

THE DAY OF OPPORTUNITY

"Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice)." Hebrews 3:7.

"Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Hebrews 4:7.

These verses imply that God speaks to man. He speaks to man in order that man may be saved. But how does He speak? Most impressively and most earnestly through the sacred scriptures, the events of His providence, the voice of your reason, the voice of your conscience, Christian ministries--especially the preaching of His Gospel, and the influences of His Spirit. Our text implies that He speaks to us daily. Every day He addresses to us some prohibition or persuasion, some caution or encouragement, some precept or promise, some invitation or warning. But what does He say? There are two subjects on which He speaks: your own condition as a sinner in His sight, that is, your guilt, pollution, and depravity; and the rich provision of His mercy in the mediatorial character and work of Christ.

Numerous are the voices audible to man throughout this terrestrial sphere. As he journeys on the pathway of life, they salute his ears at every step. In the busy city, the secluded hamlet, the open field, the arid desert, and on the glassy ocean their words are heard. There is creation's voice. There is the voice of conscience, which proclaims sin and guilt, warns of misdoings and harasses with fears. Then there are a multitude of human voices which make glad the human heart. The voice of a mother, resonant with ineffable tenderness. The voice of friendship, how it brightens the eye, awakens sympathy, and cheers in the hour of adversity. How welcome the voice of mercy, as it announces pardon to the transgressor or utters a gracious reprieve to the condemned. But amid these multitudinous voices, the one referred to in our text ever sounds distinct. Like the sweetest music it falls upon the ear of the soul and makes melody in the heart. It is the voice of Divine love, compared with which human affection sinks into insignificance. It sounds in the ear of the sinner, and tells of liberty, comfort and strength. He asks your attention, your heart, your soul, your all; but He uses no compulsion. In regard to what He says, you may be sure that it is important, true, right, wise, and kind.

I. The Duty. "Hear His Voice."

It is our duty to hear God's voice.

1. Hear it carefully.
2. Hear it eagerly.
3. Hear it understandingly.
4. Hear it believingly.
5. Hear it obediently.

II. The Danger. "Hardness Of Heart."

There is no need to "harden your heart." There is no excuse for doing so. There can be no good in it.

1. How sinners harden their hearts.
 - (1) By fixing their affections on the world.
 - (2) By inattention to the concerns of the soul.
 - (3) By holding fast some erroneous opinions to which they are committed.
 - (4) By pursuing the works of darkness.
 - (5) By yielding to the influences of unbelief.
 - (6) By excusing sin.

- (7) By refusing to be convicted of sin.
 - (8) By being unwilling to do what is necessary to become a Christian.
 - (9) By resisting the Holy Spirit.
2. How hardness of heart is evidenced.
 - (1) By dulness of conscience.
 - (2) By poverty of love.
 - (3) By inability to be moved by the gospel truth.
 3. Why hardness of heart should be prevented.
 - (1) It makes salvation impossible.
If you do not want to be saved, the Lord will not save you.
 - (2) It may cause you to be given up.
The Bible shows that it is not an uncommon thing for the Lord to give people up to the hardness of their hearts. Whole generations of Jews were thus given up.

III. The Date. "Today."

The season for hearing and obeying His voice is today. Why?

1. Because everything is ready.
The great salvation; the way of access to the throne; the great Intercessor; and the church is ready to welcome you into her fellowship.
2. Because you have delayed long enough.
You should have heard and heeded His voice in early childhood; in the days of your youth; the first time He spoke to you; in the advantages which you have enjoyed-- parental instruction, Sunday School teaching, and faithful preaching.
3. Because it is a present duty.
To defer the performance of it is sinful.
4. Because you will never have a more suitable season.
The longer you delay the deeper and firmer will be the grip of the world on your heart.
5. Because life is uncertain.
"Ye know not what shall be on the morrow."
6. Because procrastination is perilous.
 - (1) Tomorrow, you may be incapable of hearing His voice.
This should awaken your thought, quicken your interest, and arouse your anxiety.
 - (2) Tomorrow, you may be indisposed to listen to His voice.
 - (3) Tomorrow, this voice may not speak to you.
 - (4) Tomorrow may never come for you.
Amid the stillness of this night death may enter your window. Opportunity is the flower of time, and as the stalk may remain when the flower is cut off, so time may remain with us when opportunity is gone. Get saved tonight, because you are not sure of tomorrow. Every day you postpone it, the harder it becomes for you.