

# Take Heed What You Read

by A.W. Pink

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*A.W. Pink emphasizes the critical importance of discerning spiritual content we read and hear to ensure it nourishes our souls and fosters genuine faith.*

**Scripture:** Job 34:3, Psalm 42:1, Psalm 119:35-36, Jeremiah 2:13, Mark 4:24, Romans 8:5, Ephesians 1:19-20, Colossians 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, Hebrews 5:13

**Topics:** "Discernment", "Spiritual Nourishment"

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## Description

A.W. Pink emphasizes the critical importance of discerning what we read and hear, urging believers to be vigilant about the spiritual nourishment they consume. He draws parallels between physical food and spiritual food, warning that just as unhealthy food can harm the body, unspiritual messages can damage the soul. Pink encourages Christians to develop their spiritual senses to distinguish between messages that are filled with the Holy Spirit and those that are lifeless and ununctionless. He stresses that true religion is the life of God in the soul, and only messages that carry divine power can truly benefit the believer. Ultimately, he calls for a rejection of empty teachings and a pursuit of the life-giving Word of God.

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## Transcript

"Take heed what ye hear" (Mark 4:24): the word "hear" obviously includes what is read, for that which is written or printed is addressed to the ears of our intellect. Few people today realize the urgent need for "taking heed" unto what they read. Just as the natural food which is eaten either helps or hinders the body, so the mental food we receive either benefits or injures the mind, and that, in turn, affects the heart. Now just as it is harmful to listen to the rubbish and poison which is being served from the great majority of present-day pulpits, so it is exceedingly injurious to the soul to read most of what is now being published. "Take heed what ye hear" and read. But let us seek to be more specific.

The only thing which is really worth calling "religion" is the life of God in the soul-commenced, carried on, and consummated solely by the Holy Spirit. Hence, whatever does not bear the impress of the Spirit's unction should be rejected by the saint: for not only can ununctionless messages do us no good, but what proceeds not from the Spirit is of the flesh. Here, then, is the test which God's children ought to apply unto all they hear, and here is the balance in which they should weigh all that they read. True, there are varying degrees of the Spirit's unction: as it is in the natural so it is in the spiritual--there will be a varying amount of depositions from the faintest moisture of dew to the copious shower. As there had to be "salt" in every sacrifice (Lev. 2:13), so every discourse or article proceeding from the Spirit's aid is "seasoned with salt"

(Col. 4:6). But O how very much today is devoid of spiritual savour and flavour!

Some of God's dear people may suppose that it would be presumptuous to set themselves up as judges of what they hear or read, but that is a serious mistake, being both a false humility and a shirking of duty. The Apostle rebuked the Hebrews because their senses (spiritual faculties) were not developed so as to discern between good and evil (Heb. 5:13). With as much reason might it be termed pride for any one to pass judgment upon the groceries or meats purchased from the stores. Others may ask, "But how are simple and unlearned souls to distinguish between the different religious publications of the day?" Very simply: in sampling your natural food how do you determine whether or not it be seasoned? By your natural taste, of course. So it is spiritually: the "new man" has a palate too! If the God of creation has given us natural palates for the purpose of distinguishing between wholesome and unwholesome food, the God of grace has furnished His people with a capacity, a spiritual sense, to distinguish between nutritious and innutritious soul food.

"For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat" (Job 34:3). Does yours, my reader? Are you as careful about what you take into your mind as what you take into your stomach? You certainly ought to be, for the former is even more important than the latter. If you eat some material food which is injurious, you can take a purgative and get rid of the same; but if you have devoured mental food which is injurious, it stays with you! "For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth food." Again, we ask, Does yours, dear reader? Are you learning to distinguish between "letter" and "spirit," between the "form" and the "Power," between that which is of the earth and that which is from Heaven, between that which is lifeless and ununctionless and that which is instinct with the breath of God? If the answer be No, then you are greatly the loser.

How many of God's dear children listen to the automaton "letter" preachers of today, and yet find nothing suited to the needs of their poor souls! And how many are subscribing for one magazine after another, hoping to find that which will the better furnish them to fight the good fight of faith, only to be disappointed? What they hear and what they read does not penetrate and grip: it has no power: it neither breaks down nor lifts up: it produces neither godly sorrow nor godly joy. The messages they hear or read fall upon their ear like an idle or twice-told tale: it completely fails to reach their case or minister to their needs. They are no better off after hearing a hundred such "sermons" or reading through a hundred such periodicals than they were at the beginning: they are no farther from the world and no nearer unto God.

It is often a long time before God's children are able to account for this. They blame themselves: they are exceedingly loath to say, "This message is not of God." They are afraid to act in the spiritual as they do in the natural, and condemn and discard that which is worthless. While they feel a lack of power in the sermons they hear or the articles they read, and while their souls steadily get dried up like a potsherd, they are slow to realize that this is the inevitable effect of the ununctionless preaching they listen to or the ununctionless matter they read, and that such dryness and leanness of soul is inevitable by their association with unhumiliated and empty professors. But in due time God opens their eyes, and they see through the flimsy veil and discover that both the sermons they hear and the literature they read are only the product of a dead profession.

Ah, it is a great thing when once the Holy Spirit teaches a soul that it is power which is lacking from the lifeless preaching and lifeless articles of dead professors. It is power which the renewed soul seeks: a message which has power to search his conscience, to pierce him to the quick, to write it upon his heart; a message which has power to bring him to his knees in broken-hearted confession to God; a message

which has power to make him feel that he is "vile"; a message which has power to drive him to Christ, for the binding up of his wounds, for Him to pour in "oil and wine," and send him on his way rejoicing. Yes, what the renewed soul longs for (though at first he knows it not) is that Divine message which comes to him "not in word only, but also in power" (1 Thess. 1:5).

Sooner or later, every member of the Body of Christ comes to value "power," and to count as worthless whatever lacks it. It is by Divine power he is taught in his own soul, by which he is made to feel acutely his sinnership, his carnality, his beggarliness. It is Divine power working in his heart--the same power which brought Christ again from the dead (Eph. 1:19, 20)--which draws his affections unto things above and makes his soul pant after God "as the hart panteth after the water brooks" (Psa. 42:1). It is this Divine power working in him which reveals to his burdened spirit the Throne of Grace, and causes him to implore mercy and to seek grace "to help in time of need." It is this Divine power working in him which makes him cry "Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments; for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness" (Psa. 119:35, 36).

They who are partakers of this Divine power (and they are few in number) can never be satisfied with a powerless ministry, either oral or written. "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh" (Rom. 8:5), and are charmed with oratorical eloquence, catchy sayings, witty allusions, and jocular interspersions: on just such "husks" do the religious "swine" feed; but the penitent prodigal can find no nutriment therein! Men "of the world"--and they may be graduates from some "Bible Institute" or possessors of a diploma from some seminary, now styling themselves "preachers of the Gospel"--will speak of the things of the world (varnishing it over by denominating them "signs of the times") and "the world heareth them" (1 John 4:5). But those who are seeking to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling" obtain no help therefrom, yea, they perceive clearly that such sermons and periodicals are "broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13).

"Take heed what ye hear" and read! More than forty years ago the saintly Adolph Saphir wrote, "I think the fewer books we read the better: it is like times of cholera, when we should only drink filtered water." What would he say if he were on earth today and glanced over the deadly poison sent forth by the heterodox and the lifeless rubbish put out by the orthodox? Christian reader, if you value the health of your soul, cease hearing and quit reading all that is lifeless, ununctionless, powerless, no matter what prominent or popular name be attached thereto. Life is too short to waste valuable time on that which profits not. Ninety-nine out of every hundred of the religious books, booklets, and magazines now being published are not worth the paper on which they are printed.

To turn away from the lifeless preachers and publishers of the day may involve a real cross. Your motives will be misconstrued, your words perverted, and your actions misinterpreted. The sharp arrows of false report will be directed against you: you will be called proud and self-righteous because you refuse to fellowship empty professors. You will be termed censorious and bitter if you condemn in plain speech the subtle delusions of Satan. You will be dubbed narrow-minded and uncharitable because you refuse to join in singing the praises of the "great" and "popular" men of the day. More and more you will be made to painfully realize that the path which leadeth unto Life is "narrow" and that FEW there be that find it. The Lord be pleased to grant unto each of us the hearing ear and obedient heart: "Take heed what ye hear" and read!

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