

WORSHIP IN SPIRIT: HOW TO LISTEN TO GOD IN A SERMON

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It is easy to get in a habit of poor listening. There are skills to listening that have to be used in school, or the tests will be much more difficult. If a student focuses all his/her attention on the lesson in class, employing good note-taking exercises, he will find the grade-point average improving significantly.

When our country was attacked on Sept. 11, 2001, it got our attention, and we hung on every word of the President. It seemed important because it was important and we sensed that we could lose the way of life we had taken for granted. When our senses are brought to life, our attention is focused. We are very deeply involved and interested. However, when we have a false sense of security, we settle in to some habits of non-listening. The sense of urgency is gone and we become “dull of hearing”. It is complacency that opens the door to terrorists to attack again. It is complacency that

opens the door for Satan to make our worship empty, powerless, and useless.

To worship God “in spirit”, we must check ourselves. There are certain keys to good listening that will open the door to spiritual refreshing and renewal of our faith, hope, and love. It is all in the mental preparation and convictions. What are some of those keys to good listening?

First, we must desire to hear everything God wants us to hear (Acts 10:24,33). We must have a sense of urgency that our souls are important, and that complacency is Satan's best opportunity to ruin our relationship to God and His word.

Second, we must come to hear God Almighty (1 Thess. 2:13). If we listen to a sermon like it is just a man talking, we lose the power that is really there. If we listen like it is the Almighty talking (and it is, if it is scriptural), then it can “work mightily in us”. It has the power to change us right down to the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

Third, we must be a “Bible student”. A student of the Bible hungers and thirsts for knowledge. That drive is what makes him/her a “disciple” or learner. Quit learning and you cease to be a disciple. If we are disciples of Christ, we hunger for more, and we do not mind our pure mind being stirred up by way of reminder of what we already know. If we are not interested enough at home to be a student of Christ, then it will be hard to shift gears and suddenly be interested in Christ at the assembly.

Fourth, we must receive with meekness and all readiness of mind the engrafted word which is able to save our souls. (Jas. 1:21f). The Bereans were more noble-minded than the Thessalonians because they were eager to hear and learn. They were not gullible. They were willing to check out the preaching by comparison to the Scriptures. They did not just accept whatever the preacher said. But, because of their care, they knew that the message preached was the most important message in the world.

There was a time when Israel lost sight of how important Bible teaching was. Only after a long time in Babylonian captivity did they awaken to what had really happened to their hearts. When they got that deeper inner hunger again for truth, they were very reverent and respectful toward the law, the reading of it, and to the one giving the sense or meaning of it. In Nehemiah 8, we find them standing in awe of the occasion of hearing the law of God preached from a pulpit made for the purpose. Why did they not have that same reverence before they went into captivity? What happened to their respect and interest that caused them to decline into their ruinous state? Why did it take such a drastic shock and period of hardship to bring them to their senses?

We hold within our hands the “power of God unto salvation”. It may seem to be foolish to others, but to those of us who are being saved, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. We must have “ears to hear”, and be eager to hear what the Spirit is saying to us. He is still calling out to us, but are our hearts

inclined to hear?