

Being a Berean or Hyper Critical

by Tim Conway

Transcript

And I want you to biblically try to discern this, try to answer this. This comes from a Christian sister. She says, Will you consider doing a study on the difference between being Berean and being hyper critical? And a lot of times I like to field these questions just because I think that they'll take us into profitable directions, even if the people I'm talking to maybe don't necessarily have any issues with this.

It often is really helpful just to get us thinking about some good things. So anyway, it goes on like this. She's asking that I do a study on the difference between being Berean and being hyper critical.

And the church that this lady is in, she says, The background to this question is that sadly, in my church, some seem to have a highly critical spirit. Listening to sermons with ears tuned in to find fault rather than listening with a heart that's hungry and eager to be fed. They say this is being Berean and would consider those who don't listen in this critical way to be unbiblical.

Seems they're putting up a fighting stance with guard walls up around their hearts before each sermon and only letting the wall down at the very end to determine if everything said is biblical before receiving any of it. This attitude towards our own shepherds does not seem right. Basically a mindset of guilty until proven innocent.

Obviously, you know that I'm not saying that if anything concerning comes up, we shouldn't search the scriptures to see if these things are so. But it's the critical walls up heart attitude that doesn't seem right to me. I would like to hear your thoughts on this.

So. So I thought, yeah. Hearing is a good thing.

I mean, the study of hearing. How do we hear? Because the truth is this. Don't we come into the church meeting every single week? Don't we enter into that building? And listening is something that every one of us have to engage.

I mean, skillful listening is really a non-negotiable, right? I mean, it doesn't matter if you're lost or saved. I mean, if you're walking into a church building, I recognize you might be forced to be there. I recognize that some people can have ulterior motives for being there.

But the vast majority of people that enter into a church building, they're going in there for a reason. That they're going to open up their ears and they're going to try to hear what's being said. And that's just a reality.

And so, if there is a place in Scripture that, if you think about it, that has to do with hearing, I think perhaps the eighth chapter of Luke is a good place for us to go. Luke chapter 8. So if you've got your Bibles there, I can remember coming across a preacher years ago. Oh, probably 18 years ago, perhaps.

And he was finding fault with the people that listened to him preach. And, oh, let me think. Trying to think what he said.

His grievance, I don't know, I think the grievance might have been that people weren't profiting. I remember somebody told me about this guy that they had listened to an entire sermon series on Hebrews that this guy did, and they didn't get anything out of the whole series. And I remember this preacher being upset with his hearers.

And I don't know if they were falling asleep while he was preaching. But I can tell you this, that as preachers, we ought to suspect ourselves to be the problem before we immediately say that our hearers are the problem. If our hearers are not in some way profiting, if they're being critical of us, if they're finding fault in our preaching, if they're falling asleep while we preach, if something's wrong, I think humility demands first and foremost that we look at ourselves.

I think we should suspect ourselves right off. See, the question here had to do with being a hearer. It has to do with discerning over against being hypercritical.

So when are we Berean? When are we hypercritical? And so I recognize that the question that's being presented here has a lot to do with how we hear and how we wrestle with being discerning but not being overly critical. How do we strive for being Berean yet loving? We don't want to be these pedantic people. You know what that is? That's just basically your nitpicking.

You're always finding fault with the most minor things. You're always finding fault with something. You're just picking it apart.

You're just splitting hairs, we might say. How do you get to where you're a discerning person but you're not overly discerning? I mean, it's like a lot of things in the Christian life. We need to be balanced.

But the first thing I want to say about all this is that when our hearers are taking issue, not, look, I recognize you can have a bad apple in the church. I recognize you can have somebody whose heart isn't right. Somebody who, for whatever reason, they're proud.

They want everybody to know that they're able to find fault in the preacher's preaching. You can get somebody that's jealous. You get somebody that they're just not saved and they just don't like what's being preached.

There's all sorts of things that happen. But I'll tell you this, if a preacher has more than one person, if he has various people that are saying he speaks over our head, well, you know what, there's a good possibility that's what's happening. If people say he's not clear, I don't understand what he's saying.

That's something a preacher really ought to take note of and ought to examine himself over. We want to be wary of problems with the speaker because, look, there's no speaker that's perfect. And I don't care what speaker you tell me about.

As much as we put Lloyd-Jones and we put Spurgeon up on a pedestal, reality is those guys weren't perfect. And there's things that if you know their theology, you probably would take issue with. I mean, I've listened to both of those guys enough or read Spurgeon enough that I've come across things that I don't think that they're right on.

And so, you know, God didn't make any of us perfect. And you know what, sometimes preachers don't want to hear it. Why? Well, pride, maybe insecurities.

They're too sensitive. People don't like to find fault found with them. Insecurities are a horrible thing.

We got these masculine insecurities in a lot of men. You know, how dare you question me? How dare you call into question my preaching? Look, I think this. My preaching needs to be able to stand up to Scripture.

And so my preaching needs to stand up to scrutiny. I had somebody ask me probably two years ago maybe. I think it was when I was investigating coming over here, but we went back to the States.

And I had a brother come up to me and he said, is it okay for us to kind of dissect your sermon after you preach it? I mean, to sit down with other people and talk about what you preach? And I said, of course it is. I mean, we want to encourage the churches to be Berean. What's Berean? We know what it is.

Berean is the people who were more noble than the Thessalonians. And why were they more noble? Well, they were more noble because they searched the Scriptures to see if what the Apostle Paul. They didn't just say, hey, you're an apostle.

We're going to believe you. Nope. They were people that were noble because they went to Scripture to see.

And of course they had the Old Testament Scripture. You recognize the Bereans didn't have the New Testament. They only had the Old.

So what would they have been going to look at? Well, they would have been searching to see if what Paul was saying about Christ lined up with the Old Testament Scriptures. Namely, the prophetic statements about Christ. Is this Christ that Paul preaches, does it line up with the hundreds of prophecies found in the Old Testament? That's what they were searching out.

That's a very noble thing. It's very noble to be a pursuer of truth. Of course, that's different than having a pedantic or a hypercritical sense to you.

Being overly critical. Listen, let's just think. There are things that ought to unsettle hearers.

And I'm talking to the speakers at this point, which is me. And it's others that you get in a position where you're teaching, you're preaching. You know what? There are times preachers try to preach on subjects.

They just simply are ignorant about. They don't know enough. They don't know their Bibles well enough.

And when they preach, the people sitting out there recognize. They don't know what they're saying. Or they say things that are inconsistent.

Or they don't prove from the Bible that what they're saying is actually God's Word. And it's from the Bible. Oftentimes, you get men in the pulpit that are extremely opinionated.

Listen, it's good to be dogmatic about what the Bible says. When I say opinionated, I mean this. They're preaching their opinions.

You can't prove it. You ever sat there? Maybe it's happened when you've heard my preaching. But you think, he didn't prove that from Scripture.

And I don't even think there's anywhere in Scripture where you can prove that. I know sometimes you can be listening to a preacher. And it's like he produces more questions in your mind than he solves.

He takes you to a certain passage, and he's saying a bunch of things. But he's not solving any of the problems that you see in the text. All he's doing is producing 10 more problems in your mind.

I mean, listen, these kinds of things, you know what? The thing about being a preacher now is for many years, I sat and listened. I mean, for the first 10 years of my Christian life, I was doing some preaching. But the vast majority of what I did was I listened.

I was listening to literally thousands of sermons. And, I mean, many of them listening to over and over and over. And, you know, you find out what powerful preaching is and what powerful preaching isn't.

You all know this. I mean, we live in a day of the Internet. This is one of the things that makes shoddy preaching somewhat difficult.

What? Well, look, if you have well-versed people, you have people who are hungry for good preaching, well, where are they going to be? They're going to be out there on the Internet. And you know what? If you have a congregation full of people that are searching out good sermons on the Internet, then you stand up in the pulpit and preach shoddy messages, well, what's going to happen? They're going to sniff you out. So, you know, you don't want to be the guy that stands in the pulpit.

I've heard this before. Weak point, raise voice. You know that kind of preacher? It's like they come to a place that they can't really substantiate, so they just yell.

They just say it louder as though that gives some kind of emphatic guarantee that it's actually truthful. Or you get a preacher that say, that's a fact. That's just a fact.

Well, that's nice you say it, but did you actually prove it? You hear some preachers, they tell you something and then they say, it is. It is. And it's like, well, that didn't prove it.

You got to show me from the Word of God. Don't just sit there and say it is or that's a fact. I mean, that's nice that you say that.

I mean, you sound dogmatic that you believe it. But just because when you have a weak point, just because you shout louder, well, anybody that's got half a sense of discernment, they recognize that the guy didn't really prove it. And so we want to be careful that we're preachers who are rightly handling the Word.

You know, there are some preachers that cultivate distrust. And I know I'm leading to talking about the hearer. But listen, speakers have to earn the hearer's trust.

And I recognize this. I don't expect you to just believe me. In fact, it scares me when somebody says they're just going to believe me because, and you know the reason.

Somebody says they're just going to believe me because my name has a little bit of popularity from the fact that James Jennings has a website that he put my material on. And, you know, you can get exposure on the Internet. And the thing is, people can have respect for you.

People can think highly of you just because you have exposure. That's really all it makes a TV star famous. It's just he has exposure.

You've seen his face on a screen, and so you think he's somebody. But that doesn't make anybody anything. The reality is this.

No matter what name somebody has, it doesn't matter what it is. It doesn't matter if somebody's called by John MacArthur. The reality is this.

You've got to earn people's trust. You've got to stand in that pulpit day in and day out, week after week. And you've got to be able to show people that you know how to rightly divide the Word and prove from people with their eyeballs in their Bible that what you're preaching is indeed the truth and it comes out of that book.

Listen, any preacher that's worth his salt wants his hearers to be Berean. He does not want his hearers just to accept what he says. You know what? I take as much delight in anything as telling you something difficult to believe or telling you something mysterious.

It's telling you something that almost seems inconsistent. I love bringing hard things out of the Bible or mysterious things out of the Bible or seemingly contradictory things out of the Bible that I can tell you to drop your eyes right down in that chapter, in that verse, and look what it says there. Because I believe this.

I believe in the perspicuity of Scripture. In other words, I believe that Scripture is understandable. I believe that God has given us the ability.

He's given us brains. He's given us the Spirit of God by which spiritual men can, I mean, God specifically has given His people the light and the knowledge to be able to grasp spiritual truth. And it comes out of the Word of God.

And, I mean, between the reasoning faculties He's given us, the Spirit of God He's given us, the Word of God He's given us, I actually do believe when I'm standing in the pulpit that I can say something. It goes in your ears. You hear what I say, and you drop your eyes down on that book, and you look in there, and you read, and there it is.

I mean, God never presents His Word to us as though it's a book that you can't understand. I know there's some things hard to understand. Peter says that about Paul's writings.

But the truth is, the vast majority of Scripture, Jesus could constantly say, Have you not read? Have you not read? I mean, what was His assumption? Well, if you had read it, you'd have understood it. The vast majority of Scripture means what it sounds like it's saying. And I like that.

I like that I can say to people, Look, you've got to look there. Bad preachers often blame their hearers. But, you know, I don't find that Spurgeon typically had issue with people falling asleep during his preaching.

So, anyway, as I'm going to talk about hearing, I do want us to recognize that I am in no way saying, shoddy preaching in any way should be recognized as anything else by the hearers. Hearers need to be

discerning, and they need to discern shoddy preaching when they hear it. They need to discern preaching that isn't biblical, that doesn't make biblical cases, that doesn't answer questions of the text, that isn't rightly dividing the Word, or just plain, flat-out erroneous, contrary to Scripture.

I expect that hearers are going to recognize when you've got a preacher who preaches his opinions all day long. Or he quotes a Scripture at the beginning of his sermon, and then he never preaches from it. You ever hear preachers like that? They quote a text in the beginning, and then they don't even go there.

Oh, they preach off this way and off that way, and they talk about this. And, you know, I've heard of churches where no matter what they're preaching on, now a word on baptism at the end. Or there's a lot of churches where they've got to get somehow fit tithing in there somewhere.

It's like you don't even know what Andy talked about over in China. It's like one of these big pots they throw all the stuff in. He said you stick in your chopsticks and you don't know what you're going to haul out.

It might be an eyeball, it might be a noodle. He said a lot of the preaching over there is like that. Guys ramble all over the place.

That's the last thing we need. Folks, we're dealing with things that have to do with life and death, with heaven and hell, with the eternity of the soul. We better be knowing what we're talking about.

We better be preaching God's Word. We better be preaching what's important. We better be doing it with clarity.

We better do it so that our hearers know what in the world we're talking about. And so what I'm going to say now is in no way, no how, am I saying anything different than as hearers we do need to be discerning. We do need to figure out and be discerning of good preaching and bad preaching.

And we don't want to just out of love or care for a Christian brother just gloss over the fact that he's a shoddy preacher. And that's one of the things kind of bemoaned over there in China. He said everybody's always saving face.

And so nobody's able to be honest with each other. We need to be honest, folks. We need to be honest.

And you know what? Sometimes preachers can kind of drift off, and they're not expositively preaching, and so certain preachers can preach the same subject matter all the time. Sometimes you can just get the accusing preacher who just is finding fault with his hearers all the time. You guys had a situation, it sounds like, where you were getting church discipline practiced from the pulpit, people being called out.

I mean, there's all sorts of things that can happen. You know this. I mean, you have the crazy thing.

I mean, preaching is just a crazy thing. You put a guy up in a pulpit. A pulpit.

He stands there with an open book, and he talks to you for, who knows, around an hour. I mean, that's the way God's designed it. Through the foolishness of preaching, people get saved.

Through the foolishness of preaching, people get exhorted. They get encouraged. They get comforted.

They get taught. They get instructed. They get built up.

I mean, they get sanctified. It's truth being proclaimed across the pulpit. I mean, it's crazy that on the first day of the week, some guy goes up and stands in a pulpit, and you get a bunch of people that come and sit around him and listen to him.

And yet, spiritual things happen, and we know that there is constantly a speaking and a receiving. There is a hearing. And we want good preachers, but I think we probably more often get messages on the preaching than on the hearing.

And the Bible does have things to say about hearing. So here we go. Luke 8. Very well known.

We have a portion of Scripture that deals with some of the parables from Luke's perspective. And, of course, one of the greatest parables of all. Is the parable of the seed and the sower.

And we find that in Luke 8. And you can just note as we go through here. I'm going to read 14 verses or so. 15 verses.

And you'll notice how many times there's the aspect of hearing. Or at least it's implied. So verse 4. A great crowd was gathered.

People from town after town came to him. He said in a parable, A sower went out to sow his seed. Now you know what sowing the seed is.

It could be in a tract. I recognize. But it's typically speaking.

Speaking. I know it could be reading. But sower is sowing.

He's sowing his seed. The seed is the gospel. So you see it implied here.

He's speaking the word of God. That's what sowing the seed is. As he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot.

And the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on the rock. As it grew up, it withered away because it had no moisture.

Some fell among thorns and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. Some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold. As he said these things, he called out.

Now here it is. He who has ears to hear. Let him hear.

Okay, now that's key. Because that has to do with listening. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Right off. You know what that's telling us? That's telling us there are people who can hear. And there are people who can hear.

There are people who can hear in one sense. But he's talking to people who can hear in another sense. What he's saying is this.

There's a kind of hearing that people do that goes beyond the ears that they have on their heads. Now they go together because oftentimes the hearing that he's talking about is a spiritual hearing. It's a spiritual comprehension.

It's a spiritual understanding. And it's gotten through the physical ears as the sound of the preacher, the sound of the sower, as it comes into our physical ears, there's a way that people hear. And there's a way that people really hear.

You know, you can have people that hear the words, but they don't really hear. They don't get what was really said. That happened all the time when Jesus spoke.

People heard the words, but the meaning was shrouded. And he's telling a parable. Why do you tell parables? Well, he said because to some people it was meant for them to understand it, and to other people it wasn't.

You know, you can have somebody tell you a parable. You can hear the words. You can hear the words about a sower going out to sow and casting his seed on a path, and birds came down, and have no idea whatsoever what he's really talking about.

You see, you can have ears to hear the parable, but it takes another kind of ear to hear the meaning. And he's saying, he who has ears to hear, let him hear. And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, to you it's been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they're in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.

Oh, let me tell you something. When we hear, we want to understand. And I'll tell you, the best preachers are going to be the kind of preachers that help you understand what they're saying.

You know what? I can remember my wife told me that years ago she went to a church where she said that the pastor talked over everybody's head. I've seen pastors that are more interested in wowing their audience with their knowledge of the Greek, and they say things about the Greek that aren't helping the hearers at all. All it is is a prideful exhibition of their understanding of another language that's meant to impress people.

I can remember one time we met. We were nothing. We were a relatively small church.

We were meeting at Fatty's Burger Joint there on Commerce Street in San Antonio. And the service was over, and I heard two ladies walk out. These ladies were from the neighborhood.

And I heard one say to the other. I was around the corner so I could hear them, and they couldn't see me. And one lady said to the other, You know why I like coming here? I understand what they say.

And I thought, You know what? That's a really good thing. Charles Spurgeon said, Give the people like, I forget how many shillings in a pound or whatever, but he was using whatever expression was suitable to your British currency at that time. But it would be like saying, Give them 100 pence to the pound of good Anglo-Saxon English.

In other words, talk to the people in the common man's language and say it how people can understand. Because the fact is that it may be that God doesn't give certain people ears to hear. It may be that hearing they may not understand, but let it never be because the preacher is somehow shoddy or somehow failing to be clear in what he teaches.

But okay, verse 11, Luke 8. Now the parable is this. The seed is the Word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard.

You see that. So it's definitely talking about the preached Word of God. It's talking about preaching the Bible, preaching what God has said.

And these people hear. But there's a problem. The devil comes and takes away the Word from their hearts.

So they heard it, but it got taken away. So that they may not believe and be saved. The ones on the rock are those who when they hear, there's our Word again, so hear the Word.

That's what this has to do with hearing. They receive it with joy, but they have no root. They believe for a while in time of testing.

They fall away. So wow, you've got two kinds of hearers here, and it goes bad. Let me tell you, we really need to take an effort in how we hear.

Because what the Bible's telling us, what Jesus is teaching is that a lot of people hear, and they don't hear well, and it goes bad with them. Listen, folks, hear for your life. I'm serious.

You need to make it an art. Study the art of hearing. Because people perish, and people within churches do.

What do you think the second type of seed represents? People that were in the church, and they received it gladly. And what happened? They got to the place where no matter how much they heard, they fell away. Luke 8.14, As for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear.

See how much hearing's going on here? But as they go on their way, they're choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. Wow. You know what you find? We can think of a lot of people in the world that don't hear.

But here, you have people hearing, and the devil comes. You have people hearing, and they fall away. You have people hearing, and they get choked.

8.15, As for that in the good soil, they are those who, there it is again, hearing the word, hold it fast. What do they hold fast? They hold fast what they heard. It means it not only goes in these little appendages on your head with holes in the middle of them, but the resonating goes in there, strikes your eardrum.

The eardrum translates all those vibrations into your brain. You are able to actually take. It's an amazing thing.

If you think about it right now, I've got air in my lungs. I'm pushing them out across those vocal cords. It goes through the air, resonates through the speaker system, out across the internet, through your speaker, out through the air, resonates through the air, goes in your ear, rattles that eardrum, somehow produces signals that you recognize as words coupled together into sentences that make up paragraphs of thought.

And you're able to process them in your brain so that some kind of spiritual good, some kind of spiritual strength, and even in eternal life itself, can come forth from that. That's the whole thing. It's like how many miracles is going on in all that.

But this is what happens. But the truth is that people can hear the words. They can make sense of the actual words of the sentence.

They can even rehearse the sentence back to you. But knowing what the real meaning is and processing that in their heart, wow, look at this. They are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart and bear fruit.

So you see what happens. This is something that the truth of what you hear gets processed and held onto, and it's held fast in the heart, an honest and good heart. And it bears fruit.

Wow. Did Jesus not say, the wise man builds his house on a rock, he hears, but he doesn't just hear. He hears and he does.

You see, that's a person that's really heard when they hear and they do. We've got a lot of people hearing and they don't do. But that's a foolish man.

And they're not on the rock, they're on the sand. Now, here's the thing. We're not done with listening.

We're not done with hearing yet. Because look at verse 18. Take care then how you hear, for the one who has, more will be given.

And from the one who has not, even what he thinks he has will be taken away. What a truth is this. Take care how you hear.

It's like, yeah, if you hear and you take in, you're going to be given even more. Like the ability to hear even more. But what's interesting is this.

Why does verse 16 and 17 get thrown in the middle here? I mean, we would almost expect him to say this. Hearing the Word, they hold it fast, they bear fruit with patience, then you better take care how you hear. I mean, coming out of these four different scenarios, you would expect that he'd say that right away.

Okay, I just made my case. Four cases. You see one is good, the other three are bad.

You ought to take care then how you hear. Instead, he sticks two other verses in here before he says, take care how you hear. That must mean that these two other verses have something to do with how we hear.

Let's read them. No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed or puts it on a stand so those who enter may see the light. For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be made known and come to light.

Take care then how you hear. It almost seems odd. It almost seems like he changed his metaphor here.

So let's just think. The text, there's no question. You see it.

This text is all about hearing the Word of God when it's proclaimed. Four responses to the preaching of the Word. You see it.

Jesus makes sure we get the point about hearing. There's no question. He's driving it home.

And he says, he who has ears to hear, let him hear. And you know what that means. It's not enough to have those ears on your head.

That is not enough. Everyone has those. But there's another kind of ear.

There's a spiritual ear. There's an ear that hears in the preaching more than just the mere words of it. That's the reality.

I mean, what we get here is there are people who when they hear from the Bible, they have the ability to comprehend a beauty, a power, to comprehend truth that the physical ears just don't necessarily hear. There's a hearing where something happens in that Word that's transforming, that's compelling, that's powerful. I mean, we're able to behold the glory of the Lord.

You know, oftentimes the Bible talks about seeing. They have eyes, but they don't see. But you know, our seeing happens through our perception.

We don't see the Lord. We hear about the Lord. That's how we see.

That's where that perception... That's the kind of hearing that Jesus is calling for. That's what this text is all about. But that brings us to this last mention of hearing there in verse 18.

It's like preaching. Preaching is one thing, and it's crucial. But hearing... Obviously, it's just as crucial.

You need to take heed how you hear. You notice there's nothing in this text at all that admonishes the preacher. The assumption is there's somebody that's preaching truth.

That's the assumption. But the preacher here... Oh, you can find verses that talk to the preacher about rightly dividing the Word, or there ought not to be many preachers. There's places we can go, and man needs to be apt to teach.

We know these texts. There's places that talk about the kind of truth. I'm not going to know anything except Christ and Him crucified.

We know about the preaching, but there's nothing here about preaching. There's nothing here about the effectiveness of preaching. It's all about the effectiveness of hearing.

It's all about how we hear. The point is not take heed how you preach. The issue with these verses is take heed how you hear.

For to the one who has, more will be given. And from the one who has not, even what he thinks he has will be taken away. In other words, you need to hear with spiritual ears, not just with those ears on your head.

And we need to hear with an honest and a good heart. That's what's being taught in these passages. Not a deceptive heart.

Not an evil heart. Hearing is huge. Hearing is life-giving.

Hearing has everything to do with how well you're going to live as a Christian. Hearing has to do with how well you're going to run. Hearing has to do with how well you profit when you walk through the doors of a church building and we sing songs.

You ever heard about singing songs to each other? We teach one another. And by proclaiming back and forth, we are actually doing something in the singing. And when we communicate truths during the Lord's Supper, and when we communicate truths when we fellowship, and we're stirring up one another to love

and good works, and when I take that pulpit, or George just took the pulpit.

Folks, if you don't have your hearing apparatus on when you attend the worship and the meeting that we attend on Sundays, then it's not going to be profitable. And the truth is this, that Jesus is warning that people who on a regular basis don't hear, even what they think they have is going to be taken away. Folks, I can tell you, people that go in and they hear the Word of God preached and they're just not coming away with the truth because they spurn it, they scorn it, they don't want to hear it, they're ignorant to it, they close their ears, they're distracted, they're thinking about what they're going to do for dinner later on, they're thinking about how they don't like to hear what's coming from, they try to blot it out of their minds.

Listen folks, what Jesus is doing is warning that if you don't hear, then even what you think you have is going to be taken away from you. This hearing that He says here, it's a really big deal. It's not a small thing.

I mean, the thing is that... Folks, I believe with all my heart that God has called me to preach His Word. And many of you, undoubtedly, you're going to be called to proclaim the Word of God in different situations. We've got guys that preach the Word out on the streets.

Some of you have children, you're going to have family devotions, you're going to teach the Word of God there. But the text is not about the calling that any of us have to proclaim the Word. This text is all about how you and I are called to process the words that we hear.

That's what this is all about. The calling is to hear the Word of God. It's no small thing.

Folks, the stakes are really high in how you hear. And maybe you haven't had a message like this before. Maybe you haven't even contemplated just how serious this is.

You know, we can... Oh boy, it is so easy to be a lazy hearer. We talk about sloppy preaching. You know how it's easy to be a sloppy hearer? Stay up too late on Saturday night.

I mean, things like that. You come in, you're tired, you can't focus, you don't want to do that. You don't want to do that.

The stakes are high. Listen to this, Proverbs 2.2. Making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding. Did you get that? Making your ear attentive to wisdom.

Yes, if you call out for insight, raise your voice for understanding. If you seek it like silver and search for it as hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. You do recognize what we're after when we hear.

One of the main things we're after is a knowledge of God. People who don't hear don't know God. They don't find out about God.

They don't learn about God. Mark says it this way, Jesus said to them, pay attention to what you hear. With the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you.

Now that comes from Mark 4, where Mark is talking about this parable. Now don't you like that? Listen to what this says. Pay attention to what you hear.

With the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Okay, let's just think for a second. The question on the table we really haven't gotten to, that's the question about being a critical ear.

Hypercritical, pedantic kind of ear, nitpicky, hair splitting, just somebody that has a censoriousness about them. Do you hear what's being said? Pay attention to what you hear. With the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added.

Now I would say that that's a very important verse when it comes to this whole subject. You see, with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. You know what that sounds like it's saying? It sounds like pay attention to what you hear, and with the degree of investment that you make in hearing, it will be paid back to you.

But folks, I have found that people that are censoriousness, you've probably heard of that, people who are censorious, people who are just nitpicking all the time, people who are looking for error, oh boy, and do they want you to know that they found it? They're very rarely content to keep the fact that they found error all to themselves. They like other people to know. They like to question, they like to quiz, they like to examine, or they just like to get aside with other people and talk about, you know, well, that wasn't right, that wasn't right.

You know, maybe it's just to their wife or whatever, but they like other people to know it. Folks, listen, if we sit down and you have to recognize, preachers are imperfect people. Here's what happens.

You know what the hypercritical guy does? He so looks for the thing that's wrong that he doesn't hear the 10 things that are right. And you know what? The very fact that he didn't hear the 10 things that are right, it's going to be measured back to him according to the measure that he just hauled out. In other words, he's not going to benefit anything from the 10 things that were right in what the preacher said.

Why? Because he couldn't hear them. Because his ear wasn't even tuned to hear them. Because he sat down and the first thing he was doing, oh look, it's good to be critical.

I think I'm a critical hearer. That can be negative, it sounds negative, but folks, there's a positive element to that. To be a critical hearer is synonymous with being a discerning hearer.

When I listen to other preachers, my mind is processing what they're saying through Scripture the entire time. I'm thinking, is it true? Is it true? Is it true? Is it true? Now look, you can have a shoddy preacher who causes his hearers to be suspicious. Now, there's a real question whether that guy is even gifted to be preaching.

My assumption is this, that if it's at Grace Fellowship Manchester, we are going to test men. They're going to be proven to have an aptness to teach. Not just to know right theology, but actually have an ability to communicate that in a way that is really profitable for God's people.

My assumption is that such an individual has been tested. But look, there's no question about it. The preacher has to earn respect.

Just because he stands in the pulpit doesn't mean he should be believed. Just because he has a title, like pastor or elder or overseer or whatever, he has some position in the church, does not mean that he automatically should be believed. We have to earn people's trust.

Which means we have to day in, day out, show that we're reliable when we crack open our Bibles and we have something to say about what God has written in His Word. We have to earn that. And our hearers, we should everywhere encourage them, do not believe me because I'm saying this.

You need to see it in your Bible. Listen, if we're going to be good preachers, you are going to want people to see what you're saying. To see it from the Word of God.

You have to demand that. Why? Because you're trying to protect people. You're trying to equip the saints.

And how do you equip them? You equip them by causing them to be Berean. That they have to find it in the Word of God if they're going to believe it. That is not being hypercritical.

That is not being pedantic. But you can become that way if you're so critical that you can't hear what's right and you can't hear the truths that are good. And you want to be careful because God is in the business of measuring back to us to the degree that we measure out.

And I would say that when Jesus is using this in Mark 4 with regards to pay attention to how you hear, the measure you use, it will be measured to you and still more will be added to you. The idea is this, that if you do pay attention to what you hear... I mean, look, I can sit there and hear a guy preach and I can think that thing he just said isn't true. But you know what? You don't want to miss the next thing that he says that is very true and that is very good.

And you know, just because somebody said something, you can recognize this. Guys are growing. You can recognize.

Not everybody has a full comprehension of the Bible the first day they start preaching. In fact, nobody has a full comprehension of the Bible any day that they're preaching. And so there's always areas of ignorance.

There's always areas that we may not fully know and we make a comment about. Somebody could prove you wrong. And you know what? There are areas in the Bible where good men disagree.

It's good to realize that. I don't have to get all bent out of shape because some guy holds a different view than I do on that text right there that I know good men have disagreed on over the centuries. And so we need to know our Bibles.

We need to know something about what's going on. We need to be listening. How do you know the different positions help? Because you're listening.

You're listening. Christians need to be listeners. We need to be given to the art of listening.

We need to be exposing ourselves to good preaching all the time during the week, not just on Sundays. We've got the Internet. But you know one thing that can happen? You get to the point where you have your favorite Internet preacher and then you hear just the common guy that stands in your pulpit each week.

And then it's like you don't even want to hear him. Why? Because he doesn't preach like that guy or this guy or that guy. He's not Paul Washer.

He's not John Piper. And so then you don't even want to hear him. Even though he may stand up there and preach, maybe with less gift, but you don't want to hear him.

Brethren, we don't want to be like that. Most pastors in this world are not John Pipers. Most are not Spurgeons and Lloyd-Jones.

Most are common guys who are going to simply open up the Bible and seek to bring out that truth. What you want is to process that truth. Yes, you've got to be discerning.

You've got to be looking for that. How about this? James says, Know this, my beloved brothers. Let every person be quick to hear.

You heard that before? Quick to hear. Slow to speak. You know, many who hear preaching would do better to process it longer before they speak.

That doesn't mean that when we get done with Bible study, you can't ask questions. That doesn't mean that you can't make comments or make observations. But there is a great wisdom in being slow to speak, and especially as a young Christian.

Young Christians ought to be asking more questions than making pronouncements about certain things. Because so often they don't have the longevity of hearing. We need to be people that are quick to hear and very much hearing.

Slow to speak. Slow to anger. For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive, notice this, receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls. Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if anyone's a hearer of the word and not a doer, he's like a man who looks intently at his natural face in the mirror.

For he looks at himself, goes away, and at once forgets what he was like. You see, we want to hear to retain. We want to hear to remember.

If you need to take notes, take notes. You know what? I find it profitable. If you can listen to a sermon, and by Wednesday still remember one prominent thing about that sermon, you're doing really well.

So often sermons, they're coming at us regularly. We're never going to remember all of them. It's kind of like being washed by the water of the word on a regular basis.

We're being reminded of truths that we need to be reminded of over and over and over. But I'll tell you, if you get to Monday, you get to Tuesday, you get to Wednesday, and you can remember one prominent thing from the sermon back on Sunday, you're doing really well. You know how you're wired.

If you'll wire yourself to try to remember. In San Antonio, we had women that would get together on, I think it was Monday, and the ladies would go over the sermon that I preached the day before. We had a group of guys that would get together on Sunday evening and do the same thing during a certain season.

But there's different things that you can try to do to retain. You know what's dangerous though? When a group of guys get together like that and all they do is nitpick and rip the sermon apart and look for fault. And I think that can become problematic.

And you don't want to cultivate that. You want to cultivate that which is healthy. You want to cultivate that which profits the soul.

You want to be like these kind of hearers who are measuring with a certain measure and it's going to be measured back. You want to be hearing to be doers. You see, that's what James is emphasizing.

Hear to do. Hear to correct. Here's the thing.

If I say something erroneous on the Lord's Day, but then God has given me ten things that you need to hear. Because I was praying, I was seeking the Lord as I studied. I had you specifically in my mind.

You were on my heart, in my thoughts as I was preparing. Because God put you there. And I'm thinking about you and I'm thinking about your spiritual situation.

And I stand up there and preach. And you hear me say one thing that you might find questionable. And now, you know, you can't hear anything else.

You're so taken up with it that you can't hear me. Why? I made a mistake. I said something wrong.

Or I said something that at least you find questionable. You might be wrong. But the truth is that now you can't hear anything more than I say.

Well, see, now you're not a hearer anymore. You basically made yourself a judge. It's like this sister was talking about.

She feels like there's some people in her church. She feels like their basic mindset is that they're approaching their preacher as though he's guilty until proven innocent. What is that? What is that? I mean, is that love, cover? Is that a loving way to approach? And you know what? Those people are usually not the most joyful people.

They're not the people that are most looking forward to hearing a sermon on Sunday. They don't drive to church looking forward to what they're going to hear. Folks, I don't know how it is for you.

I mean, I'm speaking as one who's doing most of the preaching. But I know that when I was a hearer, I looked forward. I wanted to hear the preaching.

And I mean, I didn't want to get put to sleep by things that were powerless and not hardly coherent. I didn't want that. But I was hungry for the Word of God.

Hebrews 2.1 says this, Therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. You see, we don't want to drift. Not only does James say that we want to be doers of the Word, not hearers only, deceiving our own selves.

But the author of Hebrews is telling us, we want to pay much closer attention to what we hear. Close attention. Throughout the book of Hebrews, it says, consider Jesus.

It's wanting us to pay close attention to Jesus. We don't want to become lazy with these things. And you know what, folks? We can get to the place where we feel like, wow, we've heard that before.

Now, I know. Preachers, they need to strive and struggle to say old truths in fresh ways. If people feel like they've heard you say it before and heard you say it that way, they'll shut down.

It just happens. People are people. It doesn't mean we come up with novel truths, but we do need fresh ways.

It's like singing the new song. New songs are good. The Bible talks about new songs.

And same way, just like you can create a new song to sing the same Lord's praise, we can create new sermons to sing the Lord's praise. But Matthew 7, 24. Everyone then who hears these words of mine, who hears them and does them like this wise man.

And, okay, we go back to Luke 8. And you remember those two kind of strange verses in there that had to do? It's like the talking about seed all of a sudden becomes a metaphor of light. Notice 8.16. Luke 8.16. No one after lighting a lamp. Well, how is he talking about lighting a lamp now when he was just talking about good soil? Well, think with me.

I think you can see the connection. The good soil are those that heard the word, hold it fast, and bear fruit. Well, I think that probably makes sense.

You remember Matthew 5.16 in the Sermon on the Mount? It says this. I think that's why you get the shift here. What Jesus has done is he's just talked about fruit, bearing fruit.

And then he says this. No one after lighting a lamp. In other words, the Christian, this person who was represented by good soil, the seed falling into good soil and bearing fruit with patience, this fruit that they bear is like lighting a lamp.

And nobody lights a lamp and then covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed or puts it on a stand. In other words, this kind of person who gets saved and produces fruit with patience, they need to not hide themselves. They're put on a stand so that those who enter.

Isn't that interesting? Those who enter what? Well, the idea of entering, we enter the kingdom. They may see the light. You see, the whole picture here is people are going to enter the kingdom when they see the light of Christians.

For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light. It's like everything's being brought out in the open. The feel you got here is it's part a promise and part a warning.

It's like what he's saying is this, that when you put your works on display, it's much like what Matthew 5.16 says, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Well, right here in Luke, it sounds like one of the ways they're giving glory to your Father in heaven is because they're coming into the kingdom. They see you.

They hear your message. They see the fruit of your life, and it's being put up there, and it's coming out into the open. And then in 8.17, it's kind of like a warning.

Nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest. So you can't hide anything, nor is anything secret that will not be made known and come to light. In other words, I mean, this is coming off this whole parable.

Folks, you realize what's being said here. You better take heed how you hear. Why? Because if you hear and the devil comes in and plucks that up, I mean, while you're listening at church, you allow the devil to come in and just throw thoughts in your mind? You're not going to pay attention.

You're going to think about girls. You're going to think about guys. You're going to let your mind go off to sports.

You're going to think about this, that, and the other thing. You just cheaply let the Word of God be plucked up. You're not really going to give lots of attention to it.

You're just watching YouTube before you come into the church, or you stayed up late on Saturdays. You're very careless about all of it. It's all going to come out into the light.

If you heard and then persecution comes into your life, but what you heard about isn't so important to you as to keep you from throwing in the towel when things get difficult, it's all going to come out into the light. If you are one who heard, but you allow the cares of the world, if you've got cares concerning your house, your spouse, if you've got cares concerning these things and they allow the Word, remember what is the Word all about? You hear Jesus and you do it. What did He call you to do? Remember what we were talking about? Remember visiting the widow, the orphan, the imprisoned, the sick, the hungry, the naked, the stranger? I mean, look, if you basically give yourself to your garden, give yourself to your house, it's all going to come out into the light.

And people get choked by the cares and by the riches of this world all the time. And He's saying this, what you want to do is you want to hear well, you want to believe well, you want to be the kind of person that is doing what you hear, is producing this fruit, it's drawing people into the kingdom. Because the thing is, people that don't hear that way, it's all going to come out into the open.

It's all going to be made manifest. There's not going to be anything secret. It's going to be known what you heard.

It's going to be known what you did with what you heard. And then He just finishes it by saying, you better take heed how you hear. For the one who has, more will be given.

This is really, really important. And so, look, if somebody is a critical hearer, I mean hypercritical, I don't mean in a good way discerning, but they go beyond assessing the preaching. They go beyond that.

Did you hear, this is worth saying again, did you hear what James said? James said this when he's talking about being a hearer of the Word and not a doer. And he talks about him being like a man who looks intently at his natural face in the mirror. Anyways, he's talking that way.

And he says this, Put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted Word. Receive with meekness the implanted Word. That means hear with meekness.

You know the guy that's constantly hypercritical? He can call it being Berean. But if his basic mindset is guilty until they prove otherwise, if a man can't even hear the good things that are being spoken in the sermon, the biblical things, he's not listening with meekness. He's listening with pride.

He's listening with arrogance. Folks, I remember as a young believer, I went to a conference and I heard a guy preach. And a guy preached.

And he said something that wasn't precisely right. And I was walking somewhere with him and I brought it up. And he said probably the best thing that could have been said to me.

It's like, he said something like, Brother, we're men. I mean, he might have said a few more words, but his basic thrust was, we can handle when somebody doesn't say something just perfectly right. I mean, look, there might be a time to talk about such a thing.

But I did bring it up just simply because I was recognizing the guy had said something wrong and wasn't overly impressed with it. And you know what, I've never forgotten that. And he was absolutely right.

It's like, can we not hear somebody make a gaffe, make a mistake, say something that may not be absolutely right? And I don't have to get bent out of shape about it. I don't have to pull them aside after they get done preaching and pull them over and say, there's a time to do that. But I mean, you know, what were the Bereans seeking out? The Bereans were going to see if the Old Testament prophets actually said that Christ was indeed the Messiah.

I mean, what are we talking about? Are we talking about the deity of Christ? Are we talking about the doctrine of justification? I mean, sometimes we get people that are so pedantic. It's like they've got to split hairs. Oh, you just didn't say that exactly right.

And they're calling into question everything. And brethren, the fact is that a lot of times guys do that. It's pride.

They're just wanting to show that. A lot of times guys ask questions or they call something out into the open. And it can be gals too.

But they already know the answer. The only reason they're doing it is to show that they have this superior knowledge. They're not really doing it out of humility.

They're not doing it because they genuinely want to know. They're doing it because they already know the answer. And they're wanting other people to realize that they already know the answer.

And meekness. We want to approach our hearing with meekness. But let's keep going here.

We want to approach preaching with a spirit of teachability. We want to be teachable. Because not being teachable is just being proud.

Now listen, the thing is, while somebody's preaching a passage, even if they said something that you may not agree with, or you think, well, you're not certain about that, you can still be processing. You can be thinking about the passage they're preaching from. You can be thinking about the things that they're saying that are true.

Look, what you find is this, listening, hearing. It's a high calling to the Christian church. Because your salvation hangs on it.

And your fruitfulness hangs on it. Doing the Word of God hangs on it. Causing your light to shine depends on it.

People entering the kingdom depends on it. The glory of God, obviously, we saw there from Matthew 5. It hangs on it. So you want to take heed how you hear.

Listen, if you come into the meeting with a chip on your shoulder, oh, that guy's preaching today. Well, I don't like him. And that guy's preaching today.

I know my Bible better than he does. You know what I heard Spurgeon say one time? Spurgeon went to some country preacher, snuck in the back door, sat in the back seat, heard this country preacher, who wasn't very gifted, preach one of Spurgeon's own sermons. And you know what? He didn't go up to him.

He didn't even embarrass the guy. I don't even know that he went up to him afterwards. He said that he was so thankful that he could hear the Gospel preached, even though it was from his own sermon, and preached by a man who was obviously very less gifted.

And Spurgeon said he just rejoiced. He rejoiced in the truth. Listen, if you come into a meeting with a chip on your shoulder, that there's nothing you can learn, and there's no benefit you can get, because that guy's preaching.

That guy hasn't proved himself to me yet. You're not going to learn. You know what's going to happen? God's going to give back to you with the measure that you measure out.

And you're not going to profit. You're not going to benefit. You're not going to grow.

Brethren, God always resists the proud. But if we humble ourselves before the Word of God, I mean, those are the people that tremble before the Word of God. You know what? When you come into a meeting, regardless of who the guy is preaching, but if you realize he's opening up the Word of God, and you tremble at the Word of God, God says to this man, oh, look, to him who trembles at My Word, you're trembling not because of the man in the pulpit, not because this is the most gifted guy you ever heard, but because he's opening up the Word of God.

That's what ought to... Folks, if we'll hear, humble ourselves, we'll grow, we'll bear fruit. If there's an impulse in you to always find that you have to identify error, you have to talk about error, you have to make sure everyone knows you saw the error, it's pride. You can't put another name on it.

And you know, Scripture doesn't just say to the degree that you hear it will be measured back to you. It says with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged. And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

That comes from the Sermon on the Mount. Folks, you know what? You want to be wary. Give attention to that proverb.

It tells us that the devil is in the business of snatching up the Word. If there's any reason to be careful how you hear, it's that. Satan is in the business of taking away the Word.

You know what? I can imagine that probably just about everybody here knows the truth of what I'm going to say right now. You get somebody lost who says they're going to come to church on Sunday, and they don't end up coming. Why? Something happened.

Somebody got sick. This happened, that happened, they overslept, the water line broke, something happened. That is not coincidental.

And it is not coincidental that distractions happen. I would just say this. Listen, I am good with mothers and fathers training their children.

I don't want children being whisked off all the time to some children's church or to some daycare or some whatever. But folks, you have to be sensitive. If you have a child and they start screaming and obviously

nobody else is able to hear, the most loving thing you can do is extract that child from the meeting so that everybody else can hear.

I know you might want to hear, but because you're the mother or you're the father, you do have a responsibility. And out of loving your brothers and sisters and the lost, including lost children, lost... I mean, you don't want the distractions. Satan is in the business of taking away the Word.

Don't aid him. Don't conspire with him. Don't work with him.

The work of the devil is exposed in this parable. Remember what he said to our first parents? Yea, hath God said? He likes to neuter the Word. He likes to take it away.

He likes to lie about it. He likes to distract us from it. He's in opposition to the Word of God.

And when the Word is preached, Satan is in the business. You recognize, we might think of our meeting places as holy places because we're worshiping a holy God there. But do you recognize that one of the most active places according to this parable, one of the most active places that the devil is plying his wares is right when our meetings happen and the Word is being preached.

He is in the business of plucking up the seed. That's what he does. Satan takes away the Word of God out of people's minds and out of people's hearts.

That's the business he's in. And beware that you don't fall prey to him. Pray.

I'll tell you, one of the great ways is to seek God. Whether you're lost, whether you're saved, you're coming to the meeting, God, give me ears to hear. Help me to hear something today that helps me.

Help me to hear something that causes me to grow. Do you recognize what the devil is in the business of? He means to damn you. And he means to damn your children.

He means to damn your parents. And if you're a Christian, he means to keep the Word from sanctifying. Remember, sanctify them by thy Word.

Thy Word is truth. I didn't get that right. Sanctify them by thy truth.

Thy Word is truth. Folks, the fact is this, if the devil can't unsave you, he wants you to be ineffective. And one of the ways that we're washed is by the washing of the water of the Word.

One of the ways we're sanctified is by the Word of God being preached to us. These are very real truths, folks. And the devil, if he can't damn you, then what he wants to do is make you as ineffective as possible.

And that's exactly what he's in the business of doing. The Word, where it finds good soil, there's fruitfulness. What is the fruit of the Christian life? Well, undoubtedly, visiting the widow, visiting the orphan.

It's the fruit of the Spirit. We want fruitful lives. How does that happen? Well, the Word fell in good soil.

Who is that? They heard the Word. It was received in a good and honest heart. In honesty, we want to take the Word in.

In a good heart, we want reception to take place there. He doesn't want that seed to fall there. He does not want that.

The Word of God is the means used by the Holy Spirit to sanctify His people and to make them fruitful, and to make them loving, and to make them joyful, and to make them holy, to make them Christ-like. And I'll tell you, your moral uprightness and your moral growth and your moral newness, they'll be damaged if Satan gets in there and gets his way. You know what happens? If you go attend the meeting on Sunday and you basically come away and there were so many distractions or whatever happened, and you weren't able to even process the Word, you went out the door, like some bad day of your personal devotion when you read a couple chapters of Scripture and you're like, get done.

And it's like, I can't even remember a thing I read. If you walk out, that's not profitable. That's not how you grow.

You know how you grow. It's when you walk out and you've been really impacted by what you heard. Why were you impacted? Well, because it fell in good soil.

You processed it going through your ears into your head. Satan works overtime to keep people from giving serious attention to the Word of God. And he may keep you up late on Saturday night so you can't stay awake during the sermon.

He may put a dozen different distractions around you in the service to take your mind off these things. He may send thoughts into your mind. You ever notice how all of a sudden a thought will cross your mind like a bolt of lightning? It's like, where did that come from? I wasn't thinking about that.

Suddenly, some thought from your lost day. Some thought from your lost life. Some thought about dinner afterwards.

Some thought about work tomorrow and the meeting you've got to go to. Folks, there's more at stake here. There's more going on.

I mean, when Jesus tells us you better take heed how you hear, that's because, listen, do you recognize we have angels, fallen angels, that are in the business of trying to keep us from hearing the truth. Because hearing the truth has... I mean, it's so essential. Jesus said, you'll prove to be My disciples if My Word abides in you.

That means you're hearing. You're hearing it. You're doing it.

And you know the devil would be glad to distract you just even by the sounds that are coming out of the preacher's mouth. You don't like the accent he's got. You don't like the fact that he yelled right there.

Boy, if I was up there, I wouldn't have yelled right there. When he yells like that, that's just too harsh. Oh, he's speaking too softly.

He's speaking this way. He's speaking that way. He's speaking another.

And you know what? Inattention. Inattention. That's the name of the game for the devil.

I mean, even if it's ill will. I don't like that preacher. You have something against him.

He causes feelings. The devil will cause feelings of aversion to rise up in your hearts, in your minds. These feelings might be just, you know, preacher didn't say hi to me today.

I mean, whatever it is. People may hear and understand exactly what's being said, but they're so disposed to looking for error that they can't even hear that the Word of God is actually coming from the pulpit. Satan loves to give people such a high estimation of themselves that the Word of God gains no foothold.

Satan just takes it away. And I'll tell you, people who are overjudgmental, that's what it is. It's just a high estimation of self and the devil loves it.

He'll be right there to fan the flames of it because he knows that it's in the meek where the Spirit of God is really going to take these truths home. They're going to really be driven into that hearing ear and down into the hearing heart and produce the kind of fruit and the kind of change in the person's life. Brethren, we want to be careful.

Drink your cup of coffee before you come. Do what you have to do to be alert. Do what you have to do.

You know, folks, if you know I'm going to preach on, say, Obadiah, there's a lot of wisdom in reading it ahead of time. I mean, do the things that are most calculated to make you as prepared as possible to hear. Because do you hear what's being said? With the measure you measure in your hearing, it's going to be measured back.

What that means is God is going to make it as profitable to you as the effort you put in. And to the degree of the effort you put in, God is going to see to it that you are most advantaged by it. Look, I can guarantee you, spiritual giants in this world are people that hear.

They've been slow to speak and quick to hear. The spiritual giants in this world are always made of that kind of stuff. Yes, we need to be discerning.

You know what Hebrews says. It says, solid food is for the mature, those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. So here's what you want to do.

When you're listening, we want discerning people. If I do something shoddy, you should recognize it. If I don't rightly divide the Word, you should know.

If what I say can't be proven from the Scripture I'm preaching from, that ought to stand out to you. I'm not telling any of you to ignore that. You need to be very skilled, very sharp.

But listen, even when you come across that, don't let that discredit the truth that you do hear. Don't let that cause the good that's said to become unprofitable to you. And that's what the censorious hearer does.

That's what the hypercritical guy does. He just basically shuts down and he's not profited at all. Brethren, it can be helpful to say, hey, I mean look, if somebody stands up and they say, well, my view on Romans 7 is this, and I recognize I don't agree with that, but I recognize why he believes what he believes.

I recognize why good men have believed that way. I'm not going to get all hung up. I'm not going to close my ears now in everything that he's got to say.

I'm listening for truth. I'm listening for truth and I'm listening for error. But I don't let the error so undermine the truth that I can't hear it and that I can't profit from it.

I'm only robbing myself if I get to that place. And look, if you've got something in your heart against the preacher, you need to deal with that. You know what Scripture says.

You leave your gift at the altar and you go make those things right. If they've sinned against you, you don't have any way out. If your brother sins against you, you go to him.

And if you know your brother has something against you, then you have a responsibility still to go to him. So you don't want to be there. And look, if we had some guy that so notoriously speaks error in the pulpit, then the church needs to wake up and we need to not have that guy there.

But the most perfect of preachers are imperfect still. And they will not always be spot on. Folks, I think Grace Fellowship Manchester has actually, in the past, maybe some of the problems here are diametrically opposed to the problems that this woman is sharing with us that is true in her church.

One of the problems that Grace Fellowship in the past is following a man when perhaps he is taking the church down a path that's not biblical. So we need to be skilled. We don't want to say, well, we need to pay attention to how we hear and not be discerning.

I think that's part of paying attention to how you hear. It's being discerning. But it's also being teachable.

And it's discerning the error. But it's also grasping the truth. And we want to be Berean altogether.

Open Bibles, folks. Open Bibles. Yes, let love dictate.

Let love dictate. I mean that means that you don't run to the preacher for everything. You don't bang him over the head.

You don't get all pedantic on him and pick apart everything. You don't do that to me here. But we want to have open Bibles.

You want to bring your Bible. You want to have it open. You want to see.

The heads in the assembly need to be going up and down all the time. Up and down all the time. Because you need to see it with your own eyes.

You need to see that it's true. You need to see what I'm saying to you. It can be backed up there.

Pedantic is to be excessively concerned with minor details. And usually not because the individuals are just hypersensitive to certain things. Anyway, we want to fight that.

Let love cover. I mean, love would indicate that if somebody's teaching error concerning justification by faith, that's a damnable error. We're not doing anybody any favors by not addressing it.

You see, you want to be measured. It's like, well, how big is the thing that he said? I mean, look, if you think, well, I just want to go have a discussion with the preacher because he said that. And I don't think that's right, but I know he thinks that's right.

And there's always a place for iron sharpening iron. We go and talk to each other about it. I mean, that'll happen.

But love doesn't feel like it's got to correct everybody all the time. I mean, I've been evaluating preachers at Grace for years. I would try to choose my comments carefully.

I didn't feel like I had to go on the attack for everything that was said. But I know that Charles Spurgeon said this. Maybe this is a good place to end.

Spurgeon, in his autobiography, said that when he was a young preacher, my copy of his autobiography is back in the States. So I didn't have my resource here to look the quote up exactly. Spurgeon said something like this, that as a young preacher, an older preacher said to him, Charles, it is essential that you stay ahead of the other men in the church.

In other words, you want to know your Bible better than the rest. You want to have a walk with God that's equal to anyone in the church. You want to walk with God.

You want to commune with God. You want to know His Word. You want to be well studied.

You want to know the issues. And I'm saying more than how he said it. But he was basically saying, Charles, if you don't do that, the people in the church will think they don't need you.

Now, you may look at that and think, well, that's a carnal statement or whatever. But you know what? Spurgeon recorded it because he believed it was true. And I think it's true.

I think that those men that stand in the pulpit, they need to know their Bibles and they need to rightly... You know what? A man that stands in the pulpit, he ought to be able to have some kind of communication with you about just... He ought to be able to talk at least somewhat knowledgeably about every book in the Bible, about all the doctrines of the Bible. He ought to have a command of these things. There ought to be not a subject that has some kind of biblical foundation that could be brought up that he doesn't have some kind of thoughts.

He ought to be knowledgeable in the kind of practical things that God's people deal with. This is absolutely essential. Now I recognize we're all works in progress.

Every preacher is learning as he studies Scripture. He goes through the years. He's obviously going deeper.

He's learning. He's got more to draw from. But we should have this expectation that the guy that stands in the pulpit is going to be truly a man who is able to rightly divide the Word and has a good working knowledge and understanding and comprehension of biblical truth.

We need to be men of a book. And our hearers need to recognize that our main thing is not perfecting our golf game or getting the garden just right or making sure that... the primary thing is the brakes on my vehicle. It can't be that.

You need to be men who it's known are men of a book. I mean, as Brother B has said before, men who aren't willing to read, they need to not be in the ministry. We need men that read, men that know, men that study.

We're basically students of this book. And our hearers need to be able to recognize that. As they are, you see what that man was saying to Spurgeon? That's what is essential for you to earn the trust of the people.

Because if the people feel like they actually have a better working knowledge of the Bible than you have, well, it's like the old man said, suddenly they'll think they don't need you anymore. And to some degree, it

might leave them with a longing to have somebody that they feel like can actually feed them and take them to new levels and new heights. So there is a huge responsibility on the part of the preacher, and there's a huge responsibility on the part of the hearer.

Both have a tremendous responsibility. And all of us, maybe not all of us are preachers, but all of us are certainly in a place where we've been called to proclaim the truth. It may not be in a pulpit at the church, but we all have a responsibility to evangelize and proclaim the Word of God.

We all have responsibilities to hear. And that's what primarily we're dealing with. Quick to hear.

Slow to speak. Take heed. With the measure you measure, it will be measured back to you.

That's probably the greatest truth that I would have you hear tonight. That one right there. Now I'm sure we could go on and on about some of the ways to focus in on hearing better.

But I think oftentimes the biggest issue is just to wake people up to the importance of something. And then once somebody realizes something is really important, they'll take it upon themselves to start to think, ah, if that's so important, what do I need to do to hone my hearing capacity? Well, get rid of the distractions. Anyway, there's a lot more that can be said, but it's late, so...

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/0euj1Z7xlmE.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/tim-conway/being-a-berean-or-hyper-critical/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net