

USE IT OR LOSE IT

Luke 8:16-18

(Not entirely original with me)

Introduction: "Use it or lose it" is a saying that has been around a long time and it is so true. Everyone has in the back of their minds things that they never used and eventually got stored "away." The same goes for our physical bodies. If we don't exercise, we lose muscle, physical abilities and can become stiff and have difficulty in getting around. In reference to the things of God, our text points out that when a person uses what God gives he/she is blessed but if he/she doesn't use it, it is taken away and even more could be. The text is a "caution" for God's Children, to pay attention to how they hear and use what they hear from God. We are to be attentive, awake, considerate and take seriously the word of God in it's meaning and application to ourselves.

I. WHY SHOULD WE PAY ATTENTION TO HOW WE HEAR GOD'S WORD?

1. It is almighty God who is speaking! The word we read/hear maybe through the voice of someone preaching or teaching His Word in whatever language we understand, yet it is still the voice of God and He has chosen the printed Word to reveal Himself to us.
 - Why should pay attention when God speaks? Every word that comes from God is important, He never speaks idle words.
 - If God appointed a time and place where He would speak in an audible voice to us, would you not make every effort to be there and be anxious to hear what He would say?
 - What if some didn't pay any attention, didn't even show up?
2. God does speak, to each of us, as if He called us by our name. Suppose it was announced that this coming Sunday in worship service God was going to speak audibly to someone, but nobody knew who He was going to speak to. Would the service be crowded? Would every person be saying, "is it I?" "Is it me God is going to speak to?" "What will God say?"
 - Such a thing would no doubt awaken some into activity who usually were inactive in spiritual matters. Yet God does speak to us, to people, every day as if He were actually calling out their names.
 - God has spoken to YOU, hasn't He?
 - When God speaks through His Word, through His choice of means, printed or vocal, God is speaking to YOU.
3. If you don't pay attention to WHAT God is saying, you will misunderstand what He IS saying.
 - It is well known that nobody can understand without paying attention and when God speaks, He certainly has something important you (we) need to know.
 - Countless have failed to understand/grasp things God has said because they paid no attention and therefore didn't get the right understanding and therefore go on they wrong way.
4. We need to pay attention to what God has to say because it has to do with our soul.
 - Life and death surround every word God has to say for He speaks of salvation, how to obtain it, how to secure eternal life and this subject affects every human being.
 - Salvation depends on how a person "hears" the word of God. Countless have "heard" the Gospel message but have gone on unsaved. What God speaks about concerning salvation are the conditions for being saved. How can one be saved if he/she fails to understand how? The conditions for being saved have to be met by each individual, so if a person doesn't listen and doesn't understand, he/she won't meet the conditions for being saved.

5. How we pay attention to what God has to say can affect the salvation of others. There are others who are watching you, listening to you, some even duplicating your moves. Therefore you cannot neglect to hear as you should without affecting family, friends, even strangers. They are watching you and if you listen to God as you should, some of them will too.
6. Consider that God is offering to you eternal life in what He is saying to you. God is offering to you eternal life and threatening you with eternal separation and death if you do not pay attention and do what He says. Therefore, "*...take heed how ye hear...*"
7. This may be the last time you will be able to hear what God has to say. There have been many who said, "later, not now, etc." who never got another opportunity to hear God's word. Death came for them and they entered eternity without ever doing what God told them to do to be saved.
8. Then this thought: God has said that His Spirit will not always be around to speak to you anymore. Your whole eternity may depend upon what you do this very moment that you are hearing God's word to you. Will you put your soul in such danger forever because you didn't want to hear what God has to say to you?

II. SOME THINGS WE MUST DO AND SOME THINGS THAT MUST BE TRUE IN US

1. We must listen with full attention when God speaks to us and we must put all other thoughts aside to understand what God is saying and then to do what He says.
2. We must listen with reverence and awe. It is most distracting and irritating for someone to not be paying attention to the one speaking and when it comes to God speaking and there is levity and non-respect shown, how childish and immature and disrespectful is that person.
3. We must listen with a deep sincere desire to understand what God is saying. In every worship service there are countless persons whose minds are elsewhere than tuned to what God is saying. They are thinking about lunch, about going somewhere after services, etc..
 - How many really think about heaven and hell and their own destination during a worship service?
 - How many have Bibles but seldom, if ever read them?
 - How many have heard hundreds of sermons but have never really been affected by any of them?
 - How can anyone expect to understand what God is saying if he/she doesn't focus his/her mind on what God is saying?
 - How many have said "I just can't understand the Bible..."
 - There is nothing in all the world more important than salvation and the condition of your soul.
 - How can a person expect the Lord to bless him/her if he/she pays no attention to what God is saying?
4. We must be willing to hear with frankness, be willing to hear the whole truth about ourselves.
 - Most people skip the parts of scripture that describe themselves if it puts them in a bad light or shows up weaknesses or condemns their actions. They don't want to hear anything negative about themselves.
 - We must be willing to hear and accept the truth about ourselves as God's Word reveals it to us.
 - Without accepting the whole truth about ourselves, we would never concede that we need to be saved.
5. How do you think you would feel if you could actually hear the voice of Jesus telling you what your eternal future is - heaven or hell? Would you not be concerned and pay attention? Even be scared?
 - Shouldn't we feel the same about God's Word that we have called the Bible?

6. We should hear God's Word with an intense desire to learn what God's will is for us.
 - If we hear but don't plan on obeying, we are insulting God. Willing and ready to know God's will for us, but not ready to do what God wants us to do - how awful.
7. We should hear God's Word with our hearts set upon immediate obedience. Intending to do something someday, sometime in the future for God is simply saying "not now Lord, maybe later..."
8. We need to hear God's Word with sorrow and repentance for not obeying in the past. Everyone has at one time or another knew what he/she should have done that God wanted, but didn't do it, so when we go to God again, we should do so with a sad and broken heart, ashamed of our failure to obey.
9. We have to hear God's Word with total confidence. How can we say we "believe" in God when we don't trust Him? "Oh, I trust God, I have faith in God, but....."
 - Either we trust God completely or we don't trust God at all. Which is it?

CONCLUSION:

1. There are many who carry their Bibles on the dash of their car or above the back seat on the shelf below the back window and that's where it stays. It is never read.
2. Many hear sermons preached, lessons taught and their minds are elsewhere, and they don't have the slightest idea what is being said.
3. Some "read" their Bibles daily but by the time they close their Bibles they don't remember what they read.
4. Some brag about not having missed Sunday School in so many years but don't remember what the lessons were about.
5. Not everybody paid attention to what the Old Testament prophets had to say who were sent by God.
6. When Jesus was here, not all that many cared about what He preached or taught, just wanted to see Him perform miracles.
7. God's Word has been ignored, misunderstood and misrepresented by every generation.
8. God's Word is God's Word and God's Word is truth!
9. *"...Take heed therefore how ye hear; for whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and whosoever hath not, from shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have..."*
 - *"...No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed, but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter may see the light..."*
 - *"...For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither anything hid, that shall not be made known and come abroad..."*
10. How do you hear the Word of God?