

## SERMON VII.

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HOW WE MAY HEAR THE WORD WITH PROFIT.

*Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.*—James i. 21.

THESE Jews to whom the apostle writes were guilty of many foul and scandalous sins; but their master-sin was the love of this world: “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” (James iv. 4.) And from this sin arose many other evils wherewith they are charged in this epistle, as,

1. *Their tickling joy in hopes to get gain*: “Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain.” (iv. 13.)

2. *Their hoarding-up of riches*: “Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.” (v. 3.)

3. *Withholding the pay of the labouring man*: “Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.” (v. 4.)

4. *Their fightings and contentions one with the other; yea, their killing one the other to get their estates*: “From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not even from your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain.” (iv. 1, 2.) Their desiring to have, made them kill one the other, as Ahab did Naboth.

5. *Their admiring the rich and vilifying the poor*: “If there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing.” (ii. 2, 3.)

6. And lastly, to name no more, hence arose *their unprofitable hearing of the word*: “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” (i. 22.) They heard, they had the best places at meetings; but they were *hearers* only, they *did* nothing: for riches, as Christ tells us, choked the word: “And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life.” (Luke viii. 14.)

And as they were guilty of these moral vices, so [they were] erroneous in the doctrine of faith, especially in that main article of justification, holding an empty and inefficacious faith sufficient to interest a man in Christ:

“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?” (James ii. 14.) Can *such* a faith save him? *Μη δυναται ἡ πιστις σωσαι αυτον*; “Can *that* faith save him? Can *such* faith save him?” That faith that saves is always fruitful; and that faith which is not fruitful is no true faith. The apostle doth not deny that we are justified by faith, by faith only; but he denies that faith without works is a true faith, it is only an empty and airy notion; and such a faith cannot justify nor save a man.

Well then, this being the case and condition of the people, it was impossible they should be quiet and patient hearers of the word, but must needs fret and fume against it as that which contradicts their lusts, errors, and delusions. The apostle, therefore, to take them off from this bitter and untoward spirit in hearing the word, gives them this wholesome counsel and advice from God: “Wherefore, laying apart all filthiness,” &c.

*All filthiness, ῥυπαριαν*—I will not restrain it to covetousness, nor to scurrilous and reproachful speeches, but take it in its utmost latitude, as denoting sin in the general. *Ῥυπος*, from whence comes *ῥυπαρια*, sometimes signifies “the filth of the flesh.” *Ου σαρκος αποθεις ρυπου*, “Not the putting away the filth of the flesh.” (1 Peter iii. 21.) And *ῥυπαρος* is applied to filthy garments: “And Joshua was clothed,” *ιματια ῥυπαρα*, “with filthy garments.” (Zech. iii. 3.) And so it may be taken in James ii. 2: “A poor man,” *εν ῥυπαρα εσθητι*, “in vile raiment.” Hence we learn that sin is a filthy thing. Sin is called filthiness in Prov. xxx. 12: “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.” And therefore, when God calls us from sin, he bids us wash ourselves: “Wash you, make you clean.” (Isai. i. 16.) “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit.” (2 Cor. vii. 1.) And we read of this, as that they are ashamed of their sins, and loathe themselves for them, and abhor themselves because of sin, and cast them away as a polluted and menstruous cloth. All these expositions denote the filthiness of sin.

*And superfluity of naughtiness, περισσειαν κακιας*—*Κακια* is often taken in the scripture for “malice:” “Therefore let us keep the truth, not with old leaven, not with leaven,” *κακιας*, “of malice.” (1 Cor. v. 8.) But, because it hath here no article, and because it often signifies *all manner of sin*, I will give it rope, without any limitation. The apostle, then, by “superfluity of naughtiness,” means the redundancy and overflowing of sin amongst those professors. There is a chaos of sin in all of us; but it was very spreading and luxuriant in these professors: and no marvel, for they loved money, which is the root of all evil.

*Laying apart, αποθεμενοι*—Or “laying down:” “The witnesses” *απεθεντο*, “laid down their clothes.” (Acts vii. 58.) It signifies the rejection, casting off, or putting away of sin. “Put ye off all these things,” (Col. iii. 8.) saith Paul: and again: “Put off the old man.” (Eph. iv. 22.) And so Peter: “Wherefore,” *αποθεμενοι*, “laying aside all malice.” (1 Peter ii. 1.)

*Receive with meekness*—Receive, that is, hear it, entertain it, give it entrance and admission.

*With meekness, εν πραύτητι or εν πραοτητι.*—Now *πραοτης* is *μετριότης περι οργης, καταστασις και ερημωσις της οργης*, “it is the moderation or rebatement of sinful anger.” For then, when the apostle saith, “Receive the word with meekness,” his meaning is: “Do not shut out the word by a peevish, froward, stormy, and angry spirit; but take it in with calmness, mildness, and submission.”

*The engrafted word, τον εμφυτον λογον.*—Though it be not *τον λογον εγκεντριζομενον*, which is the word used for “engrafting,” in Rom. xi.; yet, since *εμφυτειαι* signifies “graftings” and *εμφυτευειν*, “to graft,” the translation is warrantable. But yet *λογος εμφυτος* may respect the planting or the sowing of the word, and may be read, “the word planted,” or “the word sown;” that is, sown in your hearts by the hand of Christ’s ministers. See Mark iv. 15: “But when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.”

*Which is able to save your souls.*—That is, from hell and damnation. There is this power in the word; but it is mutuatitious, extrinical, and borrowed. It is the power of God to salvation: “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation.” (Rom. i. 16.) The word of itself saves not, but God by the word. “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” (1 Cor. i. 21.)

The words thus opened, the case I am to speak to is this: *How we may hear the word so as to profit by it.*

For the resolution of this question, I shall,

*First*, Tell you what we mean by “the word.”

*Secondly*, What by “profiting.”

And, *Thirdly*, How we shall profit by the hearing of it.

I. By “the word” I understand the word of God; which word of God may be considered either as it is written in the scripture, or as it is preached, that is, expounded and applied by the ministers of Christ. The question is concerning the word preached, *How we may hear it so as to profit by it.* Ministers are to preach the word: “Preach the word.” (2 Tim. iv. 2.) *Preach the word!* what is that? That is, Open and unfold the scriptures with a suitable application of them to the estate and the condition of the hearers. Reprove from them, rebuke from them, exhort from them.

This was Christ’s preaching: “He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,” &c., and then he expounds it: “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” (Luke iv. 17, 18, 21.) “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Luke xxiv. 27.) This was Peter’s preaching. (Acts ii. 14.) In this sermon he chiefly insists upon two scriptures, and expounds them both, and then applies all to their consciences: “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ.” (Acts ii. 36.) And this was Paul’s preaching: “There came many to his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.” (Acts xxviii.

23.) And for the Levites before Christ, who taught the people the good knowledge of the law, they preached after this manner: "So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused the people to understand the reading." (Neh. viii. 7, 8.) And that was the manner in the synagogues after Christ: "And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." (Acts xiii. 15.) Moses was not only read, but preached: "Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day." (Acts xv. 21.) And Paul prescribes the way of preaching to Timothy: "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." (1 Tim. iv. 13.) I understand it of public reading the scriptures in the church, with the application of them by way of doctrine and exhortation.

Well, then, by "the word" we understand the word preached, which is the opening and unfolding the scriptures, by the ministers of Christ.

## II. *What is meant by profiting? or, what is it to profit by the word?*

I answer, we profit by the word, when we get that good and spiritual advantage from it for which it was appointed and designed by God. Now, God hath appointed his word,

1. *For learning and instruction.*—"For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted." (1 Cor. xiv. 31.) The Colossians learned by the ministry of the word: "As ye also learned of Epaphras, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ." (Col. i. 7.) And the Philippians learned by Paul: "Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do." (Phil. iv. 9.) The things that are to be heard by the ministry, are matters of faith, and matters of practice; and if, by hearing the word, we get a good understanding in things that are to be believed by us, and the things that are to be done by us, then we profit by it. But if we remain ignorant as to these things after mercy received, then we hear the word without profit.

2. *For conversion.*—God hath appointed his word "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light." (Acts xxvi. 18.) And the angel, speaking of John Baptist's ministry, saith, "And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God." (Luke i. 16.) Now, the word turns man unto God,

(1.) *As it discovers sin.*—If the scriptures be dextrously handled, they will search into the very secrets of men's hearts: "If there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest." (1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.) The Baptist's preaching discovered to the Jews their carnal security in trusting to Abraham: "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father;" (Matt. iii. 9;) their want of charity, their covetous and humorous disposition: "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." (Luke iii. 11.) It discovered the publicans' exactings: "And he saith to them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you;" (verse 13;) and the soldiers' violence: "And he said unto them, Do violence to no man." (Verse 14.)

(2.) *As it brings people to the confession of sins.*—The Baptist's

preaching brought his hearers to confess their sins: "And they were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." (Matt. iii. 6.) And so did Paul's: "And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds." (Acts xix. 18.)

(3.) *As it works a kindly mourning and sorrow for sin.*—Upon Peter's sermon the Jews were pricked at the heart. (Acts ii. 37.) The people wept when they heard the word of the Lord. (Neh. viii. 9.) After the children of Israel had heard these words, they wept for the perverseness of their nature. (Jer. iii. 21.) The word which they heard was: "Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord." (Jer. iii. 20.)

(4.) *As it works amendment and reformation.*—The word turns people from their sins: "They themselves show of us what manner of entrance in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and the true God;" (1 Thess. i. 9;) and makes them fruitful toward God: "Ye heard before in the word of the gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit. (Col. i. 5, 6.) Now, then, if the word converts you to God, if it discovers your sins; if it causes you to confess them, to mourn for them, and to leave them; then you profit by the word. But if under hearing you do not see the sins that reign in you, as pride, covetousness, passion; if you do not confess them heartily before God, if you do not mourn kindly for them, nor leave them; you hear without profit.

3. *God hath appointed his word for the building up of those that are called, converted, and sanctified.*—"I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." (Acts xx. 32.) Apollos, by his preaching, "helped them that had believed through grace." (Acts xviii. 27.) The word doth not only serve for the implantation of grace, but it excites, strengthens, and draws out the graces of petitioners. Paul's preaching strengthened the disciples: "And he went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples." (Acts xviii. 23.) God's word is compared to meat: "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?" (Luke xii. 42.) And meat strengthens and nourishes the body; and so the word of God: "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine." (1 Tim. iv. 6.) Well, then, if by the hearing of the word you are built up, and grow by it; if your faith grow exceedingly, if your love abound, if you bring forth much fruit, then you profit by it. But if your sins grow not weaker, and your graces stronger, then you hear it without profit.

4. And, lastly, to name no more, *the word was appointed for consolation.*—"Ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted." (1 Cor. xiv. 31.) The Samaritans rejoiced at Philip's preaching: "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ to them. And there was great joy in that city." (Acts viii. 5, 8.) And so did the eunuch. (Acts viii. 29—38.) And so did

the jailor at Paul's preaching: "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." (Acts xvi. 32, 34.) Now the word comforts as it opens God's attributes, such as his mercy, wisdom, faithfulness, and power. Secondly: As it discovers Christ, the promises and privileges of the saints. Thirdly: As it discovers and reveals the marks and characters of God's children. Fourthly: As it answers the doubts and fears of saints. Well, then, if in hearing the word you find that it supports, strengthens, and revives your hearts like a cordial, then you profit by it. But if you find nothing sweet nor refreshing in it, you hear it without profit.

III. I come now to the third thing: *How we shall profit by hearing of the word.*—That is, How shall we attain the benefit from the word of God for which it was appointed? It was appointed for instruction, conversion, edification, consolation. How may we hear it so that we may obtain these things by it? I shall give you four directions, and conclude.

DIRECTION I.—First. *Hear it attentively.*—Christ, in the beginning of his sermons, calls upon his auditors to hearken: "And he said unto them in his doctrine, Hearken." (Mark iv. 2, 3.) And so doth Paul: "Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience." (Acts xiii. 16.) And, in Rev. ii. 7: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." And you read in Luke xix. 48: "All the people were very attentive to hear him," *ἐξεκρεματο αὐτοῦ ακουειν*, "they hung upon him hearing," that is, they hung their ears upon his mouth, that they might receive every word, and miss nothing. This phrase is common in Greek authors: *Ἦων λογων ἐξεκρεμαντο. Της φωνης ἐξεκρεματο\** and in the Latin,

*Narrantis conjux pendet ab ore viri.*†—OVIDII *Epist. Heroid.* l. 30.

And Augustine, speaking of his hearing Ambrose, saith, *Verbis ejus suspendebat intentus.*‡ And one promising to hear attentively, saith,

*Incipe, suspensis auribus ista bibam.*§—PROPERTII *Eleg.* lib. iii. *eleg.* v. 10.

Now this attentive hearing is a diligent heeding of the things that are spoken by the ministers of Christ, so as not to let any thing pass without notice and observation. This was the attention of the Samaritans to Philip's preaching: "And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake;" (Acts viii. 6;) and the attention of Lydia to Paul's preaching: "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul." (Acts xvi. 14.) *That were spoken by Paul*—That is, to all of them. What saith Cornelius? "Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." (Acts x. 33.) So that our

\* "They hung upon his words." "His attention was arrested by the sound of his voice."—EDIT.

† "His wife, while listening to her warlike lord,  
With fix'd attention, hangs on every word."—EDIT.

‡ "His discourse absorbed my attention, and I heard him with admiration and interest."—EDIT.

§ "My ears shall drink-in all with joy intense,  
If at the charming source thy words commence."—EDIT.

attention must be catholic and universal: we must listen to all that is spoken to us in the name of Christ the Lord. But yet, in preaching, some things are more especially to be attended to. 1. If any scripture be clearly opened, attend to that. 2. If any doubt of conscience be fully resolved, attend to that. 3. If any sin of yours be particularly discovered, attend to that. Lastly, if any thing be spoken by the minister with a more than ordinary warmth and fervency, attend to that: there is some divine signature with it, and it calls for our special observation.

That is the first: we are to *hear the word attentively*. I will only mention two hinderances of attention, and proceed:—

1. *Wandering thoughts, thoughts that are foreign and heterogeneous to the duty in hand.*—These thoughts employ the mind, and hinder the hearing of the word. Now these thoughts are various according to the employments, inclinations, and circumstances of men. Wanton people have filthy thoughts. Finical people are thinking of their attires and ornaments; worldly people, of their trades and callings.

2. *Drowsiness and sleepiness.*—When the head nods, and the eyes begin to swim, the sermon is likely to be heard well! But yet this is too common a practice, and that amongst professors; whereby they vilify the ordinance of preaching, they give an ill example to others, and render their uprightness and integrity suspected by sober Christians. And I wish that those professors who use it customarily and indulge themselves in it, would put off their livery and tell us plainly they are none of the Lord's family.

DIRECT. II. *Hear and receive the word with meekness.*—This is the direction of the text: "Wherefore lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word," &c. We must not be angry at the word; if so, it will do us no good. People are very apt to be angry at the word: see Luke iv. 28: "And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath." "Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" (Matt. xv. 12.) "When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them." (Acts v. 33.) "Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die." (Jer. xxvi. 8, 9.) "Wherefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Amaziah, and he sent unto him a prophet, which said unto him, Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand? And the king said unto him, Art thou made of the king's council? forbear; why shouldst thou be smitten?" (2 Chron. xxv. 15, 16.) "And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose

heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly : therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars. Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house ; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing." (2 Chron. xvi. 7—10.)

This is a notable instance : 1. Because this anger is great, " a rage," and such a rage as put the prophet in prison. 2. It is expressly said that this rage was against the word. (Verse 10.) 3. This rage was found in a good and holy man, whose heart was perfect with the Lord his God.

Now, from this instance, we may learn what part of the word it is that men are most angry at. 1. *The word which discovers their sins, and charges them home upon their consciences.*—As the seer charged Asa home : " Thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God ;" and this vexed him. 2. *That word that reproaches them for their sins.*—" Herein thou hast done foolishly." (Verse 9.) Men cannot endure to have their actions charged with folly. 3. *That word that threatens them for their sins.*—" Henceforth thou shalt have wars." (Verse 9.) People cannot bear it to be threatened. This was the great quarrel that the Jews had with Jeremiah : he came so often with a burden of the Lord, and threatened them : see Jer. xxvi. 9 : " Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant ?" When Christ threatened the scribes and Pharisees, they could bear no longer : " And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people, for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them." (Mark xii. 12.)

Thus you see people are apt to be angry at the hearing of the word. But what kind of people are most apt to be angry ? First. *They that are great in the world.*—" And he taught daily in the temple ; but the chief priests and the scribes, and the chief of the people, sought to destroy him." (Luke xix. 47.) It was Jehoiakim the king that cut Jeremiah's roll in pieces, and it was Herod that thrust John into prison for reproving him. Secondly. *Proud men.*—" When Jeremiah made an end of speaking unto all the people all the words of the Lord their God, for which the Lord their God had sent him to them, then spake all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely." (Jer. xliii. 1, 2.) Proud men cannot endure a check, either by the public ministry, or by a private admonition. Thirdly. *Guilty persons.*—Why was Cain so touchy when God asked him about Abel ? Because he was guilty of his blood. Guilty persons are like galled horses ; they kick if you touch their sores. Nothing hinders us from receiving the word with meekness like the conscience of sin ; wherefore when the apostle bids us " receive the word with meekness," he bids us " lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness." If the heart be surfeited with sin, it will rise and boak\* against the word. When Christ preached against covetousness, the Pharisees that were covetous were vexed at him, and expressed their vexation by sneering at him : " And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things ; and they derided him." (Luke xvi. 13, 14.)

\* An old word, sometimes written *boke*, which signifies " to belch," or " to retch."—EDIT.



**DIRECT. III.** *Hear the word with a good and honest heart.*—"But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." (Luke viii. 15.) This is a comprehensive head, and takes-in all particulars that concern the right manner of hearing; but I shall contract it and reduce it, 1. To an understanding heart. 2. A believing heart. 3. A loving heart.

1. Then hear the word *with an understanding heart.*—The way-side hearers hear, but do not understand. "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not: this is he that receiveth the seed by the way-side." (Matt. xiii. 19.) But they that receive it into good ground, that is, into an honest heart, understand it. "But he that received seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word and understandeth it, which also beareth fruit." (Verse 23.) Jesus Christ calls upon his auditors to hear and understand: "Hearken unto me, every one of you, and understand." (Mark vii. 14.) And blames them that do not understand: "And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also?" (Verse 18.) And it was his manner, after preaching, to ask if they understood him: "Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things?" (Matt. xiii. 51.) The generality of hearers are without understanding; they neither understand doctrinal nor experimental truths; not the one *for lack of knowledge*, nor the other *for lack of feeling*; and hence it is that they remember so little of the word, and that they are so little affected with the word.

2. *With a believing heart.*—"Believe the gospel." (Mark i. 15.) "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." (2 Chron. xx. 20.) Two things especially we are to mingle our faith with,—the threatenings and the promises: (1.) *With the threatenings.*—So the people of Nineveh. "So the people of Nineveh believed God." (Jonah iii. 5.) (2.) *With the promises.*—"And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshipped." (Exod. iv. 31.) Were the threatenings and promises which are constantly preached, fully understood, thoroughly believed, and brought home to your consciences by spiritual application, this would quickly put an end to sin; for the threatenings would scare you from sin, and the promises would allure you to duty.

3. *With a loving heart.*—"As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word;" (1 Peter ii. 2;) as new-born babes love the breast. David was a great lover of the word of God: "Thy word is very pure; therefore thy servant loveth it." (Psalm cxix. 140.) He loved it exceedingly: "My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly." (Verse 167.) His longing after the word was so vehement, that it almost consumed him. "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath to thy judgments at all times." (Verse 20.) He loved it far better than gold: "Therefore, I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold." (Verse 127.) But how far he loved it, he could not tell: "O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day;" (verse 97;) and therefore leaves it with God to judge his love to it: "Consider how I love

thy precepts." (Verse 159.) Brethren, had there been such a love in the people of England to the word, the mouths of so many ministers had never been stopped: and whereas we judge that such and such are the causes of it, pray let us remember that no man living can take the word from us, unless they be first empowered by our disaffection to it.

DIRECT. IV. And last. *If you would profit by hearing of the word, keep what you hear of it.*—"They, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word," *κατεχουσι*, "keep it." (Luke viii. 15.) *Κατεχειν τον λογον* is "to hold fast the word" that it slip not from us. "Prove all things;" *το καλον κατεχετε*, "hold fast that which is good." (1 Thess. v. 21.) "The people sought him, and came unto him, and," *κατειχον αυτον*, "stayed him, that he should not depart from them." (Luke iv. 42.) "By which" (gospel) "also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory," *ει κατεχετε*, "if ye hold fast, what I preached unto you." (1 Cor. xv. 2.) You know, if the seed be not kept in the ground, it is sown to no purpose; so if the word be not kept in the memory and in the heart, it will come to nothing. Keep therefore the word in your hearts; *κατεχετε*, "hold it fast," lest the devil snatch it from you. For, look, as the fowls of the air follow the seedsman to pick up the corn as soon as he hath scattered it, so the prince of the air, the devil, is at hand to take the word out of our hearts: "But when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts." (Mark iv. 15.) Immediately, as soon as we have heard the word, the devil is at hand to take the word out of our hearts. He taketh the word out of our hearts; in Matthew (xiii. 19) it is *αρραξει*, "he snatcheth it;" and if you would know why the devil is so hasty to snatch away the word, Christ tells you: "Then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." (Luke viii. 12.)

"But how shall we keep the word?"

1. *Repeat it in your families.*—The Bereans conned over Paul's sermons, and examined his proofs and allegations: "They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." (Acts xvii. 11.)

2. *Talk of it as you go from hearing.*—Jesus Christ's hearers talked of the word by the way: "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke xxiv. 32.) After Paul had preached, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves: "And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves." (Acts xxvii. 29.)

3. *Pray to the Lord, that he would preserve the word in your hearts by his Spirit.*—The devil would snatch away the word of God from us, if there were not a stronger to guard it, and that is the Holy Ghost: "That good thing which was committed to thee keep, by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." (2 Tim. i. 14.) Pray then after the word, as David: "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the hearts of thy people." (1 Chron. xxix. 18.) And such a prayer, coming from an honest heart, shall secure the word, so that it shall abide with you, and it shall

come after to your minds; it shall come seasonably in the very nick and stress of exigency, and it shall come with efficacy and power.

Thus much shall serve for the resolution of the question, *how to hear the word so as to profit by it.*—Only this I add, and conclude:—that if God shall bless these directions, and give us thus to hear his word, it will be an excellent sign that God will continue the preaching of it to us, and that his ministers shall teach these things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding them.

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## SERMON VIII.

BY THE REV. THOMAS WATSON, A.M.

HOW WE MAY READ THE SCRIPTURES WITH MOST SPIRITUAL  
PROFIT.

*And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them.*—Deuteronomy xvii. 19.

WHAT Cicero said of Aristotle's Politics, may not unfitly be said of this Book of Deuteronomy: "It is full of golden eloquence." In this chapter God instructs the people of the Jews about setting a king over them. And there are two things specified in order to their king:

1. His election.
2. His religion.

1. *His election.*—"Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose." (Verse 15.) Good reason God should have the choice of their king, seeing "by him kings reign." (Prov. viii. 15.)

2. *His religion.*—"When he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites." \* (Verse 18.) Here was a good beginning of a king's reign: the first thing he did after he sat upon the throne, was to copy out the word of God in a book. And in the text: "It shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them." *It shall be with him*—The book of the law shall be his *vade mecum*, or daily companion. Charles the Great used to set his crown upon the Bible. Indeed the Bible is the best supporter of the crown. *And he shall read therein* †—It is not

\* *Levitical sacerdotes in atrio templi volumen legis, quod erat primariae autoritatis, custodiebant.*—PAULUS FAGIUS. "The book of the law, which was of supreme authority, was carefully preserved by the Levitical priests in the inner court of the temple."—EDIT.  
† *Legere debuit, et sibi privatim, et in templo, ut sciret populus neminem a lege excipi.*—GROTIUS. "It was a part of his duty to read the law, both to himself in private, and publicly in the temple, in order that the people might know that no one was exempted from its observance."—EDIT.