

# 'Take Heed How Ye Hear'

by A.W. Tozer

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of hearing the truth and responding to it in order to receive salvation.*

**Scripture:** Luke 8:16

**Topics:** "Hearing God's Word", "Transformation through Faith"

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## Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the critical importance of how we hear the Word of God, urging believers to be active and engaged listeners rather than passive recipients. He explains that salvation is a process that begins with hearing and responding to God's voice, and that true change is possible through the power of the Gospel. Tozer warns against various types of hearers--faithless, dull, critical, and forgetful--and encourages a humble, submissive approach to receiving God's message. He highlights that redemption is complete through Christ, but salvation requires our active response to that truth. Ultimately, Tozer calls for a vibrant faith that seeks transformation and growth in the believer's life.

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## Transcript

" Take Heed How Ye Hear "

June 16, 1957

Now, in the book of Luke, the book of Luke, verses 16-18 of the eighth chapter. Luke 8:16-18. No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covered it with a vessel or putteth it under a bed, but setteth it upon 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 abroad. Take heed therefore how you 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. Now, verse 18, the first sentence, Take heed, Take heed how you hear. I want to talk a little word about that. Now, the text says, take heed how ye hear.

Now, when the great God would bring 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 till you're glorified.

I'm a little shy. I just learned the other day that a president of a well-known Bible Institute or seminary said I was a legalistic, that is Tozer 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 four-foldness or five-foldness nor ten-foldness nor twelve-foldness or one hundred-foldness, 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 it's 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're glorified.

Now, it is the will of God that we should be saved by hearing it. And that we should begin to hear now and that we should obey and follow and 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. 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 a question, now just ask a question and trust to your humility and realism to answer it. Would you like to have a visitation from an angel? Or would you like to have a messenger from heaven, or the messenger of the Annunciation, an angel of the Annunciation, to come to you and say, Mr. McAfee and others, and I could name all of you. 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'll 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 it's 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. That 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 it'll be a better man in God.

That I say is our hope brethren, that we can change; that we are not fixed, that God Almighty hasn't cast us in 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. If you've got a 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. And 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. And 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. And 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. And 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's hope. Man can change.

And not only change, but learn. And so there's 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 life. 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. When 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 is finished, He meant the giving out of His life, the pouring out of His life, the atonement, the 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 it on high, and made him Lord and Christ, and thus affected redemption; so, the 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. And 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, it was all done and there's nothing to be added; nothing, nothing to be added.

There are cults, adventism, and others. They 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, that 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 footstool. 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 for God. Now that's redemption.

But, the application of that objective truth to me subjectively, that's salvation. And so, salvation is both a human and the divine thing. Salvation is divine, in that God did that which man could not do, and redemption is 100% divine. And there's nothing that any man can do, or angel can do. That's divine. But salvation has a human element and a human side to it. It means that I've got to make a response to that redemptive message. That 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. And 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 it is the response to truth.

Suppose that you're ill with a certain kind of disease for which there has been a specific cure discovered. And say, the yaws, is that the name of that disease in the Valley, the yaws. It's a disease that eats the fingers off and eats the nose off and eats the ears. It's a terrible thing. And what I can learn, one or two injections of penicillin will cure it. And they are having difficulty over there making the heathen understand they're not gods. And that this is not a Jesus needle, and it's not a miraculous thing.

But suppose we had a terrible disease here and suppose you had it. And there was a specific that was discovered that would cure it in twenty-four hours. And suppose that a man got up before you and for forty-five minutes, lectured on that medicine, and told what it would do, the cure it would affect, and then suppose that he threw the meeting open and twenty-five 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 top. 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 in 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 is God Almighty's universal panacea. But you've heard that talked about until it's old stuff 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 for nobody, 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 man, the young man far from home in that fire country among the swine, it's still because you were made in the image of God, and in 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 ye 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 long sermon, I'm going to be brief.

There are a number of a number of hearers, perhaps there are 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 what kind of hearers we may be. For instance, here's 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 not 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.

And then, here's a dull hearer. A dull hearer is a bored hearer. Do 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.

And somebody will say immediately, well, you preachers make it so and there's 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 of, 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 our second world when they don't believe there's any more than one, or they live as if they believed 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's the critical hearer. I find him in the Bible, too. He's the fellow that wants to know about the grammar and if it isn't quite what it should be. He won't listen, and he wants to know about the delivery, and is it, 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's fairly fresh. Is there anybody that wants to eat a fairly fresh egg? It's what you call damning with faint praise. But there's the critical hearer. Is the preacher forceful? And how are his illustrations? Do you know what? If you knew that at 12 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 changed, the poorest preacher in Chicago would be an orator in your ears, and you'd be glad to hear any little thing, critical hearers.

Then, there's the forgetful hearer; and Satan steals the seed. And there's the neglectful hearer, who has good intentions and his good intentions are always put for his deeds. He never, he's always intending to do it. Did you ever stop to think how much you'd have done if you had done what you had intended to do? Did you ever think how far you'd be out along on the highway toward heaven if you had done all that you intended to do? If you had sought God as you intended to seek Him? No. Hell is paved with good intentions, our Fathers said.

Then, I read in my Bible of the trembling hearers, 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. And there's a submissive hearer as we read about matters in Cornelius's household. There's a congregation that anybody could have preached to. It wouldn't have cost you one dollar; do you know it? It would have cost you a dollar,

Now, 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's been going up now in recent times. And so, it takes thousands and thousands of dollars to rescue one sinner, because we're not submissive. Cornelius's household didn't cost anything to get them converted, because they said, here we are Lord, ready to hear whatever Thou has 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 once saw a chart of how many of the presidents of the United States and vice presidents and the leaders everywhere who were preacher's children; and great leaders, college presidents, great missionary statesman, preacher's children. So, they're not as bad as they're said to be, but I think I know why they sometimes hear in a bored way because they've just have it from the time they can remember, just from the time they can remember and sometimes not much life in them, they're dull, 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 involuntary 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're bored. And yet my friend, if we only knew it, we only knew it, that boy, 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 faithful hearer, or 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 fiat of God, to be what you are now, but you can be changed. The power of the gospel is a transforming, recreating in power. And it can change characters. It can change dispositions. Somebody says, Mr. Tozer, my disposition is so bad that I would poison heaven if I went there; and wouldn't we all. But there's deliverance, there's change, there's possibility lying here. The Book tells us, hear the voice, come unto me. Hear the voice. It says lo, I stand at the door and knock. Any man who hears and opens, I will come in. And all such passages, both in Old and New Testaments, they ring with invitation and warn and console and plead, hear the Voice. Take heed to 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're still in your first year and dedicated. You can likely to become dull; I want to warn you. You had better ask God Almighty to put life and 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 their son, I guess maybe five years old, a son of one of the teachers at Nyack. And they said, let's go down to the Alliance church in Nyack and hear Mr. Tozer. And Tommy said, oh, I heard that man once. And I wonder how many little Tommy's there are who feel the same way about it? I heard him.

Well, I admit that sometimes it's pretty the same and some time 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 will but listen. What about you?

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