

Heedful Hearing

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon passionately urges believers to listen attentively, reverently, and obediently to the Gospel, emphasizing that hearing God's Word is a solemn and transformative responsibility.

Scripture: Luke 8:18, Hebrews 10:25, Isaiah 55:3, Ephesians 5:19, James 5:16, 2 Timothy 4:2

Topics: "Hearing the Gospel", "Faith and Obedience", "Reverence in Worship"

Description

In this powerful sermon, C.H. Spurgeon exhorts believers to approach the hearing of the Gospel with utmost seriousness and reverence. He highlights the dangers of careless listening and the blessings that come from attentive, believing, and obedient hearing. Spurgeon challenges his audience to value the Gospel above all and to cultivate a heart that receives God's Word sincerely. This message serves as a timeless reminder of the transformative power of the Gospel when heard rightly.

Transcript

"Take heed, therefore, how you hear." Luke 8:18.

It is implied in this verse that you do hear. A man cannot take heed how he hears if he does not hear at all. Hence, how great is the sin of a vast proportion of the inhabitants of this city who utterly forsake the ministry of the Gospel, who never hear it, or hear it but only now and then! We have frequently met with people who, before they came to this house, never attended any place of worship. They were taken there, they say, to be christened, or they went there to be married and they expected to be carried there, or somewhere like it, to be buried, but that was all their church going and all their respect for the worship of God. Unhappy they—to have the Light of God and to refuse to see—to have God's diamond lying, as it were, at their very feet, and yet to refuse to pick it up! The day will come when wasted Sabbaths will be a burning accusation against the inhabitants of this privileged, but wicked city! With churches in almost every street, with preachers of the Gospel to be found here and there declaring fully the saving Truth of God, it shall go harder with the citizens of London than with the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day when the Lord comes to judge the quick and the dead! Do I address any who have merely dropped in here tonight, but who are not often hearers of God's Word? Ah, my dear Friends, you little know the sweetness of the Gospel, for if you did, "not tents of ease nor thrones of power" could tempt your feet away from the place where God specially reveals Himself on the Day of Rest!

Do you think how unjustly you are treating your God? There are seven days in the week and He gives you six, but you rob Him of the seventh. You are like a man on the highway who met a beggar and seeing him

to be in great need— and having but seven pounds in his pocket, he gave the beggar six—and then the beggar knocked him down and stole the seventh from him! He was an ungrateful wretch—and what are you? You shall answer for yourselves.

It is implied, again, in the text that a man hears the Gospel, for it does not matter much how you hear if it is not God's message, if it is not the Truth of God. The best way to hear a lie is not to hear it at all. The best way to hear preaching that is not according to God's Gospel is to hear enough of it to know what it is and then walk off and hear no more. But it is implied that you do hear the Gospel and here comes the enquiry—Do those who frequent places of worship invariably ask themselves the question—"Is the preacher a Gospel preacher? Does he preach according to the Holy Scriptures? Does he deliver to me the Truth of God, or is it a cunningly devised fable or invention of his own?" I fear that the most of our hearers only ask, "Is he a fluent speaker? Is he a high-soaring rhetorician? Can he pile his words, one upon another? Or is he amusing? Does he use many illustrations and metaphors? Will there be something to interest me?" Ah, but, my Hearers, if the bread is poisoned, it is of small concern that the baker makes it up into pretty loaves! If it is not a Gospel draught that is given you to drink, it is a small matter to you whether the cup is richly designed or not. Better that you have it in the poorest pot and drink from that, if it is from the river of the Water of Life, than that you receive untruth out of a golden cup! The chief matter with a hearer when he goes to a town to live and has to enquire, "Where shall I attend on the Lord's-Day?" should be this—"Where can I hear most concerning the Lord Jesus Christ? Where shall I hear a man who can touch my conscience? Where shall I hear the Truth that will be quick, powerful and sharp as a two-edged sword to my soul? Where may I hope to be saved? Where may I trust, being saved, that I may be helped on the road to Heaven?" All the rest is mere matter of taste, but this is a matter of the utmost importance! Is it the Gospel or not? If it is not the Gospel, let not your feet tread the floor! But if it is the Gospel of Jesus, then "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is."

But now, these two things being granted—that we ought to hear and that it ought to be the Gospel—the text graciously counsels us, "Take heed how you hear." We purpose to handle our theme after this fashion. First, there is a caution implied in the text. Secondly, there are rules intended in it. And then again, there are strong reasons for it. First, there is—

I. A CAUTION IMPLIED IN THE TEXT.

"Take heed how you hear." The caution is that we should not think it a trifling thing to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "Take heed"—as though you had to stop on the threshold and remember where you are. Take heed, take heed and remember, then, that it is no trifling thing to hear a sermon if it is a Gospel sermon! Some think it is a simple work to preach and child's play to sit and listen. When the great trumpet peals and the dead are awakened, they will think very differently! They will reckon that speech was never put to so noble a purpose as when it was used to bring men to reconciliation with their Maker—and that ears were never used to as good an end as when they were used attentively to hear what God the Lord would speak when He would bid the rebel come to Him and find mercy! The preacher, if he is what he should be, does not think it a light or easy thing to preach. It is said of Luther that he never feared any man and yet he declares that he never preached a sermon without his knees knocking together because he trembled lest he should be guilty of the blood of any of his hearers. This is the great burden of my life, lest I should miss anything that should be profitable to you. Lest, in dealing with God's Word, I should be like some untaught chemist's lad who is mixing medicines which were meant for restoring health, but who introduces poisons into them. No! But I would tell you all I know, tell you all God's Word as I have learned it and speak it honestly, affectionately and plainly, trusting thus to be clear of the blood of all men!

But in proportion as it is solemn work to preach, it is also solemn work to hear. When men enter king's palaces, they become at once respectful, they regard their company, they pay marked attention to the head of the household—and should they not, when they come into the assembly of God's people to join in the worship of the Most High? Should they not, after the same sort, say, "How awe-inspiring is this place where the Gospel is preached! It is none other than the House of God, and the very gate of Heaven"?

Because, then, it is no light and trivial thing to hear a sermon, take heed how you hear!

Again, it is no easy thing to hear a sermon well, and hence the appeal of the text, "Take heed how you hear." The fool cannot hear it well. He lets it in one ear and out the other! The mere critic hears it, but without any profit to himself. Multitudes have heard hundreds, possibly thousands of sermons, but they have not been benefited thereby—they have let the golden stream run past them—and not one single drop of the precious treasure have they retained. The art of listening to the preaching of the Gospel is one of the highest arts in the world and conduces to the best results! Don't you suppose when you have come up those steps, and taken your seats, that you are all ready for the sermon. No! No, it is not so! If you would have good fruit of it, there ought to be as much preparation on your part as on mine. Am I to pray that I may be a blessing to you, and are you not to pray that you may get a blessing out of the words? Are you to come flippantly, or even carelessly into these seats and sit down, and then hope to be edified? If so, indeed, you shall usually find your hopes disappointed! Take heed how you hear, because it is not a little thing, nor an easy thing, to listen to the Gospel of Jesus!

Take heed how you hear, implies this caution—that it is no light thing to hear the Gospel irreverently, for on the bad hearing may hang not only the loss of the blessing which might have come, but the infliction of a punishment which shall be the greater for careless hearing. Men never listen to a Gospel sermon and remain as they were. They are either bettered by it or—shall I say worsened?—if there is such a word. It is not possible that the Gospel should have shined on those eyes without either giving light or increasing the blindness. I do not believe that any man has regularly sat under the sound of a Gospel ministry for three months without being either sensibly hardened or manifestly softened by it. You know how children's characters are formed, how day after day, and week after week, bring impressions for good or for evil upon their sensitive minds. And it is just the same with ourselves. Every Truth of God that passes before the camera of our soul leaves some degree of impression upon the sensitive plate of our character—and we are either blessed by it, or cursed by it, as the case may be. It must be either a savor of life unto life to us, or of death unto death. It is no light thing to have heard amiss!

But there is also a sweet caution that springs out of the text if you think it over. "Take heed how you hear," for it may be a blessed thing to hear, and no one can tell the weight of mercy that may come from the hearing! I have heard of a child who used to lean forward so earnestly to catch every word—he told his mother it was because he had heard the preacher say that if there was a sentence in the sermon that was likely to save one soul, the devil would, if it were possible, be sure to get you to be inattentive while that was being said! Now the boy was right, and there was a great truth in it. If men did but always catch the Word of God, speaking after the manner of men, what chances there would be that that Word would be blessed to them! And what a blessing it would be! Why, there may be some here tonight—for there have been such here many nights—who have come in here having had a miserable life of it up till now and their wife and children a more miserable life, still, if it is possible, for they have been frequenters of the ale-house, spending their money in riotousness. But what if they should be sobered tonight by Divine Grace and get new hearts and right spirits—that would be blessed hearing—blessed for the family, for the wife and children, as well as for the man himself!

There may have come in here some poor desponding men and women, ready to make away with themselves. Oh, perhaps in the hearing, tonight, the joy of the Lord may come to them and they may be saved! Many and many have found out that they were the children of God while they were hearing—found out that Christ was theirs, pardon of sin was theirs, Heaven was theirs! And they would never have found it if it had not been for hearing it! But while they were listening, God's Holy Spirit opened their hearts to perceive and receive what had all the while been written in the Scriptures!

Oh, may it be a blessed night to some of you while you are here! Pray for it, people of God! "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." Let your prayer go up that souls here may so hear the Word of the Gospel of salvation as being a great message from God and, therefore, may hear it with all their hearts and so listen to it that it may be salvation unto them according to the Master's promise, "Incline your ears and come unto Me: hear and your souls shall live." Now, and at somewhat greater length—

II. THE TEXT IMPLIES SOME RULES AS TO HEARING.

The text is *multum in parvo*—much in little. "Take heed how you hear," means many things. Do not be alarmed when I say that we shall have seven points under this head. That you may remember them, I have put them in the order of the alphabet.

"Take heed how you hear." That is, first, take heed that you hear attentively. And it will not burden your memories if I hook on to that word another like it—retentively—that heed that you hear attentively and retentively. I have heard of a poor idiot who was an excellent hand, idiot though he was, at carrying messages. And the way in which he did it was to deliver the message exactly as he had it, word for word. But he had a great peculiarity. While the person told him the message, he always stood with one hand closing one of his ears—and as soon as ever he had got the message, he put the other hand up and closed the other ear so that both ears were shut—and away he ran! When asked why he did it, he said that when the message came he did not want it to get out at one ear—and then when he had received it, he shut the other ear in order that it might not get out that way! Observe, fool though he was, there was wisdom in the action. I wish there were as much wisdom in some who would not like to be called fools, for they hear the Truth of God with one ear and it goes out the other! It were well if they took care not to let it escape them. Have your ears open with keen, attentive listen-ing—and then have both of them shut as being retentive to keep in the Truth you have received. But alas, many do not even hear at all. The Gospel is being preached, but they are thinking of a thousand other things. Distracting thoughts fill their minds.

We all know how hard it is for the marksman to shoot a running deer. And how difficult it must be for the preacher to strike the running judgment and the moving, restless mind that is preoccupied with other things! But if we can get the whole mind fixed on the subject before us, as it should be, then we may hope to make an impression. Do labor, dear Friends, to whomever you may be listening, to put those distractions away—the thoughts of house and home and all besides, while the Gospel is operating upon your minds! And when you have heard it, try to store it up and keep it there. If it is good for today, it is good for tomorrow! And if it does not bless you today in the hearing, perhaps God may bless it to you in years to come. We have read of a man who was converted through a sermon, but he heard the sermon 70 years before it was blessed to him! Mr. Flavel had preached it and the man was sitting, 70 years later, under a hedge in the

United States. And he recollected that it was 70 years ago that day that he had heard the sermon—and God, then and there, blessed the sermon to him and he was saved! Hear, then, attentively and retentively!

The second point is—hear believingly and, as all true belief ends in practice, hear obediently. That which we do not accept as being true can be of no service to us, especially in the economy of Divine Grace—where everything comes to us by faith—and where unbelief restrains the hand of God and keeps back the blessing. Faith, however, as I have said, must always be obedient if it is true. When you have heard the Word, put it in practice at once! What a grand close to a sermon that was after Paul had preached in the streets of Ephesus, when they brought out their books of witchcraft and made a pile of them in the street and burned them before the Apostle's face! Ah, it were well if men would bring out their sins, their hard thoughts of God, their fancied self-righteousness and everything contrary to the Divine will. It were blessed preaching, and blessed hearing, if such were the result—hear believingly and obediently!

Thirdly, hear candidly and honestly. Too many are prejudiced against the Word. Prejudiced because they do not like the preacher, though I see not why they should not accept the Truth wherever it may be found. A man would prize a jewel, though he found it on a dust heap—and the Gospel of Jesus is to be valued, let who will proclaim it! Some make up their mind before they hear, that they will not receive it. This is neither honest to the Truth of God, nor to themselves. They show not wisdom, but folly here. But many will tell you that they cannot be expected to change their religion, as if they half-felt that if they were to think a little they must do so. Surely that religion that will not bear deep consideration must be a poor, poor thing! No, Sir, but hear what is to be said! Judge it by the Word of God. Judge it honestly and when you have done so, if it is not the Truth of God, cart it away to the winds! But if it is the Truth of God, then accept it and may God bless it to you! It is a pity that men are not more candid in hearing the Gospel and in applying it to themselves. How many, if they hear a Truth of God, will say, "I wonder how that will suit So-and-So," and immediately cast their eyes around the place to see if Mrs. So-and-So is there and wonder how she will like it. The old Roman said, "Lend me your ears," but I may say—keep your ears at home! Hear for yourselves. Constantly this process ought to be going on in the hearer's mind, "What has that Truth to do with me? That promise—is it mine? That threat—ought it to make me tremble? That caution—does it apply to me? That command—am I the man who ought to carry it out? Oh, for such candid, personal applications of Gospel Truth by each hearer to himself! We should then have blessed results.

I have thus gone through three points. The fourth is—hear devoutly and hear sincerely. I reckon that but little good will come of the hearing which some people give when they hear of loaves and fishes being given away. If there are so many loaves to be given away on Sunday, a certain number of poor people will be sure to be there—a vile hypocrisy which cannot be too much condemned! Take heed, dear Hearers, that none of you ever hear with such low and sinister motives, but that you come to hear the Gospel as God's voice to us and, therefore, as in God's Presence with simple and lowly hearts, desire to know His Truth that you may sincerely live it! Never should there be mixed therewith anything so gross and carnal as that which brings some men and women to the House of God.

Why, do not even some of you come merely because it is the custom to go somewhere, or because it looks respectable, as if the Lord's own worship were to follow and honor the fashion of the day? This is all mischievous and rotten as a motive! If I did not think it were some good to me to come to worship, or that it was my duty to God to do it, do you think I would do it to please my neighbors? No! Let my neighbors please themselves! The honest, upright man in these things remembers that religion is a personal thing and that to be the mere slave of fashion and custom of others is sinful degradation!

Oh, I beseech you, lay aside that slavery of men's fashion! And when you do listen to the Gospel, let it be with a direct and devout feeling in your soul that you have come to worship God and to hear what the Lord

God shall speak to you!

I will not stay on any one point and, therefore, pass on to observe take heed that you hear earnestly and, therefore, spiritually. Some men get no blessing from the Gospel, but who wonders that they do not? They never put their hearts into it. Oh, I think if I were this night under conviction of sin and were seeking a Savior, I would listen with all my heart and soul to the preaching of Jesus Christ! Have you not known times, some of you, when you would have stood in the aisles by the hour to hear of Christ, if perchance you might have got rid of the burden of your sins? Ah, these are the men that get the blessing! But those who are half asleep and in their minds quite asleep, are not likely to receive the Word.

How can it come to them with power? What probability is there that it will, when they themselves care not whether it will or not?

And then, dear Friends—coming to the letter "F"—take care that you hear feelingly, asking the Lord to make the Word cut into your souls! Those get the blessing in whom the Word plows a furrow—not those to whom it is like whipping the water, no impression being made but for an instant. Oh, pray God that you may not get Gospel-hardened! Ask Him to make you tender under all threats and to keep you like a well-plowed field that is ready to receive the good seed when it is scattered upon it! Try if you can, and may God's Holy Spirit help you to be warned under the threats, to be cheered by the promises, to be comforted by every good Word of the Lord so that, feeling the power of the Word, it may be life and salvation to you!

Again, "take heed how you hear," and mind that you hear gratefully and prayerfully. It is a privilege beyond all price to live in a land of Bibles, to be brought where the Gospel is proclaimed. Thank God for it. Do not be indifferent, lest He take the candlestick out of its place and leave you in the dark. Hear prayerfully! I wish it were a habit with you, when you get home, to take a few minutes in a quiet room and pray for a blessing upon what has been heard. We might expect to see great results if this were your constant practice, to pray after your hearing—and even before—to get the ground ready! And when the seed is sown, to rake it and water it, so that it may have congenial soil in which to take root. Ah, but how many come to hear the Gospel and then, all the way home, get into some idle company after the service and whatever Word of God might have been blessed, fails to produce any result, for the evil birds of the air have devoured the seed that fell upon such a hard highway!

May God give you Grace to put in practice these seven hints that I have given you. "Take heed how you hear." And now, lastly, there are—

III. CERTAIN OBVIOUS REASONS FOR TAKING HEED HOW YOU HEAR.

And the first is because it is God's Word. Not everything that I say, or that any minister says, is God's Word. Hence you should take heed to separate between what is God's and what is ours. But wherein we speak according to Holy Scripture, it is as much God's Word as if God Himself spoke. And let me remind you that God's Word, whoever speaks it, is a much more solemn matter than a king's word! Where the word of a king is, there is power, but where the Word of God is, though a boy should speak it, there is Irresistible Power! It is better for you to hear God's Word from your fellow men than it would be to hear it from an angel, for God would have employed angels on such messages if they had been better. But because men can enter with greater sympathy into your feelings, God has not given this ministry unto angels, but has "committed unto us the word of reconciliation." It is better for you to hear it from us than it would be to hear it from one who should rise from the dead, for if not, God would bid them rise from the

dead and preach to you. But remember, He would not send any from the dead to preach to Dive's kinsmen.

He said, "They have Moses and the Prophets: let them hear them." I will go further and say it is better for you to hear the Word of God from a poor preacher than it is to hear it from God, Himself, for men did hear it from God, Himself at Sinai, and they prayed that He would no more speak with them, for the voice was too terrible. "You cannot see God's face and live," but in tender mercy He speaks through the lips of one like yourselves, who has passed through your sinnership, has fled to Jesus and can speak from living experience. Therefore "take heed how you hear," for though it is but a man that speaks, it is more than a king, or an angel, or one risen from the dead! It is, after all, the Voice of God, the King of kings, speaking through His ambassador—therefore despise it not!

"Take heed how you hear" because it is most precious Truth which is proclaimed—Truth which may save your soul! The only chance, my unconverted Hearer, that you have of Heaven lies in the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Do you know the story? God became Man that He might suffer what was due for human sin. And whoever trusts in Jesus Christ, the Substitute for sinners, shall be saved! If you rely simply and entirely upon Him, you shall live! Now, that is the Gospel. If ever you shall enter Heaven, it shall be through that gate. If ever you have true peace, it will be through that precious balm of Gilead. I beseech you, then, despise it not! This treasure is better than gold! No mention shall be made of coral or jewel in comparison with it. Oh, come and buy it without money and without price! But trifle not in that sacred market of a preached Gospel in which alone you can buy the salvation of your soul!

Take heed how you hear, because it is by this Gospel that you will be judged. Paul says that Christ will judge the world and he adds, "according to my Gospel." The Gospel! The Gospel! You have heard that word till you have grown sick of it, but you shall see that word pointing the sword of Justice if you despise it! When God stands and holds out mercy to sinners, if they reject it, surely their destruction shall be the more severe! Oh, my dear Hearers, if you understand the Gospel of Jesus, I beseech you to so act towards it that you may not be afraid when the big books are opened and the thundering voice of the Judge shall read out the history of your life and shall pronounce your final and eternal destiny!

Take heed how you hear, for many who heard the Gospel once are now among the lost Terrible reflection! These pews have held some whose spirits are now forever banished from hope! Take heed how you hear, for you may be sitting in such a seat—the successor of such an one—and you, also, may tread in his footsteps, despise the Truth of God and so die without hope!

Take heed how you hear, for there are many nearing the end who will hear no more.

Among the regrets that too often make dying such stern and crushing work is this, "I knew the Gospel, but I did it not. I was told of Christ, but I never trusted Him. I was pressed and persuaded and prayed to give my heart up to Him, but I put off a decision until now! My last few hours have come and 'tis enough for me to be thinking of the pain I suffer! I have no time to think upon eternal things and do such weighty business with a God who has now come so near to me, dressed in robes of wrath!" Oh, as you will prize your Sabbaths when they are over. As you will value the sermons when you cannot listen to any more of them, think well of them, now, and make this resolution—and God help you to make it in His strength—that you will never again read the Bible, or listen to Gospel preaching or Gospel talking, without the solemn desire of your whole soul that it may be made a saving blessing to you, that you may not perish while hearing the

Word!

Oh, I pray you take heed how you hear, for there are many in Heaven now who never could have been there if they had not heard the Word. And they were such as you are! Then why should not you find the way there by the same road which they, though wayfaring men, were able to tread without mistake? Children, recollect that—

"Many dear children are gathering there, For of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." There are children in Heaven who were saved by hearing the Word in the Sunday school, saved by listening to it from this platform when they were but boys and girls! Dear Children, may you trust Jesus and become lambs in His flock. Young men and maidens, there are multitudes of your age who are among the choristers of the skies, making eternal melody before the Great White Throne, and they came there by hearing of the name of Jesus and trusting in Him! Will you not follow them? They were taken from you—some of you remember them when they died—you sat side by side with them in the class one Sunday, and the next Sunday they were in Heaven! Or you watched them fading slowly, like lilies broken a little at the stalk, and at last they withered. No, they withered not, except to our poor eyes, for they bloomed anew in Heaven!

Will you not bloom there, too? If so, listen to the Word of Jesus and, above all, accept it, and accept it now! Trust Him whose hands were pierced! Rest in Him whose heart was smitten with a spear! He will save you! He rejects none who yield to Him—yield to Him now! And you, you men of business, 'tis hard work to get you away a little while from the desk and ledger, you are so absorbed and eaten up with many of the business cares of life! And you, working man, so apt to close your ears to anything about another world—yet hear me! There are merchants like yourselves and working men like yourselves who stand among the white-robed host and rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory! They are there, and if you ask them how, they will tell you that they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! They found that precious blood by listening to the Gospel with attentive ears, and will you not be found there? Oh, what will it profit you if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul? Sirs, it will be bad business if you make ten thousand pounds and forever ruin your souls! It will be hard business, you working men, if you toil on, and on, and on, bricklaying and carpentering, and I know not what besides, and yet throw away your souls, your immortal natures! I beseech you, by every grain of sense you have, and all the wits that are within your brains, be wise and trifle not with your souls—your better part, your immortal part! As for your body, the worms will eat it, do what you may with it! But your soul—oh, I pray God that no undying worm may ever feed on that, but may you escape from that danger, safely be sheltered in Christ Jesus and be eternally blessed in Him!

I have given you good enough reasons, then, for taking heed how you hear, but what is needed, is not reasons, but reason, or better still—Grace, the Grace of God! What is needed is not more argument, but the willingness to yield to

those already felt. Oh, yield now to the saving Grace of God in Christ Jesus! Look to Him and be saved, I pray you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 2 TIMOTHY 2.

Verse 1. You therefore, my son, be strong in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus. This is an exhortation to everyone of us, not only to have Grace, but to be strong in it. There are many professors who as long as they are just saved, are content. We are not content with being barely alive spiritually—we do not wish to spend our life shivering with cold, but we seek after comfort as well as existence—and we seek to be in health, as well as to be in life. So should it be with the Christian. He should pray, "Lord, make me strong in

the Grace that is in Christ Jesus." Oh, that these words might be not merely an exhortation, but a Divine fiat, that as God said, "Let there be light," so He may say to His children, "Be you strong," and then oh, how soon shall the weakest of us leap into immortal strength!

2. And the things that you have heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit you to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. So then, there is to be a succession of teachers in the Church, and these do ill who are always speaking against the ministry of God. Timothy receives his ministry from Paul—he is to commit it to faithful men and these are to hold it in custody to teach to others. But there are some who say that all Christians should be teachers. To which we answer, if the whole body were a mouth, where is the ear? The mouth is, after all, but a vacuum. If the whole body was a mouth, there would be no body at all! If all are to be shepherds, who are to be the sheep? If all are to sow, where are we to find the ground? No, Brothers and Sisters, we must be careful to pray God to continue the ministry in our midst, for without it we miss many blessings. "The same commit you to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

3. You therefore endure hardships, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. If you desire delicacy, join not the army. A soldier's calling is not to be linked with softness—and if you desire ease and comfort, join not the army of Christ, for a Christian's profession and these go not together!

4. No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier. So Timothy, as a Christian minister, is to act as the Roman soldier did! It was a law in Rome that no soldier was to plead in court for another as a lawyer, or to act in business for another as a bailiff, or to have anything to do, while a soldier, with either husbandry or merchandise. And so should it be with the men of God who have to preach the Word—and every Christian, indeed! Though he meddles with common things, he is to take care that he is not entangled by them, not to be caught, as it were, as game is entangled in a net. There is a way, you know, of making the actions of common life subservient to the purposes of Divine Grace. This is the Christian's business—let him take care that he is not entangled with the cares of this life.

5. And also, if a man competes in athletics, he is not crowned except he strives lawfully. There were rules in the Grecian games. When they struck each other, the blow was not to be given except upon a certain part of the body, and if a man fought unlawfully, he could not get the prize. So there are laws, too, for the Christian ministry and also holy regulations for the great wrestling of Christians.

6. The farmer that labors must be first partaker of the fruits. This is a law. No man has any right to be a partaker at all till he has first tasted of the fruits of the field. Until we have first tasted that the Lord is gracious, we cannot effectively or properly minister the things of God.

7. 8, 9. Consider what I say; and the Lord give you understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my Gospel. Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds. But the Word of God is not bound. See how the Apostle comforts himself! Here he is in prison, but the Truth of God is free! He sits with the chains about his wrists, but the Word of God travels from nation to nation, from continent to continent, like the free spirit that dwells in it!

10. Therefore endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Not that the sufferings of Paul had anything meritoriously to do with the salvation of the elect, but

that by his earnest striving and suffering, the word of the Gospel was brought to their hearing—faith, then, came by hearing—and so they were saved.

11, 12, 13. It is a faithful saying: For if we are dead with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself. Glory be to God, the unbelief of man cannot make God break His promises! Christian, all your unbelief has not made God unfaithful to you! And Sinner, though you cast out the promises of God as being good for nothing, yet He will not therefore raise the recompense of reward, for Jesus will save others if He saves not you. "He abides faithful."

14. Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. There are some Christians who want to have this exhortation given to them in these days, for they are always striving about words to no profit. Beware of these men, if you would not have your faith staggered!

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