

hallowed zeal, and stricter obedience be ours. It is cause of regret that the image of the Saviour of men, is so faint and imperfect in the best; and that it fails to interest, and attract, and influence, the multitude of nominal christians.

May the Divine Spirit excite us to a deeper study, and a more ardent pursuit, of the mind that was in Christ. Amen.

T. D.

November, 1838.

ON HEARING THE WORD

(Concluded)

FIFTHLY. Hear the word with constant self-application. Go to the house of God with a serious expectation and desire of hearing something suited to your particular state. Something that shall lay the axe to the root of your corruptions, mortify your easily besetting sins, and confirm the graces in which you are most deficient. A little attention will be sufficient to give you that insight into your character, which will teach what you need—what the peculiar temptations to which you are exposed—and on what account you feel most humiliation, and shame before God. Every one may know, if he pleases, the plague of his own heart. Keep your eye upon it while you are hearing, and eagerly lay hold of whatever is best adapted to heal and correct it. Remember that religion is a personal thing—an individual concern; for every one of us must give an account of himself to God, and every one bear his own burden. “Is not my word as a fire,” saith the Lord, “and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces.” If such be its power and efficacy, lay your heart open to it, and expose them fully to the stroke of the hammer, and the action of the fire. Do not imagine because you are tolerably well acquainted with the system of the Gospel, you have therefore nothing to learn; and that your obligation to attend its ministry arises from the necessity of setting an example. It is possible your knowledge is much more limited than you suppose: but if it be not, it is a great mistake to imagine the only advantage derived from hearing, is the acquisition of new truths. There is a spiritual perception more important than the knowledge which is merely speculative. The latter is at most, but a means to the former, and the perception is not confined to new propositions; it is frequently, nay, more frequently, attached to truths already known; and when they are faithfully and affectionately exhibited, they are the principal means of calling into action, and strengthening the habits of internal grace. Love, joy, humility, heavenly-mindedness, godly sorrow for sin, and holy resolutions against it, are not promoted so much by novel speculations, as by placing in a just and affecting light, the acknowledged truths of the Gospel, and thereby stirring up the mind by way of remembrance. “Whilst I am in this tabernacle,” said St. Peter, “I will not be negligent to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the present truth.” We appeal to the experience of every real Christian, whether the sweetest and most profitable seasons he has enjoyed, have not been those, in which he is conscious of having learned no new truth, strictly speaking: but was indulged

with spiritual and transforming views of the plain and questionable discoveries of the Gospel. As the word of God is the food of souls, so it corresponds to that character, in this respect, among others,—that the strength and refreshment it imparts, depends not upon its novelty—but upon the nutritious properties it possesses. It is a sickly appetite only, which craves incessant variety.

SIXTHLY. Hear the word of God with a serious resolution of obeying it. “If ye know these things,” said our Lord, “happy are ye if ye do them.” He that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him to a man who built his house on a rock.” To be a forgetful hearer of the word, and not a doer, is to forget all the advantages of the Christian dispensation, which is imparted solely with a view to practise. The doctrine of faith is published, with a design to produce the obedience of faith, in all nations. The doctrine of repentance, is nothing more or less than the command of God, that all men every where should repent. If we are reminded, that he who in “times past, spake to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days, spoken unto us by his son,” it is that we may be admonished, not to refuse him that speaketh. If we are taught the supreme dignity and exaltation of Christ, it is, that “every knee may bow, and every tongue confess, that he is Lord.” If the Apostles, having the mind of Christ, faithfully imparted it, it was, that the same mind might be in us, to purify our passions, and regulate our conduct. We can scarcely imagine a greater inconsistency, than to hear the word of God with apparent seriousness, without intending to comply with its directions. It is a solemn mockery, concealing under an air of reverence and submission, a determination to rebel. Remember the practical tendency of every Christian doctrine. Remember that the ministry of the Gospel is the appointed instrument, of forming the spirits of men to faith and obedience: and that, consequently, the utmost attention and assiduity in hearing it, are fruitless and unavailing, which fail to produce that effect.

FINALLY. Be careful after you have heard the word, to retain and perpetuate its impressions. Meditate, retire, digest it in your thoughts, turn it into prayer; in a word, spare no pains to fasten it upon your hearts. You have read of those to whom the Gospel was preached, as well as to us, but the word did not profit them, “not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” Endeavour to exert upon it distinct and vigorous acts of faith, and thereby to mingle and incorporate it, with all the powers of the mind, and all the spring of action. But this you can never do, without deep and serious reflection, for want of which, it is too often left loose, and exposed like uncovered seed, which the fowls of heaven easily pick up and devour; “Then cometh that wicked one,” saith our Lord, “and taketh it out of his heart, and it becometh unfruitful.” How many hearers, by engaging in worldly conversation, or giving way to a vain or unprofitable train of thought when they leave the sanctuary, lose the impressions they receive, instead of conducting themselves like persons who have just been put in possession of a treasure, they are anxious to secure from depredation? If Satan watches for an

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