

## PREFACE

### VOLUME 13

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Far easier does the preacher find it to deliver ten sermons, than to write a page of preface to the annual volume. He can fashion the arrows, but knows not how to embroider the quiver. Yet what imperious custom demands, must be rendered—the Caesar of common usage must have its due.

Last year we availed ourselves of the space to offer apologies, which it would be a nauseous mockery of modesty to repeat, although they are equally as much intended and quite as much required. On this occasion, we shall offer the reader a few sentences of *direction* as to how to profit best by sermons, whether they are heard or read.

The art of hearing is as difficult as the art of preaching. “Take heed how ye hear,” is an admonition still in season, for many hear the Gospel to their condemnation rather than to their edification.

Some sermons are not to be listened to at all, just as some meats are not to be eaten. Despite the usual fashion of this age, which runs greedily after cleverness even when associated with the most poisonous sentiments, we venture to affirm that it is a participation in other men’s sins to assist in furnishing an auditory for deceivers.

Mere talent ought not to attract us. Carrion, well-dressed and served upon Palissy ware, is still unfit for men. As we would not be fascinated by the azure hues of a serpent, so neither would we be thrown off our guard by the talents of an unsound theologian. To hear or read sufficiently to judge is allowable to the man who, by reason of use, has had his senses exercised to discern, and whose business it is to warn others.

But where error is manifest upon the surface, to expose our minds to its pernicious influence, is as great a madness as to test the strength of the fever by lying in its lair. Godly, scriptural teaching is surely not so rare that we need go down to Egypt for help—there are streams enough in Israel without our drinking of the polluted waters of Sihor.

Where the truth as it is in Jesus is fully proclaimed, it behooves us to receive it thankfully and earnestly to drink deep into its spirit. To attend to the Gospel superficially is little worth. The inmost soul must be aroused, the mental faculties exercised, the powers concentrated, the whole man earnestly bestirred to profit by the truth in hand.

Drowsy hearing or reading is an insult to the King whose message is before us. To be saturated with the gracious doctrine, as Gideon’s fleece with the dew; to bathe in it, as Naaman in Jordan, till we feel its healing powers; to be aglow with it, as the bush in Horeb blazed with deity; to be carried heavenward by it, as Elias in his chariot of fire—this is to hear the Gospel with the ear which the Lord has opened.

The great complaint of the preacher has long been, that a slovenly hearing of the Word balks him of his success, when he has labored with the utmost diligence to deliver his testimony with effect. We would fain be as the clouds, which pour their showers upon Arabia the Happy. But alas! we waste ourselves upon Arabia the Stony, our hearts as well as our heads, but in many cases our audiences afford no entertainment for the Word, either in their heads or their hearts.

If we would always, punctually and with resolute zeal, put in practice what we hear upon the spot or at the first fit occasion, our attendance at the means of grace could not fail to enrich us spiritually. He will not lose his loaf who has taken care at once to eat it, neither can he be deprived of the benefit of the doctrine who has already acted upon it.

Most readers and hearers become moved so far as to propose to amend when they are stirred by a discourse, but alas! the proposal is a blossom which has not been knit, and therefore no fruit comes of it.

They wait, they waver, and then they forget, till like the ponds in nights of frost, when the sun shines by day, they are only thawed in time to be frozen again.

That fatal *tomorrow* is blood-red with the murder of fair resolutions. It is the slaughter-house of the innocents. It will suffice us for all purposes of preface if we leave this one thought upon the anvil, to be wrought out by the hand of meditation—*the practice of sermons is the most profitable hearing of them.*

Should the reader be impressed with any duty while perusing these pages, let him hasten to fulfill it before the holy glow has departed from his soul. Should the Holy Spirit press home a Gospel precept upon the conscience of any unconverted reader, let him be instantly obedient to the heavenly vision!

Do not give place to the devil by delay! Haste, while opportunity and quickening are in happy conjunction. Happy is the preacher who shall be surrounded with an auditory resolved to carry out his teachings. His harvest shall be a hundredfold and his Master shall have great honor. Would to God that such might be our reward upon these scores and the preceding hundreds of our sermons! Grant it, O Lord, unto Thy servant!

It may interest friends to know that our large weekly circulation has been well-sustained, not withstanding our protracted illness. We are, however, very grateful when friends exert themselves to scatter our discourses still more plenteously. We continue to hear of blessed results in all directions, but long for more. Brethren, pray for us.

Friends who have any difficulty in obtaining sermons should apply direct to the publishers, who always have all the sermons from the beginning in stock. The whole thirteen volumes can also be had at any time, in various styles of binding, by order of any bookseller, or by writing direct to the publishers, Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster, Paternoster Row, London.

It would be a great act of kindness if persons living in towns where we have no agent would communicate with the publishers, and assist them to open such an agency as might increase the sale. If the Gospel be worth preaching and printing, it is worth distributing, and those who cannot preach may at least help in the other departments. We have subjoined a textual index to this volume, believing that it will be useful for reference.

Our monthly magazine, “The Sword and the Trowel” has been of much service to the cause of philanthropy and religion. Our endeavor is to make it more and more interesting and practical. Will those of our readers who do not see it, order a copy at once, for we are anxious to enlist them all in Christian service.

During the year we have reprinted “Elisha Coles on Divine Sovereignty,” which is to be had for two shillings and sixpence, and which we earnestly recommend to the attention of our friends.

Our College and Orphanage we commend to the generous consideration of our many readers, and when providence is bountiful to them, we trust they will remember the work of the Lord’s ministers and the needs of our poor orphans.

Reader, accept the hearty salutations of

Thy servant in the Gospel,

**C. H. Spurgeon**

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).