

# (Awake! Series): Take Heed How Ye Hear

by A.W. Tozer

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*A.W. Tozer emphasizes the critical importance of how we hear and respond to God's word for spiritual transformation and salvation.*

**Duration:** 42:25

**Scripture:** Luke 8:16, Hebrews 4:2

**Topics:** "Take Heed"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by describing the different types of hearers in the church. He mentions a faithless hearer who lacks faith and therefore does not benefit from the gospel. The preacher also talks about the critical hearer who focuses on grammar and delivery rather than the message itself. He acknowledges that sometimes preaching can be dull, but emphasizes that God is still calling people to Himself. The sermon concludes with a prayer for protection against the negative influences of the world on young people.

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## Transcript

I was meditating here over the fact about my going to, over to the North Side for a ministry next Sunday, and I was thinking that I have been staying pretty close to this pulpit in recent times, and just reminiscing a little bit over the pulpits I've been asked to come to and didn't go, because I'd rather stay and preach to you. I think about the Westminster Chapel in London where I could have been for a month for two or three different summers and didn't take it and wouldn't. I've been invited to Park Street in Boston, Rockingays, and many others.

Brother Redpath was leaving for London, or leaving for his home in England, or wherever he's going in England. He asked me to take his pulpit for a month, and I told him that this church wasn't as big as Moody's, but that I considered that it's one of the most important churches in the world, and I couldn't possibly do it, and I didn't until he finally got stuck just before he left. Just before he went away, a man failed him because of illness in the home, and I said, well, I can't possibly say no for one Sunday.

That accounts for my being there. Now, honestly, I'd rather preach to you here, though only probably a fifth or less of the number than I would over there. But I hope I may have two messages for them, which in content and in spirit may help them greatly next week.

And as for preaching to big churches or large crowds, I haven't any ambition for it. It may just be laziness and lack of spirit, or it may be a deeper wisdom, and I'm inclined to think it is. Anyhow, pray, if you will.

And you're going to have two of the best preachers in the Chicago area here, excellent preachers, next week. Now, in the book of Luke, verses 16 to 18 of the 8th chapter. Luke 8, 16 to 18.

Lecture 10 The Resurrection And The Three Degrees Of Glory 2 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed, but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. For nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest, neither anything hid that shall not be known and come broad. Take heed, therefore, how ye hear.

For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seems to have. Verse 18, the first sentence, take heed, how ye hear. I want to talk a little word about that, and then first before we do, let's pray.

O God, we thank thee for the singing in which we hear a sound that isn't earthly. It's neither the cheap song of the world, nor is it the fine classical song of the world. But there is another voice, and we hear it, and it harmonizes with the beasts and elders and living creatures and ransomed, who with poems in their hands stand up to see and sing together of him who loved them and washed them in his own blood.

We are glad to hear this, Lord, and know what it will be like, a little bit of it at least. We thank thee for an assembly of Christians, thank thee for this Church, thank thee for this crowd here this steamy night. And Lord, it isn't the largest Church on the continent, but to us, the dearest, the most important.

And we pray that thou wilt grant that tonight there may go forth truth that will be helpful to people. Some don't need it, some are on their way, some have long passed the necessity for any of my preaching. Younger ones are coming up, new ones are coming in, many others by the scores are going to other parts of the country and other parts of the world and taking the instruction and the message with them there.

New ones are hearing. God grant we pray tonight that in utter humility and consciousness that it is not I and not man and not the voice of man, but the voice of the Spirit, may we hear thee speak, O Lord Jesus. Grant mercy to be over us, thus this hot, noisy, jumpy city, with its cacophonous rackets and its fears and its lusts and its deceptions and its lies and its demon possession.

O God, have mercy on this great concentration of evil that we've named Chicago. We thank thee thou hast in it a number who haven't bowed to need a bell or kissed his image and never will. Thank thee for them, Father.

Thank thee some of them are here tonight. Graciously help us that it may be in power and not in word Christ's name. Now, the text says, Take heed how ye hear.

When the great God brings salvation to us, he let it ride on a voice, he let it ride on a sound. And salvation was to begin now where we are and continue through successive stages of progression until we are glorified. For always remember that you don't have full salvation until you are glorified.

I am a little shy. I just learned the other day that a president of a well-known Bible institute, or no, seminary, said I was a legalistic sanctificationist. I thought that was nice, and I appreciate that.

If I were keeping a diary, I'd write that in for my grandchildren. But I may in some people's eyes be a legalistic sanctificationist. But I shy away from a lot of the terms that are used even in our own society.

I shy away from the term fourfold gospel. The God I know isn't satisfied with fourfoldness, nor fivefoldness, nor tenfoldness, nor twelvefoldness, nor hundredfoldness, but he multiplies himself and magnifies his glory and surprises us with new and wondrous revelations of himself that far exceed our little fourfold. And then I don't like the word full gospel.

I suppose I should, but I don't. I like it when you mean it in its great emotional flow, full salvation, full salvation. Yes, I like that.

But to put a word before the gospel, a word of man's choosing, I don't quite like it. Full gospel. You see, my brethren, you don't have full salvation, really, until you are glorified.

Now, it is the will of God that we should be saved by hearing, and that we should begin to hear now and that we should obey and follow, go on, until we pass through stage after stage and finally be glorified at last. And God, in doing all this, proceeds after a known law of life. It is that man can change.

Lecture 11 Jesus Christ, The Great Creator And Redeemer 2 Change and decay in all around I see. And that's one of the saddest things in the world, that we change so. We change, change and decay.

But it's also one of the most comforting things that I know. I want to ask you a question now, just to ask you a question and trust to your humility and realism to answer it. Would you like to have a visitation from an angel? Would you like to have a messenger from heaven, the messenger of the annunciation, angel of the annunciation, to come to you and say, Mr. McAfee, Mr. Moore, Mr. Fetter, and I could name all of you, me, I have a message from the Most High God.

It is that you remain, and it is so decreed by the Everlasting Father, that as you are at this moment, you shall be eternally. Period. You have been.

This is the judgment of God and the decision of the Most High. There will be no change from here on. It seems to me that that alone would be cause enough for one hundred days mourning and thirty days fasting to be told you'll never change.

You'll remain as you are. I say this would be an annunciation so terrible, a declaration so frightening, that I think that instead of us bringing happiness to us, it would drive us into despair. For it is the hope of every man who has named the holy name of Jesus that he's going to be better tomorrow than he was today.

But if he lives through fifty-seven, it will add up to something better than fifty-six, and if he lives through fifty-eight, it will be better than fifty-seven. Not more money, not more prosperity, not better weather, not more health, not that, but that he'll be a better man in God. That, I say, is our hope, that we can change, that we are not fixed, that God Almighty hasn't cast us and fixed us by an eternal, changeless fire.

It's predicated, this message that we hear from God, this message through the Word, it's predicated upon our ability to change. You've got to temper tonight like the very devil. It's possible for you to be so delivered that the change will be noticed by everybody that knows you near and afar.

No matter what habits you have, or what mental habits, or what vices you may have, there is power in the gospel of Jesus Christ to change you so completely that it's like changing a beast into an angel. There is

power, there is potential in man to change. You don't have to continue to be what you are.

It seems to me that's the first message the world ought to know. You can be different. That's the first message the world ought to know.

The gospel should follow that message, for preaching any gospel without that basic knowledge that I can change, that God can change me, that I am not fixed like concrete, but pliable like clay. This is a known law of life, and God takes advantage of it. I don't know but what the angels that sinned and kept not their first estate may have been fixed eternally, unable to change.

At least there's no hope for them. But for you and me, there is hope. Man can change, and not only change, but learn.

So there is the sounding of a voice through the Word, the living voice, when you open this book. When you open this book, don't read it as you would read a newspaper or a classic. Expect to hear something in it.

Expect it to speak to you and expect the voice to vibrate. Expect it to be alive. For the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are alive.

And this book is a live book. It's only dead to the dead and to the hopelessly dead. To all others, it's a live book.

You see, my brethren, there's a difference between redemption and salvation. Jesus Christ died on the cross and provided redemption there. And there isn't anything that can be added to redemption.

Redemption is the finished work of Christ on the tree, the finished work. That is, he finished that part of the dying on the cross, that part was done, and Christ said, It is finished. He didn't mean redemption was finished, he meant that part of redemption was finished.

The rest of redemption was that he had to rise again and go to the right hand of the Father. For he saved us by his death but justifies us by his resurrection. Let's not bear down too hard on that single phrase, It is finished.

For when he said it's finished, he meant the giving out of his life, the pouring out of his life, the atonement, the sacrifice was made, the Lamb was dying. But if God had not received the Lamb, salvation would never have been, redemption would never have been accomplished. But God accepted the Lamb, raised him from the dead, sealed him and put him on high, and made him Lord in Christ, and thus effected redemption.

So that redemption is all Jesus Christ did for us. From the time he picked up his cross until the time he sat down at the Father's right hand, that's redemption. That's done, and there's nothing we can add to it.

Not the keeping of the Sabbath, not the eating of certain meats, not the long periods of fasting, not even prayer can add anything to that. Long before you existed, when you were only a forethought in the mind of God, it was all done. There's nothing to be added, nothing, nothing to be added.

There are cults, Adventism and others, there are cults that say that there's something we must add, that it was not finished, not done, there's something we must add. I believe that to be blasphemy. But there's anything we must add.

Nothing more is to be added. This man, when he had made one sacrifice for sin forever, sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting until his enemies be made his foot tool. Nothing can be added, and any attempt to add is to insult the Savior who gave his all.

That's redemption. Salvation is something else. Salvation is redemption applied to the individual life.

Redemption is objective. It's that which is done. It is that which was done before you were born, before America was a nation, before the Crusades, before the fall of Rome.

It was that which was done in that relatively short period of time, redemption. The Lamb was led out to die, he died, rose and sat down, in what the old theologians call his session, his seating before God. That's redemption.

But the application of that objective truth to me subjectively, that's salvation. So salvation is both a human and a divine thing. Salvation is divine in that God did that which man could not do, and redemption is one hundred percent divine.

And there's nothing that any man can do or angel can do. That's divine. But salvation has a human element and the human side to it.

And it means that I've got to make a response to that redemptive message. I have to make a response to it, otherwise it does not become saving to me. Christ died for Englewood, and redemption was provided for Englewood.

But Englewood is not saved. Why? Because Englewood made no response. The sinners that we know that die every day are sinners and die in sin not because they were not redeemed by the blood of Christ, but because they do not respond, they do not hear.

Now, it is our part to understand and to hear, to hear and to understand and to respond. Remember that we can sit and hear truth and be none the better for it. Remember that, that it's the response to truth.

Suppose that you are ill with a certain kind of disease for which there has been a specific cure discovered, as, say, the jaws. Is that the name of that disease? Yaws. It's a disease that eats the fingers off and the nose off and eats the ears, and it's a terrible thing.

What I can learn one or two injections of penicillin will cure it. And they are having difficulty making the heathen understand they are not gods, and that this is not a Jesus needle, that it's not a miraculous thing. But suppose we had a terrible disease here, suppose you had it, and there was a specific that was discovered that would cure it in 24 hours.

And suppose that a man got up before you and for 45 minutes lectured on that medicine and told what it would do, the cures it would affect. And then suppose that he threw the meeting open and 25 people got up and said, I want to testify that what that man said is true. I had that disease.

I took that medicine and look at me now. I can do a day's work and feel good and sleep, as my father used to say, like a thought. Well, has anything been done for you yet? No.

You're sitting down there, you're hearing a man tell of the merits of a certain medicine. You're hearing people testify that that medicine cured them. But nothing's happened to you.

You still have your disease. What are you supposed to do? You're supposed to hear it, believe in it, and do something about it. That's exactly what it is with salvation.

The blood of Jesus Christ is the medicine of immortality. And the dying and rising and living and pleading of the Savior is redemption without anything man can add. It's God Almighty's universal panacea.

But you've heard that talked about until it's all stuck to you, and until you have heard with faith and then risen to do something about it and apply it to your own self by obedient faith, it doesn't mean anything. It's all objective, all outside of you. It must become subjective and get inside of you.

No confirmatory work has to be done. We need to look to nobody for confirmation. It's all been done.

In the beginning was the Word, and there's a speaking Word, and because in the beginning was the Word and you were created in the image of the Word, you can understand the Word. And even though fallen like the young man far from home in a far country among the swine, it's still because you were made in the image of God and the beginning was the Word and all things were made by the Word, and without him was not anything made that was made, you have in you the ability to hear the Word. Take heed how you hear, for redemption is yonder.

Salvation is when redemption that is yonder becomes present and within us by obedience and faith. So there is a voice, and it sounds living and vibrant all through the Word. But you know there are different kinds of hearers.

I've looked through the scriptures to notice the different kinds of hearers. Don't get braced for a long sermon, I'm going to be brief. But here are a number of hearers.

Perhaps six or seven of them here, and enough for each one for a sermon. But I'm going to condense them and point out what kind of hearers we may be. For instance, here is a faithless hearer, a hearer without faith.

Israel had the gospel preached unto them, said Paul, but it did not help them because it was mixed with faith. There was no faith in the hearts of the people that heard it. So it's possible to be a hearer without any faith at all.

Then here is a dull hearer, a dull hearer is a bored hearer. You know that if you could take all the dullness that there is in Protestant religion and bottle it, and if you could burn it, you could heat the whole United States all the winter of 1957. And if it was like gasoline, you could run all the trucks on the highways for the next five years with it.

Because boredom is one thing that is pretty present in the Church of Christ. Somebody will say immediately, well, you preachers make it so. And there is a lot of truth in that, a lot of truth in that.

We do, we do. We talk about things the most important in a tone of voice that has no interest whatever, no vibrancy. We give the impression, so what? I know that boredom is partly the result of the pulpit, but also boredom is partly the result of people trying to feed people who aren't hungry and trying to get people to seek God who don't want God and trying to get people to get their life insured who don't think they're going to die, and trying to get people to get ready for a second world when they don't believe there is any more than one.

They live as if they believe in only one world. A lot of that boredom, that dullness, is a result of hearing and hearing and not doing anything about it. Then there is the critical here.

I find him in the Bible, too. He is the fellow that wants to know about the grammar, and if it isn't quite what it should be, he won't listen. He wants to know about the delivery, and is it forceful? When I go anywhere and I'm advertised as a forceful preacher, I always remember what they said about the egg that is fairly fresh.

Anybody that wants to eat a fairly fresh egg, it's what you call damning with faint praise. But there is the critical here. Is the preacher forceful? In Howard's illustrations, you know what? If you knew that at twelve o'clock tonight the sound of the trumpet should echo through the land, and all the old forgotten graveyards of our Puritan fathers should be visited by the Holy Ghost, and the dead should rise and the living change, the poorest preacher in Chicago would be an orator in your ears.

You would be glad to hear any little thing. Critical here. Then there is the forgetful here, and Satan steals the seed, and there is the neglectful here, who has good intentions, and his good intentions are always put for his deeds.

He is always intending to do it. Did you ever stop to think how much you would have done if you had done what you had intended to do? Did you ever think how far you would be out along on the highway toward heaven if you had done all that you intended to do? If you had sought God, did you intend to seek him? No. Hell is paved with good intentions, our Father said.

Then I read in my Bible of the trembling here, when that jailer trembled and fell down and said, What shall we do? Oh, what shall we do? He said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Then there is the submissive here, as we read about in the Cornelius household. There is a congregation anybody could have preached to.

It wouldn't have cost you one dollar, do you know it? It would have cost you a dollar. No, the price of souls is going up these days. Peter preached and 3,000 were converted, and the overhead was exactly nothing.

It didn't cost anybody a dime, not a dime. But it has been going up in recent times, and so it takes thousands and thousands of dollars to rescue one sinner. Because we are not submissive, Cornelius' household didn't cost anything to get them converted, because they said, Here we are, Lord, ready to hear whatever thou hast to say to us.

So Peter preached the gospel, and while he was speaking to them, the Holy Ghost fell on them. That's because they were ready for it. They were a people submissive and prepared and ready to hear what God the Lord will speak.

Ah, how precious is the little time that we've got left! How precious is the little time! And how vital is this little time to the long, long future that lies before us! Take heed how you hear. Some of you have had the good fortune and the misfortune to be brought up in Christian homes where you heard the word from the time you were born. They say that preacher's children are sometimes the very hardest to reach and the ones that go the farthest astray.

That isn't always true, and history will show that it isn't true. I read once, saw a chart once, of how many of the Presidents of the United States and Vice Presidents and leaders everywhere were preacher's children. Great leaders, college Presidents, great missionary statesmen, preacher's children.

So they are not as bad as they are said to be, but I think I know why they sometimes hear in a bored way, because they just have it from the time they can remember, just from the time they can remember, and sometimes not much life in it, but dog! Routine, routine religion is like a routine kiss. Who wants that? I ask you now, who wants that? And who wants routine religion? If it isn't voluntary and impulsive, it isn't religion at all. And we grind it out sometimes and make the poor little fellows sit.

Mrs. Dietz used to say, God says to the little children, squirm, and we say to the little children, now sit still. That's in Sunday school class. God says, squirm, and we say, now sit still.

And we make them sit still and listen to that which they don't understand and wonder why they are bored. Yet, my friend, if we only knew it, if we only knew it, that voice, that word, that dual message, for it is a dual message, it's a message of reproof and a declaration of intention. The reproof is, repent ye, and the intention is to save you through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So if you will hear that message now, dig at your heart and dig up your fallow ground and get free from the dull boredom of it all. And shake yourself and say, am I a faithless hearer, do I believe what I'm hearing? Am I hearing interestedly, or am I a dull, bored hearer? Am I a critical hearer, am I a humble, submissive hearer, ready to hear what God the Lord will speak? It's going to mean a tremendous lot to you in that great day, which can't be very far away. It's going to mean everything in that great day.

You can change. You're not frozen, fixed by a fad of God. Be what you are now, but you can be changed.

The power of the gospel is a transforming, recreating power. It can change characters, it can change dispositions. Somebody says, Mr. Tozer, my disposition is so bad that I'd poison heaven if I went there.

Wouldn't we all? But there is deliverance, there is change, there are possibilities. Lying here, the book tells us, hear the voice, come unto me, hear the voice. It says, Lord, I stand at the door enough, any man hears and opens, I will come in.

All such passages, both in Old and New Testament, they ring with invitation, warn and console and plead. Hear the voice, take heed how you hear. Some of you young people have been reared on the Sunday school, you've been brought up, you were brought here when you were still in your first year dedicated.

You're likely to become dull, I want to warn you. You better ask God Almighty to put life in the nerve inside your soul and don't let it die by the grace of God. What about it tonight? What about you, young fellow? What about it? Somebody wrote me about a young child, Tommy, that's some, I guess maybe five years old, the son of one of the teachers at Nyack.

They said, let's go down to the Lyons Church in Nyack and hear Mr. Tozer. Tommy said, oh, I heard that man once. And I wonder how many little Tommies there are who feel the same way about it I heard.

Well, I admit that sometimes it's pretty the same and sometimes it's pretty dull, but it's a thrilling, thrilling, wondrous, life-giving fact that however poor the preacher, God is calling men to himself. And if we'll but listen, what about you? Let's pray. Holy Father, Jesus Christ, Son of the Father, we cry unto thee.

All around about us unseen there are the dark and sinister forces determined to destroy in every way possible our people, particularly our young people. And we beseech thee, O Lord Jesus, we hate to ask any more. Thou hast given us thy blood, thou hast given us thy life and thy death, thou hast given us thine all, but we still plead, O Lord Jesus, thou who canst do it, drive back the devil and roll back the darkness

and deliver the minds of the young from the influences of the world and from the brainwashing of TV and radio and newspapers and magazines.

Save them, we pray thee, from the brainwashing of social custom and habit and vogue. Deliver them, we beseech thee, from Sodom, from being like the Sodomites round about them. Help them to escape unto the hills and to seek shelter while they can.

Gracious Father, hear our prayers. Save us, we beseech thee, from the evil that is everywhere about. Save our people, save our young people, save our children.

Save our people, O Lord, we beseech thee. Save them from the consequences of our own dullness. Save them, we pray thee, from the results and fruits of dullness, the days gone by.

Save them, we pray thee, from stumbling over insincerity and hypocrisy, or what seems to be it. Grant, we beseech thee, that there may be hearers who are alert and submissive and faithful and obedient, ready to do what they are told by the voice of the Word. We thank thee.

Speak on, O Lord, speak on. Do not stop speaking. Let there not be a famine of the word of the Lord in our day.

Keep on speaking through thy word, we beseech thee, and help us to keep on hearing, until the sad old world is finished, until the day of atom bombs and terror and iron curtains and fear and shooting is all over, and there shall be peace from the river to the end of the earth, and men shall say, let us go up to Jerusalem and hear what the Lord will say. God grant that time soon may be, but while it tarries yet a little, we pray thee, send us to our knees in prayer, for Jesus' sake. Dear young people, I want to urge you, I want to urge you, don't get up and go to your school or to your work without seeking God.

Don't go to bed without seeking God. Don't laugh and listen until the last minute to something amusing and then go to bed. Seek the face of God.

Seek God. Seek God. We are going to have a hymn sung down here, and we are a half hour early than we used to be.

Don't take advantage of that and come in long after you should have been in. Get in off of the streets and please your parents by being in a little early. Take the worry out of their hearts, because they are never quite restful until you are home.

Gangs and vicious killers on the streets, accidents, nobody is ever quite restful until you are in. So go and sing and rejoice and testify and go on home. Parents will not rest until you do.

God bless you, young people. You older people, think on these things. Hear what God the Lord will speak, and be careful how you hear over the next hour.

Let us stand.

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