

φύλη which carries the personality of the man: which is between the *πνεῦμα*, drawing it upward, and the *σάρξ*, drawing it downward, and is saved at last—passes into life or death, according to the choice between these two. And the *λόγος ἐμφυτός*, working through the *πνεῦμα* and by the divine *πνεῦμα*, is a spiritual agency able to save the *ψυχή*." (Alford). Huther says: "Instead of *τῆς ψυχῆς ὑμῶν*, James might simply have written *ὑμᾶς*."

HOMILETICAL.—In the passage we are taught: With what dispositions we are to wait on the Word; with what spirit we are to receive the Word; and what is accomplished by the Word.

I. WITH WHAT DISPOSITIONS WE SHOULD WAIT ON THE WORD.

"Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." This language is universally applicable to all subjects of human inquiry or research; but, as used here, doubtless refers to the word of truth—the Gospel of salvation—the subject in hand. It is not simply an excellent rule in relation to the civilities and courtesies of social intercourse, but an injunction with regard to the right manner of giving and receiving instruction in religious truth.

We notice the injunction, and the argument by which it is enforced.

1. *The injunction*, which is threefold, and relates to the ear, the tongue, and the temper.

(1) "*Be swift to hear.*" Faith cometh by hearing; and hence, indirectly at least, hearing becomes a channel of salvation. The ear is one of the chief receptive organs of the mind, and it is obviously most important that we should be solicitous, not only how, but what, we hear. There is much which is erroneous, impure or profane; much that is vain, frivolous and unprofitable, which it were better not to hear at all, and in reference to which the less heed we give the better. Much also is said that is censorious, or calumnious, against which we should close our ears, or be slow to hear. But all that God has revealed—specially the truth, which when received is able to save the soul

—demands a reverent, ready and docile attention. The mind should be kept open for the reception of the truth of God, from whatever source it may come. We should be *swift to hear* all voices which reveal to us the mind and will of God. But the Scriptures should be searched with special assiduity. God's law should be pondered day and night; and attendance, regular and punctual, on the services of the sanctuary and the ministry of the Word and ordinances, should be faithfully maintained. A dust-covered Bible on the shelf and a vacant pew in the church at one service on the Sabbath, and not infrequently at both, is sad proof that the owner of either is not swift to hear, and willfully neglects the divine injunction. Great stress is laid by the inspired writers on hearing. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear," is the injunction given to each of the seven churches of Asia. Our Lord Himself, during His ministry, frequently delivered the same precept. (Matt. xi: 15; xiii: 9, 43; Luke xiv: 35.) Obedience to the precept implies that we are to seize with alacrity on every opportunity of hearing, and take earnest heed how we hear. There is an art of hearing profitably, which should be cultivated. We should listen to the word of truth eagerly, attentively, intelligently, and prayerfully. "Hear, and your soul shall live."

(2) "*Be slow to speak.*" Words are sacred, serious things; winged agents of good or evil, and mighty in their influence. The words of Christ are spirit and life, and should be treated and used with respect and solemnity. The propriety of careful thought before speaking is embodied in the adage, "Silence is golden"; yet, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin; but he that refraineth his lips is wise." Every man may adopt the language of the Psalmist, and say: "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue." "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." (Compare Matt. xii: 36, 37; Prov. xxix: 20; xiii: 3; xv: 2;

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