

Take Heed How You Hear

by A.W. Tozer

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

Duration: 39:02

Scripture: Luke 8:16, Luke 8:18, Romans 10:17, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Hebrews 4:12, Hebrews 11:6

Topics: "Hearing"

Description

The sermon transcript emphasizes the importance of listening to the word of God and not just hearing it. It highlights the danger of routine religion and the need for a genuine and personal connection with God. The speaker addresses the critical attitude of some individuals who focus on superficial aspects of preaching rather than the message itself. The transcript also references biblical verses that emphasize the significance of how one hears and the consequences of not truly understanding and applying the word of God.

Transcript

I was meditating here over the fact about my going to, over to the other north side for a ministry next Sunday. And I was thinking that I have been staying pretty close to this portrait in recent times, and just reminiscing a little bit over the culprits 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 or two or three different summers and didn't take it and wouldn't.

I was invited to Park Street in Boston, where often Gay is and many others. Brother Redpath was leaving for London, or leaving for his home in England, or wherever he was going in England. He asked me to take his portrait for a month.

And I told him that this church wasn't as big as Moody's, but that I considered that it was 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. And so, 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. You know, honestly, I'd rather preach to you here. There are only probably a fifth or less of these numbers than I would over there.

But I hope I may have a message, 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 16-18 of the 8th chapter.

Luke 8, 16-18. I was meditating here over the fact about my going over to the North Side for ministry next Sunday, and I was thinking that I have been staying pretty close to this portrait in recent times, and just reminiscing a little bit over the portraits 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 or two or three different summers and didn't take it, and wouldn't.

I've been invited to Park Street in Boston, Rock and Gaze and many others. Brother Redpath was leaving for London, or leaving for his home in England, or wherever he was going in England. He asked me to take his portrait for a month, and I told him that this church wasn't as big as movies, but that I considered that it was one of the most beautiful churches in the world.

It said it was on a candlestick. The tale which enter in may seem the lie, for nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest. Is there anything hid that shall not be known and come abroad? Take heed, therefore, how you hear, for whosoever hath in 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, take heed how you hear. I want to talk a little words 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 is earthly.

It's neither the cheap song of the world, nor is it the fine classical song of the world. But there's another verse. We hear it, and it harmonizes with the beasts and elders and living creatures and ransoms who with palms in their hands, stand up to you and sing together of him who loved them and washed them in his own blood.

We're glad to hear this, Lord. We know what it'll be like, a little bit of it at least. Thank thee for November of Christians.

Thank thee for this church. Thank thee for this crowd here this evening night. And Lord, it isn't the largest church on the continent, but to us, dear, the most important, and we pray that all grant that tonight there may go forth troops that will be helpful to the people.

Some will need it. Some are on their way. Some have long past the necessity for any of my priests.

Younger ones are coming up. New ones are coming in. Many others are the scorers, 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 me say 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 deliver us from this hot, noisy, jumpy city with its cacophonous racket 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. We remain in Chicago. We thank thee thou hast sent us a number who haven't bowed the knee to Baal nor kissed his image and never will.

Thank thee for them, Father. Thank thee some of them are here tonight. Graciously help us, who may be in power and not in burden.

Now, the text says, Take heed how ye hear. When the great God brings salvation to us, he let it ride on the voice, he let it ride on the sound. And salvation was to begin now where we are and continue through successive stages of progression until we are glorified.

So always remember, if you don't have full salvation until you're 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, that exposure, was a legalistic sanctificationist.

I thought that was nice, and I appreciate that. If I was 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, or fivefoldness, or tenfoldness, or twelvefoldness, or 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 fourfold 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 choosing, I don't quite like it. Plural gospel.

You see, my brethren, you don't have plural salvation, really, until you're 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. 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'm going 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, or would you like to have a messenger from heaven, the messenger of the annunciation, the angel of the annunciation, come to you and say, is there more, better, and I could name all of you, I have a message from the most high God. It is that you remain so defeated by the everlasting Father that as you are at this moment, you shall be eternalized.

Serious. 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 100 days mourning and 30 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 just 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 57, it will add up to something better than 56, and if he lives through 58, it'll be better than 57. 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, rather, that we can change, that we are not fixed.

But God Almighty has chastised 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 when you're in the fire. No matter what habits you have, or what negative 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 eagle. 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, and 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 viable like clay. And this is the known law of life, and God takes advantage of it. I don't know that what the angels have sinned and cut off their first estate may have been fixed eternally, unable to change.

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

And so there's a sounding of a voice through the world, a 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 read 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 if he finished that part of the dying on the cross, that part was done.

And Christ said, if he 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 that hand of the Father. For he saves us by his death, but justifies us by his resurrection.

But not bear down too hard on that single phase that is finished. For when he said he 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 redeemed the lamb, salvation would never have been.

Redemption would never have been accomplished. But God accepted the lamb, raised him from the dead, healed him and put him on high, and made him Lord in Christ. And that's effective redemption.

For 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 gone, and there's nothing we can add to it. Not the keeping of the tablet, not the eating of certain meats, not the long periods of fasting, not even prayer can add anything to that long before you existed. And you are only a forethought in the mind of God.

It's all done. It's 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 glad for me, 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 it 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's that which was done before you were born, before America was a nation, before the Crusade, 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 passion, his season 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 divine thing.

Salvation is divine in that God did that which man could not do, and redemption is 100 percent divine. There's nothing that any man can do, or angel can do. That's divine.

But salvation has a human element in it, a human side to it. And 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 Inglewood, and redemption was provided for Inglewood.

But Inglewood is not saved. Why? Because Inglewood made no response. The sinners that we know that die every day are sinners who do not 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 in mere truth and be none the better for it. Remember that, that it's the response to truth.

Suppose that you were ill with a certain kind of disease for which there has been a specific cure discovered. And, say, it is yawns. That's the name of a disease, yawns.

It's a disease that eats the fingers off and eats the nose off and eats the ears and terrible things. And what I can learn one or two injections of penicillin cure it. And they're having difficulty over there making me believe and understand they're not God.

And this is not a Jesus miracle. It is not a miraculous thing. But suppose we have a terrible disease here.

Suppose you had it, and there was a specific. It was discovered that it would cure it in 24 hours. And suppose that a man got up before you and for 45 minutes lectured on that medicine, 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 looked at me. I can do a day's work and feel as good as sleep, as my father used to say, like a fox.

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 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.

And that's exactly the 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 shut to you, and until you have heard his faith and then risen to do something about it. And the fire itself, by reading his faith, 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. You need to look to nobody, to nobody for confirmation.

It's all been done in the beginning of 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 the far country among the swine, swine, swineherds, still, still because you were made in the image of God 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 me to 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's a verse, 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 great for a long sermon, I'm going to be brief. There are a number of hearers, perhaps 67 of them here, and not 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's a faithless hearer, a hearer without faith. Faith. Israel had the gospel preached unto them, said, Paul, but it did not help them because they were 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.

You know that if you could take all the dullness that there is in Protestant religion and ballast, 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. 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 of the most importance in the tone of voice that has no real interest, whatever, and no vibrancy, and 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 lives 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's any more than one. They live as if they believe there's only one world.

A lot of that boredom, that dullness, is a result of hearing and hearing and not doing anything about it. And then there's a critical here. 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 thoughtful? When I go anywhere and I'm advertised as a thoughtful preacher, I always remember what they said about the egg that's fairly fresh. Anybody that wants to eat a fairly fresh egg, it's what you call damning with faint praise.

But there's the critical here. There's the critical thoughtful. And now I say that phrase.

Do you know what? Do you know that it's twelve o'clock tonight? The sound of the trumpet should echo through the land, and all the old forgotten great gods of our two-written fathers should be visited by the Holy Ghost, and the dead should rise into living change. The poorest preacher in Chicago would be an orator in your ears, and you'd be glad to hear any little thing. Critical here.

Then there's the forgetful here, and Satan feels the speed, and there's the neglectful here who has good intentions, and his good intentions are always put for his deed. 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 stopped God, did you intend it to speak to him? No.

Hell is plagued with good intentions, our father said. Then I read a nice Bible of the trembling years, and that jeweler 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's the submissive here as we read about Matthew, Cornelius's household.

There's a congregation that anybody could have preached to. Then he cost you one dollar, do you know it? He cost you a dollar. Now, the price of souls was going up these days.

He preached, and three thousand 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 hast to say to us. But he didn't preach the gospel, and while he was speaking to them, the whole village fell on him. 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 at a church concert 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 faiths and preacher's children. So they're not as bad as they're said to be, but I think I know why they're sometimes here in a bored way, because they've just had it in the time they can remember.

Just in the time they can remember, sometimes it's not much like them. It's just dull, routine, routine religion. It's like a routine kiss.

Who wants that? I ask you now, who wants that? And who wants routine religion? It doesn't matter 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 sick, and it's as if each youth would say, as God says to the little children, "'Spring,' and we say to the little children, "'Now sit still.'" As in Sunday School class.

God says, "'Spring,' 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 gorged. Yet my family will only know it, will only know it, that word, that word, that, that, that dual message. For it is a dual message.

The recording finished at that point. The credit is on the candle stick, the thing which in ruin may seize the light. for nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest.

Under anything hid that shall not be known and come abroad. Take heed, therefore, how you hear. For whosoever hath, a union shall be given, and whosoever hath not from the union shall be taken, even that which he seems to have.

Now, verse 18, the first sentence, take heed, how you hear. I want to talk a little words about that, and then first before we do, let's pray. Oh God, we thank thee for the scene in which we hear a sound that is earthly.

It's neither the cheap song of the world, nor is it the fine classical song of the world. But there's another voice, and we hear it, and it harmonizes with the beasts and elders and living creatures, and ransom them with pawns in their hands, families and kings, and bring together of him who loved them and washed them

in his own blood. We're glad to hear this, Lord, and we know what it will be like, a little bit of it at least.

Thank thee for an ascended Christian. Thank thee for this church. Thank thee for this crowd here this evening and night.

Lord, it isn't the largest church on the continent, but to us it is the most important, and we pray that all grant that tonight there may go forth to let their day pass positively. Some don't need it, some are on their way, some have long past necessity. For any of my priests, younger ones are coming up, new ones are coming in, many others are the scorers, are going to other parts of the country and other parts of the world and taking the instruction and the message with them there.

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O God, have mercy on this great concentration of evil that is made in Chicago. We thank thee thou hast been as a number who hath inbound the need of Baal, nor kicked his image, and never will. Thank thee for them, Father.

Thank thee some of them are here tonight. Graciously help us that we may be in power, and not in burden. Christ's name be praised.

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