

Itching Ears

Kenneth Hagin Jr.

Contents

[1 What Are You Hearing?](#)

[2 Itching Ears](#)

[3 Receiving the Full Gospel](#)

[4 Characteristics of Itching Ears](#)

[A Sinner's Prayer To Receive Jesus as Savior](#)

Chapter 1

WHAT ARE YOU HEARING?

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.

— 2 Timothy 4:1-3

I want to share with you on the subject of "Itching Ears," a subject I believe is a tremendous problem in Christian circles generally, and in the charismatic movement particularly.

Because the word "lusts" is used in the third verse of this text, the meaning is a little obscure.

We assume the verse means that sinners will find somebody to preach to them that what they're doing is all right. But that's not what this passage of Scripture means when it speaks of "itching ears."

Jesus frequently said in His teaching and preaching, "*He that hath an ear, let him hear.*" But that's not all He said. He added, "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying....*"

In churches, fellowships, prayer groups, schools, and any other Christian organization you can name, people are hearing—but they're not hearing what the Spirit is saying. They're hearing what they want to hear. They're being entertained. They don't go to services to be blessed or to get anything; they go so they can feel good—so they can get a spiritual high!

Social drinkers do the same thing. Why do people go to bars and drink? To feel good. Why do people stupidly shoot their veins full of heroin? To feel good.

It's time we stopped being selfish and interested only in hearing what we want to hear so we can go out of a place feeling good. That's all in the realm of our five senses: touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight. We are missing it if we go to meetings just to get another spiritual high.

I heard somebody say the other day, "Boy, I sure need to go somewhere and hear somebody teach something good so I can get back up again."

What are you doing down? You have itching ears.

Many groups of people have arisen wanting to hear only the faith message. Others want to hear only missions; some, only salvation; some, only love; some, only righteousness, and so forth.

Anyone who is locked into hearing only one message from God's Word is in trouble.

Today there are people who will walk out of a service if the speaker is not doing what they call "teaching"—and teaching only on the subjects of faith for healing and especially for money (or prosperity).

These people will not listen to anyone who stands in the office of the evangelist. An evangelist's delivery is sometimes hard, fast, and loud. These people won't listen to that. Therefore, we have almost lost one of the greatest ministry gifts ever given to the Church—the ministry of the evangelist—because everybody wants to hear a teacher.

Some pastors have had to become teachers in order to hold their people. They can't get up and give an evangelistic-type message; they've got to teach all the time.

Now, a pastor should be able to teach, but he also should be able to operate in other areas of ministry, too. It's the people who are causing this problem. Ministers have learned that if they want to stay as pastors, they've got to give the people what they want.

On the other hand, we also can indict the ministers for giving in to the people and not doing what Paul told Timothy to do: preach the Word. Too many ministers have backed off, specialized, and become faith teachers. I am tired of so many faith teachers.

The faith message is not the issue. Faith preachers and teachers are not the issue. It is the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that needs to be preached. You need to be a teacher or preacher of the Gospel—all of it.

The faith message is not the only message in the Word of God, but some people have latched onto the faith of God—what it can get them, and so forth—until they have perverted this greatest truth of God's Word.

Yes, faith is important. It is the base; the foundation. Without faith it is impossible to please God. But faith is just a part of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. As such, faith is not more important than love, righteousness, or

judgment.

Chapter 2

ITCHING EARS

You could go into a lot of churches right now and hang a lot of "Itching Ears" signs around people's necks. They will not take the whole counsel of God's Word. They will take only what they want taught from their pulpit.

People like this have pulled out of churches all over the country and have started faith teaching centers, Word teaching centers, and so forth, just because they didn't hear what they wanted to hear all the time. Somebody may have come to their former church and preached a message they thought was not faith, so they began to grumble and complain.

The Word of God has much to say about many subjects other than faith. If a pastor preaches faith every time he stands on the platform, he is hindering that congregation unless he has teachers or staff teaching on some of the other great truths from God's Word.

For example, we have yet to discover the complete story of who and what the Holy Spirit is. All we have discovered is power and tongues. We've run off with it like a dog with a piece of steak, yet we've only crossed the threshold into the Dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

Not many people want to study the character of the Holy Spirit. All they want is the power (and the tongues so they can keep the power charged). They don't get past tongues and power.

And they really don't care too much about the gifts, except for tongues, interpretation, prophecy, healing, and occasionally a word of wisdom. They don't do much with the rest of the gifts.

If you trace their attitude, it goes right back to their teachers or ministers. They were not of God's sending; they were of the people's choosing. Their message is an indictment against the people. Why did the people choose the course they did? To satisfy their own desires.

Students and others come up to me and tell me how to run RHEMA, what they like, and how they like it to be. That's fine. I'm glad you've got an individual personality, because those good characteristics can be molded into something for God.

But I'm really not interested in whether people like the way we run

RHEMA Bible Training Center or not. Do you know what I'm interested in? Whether God likes it. What I'm interested in is whether I'm doing what I feel God has given us to do.

It's not people to whom I'm going to have to answer in the end; it's God.

Paul was very explicit in his writings to Timothy, saying that the time would come when all of this would happen; when people would have itching ears. What ministers must do is preach the Word, whether the people want it or not. They've got to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.

Too often the hearers shape preachers and teachers into what they want them to be. A group invites a teacher in, and if they don't like him, he doesn't get invited back. They vote a pastor in, and if they don't like him, they get rid of him and get another. If the people want a "calf-worshipper," a ministerial calf-maker will be found. If they can't find one, they'll develop one out of their own group.

Many teaching centers have been started because some group couldn't get teachers to come and teach what they wanted, so they developed their own teacher, who got up there and taught what they wanted to hear.

Another characteristic of people with itching ears is that they're always seeking new revelations. We don't know what to do with the revelations we've got; what are we seeking new revelations for? Let's find out how to walk in the revelations we have before we begin to let our ears itch for new ones.

When people start seeking new revelations, they usually wind up in a mess, because they start talking about things they don't know anything about, and they start putting incorrect interpretations on Scripture. They go back into the Old Testament and begin to take Scripture that is history and strictly history and try to apply it to the Church today. Or they take Scripture meant for the Jewish nation and try to apply it to Gentiles, who are under the Dispensation of Grace and the Holy Spirit—and it won't work. We end up with confusion and a lot of little splinter groups.

"The master of superstition is the people, and in all superstition wise men follow fools." This is what one theologian said after reading Solomon's writings; especially "The Preacher" (Ecclesiastes). That's the sum total of what Solomon's trying to say.

For some reason, people will heap to themselves teachers who are not

teaching things out of the Word of God, and they will follow these teachers.

Some of you have said, "I can't understand why they got into that mess." If those who did will check back, they'll discover it was because they began to have "itching ears" for some kind of new revelation, and sure enough somebody came along who had it for them.

The Apostle Paul was very hard on his student Timothy. He continually charged him to stay on the right path. In modern-day slang, he was saying, "Boy, I'm telling you to get out here and do it this way, or else!"

Chapter 3

RECEIVING THE FULL GOSPEL

Itching ears! There are many people who sit in meetings with itching ears. Somebody will be trying to tell them something of importance, but because they have itching ears, they'll reach up, click the knob, and turn them off mentally. They'll say, "I'll be so glad when I get out of this meeting so I can go over to So-and-so's meeting. He teaches the Word. I can get over there and get blessed."

For the last two years I've told our RHEMA students, "If you came here with ears itching to get faith so you can drive Cadillacs, fly airplanes, or have million-dollar homes, go home. Or else reach up, pull off those itching ears, and say, 'I'm here to receive what God has for me.'"

"Many of you will have a rude awakening in the weeks ahead. You will hear things you won't understand. Your theological itching ears will scream, 'Get out of here! They're not teaching what you need to hear. You need to go somewhere where they teach the Word!'"

"That's the enemy's trick, because we do teach the Word here. But, we don't teach just part of it— we don't teach just the part that'll make you feel good—we deal with the whole Word of God."

You'll hear me preach about judgment. On the other hand, you'll hear me talk about love. And you'll hear me talk about righteousness, healing, faith, and believing God for finances. You'll also hear me talk about using that same faith to believe souls into the kingdom of God!

You'll hear me talk about the sacrifice that's involved when you go into the ministry. People with itching ears run from that one in a hurry! Anytime you mention sacrifice, they're quick to say, "Oh, no, brother, I'm a faith child. I don't have to sacrifice."

That's the problem. Many people think that when you get in the walk of faith it's all fluffy clouds and sunshine. No rain will ever fall. No mud will ever splatter your shoes. Never again will a frown cross your face. And there'll never be another trial or sorrow or temptation in your life. And if anybody preaches anything contrary to that, your itching ears run to the teachers who don't tell you the truth.

Paul, the man I've been talking about—the man who penned our text—is the greatest man of faith except Jesus Christ found in the pages of God's Word. If you study, you will find that 90 percent of the scriptural teaching on faith comes out of the Pauline epistles.

Yet you tell me this great man of faith never had a trial, never had a test, never was left for dead, never was shipwrecked, never was beaten, never was put in prison, never was persecuted— and always had a whoopee good time?

This man Paul, who taught us more about faith than anybody else—this man who warned us against having itching ears—faced all of those trials and went through all of those trials because he knew what his faith in God would accomplish in the end.

There's a saying in the natural that goes, "Something that's worth having is worth working for." Something of value is worth putting yourself out to receive. It's worth taking faith and fighting the battle for "*the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 3:14) and that great day we're all looking forward to when we'll be caught out of this world.

No, itching ears people don't like you to say anything about battles. Battles represent work! Battles represent an opportunity for failure or defeat. They don't want to hear anything that offers the possibility of failure or defeat. (Of course, just because the possibility exists doesn't mean it has to materialize.)

Most of the time when you get into trouble it's because of ignorance. You didn't realize what you were facing. But when we are in complete control of our lives through the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can go through the mine fields by faith and avoid every explosion. We can walk through the front lines of the enemy and experience no defeat—maybe some scratches, but no defeat— because we didn't have itching ears to hear just what we wanted to hear. We were wise enough to throw away the itching ears and to listen to the whole counsel of God's Word; not just a portion of it.

A portion of the Word of God preached without the whole counsel of the Word of God is as dangerous as a baby playing with dynamite. And that is the problem in charismatic Christianity today: We've got a bunch of babies who think they are spiritually mature playing with dynamite!

"You're not part of my group," people say. "I don't like your teacher, so I'm not going to fellowship with you." But we all claim to be saved by the same blood! We all claim to be filled with the same Holy Spirit. We all claim

to be doing miracles and laying hands on the sick through the same Holy Spirit.

I think it's time we got our act together! I think it's time we began to realize we have lived to see these Scriptures Paul wrote to Timothy come true in our era just as they did in the Early Church, causing it to be apostate, never really reaching its fulfillment.

But you and I are living in the Church Age, when these Scriptures have reached their fulfillment. Christians today with "itching ears" are causing havoc in the Body of Christ. It is time to forget what we like. It is time to forget that we like to hear only faith preaching.

What happens if you eat only sweets? You get fat. Your teeth get bad. Soon you've got too much sugar in your system, and all kinds of things happen to you physically.

We recognize that we need a balanced diet in our natural body. Do you like a balanced diet? I don't. I like meat, potatoes, gravy, corn, and navy or red beans. And that's all I like. As far as I'm concerned, the only vegetables that exist are potatoes, corn, and beans.

But if I ate only what I like, I'd be fatter than I am. Therefore, for my body's sake, I have to eat other kinds of vegetables occasionally so my metabolism will function properly.

It's strange that we can learn in school how to take care of our natural body by feeding it balanced meals, yet when it comes to the spiritual body, we've got itching ears, and we run here and there to get nothing but sweet stuff.

As one preacher said, "They run to get another handful of spiritual taffy to put into an already diabetic spiritual man."

What happens to a diabetic when you keep putting sugar into him? He goes into shock, and if something's not done for him right away, he'll die. We've got a lot of Christians continually running around to feed that shocked spiritual man more sugar. Eventually he'll die.

(The best antidote is to tell you the truth so you can realize where you're at.)

Chapter 4

CHARACTERISTICS OF ITCHING EARS

The first characteristic of people with itching ears is that nobody's right but them. The first thing they do is gripe about everything except what they like.

The second characteristic of people with itching ears is that they won't recognize the facts. (For example, when you're sick, you've got to recognize that you're sick.)

"I'm not going to speak that into existence!" they say. You don't have to. It's a fact. If you hurt, you hurt. That's a fact. You don't have to speak it into existence. If it's already there and it's a fact, you're not confessing or speaking anything into existence; you're simply recognizing the fact. (Why can we be so stupid in one area and so wise in another?)

Before we were saved, we had to recognize the fact that we needed salvation. What makes you think we don't have to recognize the fact that we need healing or something else from God before we can get it?

If you don't have any milk in your refrigerator; you've got to recognize the fact that you don't have any before you'll ever get in gear to go get some. Simple. But we take the simplicity of God's Word and make something complicated out of it.

It's the people with the itching ears who want the Gospel to be complicated. They want to hear the Gospel on a "higher level." If something can be stated in high-sounding phrases, they think it has more meaning. Often the ministry has obliged them. It's not what you say; it's what you say by the Spirit of God that's important.

But I found out that Jesus didn't pay any attention to people like that. He told it like it was: very simple, very straight, very much to the point—and He got beautiful results.

We've already established that itching ear people gripe and like high-sounding phrases. They have a dozen characteristics. Another is that they holler about love if they're challenged or taken to task. If you're in a business deal with them and have to say, "Hey, wait a minute—this is what we agreed on," they will immediately say, "Where's your Christian love, brother?"

These itching ear people run around hollering about love, love, love—but they never have studied love, because love is not placid. Love involves communication, discipline, and judgment, too.

If you study God, you'll find that God is love. And because God loved His people, He judged them so they would be in a position to receive the benefits He wanted to give them.

Strip off those itching ears. Get ready to hear; not with ears tingling with the excitement of faith or great speakers' testimonies, but with ears that have no preconceived ideas of what they want to hear—ears that are dedicated and open to hear what God has to teach you.

Hear what the Spirit of God has to say to you. Be content to hear what is given you for reproof. And if you hear doctrine that is contrary to what you have believed theologically, examine it. If it's in the Word, throw yours away and take the Word. Make that your goal.

A Sinner's Prayer To Receive Jesus as Savior

Dear Heavenly Father,

I come to You in the Name of Jesus.

Your Word says, "*... him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*" (*John 6:37*). So I know You won't cast me out, but You take me in. And I thank You for it.

You said in Your Word, "*... if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, THOU SHALT BE SAVED.... For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*" (*Rom. 10:9,13*). I believe in my heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I believe He was raised from the dead for my justification.

I am calling upon His Name—the Name of Jesus—so I know, Father, that You save me now.

Your Word says, "*. . . with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*" (*Rom. 10:10*). I do believe with my heart, and I confess Jesus now as my Lord.

Therefore I am saved!

Thank You, Father!

Signed_

Date_

About the Author

Kenneth Hagin Jr., Executive Vice-President of Kenneth Hagin Ministries and Pastor of RHEMA Bible Church, writes from a rich and diversified background of more than forty years in the ministry.

Rev. Hagin attended Southwestern Assemblies of God College and Oral Roberts University, graduating with a degree in religious education.

After serving as an associate pastor, Rev. Hagin traveled as an evangelist throughout the United States and abroad and was responsible for organizing RHEMA Bible Training Center, a school which equips men and women for the ministry.

In addition to his administrative and teaching responsibilities at RHEMA, Rev. Hagin is senior pastor of RHEMA Bible Church, a large, thriving congregation on the RHEMA campus. He is also International Director of RHEMA Ministerial Association International. Rev. Hagin has a weekly radio program, "RHEMA Radio Church," which is heard on stations throughout the United States, and a weekly television broadcast, "RHEMA Praise."