

Text: Heb. 5:11-14

Title: "Christ-like ears"

Time: 3/1/2005 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: You may know that I spent some time as an assistant pastor at The Baptist Church of Danbury in Danbury, CT. That opportunity was a great blessing to my life. One of the unique things about that church, which was founded in 1790, is that it has three stained glass windows in the front of the church. That is unusual for a Baptist church.

The windows are Tiffany windows, and the center window depicts the twelve-year-old boy Jesus remaining behind in the temple conversing with the Jewish elders who ministered there. Luke tells us specifically what Jesus was doing (2:46-47): "And it came to pass, that after three days they [Jesus' parents] found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at his understanding and answers."

I used to find that window helpful as I sat and listened to the many messages I heard from Pastor Reinhardt over those 11 years. I would look at it and be reminded that Christ was a very diligent listener and learner when it came to the things of God, and as someone who desired to be more like Him, I needed to be as well.

This Jesus learned at a very early age. The first thing we read of Jesus' human life is this: "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40). "And Jesus increased in

wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

There was a time in the life of Christ when He had to have ears willing to hear so that He could grow in wisdom and in God's grace and favor. You and I are there now. Our author told his readers that they were there (v. 11). But they had a problem—their ears were not like the ears of the young Jesus. You and I often suffer from the same deficiency. This is a passage about our ears, and I want us to set as our goal this morning that we should be helped by this passage and God's Spirit to have ears that are more Christ-like ears. Note 4 things with me.

I. Christ-like ears are not dull ears (v. 11).

Illustration: Mark Twain once said, "If we were supposed to talk more than we listen, we would have two tongues and one ear." Scientists have estimated that 70% of our waking hours are spent in some form of communication, and that of that 70%, 45% involves the need to listen (talking = 30%; reading = 16%; writing = 9%). It is common knowledge that good listening is a great skill to have that takes a lot of work. Corporations hold seminars on teaching listening skills, and they do that because skillful listening is valuable to an enterprise but very hard to do. It is apparent that people have difficulty listening today because we live in a world dominated by tweets, sound bites, you tube, and TV, rather than by books, journals, lectures, and preaching.

Application: God has asked us as believers to do something very difficult with our ears in spite of the way of the world is around us. He has asked us to listen well to a large book, our Bible, which is actually 66 books, with a total of 1,189 chapters, containing 31,102 verses, comprised of 788,280

words. And the more we listen well to those 788,280 words, the better we come to know the Lord and to be like Him.

Melchizedek's significance to Christ is one of the difficult details of that material, and yet our author is rebuking his readers for not being ready for that topic because they are dull of hearing. That word *dull* simply means *lazy*. It is the same word translated *slothful* in 6:12, where it is the opposite of words like *diligence* (6:11), *faith*, and *patience*.

So Christ-like ears are not lazy ears; they are diligent, faithful, and patient ears. Today, we might be concerned that the subject of Melchizedek is too difficult or too boring or too detailed or too complex. The Lord is concerned over how lazy our ears are. Christ-like ears are not dull ears. To have ears like His takes diligence, patience, and hard work.

II. Christ-like ears listen with a sense of obligation (v. 12a; "ye ought to be teachers").

Illustration: The Lord Jesus increased in wisdom with God and man with a sense of obligation. When after three days of frantic searching for their twelve-year-old son His parents asked Him, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?" Jesus replied, "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Jesus learned with a sense of obligation for what He called His heavenly Father's business. He said He must be about it.

Application: Do we have the same sense that we have an obligation, a job to do, when we listen to the word of God? This is the point the author makes when he says, "Ye ought to be teachers because of the time." After a certain amount of time, every believer in Christ is under obligation to be a teacher of the word of God. This is the only way to make

disciples as the Great Commission says, “Go ye into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . . , teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20). Do we listen to the word of God with that sense of obligation – we must learn so that we can teach others? Do we have a Bible study going with others who need to be taught? Are we helping them to consider baptism? Are we teaching them Christ’s commands? This is the obligation of every believer. We must be about our Lord’s business, just as He was about His Father’s; we must listen and learn with that sense of obligation to teach.

III. Christ-like ears are mature (v. 12b-14a).

Illustration: Last month Brother Paul Valles preached from a passage that spoke of the milk of the word as a positive thing (1 Pet. 2:2). That is a great verse. It describes a virtue that no believer should ever lose – the intense desire for hearing and reading all the content of God’s Word, which can be described equally in every part, simple and difficult, as pure milk. Healthy babies get hungry without fail, and they demand that something be done about their hunger without fail. Every believer should have that kind of intense hunger and thirst for every part of God’s Word throughout their Christian lives. In that sense, we want to be like babies when it comes to the word of God.

Application: But here we find the sense in which we do not want to be like babies when it comes to the word of God. Paul talked about his daughter’s growing appetite for adult food. If at the next fellowship meal we served nothing but baby formula and Gerber’s mashed beats and carrots and the rest, none of us would be back. Our little ones need that because they have no teeth, but when they get teeth, and teething is honestly not a lot of fun, their needs change and their appetites develop for solid food so that they can grow

and be healthy. Do we have an appetite for the content of the word of God that requires some chewing? Honestly, it is very difficult to find a rebuke in Scripture from the Lord directed against a teacher who has not been simple enough. The meat of the word is meat, and it cannot always be put into a bottle for consumption. But the Scripture is full of the exhortation for our hearing to be more mature and adult-like.

Illustration: Let me share what I believe an adult appetite looks like when the word of God is being preached. [These are 8 of 10 principles for listening that I found on a website <http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/listening-skills.html>; 2/4/2015]:

1. Stop Talking.

Don't talk, listen. When somebody else is talking listen to what they are saying, do not interrupt, talk over them or finish their sentences for them. Stop, just listen.

2. Prepare Yourself to Listen.

Relax. Focus on the speaker. Put other things out of mind. The human mind is easily distracted by other thoughts – what's for lunch, what time do I need to leave to catch my train, is it going to rain – try to put other thoughts out of mind and concentrate on the messages that are being communicated.

3. Put the Speaker at Ease.

Help the speaker to feel free to speak. Remember their needs and concerns. Nod or use other gestures or words to encourage them to continue. Maintain eye contact but don't stare – show you are listening to what is being said.

4. Remove Distractions.

Focus on what is being said: don't doodle, shuffle papers, look out the window, pick your fingernails or similar things. Avoid unnecessary interruptions. These behaviors send messages to the speaker that you are bored or distracted.

5. Empathize.

Try to understand the speaker's point of view. Look at issues from their perspective. Let go of preconceived ideas. By having an open mind we can more fully empathize with the speaker. You need not always agree to do so.

6. Be Patient.

A pause, even a long pause, does not necessarily mean that the speaker has finished. Be patient and let the speaker continue in their own time, sometimes it takes time to formulate what to say and how to say it.

7. Avoid Personal Prejudice.

Try to be impartial. Don't become irritated, and don't let the person's habits or mannerisms distract you from what they are really saying. Everybody has a different way of speaking. Focus on what is being said and try to ignore styles of delivery.

8. Listen for Ideas – Not Just Words.

You need to get the whole picture, not just isolated bits and pieces. Maybe one of the most difficult aspects of listening is the ability to link together pieces of information to reveal the ideas of others.

All of these are characteristics of mature listening, and this is especially true when the word of God is being communicated. Christ-like ears are mature.

IV. Christ-like ears learn the difference between good and evil (v. 14b).

Application: Did you notice what the author calls our Bible? He says it is *the word of righteousness* (v. 13). What makes it that is that our Bible tells us the difference between right and wrong, good and evil. Satan wants right and wrong to be the same thing or muddled together into the great gray of every man doing what is right in his own eyes. That is a spiritual trap, and the only way out of that trap is to become biblical people. Notice two things about becoming a biblical believer who can discern between good and evil:

1. Biblically discerning between good and evil takes practice.

Illustration: My Jr. High team did much better against Chichester because they have been practicing. But they do not practice much or well, or they would have beaten that team.

Application: If we are to beat evil with discernment, we must be willing to go to practice. It should be a given that we are baptized, church members, attending the assembly times, bringing our Bibles, having personal and family devotions, and serving the Lord faithfully in our church. Over time, right and wrong become clear to people who live this way.

2. Biblically discerning between good and evil is a function of our own senses, not a set of rules imposed upon us from without. It is developed, not imposed. This discernment is an important qualification for a teacher in the local church. If a believer has to be told constantly about the ABC's of

right and wrong when it comes to the Christian life, he is not ready to be put in a position where they are teaching others. That maturity cannot be imposed from without.

Conclusion: The passage begins, "Of whom I have much to say, but . . ." How tragic! Think of all that God would teach us if only we could hear. Becoming Christ-like begins with getting a pair of Christ-like ears. Let's ask for a pair.

"A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction – the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching