

## HEARING & HEEDING

In Luke 8, Jesus says *"take care how you hear"* and *"he who has ears to hear, let him hear."* He's been explaining the parable of the seed and the sower, and how only one soil bore fruit. Not everyone who hears the word of God becomes a believer in Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Being a Christian is more than just hearing God's word, it's about bearing God's fruit. Those who hear and believe will grow and produce the fruit of the Spirit, through repentance and faith.

**ETERNAL LIFE AT STAKE** - *"Saving faith"* is your whole person wholly believing in Jesus as Christ, Lord, Savior, with all your heart, mind, and will. The parable of the soils shows that casual hearers are not saved, those who believe only emotionally, only intellectually, or only volitionally.

The evidence of those who are born again from above by the Holy Spirit is a transformed life, which produces the fruit of the Spirit, persevering, growing, and bearing God's fruit. "The degree of benefit you receive from the means of grace depends entirely on the way in which you use them," notes JC Ryle. He posits three rules to hear aright: faith, reverence, and prayer.

**THREE COMPANIONS** - First, faith, as Hebrews 4:2 speaks of the children of Israel whose hearts were not united with faith in what they heard from God. Second, with reverence, as 1Thessalonians 2:13 says, *"you received the word of God which you heard from us not as the word of men, but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers."*

Third, with prayer, as 2Thessalonians 1:11 says, *"because you believed our testimony of the word of God, we always pray for you that God may make you worthy of His calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by His power."*

And as 2Thessalonians 2:13 says, *"giving thanks because God chose you to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth."* You're not just hearing a preacher preach, you're hearing the Word of God, so take care how you hear.

"Pray before, during, and after reading or hearing God's word, lest it pass through your mind like water through a leaky vessel and leave nothing behind," says Ryle. "If faith, reverence, and prayer are our companions, we shall hear God's word with profit, and return it with praise."

**MORE WILL BE GIVEN** - In Luke 8:18 Jesus warns, *"Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."* The New Living Translation puts it, *"so pay attention to how you hear. To those who listen to My teaching, more understanding will be given, but for those who are not listening, even what they think they understand will be taken away from them."*

Ryle explains, "you either make good use or no use of what you received from the Lord." True saving faith in Christ will bear the fruit of Christ. "There is no neutrality," notes RC Sproul, "you either respond and move from faith to faith, from grace to grace, from life to life. Or else you move in a negative direction from darkness to darkness, from unbelief to unbelief, from death to death."

Does this mean that the one who does not respond in faith can expect another chance? No. Jesus commands, *"if you have ears to hear, then hear"* present tense, now, this moment, and respond in obedient faith. You can't expect another sowing of the seed. And, birds may pluck it away, it may never take root, it may be choked out by riches and cares of the world.

**HEAR TODAY & HEED** - In Luke 8:10, Jesus quotes Isaiah 6 to explain the purpose of the parables, and how only some would hear and believe. It's like the apostle Paul said in Acts 13:42-52 when some Jews rejected the apostle's preaching: *"since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold we are turning to the Gentiles,"* who then *"began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. And behold, the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the region."*

Acts 28:24-31 continues, *"some were convinced and others disbelieved the preaching."* Paul then quotes from Isaiah 6, that only some out of unbelieving Israel would believe. Then he declares, *"therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles. They will listen."* All those regenerated by the Holy Spirit hear and heed the word of God, with saving faith. They express the evidence of transformed lives, as they bear the fruit of the Spirit! □