

# The Reception Of God's Word

**The Christian's  
Approach And Attitude  
Towards  
The Reading And Hearing  
Of God's Word**



*Elijah Thomas Chacka*

*“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”*

*Matthew 7:24-27*

## Preamble

**I**n concluding the sublime Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:24-27), our Lord vividly portrayed to His disciples the diametrical contrast of the consequences of two types of hearers. The truly wise, who hears and performs the Word of God, is likened unto the man who built his house upon the rock; when the rain descended, the floods came and the winds beat upon the house, his house stood still; for it was built upon a rock. On the other hand, the foolish man built his house upon the sand and when the same calamities came, it fell. The foolish man depicts the man who hears God's Word but does not apply it in his life. It is good for us to observe that the actual difference between the houses is neither in the edifices nor the foundations but the nature of the grounds. Similarly, both the fool and the wise man hear God's Word but the distinct difference lies in the manner, attitude and regard in their reception of God's Word. The fool hears God's Word somewhat in a careless, superficial and haphazard manner, wherefore he eventually suffers for it. The wise man knows the efficacy and power of God's Word and approaches it with reverence, fear and trembling, with the intent to apprehend and perform it. Such an attitude will make the man blessed and prosperous in all his ways (Joshua 1:6-8; I Kings 2:3,4; Psalm 1:1-3). Some reflections will help us realise that the erection of a foundation in the rock requires the arduous and painful process of digging, stone-lifting, rock-breaking and chipping; nevertheless, the wise man was resolute, knowing the end would justify his toil, sweat and tears. And the test of time reveals and proves his judgment and prudence. Howbeit the foolish man, lacking resolve, purposefulness and diligence, ultimately experienced disastrous outcome when the calamities transpired. It is therefore of utmost importance to take heed to how we hear or read God's Word. It is indeed true to say that eventually the quality and destiny of our lives would very much depend on how we hearken and take heed to God's Word. In the Book of Revelation, the addresses to the seven churches down the corridors of history is sealed with the message of these words, "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*" (Revelation 2:7,11a,17a,29, 3:6,13,22).

Following are some vital and sound considerations whereby we can effectively secure the full benefits and blessings of the reading and hearing of God's Word.

### **(1) Employing spiritual faculties to discern spiritual truth**

There are many people today who are ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the spiritual truth (II Timothy 3:7). Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned (I Corinthians 2:14). First and foremost, we must examine and prove ourselves whether we are spiritually quickened from our deadness in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). Unless a man is born again of the Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel, he cannot perceive the things pertaining to the Kingdom of heaven. In John's Gospel, we learn of Nicodemus, who was a leader and teacher of the Scriptures and yet could not apprehend the spiritual truth therein because he was not regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit (John 3). Secondly, the same principle will further apply in our understanding and comprehension of the deeper things of the Scriptures. We must always bear in mind that spiritual truth can never be fully appreciated by our mental and intellectual faculties alone. It can only be made known to us by divine illumination. This is why our Lord promised to grant us the Holy Spirit Who would enlighten and reveal to us the Scriptures (I John 2:20,27). Hence our very approach to anointed preaching and the hearing of God's Word should be marked by a humble dependence upon God. We must neither be inhibited nor hindered by the prejudices and strongholds of worldly and fleshly wisdom (Isaiah 66:1,2).

A great deal of ecclesiastical errors and heresies that contribute to the modern trend of liberalism are the by-products of men who have ventured to interpret and understand the Scriptures without relying on divine help. Such men evoke the displeasure and curse of God, let alone deprive themselves the real joy and life-giving efficacy of God's Word.

### **(2) Adopting an attitude of humility and teachability**

It is good for us to examine ourselves every now and then to see whether we are maintaining an attitude of meekness and teachability. We must never take for granted that we would be continually blessed in the reading, hearing and meditation of God's Word. While we give ourselves to the ardent study of God's Word, we must also learn what it is to wait quietly upon the Lord with faith and anticipation. Never let our past experiences and perception of the truth (however sound and Scriptural we presume them to be) become a stumbling block in our pursuit of apprehending a deeper and clearer insight and more accurate concept of the truth (Philippians 3:12-14). It could be that sometimes our approach in worship and the meditation of God's Word may not find the Lord's approbation because of our presumptuous, haughty and insincere disposition (Psalm 19:14; Romans 12:1). One way of checking and correcting this is to constantly and honestly examine ourselves introspectively (Psalm 139:23,24; II Corinthians 13:5). We must conscientiously strive to remain humble and contrite before the Lord at all times if we are to seek His grace, wisdom and power (Isaiah 57:15, 65:2,5; John 6:44; II Corinthians 12:9,10). Our Lord epitomised this attitude in His own life. In Matthew 11:29, He beckons us to learn of Him meekness and lowliness in heart. Only then can we appropriate the real joy, power and comfort of God's Word so that we may find rest unto our souls. The Book of Proverbs begins with the declaration that a spirit of teachability would profit not only the simple and young but also the wise and the learned (Proverbs 1:4-6). So often the subtle and actual danger comes when we become acquainted and familiar with the Scriptures to some measure and then subsequently suffer from the elements of pride and incorrigibility. This may in turn deprive us of further blessings and retard and eventually abate our spiritual progress and advancement. The common adage, 'Familiarity breeds contempt', is ever true in this instance and should cause us to be vigilant against the emergence of such a spiritual malaise.

There is only one way to express the attitude of humble expectancy before God and that is by prayer. We must both pray before we read or hear God's Word and read and hear

it in a prayerful frame of mind. In the acrostic song of Psalm 119, there are many expressions of prayer by which the psalmist entreated the Lord to grant him the ability to understand further the truth of God's Word so that he may diligently keep them. Like the psalmist, our innermost cry should always be: *"Deal bountifully with Thy servant, that I may live, and keep Thy Word. Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law"* (Psalm 119:17,18).

### **(3) Exercising consistency in our devotional habits**

Although our attitude must solely and wholly be dependent upon the Lord in helping us to understand, grow and be sanctified by God's Word, we must not remain passive in our efforts but we are to *'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling'* (Philippians 2:12b). We are to consciously cultivate the good habits of reading and hearing God's Word. This would require that we exercise a certain measure of discipline and diligence on our part, but, by the grace of God, these habits will beget godly attitudes which would in turn greatly enhance and fortify our Christian character as we continue to do so. For instance, it will be good for us to seek the Lord in and through His Word early in the morning or even a great while before dawn. In fact the Scriptures gives us implied precepts and examples of this (Psalm 63:1; Mark 1:35). It is only right that we spend much time with the Lord both in the Word and prayer before we begin our day's activities. It will also benefit us if we come a great deal earlier before the beginning of a worship service or a Bible Study so that we can give adequate time to prepare ourselves in stilling our minds and hearts in prayer. We must make a conscientious effort to remember and meditate what we have heard or read. We can aid this by writing concise notes on what we have heard or read. Perhaps the hardest area where discipline is required is in the meditation of God's Word. Meditation is the process of thinking and praying over God's Word with the intent of applying it in one's life. We must seek God for special grace so as to increase our ability to meditate effectively on God's Word while we are undertaking other activities in our everyday living (Deuteronomy 11:18-19).

#### **(4) Obeying and applying God's Word**

We can never be blessed if we stop merely at gaining Scriptural knowledge. Our intention of receiving God's Word should be nothing short of fully obeying and applying it in our lives. James the apostle admonishes us in his epistle: *"But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves"* (James 1:22). *"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed"* (James 1:25). The true and full joy of receiving God's Word can only come after we have implemented it in our lives. It is said that Ezra, the scribe, prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord first to do it and then to teach it (Ezra 7:10). The efficacy and power of God's Word must be allowed to be completely transmitted and harnessed in our lives so that it may renew our minds and transform our hearts and make us thoroughly furnished unto all good works (II Timothy 3:16,17).

#### **Conclusion**

If we are negligent or deficient in cultivating a proper and godly regard towards God's Word, it can have detrimental and far reaching effects upon our spiritual lives. Indeed, the consequences would be eternal. Our Lord concluded the Sermon on the Mount by describing the tragic outcome of those who come short of a proper application of the hearing of the Word of God. *"And great was the fall of it"* (Matthew 7:27b). A trembling and godly regard towards God's Word both preached and read is the most sure way to enhance our comprehension of the truth and benefit ourselves with the richest and fullest of the blessings of God. By all means, let us ensure that our reception and appreciation of God's Word fit the description of the wise man who built his house upon a rock. **✠**

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