalmist said in Ps. 119:10, ***“With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!”*** We need to learn to think this way ourselves, 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 they understand the word of God. Rather than argue with

God, they accept it and they hold fast to it. In the end they bear fruit with patience, some 30 fold, some 60 fold, and some 100 fold. You see a good and honest heart is willing to be in subjection to God because he loves God and knows that God loves him and would never give commandments that are burdensome and unneeded. Too many hearts want to argue with God about what is sin and what is not rather than to listen to what God actually says. An honest and good heart will listen to God and make the needed changes.

God is able to produce fruit in a good and honest heart, because His word is firmly fixed there. If you are not willing to listen to God, God cannot help you; but if you are willing to listen, God can do great things in your life! Many want to claim the promises of God in His word, but they are unwilling to let God's word be the moral and spiritual authority in their lives. But you can't have the promises of God if you are unwilling to accept the rest of what God says. God is God, and we are His creation. We don't know more than He does. We are not wiser than Him. We therefore need to listen to Him and believe.

Listening to God means that we regard His written Word as the final authority. Instead of going with our "gut feelings" or listening to other voices in this world, we listen to Him and His revealed Word. Listening means we quit trying to rewrite what the Bible says, we quit trying to remake God in our own image, and we quit thinking God is subject to our culture – God is not an American, nor does he think like an American. He is the one who created all things, and He is the one that best knows how the created world should act and be. And in the end – on the last day

of this earth, all things American will be gone, but His word shall live on. His word doesn't change. Psalm 119:89 says, "***Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.***" What was true when Jesus spoke in the first century is settled in heaven and has not changed. In John 10:35 Jesus said that Scripture cannot be broken. That is, you cannot change it, edit it or dispose of it. What is written stands forever in all eternity.

God speaking through Paul in the book of Galatians reminds us that there is one, unchangeable gospel. The gospel of Christ is not a cafeteria, where people can choose what they want and leave the rest. God determines what the gospel is, our task is to hear and be obedient to what is written.

In Gal. 1:6-9 we read, "***⁶I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—⁷not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.***"

There is only one true gospel – it is the one preached in the N.T. Of that gospel Paul said in 1 Cor. 15:1-4, "***¹Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand,² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.³ For I delivered to you as of first importance***

what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures...”

Why is all of this important? It is important because we can be deceived, and quite frankly, many have been deceived. If we believe a gospel that has been tampered with, we will be following a lie. We must hear and obey that one true gospel.

In 2 Thess. 1:6-10 we read, “⁶***since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.***” According to Paul those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord. And in 1 Cor. 15:1-4 we read that the gospel was the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. According to Paul in Romans 6:1-14, this is exactly what baptism does, it lets us obey the complete gospel and be crucified, buried and resurrected like our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is why Jesus in Mk. 16:16 said, “***Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.***” This morning I ask you to listen to God’s word and obey the gospel so you won’t suffer eternal death. Won’t you come in

obedience to the Lord and obey His will for your life. Come as we stand and sing.