

## PREFACE

### VOLUME 12

IN the golden age of English theology, when the writers' minds as well as their books were grand massive folios, a preface was generally worthy of careful reading. It was crowded with pithy sentences nestling together like young doves, and it abounded with sportive metaphors, skipping upon the page like lambs in a field.

The authors of the Puritan ages were noble entertainers of their reader, they served up no light breakfast of French rolls and butter, but they set before their guests right royal banquets of substantial and luxurious fare. They brought forth feasts of fat things, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined, and their prefaces were fit heralds of such princely hospitalities, gorgeously liveried with wit and learning, as became the servants of mental royalty, throwing open the doors of the banqueting hall with a stately grace, and with a hearty blast of trumpets such as beseemed the richness of the table.

Our degenerate age retains the name and state of a preface, but like the Lord Mayor's show, it is so shorn of its glory, that common humanity proposes its omission. More or less reluctantly the majority of our authors obey the ancient custom, for such is the conservatism of our English nature that as we will not endure the removal of a city gate when the town has swollen many miles beyond it, so, on the other hand, we maintain the ostentation of a moat and drawbridge when the castle has dwindled into a cottage.

We shall yield to the force of fashion, but shall endeavor to turn its exactions to account by using the preface, which needs must be written, for another than its original object, for as a moat, if it must be digged, may make a fishpond, so may a preface answer for an apology.

Twelve yearly volumes of our sermons are now before the public, and in looking back upon them, like Pharaoh's butler, we do remember our faults. Bishop Jewel says, "faults will escape a man betwixt his fingers, let him look to it ever so narrowly," but ours are to be reckoned by handfuls, for we have never enjoyed the opportunity of making careful revision, but our raw and hasty words have been served up at once like ill-cooked meat, and the grain of our thoughts has been bound up in sacks altogether unwinnowed and almost un-threshed.

If Augustine needed to correct in his riper years the errors of his youthful writings upon which he had spent considerable care, how much latitude must be allowed to us who being without his ability are also without his leisure, and have to bear the responsibility, not to treatises deliberately written but of words spoken upon the spur of the moment and but hurriedly amended before their issue from the press.

If the grapes of the well-trimmed vine are sometimes sour, shall the clusters of the wild vine be always sweet? If the land which yielded milk and honey was not without its briars, what shall be said of the garden which borders upon the wilderness? Youth has not quite departed from us, but when the first of these twelve volumes was born into existence we had but barely reached the age of twenty-one. Is there need of more apology when wise men are the critics, and if the critics be not wise, of what avail is any apology whatever?

We are grateful that with all our regrets we have not to mingle the bitterness of remorse for having preached another Gospel, and with all our desired revisions we contemplate no recantations. Our twelve volumes like the sons of Jacob can say, "We are all one man's sons, we are true men." In fundamentals we remain like the oak rooted to the same soil, although in circumstantials here and there, a branch spreads itself otherwise than it did ten years ago. Growth there should be, but not wanton change.

Having obtained help of God we continue unto this present, witnessing both to small and great the eternal verities of our faith. Men given to change have no vocation upon the Gospel platform. The church needs fixed lamps, not will-o-the-wisps. Let others follow the suppositious advances of a

rationalistic theology, or dance to the music of ritualism. We love every day more and more intensely the old, sure, and precious Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our flag is nailed to the mast, and our motto is "No surrender."

Our gratitude claims liberty of utterance, for if any preacher is under bonds to love and praise his God for help received, the author of these seven hundred published sermons is the man. An aged saint declared that as she looked back upon her Ebenezers they stood so closely together as to be like a wall, under whose shadow she walked with joy. Our experience is the same. Our life has been as full of mercy as the sea is full of water, and who shall deny us the luxury of praising God on account of it?

We gave thanks before we distributed our barley loaves among the multitudes, and now that we have gathered up of the fragments twelve baskets full we give thanks a second time. We had rather be charged with egotism than be guilty of unthankfulness. Say that a man is ungrateful, and you have charged him with every wickedness. "Ingratitude," says one, "is a monster in nature, and a most ugly sin." To be silent under such special favor as we have received would be baseness of the worst sort. Join with us, you who have received any benefit from our labors, in a loud, lowly and loving ascription of praise unto our faithful God who hitherto has helped us.

To stimulate our praises, be it remembered that very many souls have been gathered into the fold of the good Shepherd by the reading and hearing of these discourses. Much of their fruit is in heaven this day, and yet more remains on earth. Hence we have not only to be thankful for the message from the Lord, but for the power of the Holy Spirit which has evidently gone forth with it. These iron keys in the hand of God have unlocked golden treasuries and opened prison doors. Our words, like the Philadelphian church, have but little strength, but a great door has been opened for them. Wonder of wonders, that life should come to the dead by us, who in ourselves are no better than dead dogs.

Marvel most marvelous, that food should be given to multitudes from those of us who bemoan our own barrenness with shame and confusion of face. If we could serve our Master ten thousand times better, our service would fall infinitely short of his deservings, but blessed be His name, for enabling us even to add one feeble but hearty Hosanna to the shoutings of his people, or to cast so much as one green leaf in His royal pathway. "*The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock.*"

With much earnestness we entreat the people of God to strive together with us in their prayers for the advancement of the truth as it is in Jesus. The darkness thickens, let us pray for the sun-rising. The storm rocks the vessel, let us cry unto our Master, who is still at the helm. Prayer, like charity, never fails. Come what may, while the mercy seat remains to us, we cannot so much as think of despair. By the two fold ministry, first at the throne of intercession, and then upon the platform of testimony, the battle will be won, and truth will be preserved. To some it is given to fight as Joshua, and to others to pray as Moses, let neither service be neglected. As a favor, choice and special, we say to our readers, "*Brethren, pray for us.*"

A textual index of the whole series of sermons has been appended to the present volume. It may make them more easy of reference. All the sermons are always on sale, as stereotype plates have been prepared of the whole. And ministers and students can procure complete sets at somewhat easier terms by application direct to me or the publishers.

With sincere Christian salutations, wishing you every new covenant blessing, we are, dear readers,

Your friend for the Lord's sake,

C. H. Spurgeon

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Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at [www.spurgeongems.org](http://www.spurgeongems.org).