

—PREFACE—

It is laid upon my heart in this Preface to the Eighth volume of my sermons, to commune a little with the great host of readers who continually peruse these discourses. Unknown by face to most of you, my soul feels the bonds of brotherhood, and is filled with an earnest yearning for your welfare. Grace and peace be with you all. Amen.

Sick Saints, what a delight I feel in ministering to you! Shut out from the sanctuary, and the sound of the Word, you find a solace in reading what others have crowded to hear. Accept my most tender sympathy in your affliction, while I breathe the prayer that He who suffers *in* you, may abide *with* you. The Great Captain of the host has called you to glorify Him on your beds; it may be you could never have done this in active service; what a mercy is it that a sick chamber affords you opportunities to honor Him! Your patience, holy resignation, and joyous faith, make you invaluable teachers to those Believers who visit you, and even your ungodly friends may be greatly blessed by your means. Little do you dream how well your words are remembered, and how powerful they will be even when you have fallen asleep in Jesus. From the green mound in the cemetery your loving voice shall sound in their ears! Those very persons who now seem so indifferent, may be the first to be converted by your testimony. Speak well of your Lord; you see Him often, let His name be always in your mouth. He makes *your* bed; let your bosom be a pillow for Him. Let your chamber be a sanctuary, your bed a pulpit, your living loving experience of Divine Grace the constant sermon! We cannot do without you in the Lord's battles. Your power for good is wonderful; forget not your advantageous position, but lift up the banner of your Lord on high! Let no persons retire from your bedside without being enriched by some affectionate admonition. In the night watches, when your eyes are held waking so that you cannot sleep, plead for the Church, the world, your minister, your friends, and do not omit the unworthy Brother who now writes to you. What showers of mercies your intercessions may bring down! The golden keys of Heaven are at your belt, open the treasury and bless us all! "As the sufferings of Christ abound in you, so may your consolation also abound by Christ."

My Brothers in the ministry, receive my affectionate salutations and my best thanks for your kind endeavors to promote the circulation of these sermons. I count myself thrice happy to have so many readers among the leaders of our Israel; and if, like the lad in the Evangelists, I may bring the barley loaves and small fishes which the Master may distribute to you, that by you the thousands may be fed, we will all of us rejoice together. Brothers, I trust we long for souls, and are not to be satisfied unless we see them saved. We give out medicine daily, but this would be sorry work if we did not see men healed thereby! It is our duty to serve our Master even if no apparent success should crown our labors; but surely we are not faithful servants unless we long and pant after success. He is a brutal physician who, having administered the potion, is quite at ease whether the patient shall live or die. Let us hunger and thirst after conversions with a passionate longing which none but God Himself can satisfy! Let the terrors of Hell quicken our zeal to save men from them; for, alas, Brothers, they are dropping into them every hour. Let the preciousness of Christ impel us to great earnestness, for who can bear that He should be despised and rejected of men? Why must this Pearl be trod under foot of swine forever? Oh, why must the matchless beauties of Immanuel forever be forgotten? Time and eternity both stand behind us in the pulpit and cry, "Work while it is called today; the night comes, when no man can work." Let us not spare our arrows, for Death is shooting his shafts abroad. If men will not escape damning, it is certain that they cannot escape dying. Up then, each one of us to our work, and let nothing but the winning of souls content us! Forgive me if I use the language of Baxter on my own account, for when I see so many *comfortable* preachers at ease in Zion, I marvel the stones do not cry out against them! "I confess, for my part, I marvel at some ancient reverend men, that have lived twenty, thirty, or forty years with an unprofitable people, among whom they have scarcely been able to discern any fruits of their labors, how they can, with so much patience, continue among them! Were it my case, though I dare not leave the vineyard, nor quit my calling, yet I would suspect that it was God's will I should go somewhere else, and another come in my place, who might be better fit for them; and I would not be easily satisfied to spend my days in such a manner."

This year has brought in its seals to the Ministry at the Tabernacle in undiminished numbers, but, alas, how many are still unconverted! O for a harvest, a joyful harvest of souls!

To those Brothers who publicly read these sermons in cottages and village preaching rooms, a word of hopeful encouragement. Several cases of conviction and comfort have come under my notice this year through your good work in publicly reading my discourses. I pray you, persevere! No man need despair of winning souls. In these days the lack of talent is no bar to usefulness. If we cannot preach the sermon ourselves, if reading it to a few cottagers may be blessed by God the Holy Spirit, who would refuse to do it? Go on, dear Friends, and may the Lord continue to bless us in publish-

ing the glad tidings of His Divine Grace! We serve a generous Master who thinks much of our littleness. O that we thought more of Him!

To all my Brothers and Sisters, thanks and Christian love. Thanks for your assistance in spreading my “words for Jesus,” and love, because we are one in Him. Let me entreat you to wrestle together with me in your prayers that the Good News may be received by many prepared hearts. If all my readers would pray for the preacher, and for a blessing upon the sermons, as they travel throughout all lands, what a great result would follow! The Holy Spirit is able to make the Word as successful now as in the days of the Apostles. He can bring in by hundreds and thousands, as easily as by ones and twos! If we have the Spirit sealing our ministry with power, it will matter very little about our talent. Men may be poor and uneducated; their words may be broken and ungrammatical; there may be none of the polished periods of Hall or the glorious thunders of Chalmers; but if the might of the Spirit attends them, the humblest Evangelists will be more successful than the most learned of divines or the most eloquent of preachers! It is extraordinary Grace, not talent, that wins the day! It is extraordinary spiritual power, not extraordinary mental power, that we need! Mental power may fill a Chapel; but spiritual power fills the Church. Mental power may gather a congregation; spiritual power will save souls! We need spiritual power! Oh, we know some before whom we shrink into nothing as to talent, but who have no spiritual power; and when they speak, they have not the Holy Spirit with them. But we know others—simple-hearted, worthy men, who speak their country dialect, and who stand up to preach, and whether it is in a barn, or the village green, the Spirit of God clothes every word with power! Hearts are broken, souls are saved, and sinners are born-again! O Spirit of the living God, we need *You!* You are the life, the soul, the source of Your people’s success! Without You we can do nothing! With You we can do everything! Dear Readers, we need above all things, the “power from on high.”

During the past year, partly in consequence of better type, our circulation has largely increased. But why should it not at once be multiplied at least four times? Will each reader assist us? Have you not three friends who might be induced to take the sermons weekly or monthly? If they have been useful to you, make it your business to introduce them to others! Get three friends to become subscribers, and our desire is fulfilled. When Popery perverts its thousands; when Atheism climbs into high places; when Skepticism wears a miter; when heresy fills the tutor’s chair; when lax theology is becoming the rule, and sound divinity the exception, it is time that all lovers of true Doctrine should spread it with greater vigor!

A friend has scattered a large number of sermons in the colleges and towns of Ireland. Working with great discretion, he sowed the seed so rapidly in each place, that before the foul bird, the Popish priest, could hasten to stop him, the work was done! Our friend’s adventures in some of the Irish towns prove that religious liberty is a thing yet to be understood by that priest-ridden people! We shall, we are sure, hear of his sowing in years to come.

An Italian translation of the sermons is now under serious contemplation, and will probably be produced during the ensuing year. Everywhere—from China and India, Australia and Africa, the States and the Brazils, Germany and France, Florence and Rome, we have heard of good from the sermons. From ships of war, foreign military stations, mission establishments, and exploring parties, we have had words of gratitude and friendship. Therefore do we thank God, and take courage. Onto the Lord our God be honor and praise for another year’s support. In His name we set up our banner and advance with confidence!

Apologies are again offered for all grammatical and typographical errors, the necessary result of hasty revision and printing. These are, however, much fewer and far less serious than in former years.

And now, Brothers and Sisters, farewell. Cease not to pray for,
Yours ever truly,

Charles H. Spurgeon

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