

THE BURDEN OF THE WORD OF THE LORD

NO. 2114

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“The burden of the Word of the Lord.”
Malachi 1:1.

THE Prophets of old were no triflers. They did not run about as idle tellers of tales, but they carried a burden. Those who at this time speak in the name of the Lord, if they are, indeed, sent of God, dare not sport with their ministry or play with their message. They have a burden to bear—“The burden of the Word of the Lord.” And this burden puts it out of their power to indulge in levity of life. I am often astounded at the way in which some who profess to be the servants of God make light of their work—they jest about their sermons as if they were so many comedies or farces.

I read of one who said, “I got on very well for a year or two in my pulpit, for my great-uncle had left me a large store of manuscripts, which I read to my congregation.” The Lord have mercy on his guilty soul! Did the Lord send him a sacred call to bring to light his uncle’s moldy manuscripts? Something less than a *Divine* call might have achieved that purpose.

Another is able to get on well with his preaching because he pays so much a quarter to a bookseller and is regularly supplied with manuscript sermons. They cost more or less according to the space within which they will not be sold to another clerical cripple. I have seen the things and have felt sick at the sorry spectacle. What must God think of such Prophets as these? In the old times, those whom God sent did not borrow their messages. They had their message directly from God Himself, and that message was weighty—so weighty that they called it, “the burden of the Lord.”

He that does not find his ministry a burden now will find it a burden hereafter, which will sink him lower than the lowest Hell. A ministry that never burdens the heart and the conscience in this life will be like a millstone about a man’s neck in the world to come.

The servants of God mean business. They do not play at preaching but they plead with men. They do not talk for talk’s sake. But they persuade for Jesus’ sake. They are not sent into the world to tickle men’s ears, nor to make a display of elocution, nor to quote poetry—theirs is an errand of life or death to immortal souls. They have something to say which so presses upon them that they must say it. “Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel!” They burn with an inward fire and the flame must have vent. The Word of the Lord is as fire in their bones, consuming them. The Truth of God presses them into its service and they cannot escape from it. If, indeed, they are the servants of God, they must speak the things which they have seen and heard. The servants of God have no feathers in their caps—they have burdens on their hearts.

Furthermore, the true servants of God have something to carry, something worth carrying. There is solid Truth, precious Truth in their message. It is not froth and foam, phrases and verbiage, stories and pretty things, poetry and oratory, and all that. But there is weight in it of matters which concern Heaven and Hell, time and eternity. If ever there were men in this world who ought to speak in earnest, *they* are the men. Those who speak for God must not speak lightly. If there is nothing in what a man has to say, then God never commissioned him, for God is no trifler.

If there is no importance in their message—yes, if their message is not of the first and last importance—why do they profess to speak in the name of God? It is constructive blasphemy to father God with our nonsense. The true servant of God has no light weight to bear. He has eternal realities heaped upon him. He does not run merrily as one that has a feather-weight to carry—he treads firmly and often, slowly—as he moves beneath “the burden of the Word of the Lord.”

Yet, do not let me be misunderstood at the beginning. God’s true servants, who are burdened with His Word, right willingly and cheerfully carry that burden. We would not be without it for all the world. Sometimes, do you know, we get tempted, when things do not go right, to run away from it—but we view it as a temptation not to be tolerated for an hour. When some of you do not behave yourselves and matters in our Church get a little out of order, I say to myself, “I wish I could give this up and turn to an employment less responsible and less wearing to the heart.”

But then I think of Jonah and what happened to him when he ran away to Tarshish—and I remember that whales are scarcer now than they were then—and I do not feel inclined to run that risk. I stick to my business and keep to the message of my God. For one might not be brought to land quite so safely as the runaway Prophet was. Indeed, I could not cease to preach the glad tidings unless I ceased to breathe. God's servants would do nothing else but bear this burden, even if they were allowed to make a change. I had sooner be a preacher of the Gospel than a possessor of the Indies. Remember how William Carey, speaking of one of his sons, says, "Poor Felix is shriveled from a missionary to an ambassador." He was a missionary once, and he was employed by the government as an ambassador. His father thought it no promotion and said, "Felix has shriveled into an ambassador." It would be a descent, indeed, from bearing the burden of the Lord, if one were to be transformed into a member of Parliament, or a prime minister, or a king. We bear a burden but we should be sorry, indeed, *not* to bear it.

The burden which the true preacher of God bears is for God, and on Christ's behalf, and for the good of men. He has a natural instinct which makes him care for the souls of others and his anxiety is that none should perish but that all should find salvation through Jesus Christ. Like the Christ who longed to save, so does the true Malachi, or messenger of God, go forth with this as his happy, joyful, cheerfully-borne burden—that men may turn unto God and live. Yet, it is a burden, for all that. And of that I am going to speak to you. Much practical Truth of God will come before us while we speak of "the burden of the Word of the Lord." Pray that the Holy Spirit may bless the meditation to our hearts.

I. And why is the Word of the Lord a burden to him that speaks it? Well, first, it is a burden BECAUSE IT IS THE WORD OF THE LORD. If what we preach is only of man, we may preach as we like and there is no burden about it. But if this Book is inspired—if Jehovah is the only God, if Jesus Christ is God incarnate, if there is no salvation except through His precious blood—then there is a great solemnity about that which a minister of Christ is called upon to preach. It therefore becomes a weighty matter with him. Modern thought is a trifle light, as air, but ancient Truths of God are more weighty than gold.

And, first, the Word of the Lord becomes a burden in the reception of it. I do not think that any man can ever preach the Gospel aright until he has had it borne into his own soul with overwhelming energy. You cannot preach conviction of sin unless you have suffered it. You cannot preach repentance unless you have practiced it. You cannot preach faith unless you have exercised it. You may talk about these things—but there will be no power in the talk unless what is said has been experimentally proven in your own soul.

It is easy to tell when a man speaks what he has made his own, or when he deals in secondhand experience. "Son of man, eat this roll"—you must eat it before you can hand it out to others. True preaching is artesian—it wells up from the great depths of the soul. If Christ has not made a well within us, there will be no outflow from us. We are not proper agents for conveying the Truth of God to others, if Divine Grace has not conveyed it to us. When we get God's Word in our studies, we feel it to be a load which bows us to the ground. We are, at times, obliged to get up and walk to and fro beneath the terror of the threats of God's Word. And often are we forced to bow our knee before the glory of some wonderful word of the Lord which beams with excessive Divine Grace.

We say to ourselves, "These are wonderful Truths—how they press upon our hearts!" They create great storms within us. They seem to tear us to pieces. The strong wind of the mighty Spirit blows through the messenger of God and he, himself, is swayed to and fro in it as the trees of the forest in the tempest. Therefore, even in the reception of the message of God, it is a burden.

The Word of God is a burden in the delivery of it. Do you think it an easy thing to stand before the people and deliver a message which you believe you have received from God? If you so imagine, I wish you would try it. He that finds it easy work to preach will find it hard work to give an account of his preaching at the Last Great Day. One has carefully to look around and think while he is preaching, "I must mind that I do not put this Truth of God in such a way as to exaggerate it into a falsehood. I must not so encourage the weak that I dwarf the strong. Nor so commend the strong as to grieve the weak. I must not so preach the Grace of God as to give latitude to sin—I must not so denounce sin as to drive men to despair."

Our path is often narrow as a razor's edge, and we keep on crying in our spirit, while we are speaking, "Lord, direct me! Lord, help me to deal wisely for You with all these souls!" The anxieties which we feel in connection with our pulpit work are enough to make us old before our time. I have heard of one who thought he would give up his ministry because

he had so small a Chapel into which he could not get more than two hundred people. But a good old man said to him, “You will find it quite hard enough to give a good account of two hundred at the Last Great Day.”

It is an idle ambition to desire a large congregation, unless that desire is altogether for God’s glory. For we only increase our responsibilities when we increase the area of our influence. Still, some are *responsible* for not having a large congregation. If their dullness keeps people from hearing, they do not, thereby, escape from responsibility. To speak aright God’s Word beneath the Divine influence is, in the speaking, as well as in the getting of the message, the burden of the Lord.

When we have preached, the Gospel becomes a burden. “Well, now, it is all done,” says one. Is it? Is it all done? You, dear Teacher, when you have taught your class today, have you done with your children? You have thought of them upon the Sabbath—will there be no care for them all the week? If your soul is towards your children, or your congregation, as it ought to be, you will bear them always on your heart. They will never be far away from you. The mother is gone from home. She is out today, seeing her sister—surely she is not caring about her babe, is she? Is SHE NOT? Why, wherever she is, the tender mother, if she does not bear her child outside her bosom, bears it inside her heart. Her babe is always on her mind.

“Can a woman forget her sucking child?” Can a soul-winner forget his charge? If God sends any of us to do good to our fellow men and to speak in His name, the souls of men will be a perpetual burden to us and we shall constantly cry for their salvation and perpetually, with entreaties and tears, go to God for them and ask Him to bless the message we have delivered.

Oh, that we may have, in all pulpits, ministers who bear the burden of the Lord in the study, in the pulpit, and when the discourse is finished! Once truly a minister, you are always a minister. Your burden clings to you. May you, my Brothers and Sisters, partakers in the holy service of our Lord Jesus Christ, each of you, in your measure, bear the burden of the Word of the Lord, and that continually.

II. I pass to a second point. It is not only a burden because it is so solemnly the Word of the Lord, and therefore weighty and overwhelming, but next, BECAUSE OF WHAT IT IS. What is it that the true servant of God has to bear and to preach?

Well, first, it is the rebuke of sin. I have heard of hirelings who preach, but never think of rebuking sin. It is with them like as in the story of the old Negro preacher, a very popular preacher, indeed, among his black Brothers. His master said, “I am afraid some of your people steal chickens, for I am always losing mine. I wish you would, next Sunday, give them a word about it.” “Master,” said the preacher, “it would throw such a damp over the congregation if I were to say anything about stealing chickens.” So the black preacher avoided that subject.

It seems to me that stealing chickens was the very thing that he ought to have preached about, if that was the sin his Brethren were guilty of. If a man bears the burden of the Word of the Lord, he speaks most to his people upon the evil of which they are most guilty. Somebody once said to me, “Sir, you were very personal.” I answered, “Sir, I try to be. Do not think that I am going to apologize for it. If I knew anything that would come home to your heart and conscience concerning sin, I would be sure to say that—just that very thing.” “And what if I should be offended?” “Well, I should be very sorry that you refused reproof and should feel all the more sure that it was my duty to be very faithful with you. If after much love and prayer you refused the word, I could do no more. But I certainly should not speak with bated breath to please you. And you would despise me if I did.”

I remember one in Oliver Cromwell’s day who complained to a preacher. He said, “The squire of the parish is very much offended by some remarks you made last Sabbath day about profane swearing.” “Well,” said the Puritan preacher, “is the squire in the habit of swearing?” It was admitted that he was and that he therefore thought himself pointed out by the minister. The Puritan replied to the complaining tenant, “If your lord offends my Lord, I shall not fail to rebuke him for it. And if he is offended, let him be offended.” So must every true preacher be not concerned of man’s esteem—and speak faithfully—and this is a burden to one of a tender spirit.

If there is any topic upon which we *must* of necessity dwell, it must be upon that sin which is most grievous to the Lord. For we must by no means leave an erring Brother unwarned. This is not a work to be coveted. It is neither pleasant

to the hearer, nor pleasant to the speaker. And yet to rebuke sin and to rebuke it sharply, is part of the work of him whom God sends. And this makes the Word of the Lord his burden.

And, next, the Word of the Lord gives a rebuff to human pride. The doctrines of the Gospel seem shaped on purpose, among other objects, to bring into contempt all human glory. Here is a man who is morally of a fine and noble nature, but we tell him that he is born in sin and shaped in iniquity—this is a stern duty. Here is a man of a grand righteous character in his own opinion and we tell him that his righteousness is filthy rags—he will not smile on us for this. Here is a man that can go to Heaven by his own efforts, so he thinks, and we tell him that he can do nothing of the sort—that he is dead in trespasses and sins—this will bring us no honor from him.

He hopes that by strong resolves he may change his own nature and make himself all that God would have him. But we tell him that his resolutions are so much empty wind and will end in nothing—this is likely to earn us his hate. Behold, the axe is laid at the root of the tree. Every man, woman, and child stands a convicted criminal, and if saved must owe his salvation entirely to the gratuitous mercy of God. Condemned and ruined, if he ever escapes from his ruin it must be through the work of the Spirit of God in him and not by his own works. Thus, you see, human nature does not like our message. How it writhes in wrath, how it grinds its teeth against the doctrine which humbles man, crucifies his pride and nails his glory to the gallows! Therefore, such preaching becomes the burden of the Lord.

And then the true preacher has to come into contact with the vanity of human intellect. We ask of man, “Can you, by searching, find God?” You say, “I know.” What do you know, poor blind Worm? You say, “I am a judge and I can discern.”

What can you discern, you that are in the dark and alienated from God by your wicked works? The things of God are hidden from the wise and prudent but revealed unto babes. And the wise and prudent are indignant at this act revealed of Divine Sovereignty. “Well,” says one, “I quarrel with the Bible.” Do you? The only real argument against the Bible is an unholy life. When a man argues against the Word of God, follow him home and see if you cannot discover the reason of his enmity to the Word of the Lord. It lies in some form of sin.

He whom God sends, cares nothing at all about human wisdom, so as to dote upon it and flatter it. For he knows that, “the world by wisdom knew not God.” And that human wisdom is only another name for human folly. All the savants and the philosophers are simply those who make themselves to be wise but are not so. To face false science with “the foolishness of preaching,” and to set up the Cross in the teeth of learned self-sufficiency is a burden from the Lord.

The most heavy burden of the Word of the Lord, however, is that which concerns the future. If you are sent of God and if you preach what God has revealed in His Word, then you say, “He that believes not shall be damned,” and you do not hesitate to say that the wrath of God abides on the rejecters of the Savior. You do not hesitate to say—

*“There is a dreadful Hell
And everlasting pains,
Where sinners must with devils dwell
In darkness, fire and chains.”*

All the romance of the age runs against this. Everybody says, “Be quiet about the wrath to come, or you will have everybody down upon you.” Be down upon me, then! I will not soften God’s Word to please *anybody*. And the Word of the Lord is very clear on this matter. If you receive not the Lord Jesus Christ, you will die in your sins. If you believe not in Him, you must perish from His Presence. There is a day coming when you will die—after this comes another day when you must appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ and all your actions shall be published and you shall be judged for the things done in the body, whether they are good, or whether they are evil.

And then you shall receive the sentence of, “Come, you blessed,” or, “Depart, you cursed.” Do you think we like to preach this? Do you think that it is any pleasure to the servant of God to deliver these heavy tidings? Oh, no—very often we speak in the bitterness of our spirit. But we speak because we dare not refrain. It is infinitely better that men should be told the truth than that they should be flattered by a lie into eternal ruin. He ought to have the commendation of all men, not who makes things pleasant, but who speaks things truly. Somebody is preaching of how to get people *out* of Hell. I preach about how to *keep them away* from Hell.

Don’t go there. Keep clear of the fire which never can be quenched. Escape for your lives—look not behind you! Stay not in the plain but hasten to Christ, the Mountain of Salvation, and put your trust in Him. This is it which is the burden of the Word of the Lord. We have grief of heart because of the dreadful future which men prepare for themselves, namely,

“everlasting punishment.” We are heavy at heart for the many who will not turn to God but persist in destroying their own souls forever. Oh, why will they die? The prospect of their future is a present misery to us.

III. Now, dear Friends, I have, in the third place, to say that it is a burden not only because it is the Word of the Lord and because of what it is, but BECAUSE OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR BRINGING IT TO YOU.

Suppose that we do not preach the Gospel and warn the wicked man, so that he turns not from his iniquity, what then? Hear this voice—“He shall perish but his blood will I require at your hand.” What will my Lord say to me if I am unfaithful to you? “Where is the blood of those people who gathered at Newington? Where is the blood of that crowd which came together to hear you speak and you did not preach the Gospel to them?” Oh, it were better for me that I had never been born than that I should not preach the Gospel! “Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel” of Christ, for men perish where there is not the Word of God!

I remember Mr. Knill’s portrait which was once in *The Evangelical Magazine*, that it had written at the bottom of it, “Brethren, the heathen are perishing—will you let them perish?” So is it with men that hear not the glad tidings. They die in sin. Worse still, men are perishing in *this country*—in the blaze of the Light they sit in darkness. Oh, that we might go and find them and tell them of the Gospel! For, if we carry it not to them, “How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they are sent?” What makes it more of a burden to me, is that men may die even if they do hear the word of salvation—men may go from these pews quickly into perdition. Those eyes that look on me tonight, oh, how intently and earnestly!

O Sirs, if you do not look to *Christ*, you will be lost, however well you may have attended to *me*. Now, you listen to each word I utter. But I pray you listen to the Word of God, the heavenly Father, who bids you repent and believe in His dear Son. For “except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” So said the Savior. And this, I say, makes the burden of the message, lest some of you should not receive it.

I cannot bear that one of you should die unforgiven. I look along these pews and I remember some of you a good many years ago. You were then in a hopeful state but you still have not received Christ. Most faithful *hearers* you have been, but you have not been *doers* of the word. Do not think that I charge you too severely. Have you repented and believed?

If not, woe is me that I should bear to you a message which will be a savor of death unto death unto you because you refuse it! For how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? When it has been freely proclaimed to us year after year, what will become of us if we reject it? Do not still refuse to come to Jesus! Do not make me a messenger of death to you. I implore you, receive the message of mercy and be saved.

And, then, it becomes a great burden to me to preach the Gospel when I think of what those lose who will not have it. That Heaven above—what tongue can describe it? What painter can ever picture it—the Heaven above—where all is love and joy and peace and everlasting blessedness? What if you should be shut out? What if against YOU, the door should be closed! There is no opening that door again, remember. Even though you stand and cry, “Lord, Lord!” yet will He not open it to you. May no one of us miss eternal felicity! May no one among us fall into eternal misery! But here lies the burden of the Lord—in the consequences of our ministry.

I remember walking out to preach near unto forty years ago, just when I began my witnessing for the Lord Jesus. As I trudged along with a somewhat older Brother, who was going to preach at another village station, our talk was about our work and he said to me, “Does it not strike you as a very solemn thing that we two local preachers are going to do the Lord’s work and much may depend even upon the very hymns we give out and the way in which we read them?” I thought of that and I prayed—and often do pray—that I may have the right hymn and the right chapter, as well as the right sermon.

Well do I remember a great sinner coming into Exeter Hall and I read the hymn beginning, “Jesus lover of my soul,” and that first line pierced him in the heart. He said to himself, “Does Jesus love *my* soul?” He wept because he had not loved the Savior in return. And he was brought to the Savior’s feet just by that one line of a hymn. It does make it the burden of the Lord when you see life, death and Hell and worlds to come, hanging, as it were, upon the breath of a mortal man, by whom God speaks to the souls of his fellows. This is serious burden-bearing. At least, I find it more and more so the longer I am engaged in it.

IV. But I pass on to notice one thing more now. It is often the burden of the Lord, because of THE WAY IN WHICH MEN TREAT THE WORD OF GOD.

Upon this I will be very brief. Some trifle with it. I was reading last night an account of how people are said to behave who go to Church. It was written by a canon. I dare say he knows. Certainly, some people who go to Nonconformist places are as bad. A servant was asked by her mistress about the sermon. She said it was a very good sermon. "Where was the text, Martha?" "Somewhere in the Bible, ma'am." "What was it about?"

She did not remember a word of it. One question after another is put to her. She tells her mistress that it was a very nice sermon but she really does not know what it was all about. And the writer goes on to say that a large proportion of our people go off at a tangent while we are talking and their minds are thinking about something else. I hope that it is not quite true of you tonight. A man once went to hear Mr. Whitefield. He was a shipbuilder and he said, "Oh, that man! I never heard such a preacher as that before. When I have been to other places, I have built a ship from stem to stern—laid the keel and put the mast in and finished it all up, while the parson has been preaching. But this time I was not able to lay a timber. He took me right away."

This preoccupation of human minds makes it such a burden when we are in earnest to reach the heart and win the soul. Our people are sitting here in body but they are far away in spirit. Yonder sits a good woman who is meditating as to how she shall leave her home, tomorrow, long enough to get to the shop to buy those clothes for the children. A gentleman here tonight wonders where he has left that diamond ring which he took off when he washed his hands. Do not let that bother you any more. Sell the stone and give the money away—then it will never trouble you again.

All sorts of cares come buzzing around your brains, when I am wanting them to be quite clear to consider holy subjects. Little pettifogging cares intrude and the preacher may speak his very soul out but it all goes for nothing. This makes our work the burden of the Lord.

Then there is another. It is the number of those who *do* hear, with considerable attention, but they forget all that they hear. The sermon is all done with when they have done hearing it. The last drop of dew is dried up when they get home. Nothing remains of that which cost the preacher so much thought and prayer. And is it not a hard thing to go on "pegging away and pegging away," and have done nothing? The preoccupied mind is a slate and we write on it. And then a sponge goes over it all and we have to write each word all over again.

Few would choose to roll the stone of Sisyphus, which always fell backward as fast as he laboriously heaved it up the hillside. We are willing to do even this for our Lord. But we are compelled to admit that it is burdensome toil. Poor, poor work with some of you. Ah, it is the burden of the Lord to deal with your souls!

Alas, there are some others that hear to ridicule. They pick out some mannerism, or mistake, or something odd about the speaker's language, and they carry this home and report it as raw material for fun. The preacher is in anguish to save a soul, and they are thinking about how he pronounces a word. Here is a man endeavoring to pluck sinners from the eternal burnings, and these very sinners are all the while thinking about how he moves his legs, or how he lifts his hand, or how he pronounces a certain syllable. Oh, it is sickening work—soul-sickening work! It is the "burden of the Word of the Lord," when our life or death message is received in that way.

But when it is received rightly, then are we in the seventh Heaven! Oh, well do I remember one night preaching three sermons, one after the other. And I think that I could have preached thirty, if time had held out. It was in a Welsh village, where I had gone into the Chapel and simply meant to expound the Scripture, while another Brother preached. He preached in Welsh and when it was done, the question was put whether Mr. Spurgeon would not preach. I had not come prepared but I did preach and there was a melting time. And then we sang a hymn. I think we sang one verse seven or eight times over—the people were all on fire.

The sound seemed to make the shingles dance on the top of the Chapel. When I had done, we asked those who were impressed to stop. They all stopped and so I had to preach again. And a second time they all stopped and I had to preach again. It got on to past eleven o'clock before they went away. Eighty-one came forward and joined the Churches afterwards.

It was but a few months before the terrible accident at Risca, [see Sermon #349, Volume 7] and many of those converted that night perished in the pit. God had sent His Spirit on that glorious night to save them, that they might be ready when He should call them Home.

It was grand work to preach, for they sucked in the word as babes take in milk. They took it into their hearts—it saved their souls. Would we had many such opportunities! And then the Word of the Lord would be no burden—but like the wings of a bird, would make us mount on high and joy would fill every heart!

V. And now I must not detain you. But I want to say, in the fifth place, the Word of the Lord is the greatest burden to the true teacher's heart, because he remembers that HE WILL HAVE TO GIVE AN ACCOUNT.

They are all down, those fifty-two Sabbaths. And those weeknight opportunities—they are all down in the heavenly record and the writing will be forthcoming when required. There will come a time when it will be said, "Preacher, give an account of your stewardship." And at the same time a voice will be heard, "Hearers, give an account of your stewardship, too." What a mercy it will be, if you and I together shall give our accounts with joy and not with grief! A mournful account will be unprofitable for you. What sort of sermons shall I wish I had preached when I come to die? What sort of sermons will you wish that you had heard when you lie on your last beds?

You will not wish that you had heard mere flimsy talk and clever speeches. Oh, no! You will say, as a dying man, "I bless God for weighty words, earnestly spoken, that were a blessing to my soul." I will say no more upon that, although it is the pressing point of the whole matter. Brethren, pray for the preacher. Brethren, pray for yourselves.

I have only these two or three practical words to say. We have to bear the burden of the Lord. But there was one, the Head of our confraternity, the great Lord of All true Gospel preachers, who bore a far heavier burden. "He His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." Preacher, Teacher, do you ever get weary? Look to Him as He bows beneath His Cross! Take up your burden cheerfully and follow after Jesus.

If this work is a burden, we also rejoice in One who can help us. There is One who can make the burden light, or strengthen the shoulder to bear the heavy yoke. Dear People, pray for us that this great Helper may enable us to bear the burden of His Word to your souls. Do not pray that it may not be a burden. Pray that it may be a burden that crushes your pastor to the very dust. God forbid that he should ever preach without its being a load to him! But pray that he may then be sustained under it. And for every true preacher of the Gospel pray the same prayer. If the Lord is with us we shall not faint but go from strength to strength.

Since it is a burden in itself, I ask you not to make it any heavier. Do not make it intolerable. Some add to it greatly and wantonly. Who are these? Well, I will tell you. Inconsistent professors. When people point to such-and-such a member of the Church and say, "That is your Christian!"—this makes our burden doubly oppressive. What a spoil it is to our testimony for Christ when outsiders can point to one and another and say, "That is how those Christians act!"

Do not plunge us in this sorrow. I do not know why I should be blamed for all the offenses of everybody that comes to hear me. Can I keep you *all* right? Are you like chessmen, that I can move at pleasure to any square on the board? I cannot be responsible for any *one* person—how can I be the guardian of *all*? Yet the preacher of God's Truth is held responsible by many for matters over which he has no power. And this injustice makes his burden heavy.

And, next, do not make our burden heavier by your silence. There was a man of God who had been a very distinguished preacher, and when he lay dying he was much troubled in his mind. He had been greatly admired and much followed.

He was a fine preacher of the classical sort and one said to him, "Well, my dear Sir, you must look back upon your ministry with great comfort." "Oh, dear!" said he, "I cannot. I cannot. If I knew that even one soul had been led to Christ and eternal life by my preaching I should feel far happier. But I have never heard of one."

What a sad, sad thing for a dying preacher! He died and was buried and there was a goodly company of people at the grave, for he was highly respected and deservedly so. One who heard him make that statement was standing at the grave and he noticed a gentleman in mourning, looking into the tomb and sobbing with deep emotion. He said to him, "Did you know this gentleman who has been buried?" He replied, "I never spoke to him in my life." "Then what is it that so affects you?" He said, "Sir, I owe my eternal salvation to him."

He had never told the minister this cheering news and the good man's deathbed was rendered dark by the silence of a soul that he had blessed. This was not right. A great many more may have found the Lord by his means but he did not know of them and was therefore in sore trouble. Do tell us when God blesses our word to you. Give all the glory to God, but give us the comfort of it. The Holy Spirit does the work, but if we are the means in his hands, do let us know it, and we will promise not to be proud. It is due to every preacher of Christ that if he has been blessed to the conversion of a soul

he should be allowed to see the fruit of his labors. And when he does not see it, it adds very sadly to “the burden of the Word of the Lord.”

Do you not think that you add to my burden, too, if you do not aid me in the Lord’s work? What a lot of idle Christians we have—Christian people who might sing, like mendicants in the street—

*“And got no work to do,
And got no work to do!”*

What a shameful chorus, when the world is dying for lack of true workers! There is a Sunday school—do you know it? “Oh, yes, we know there is one of those excellent institutions” connected with our place of worship. Did you ever visit it? Have you ever helped in it? There is an Evangelists’ Society and young men go out to preach. “Oh, dear!” you say, “I never thought of that.” Why do you not go out to preach yourself? Some of you could, if you would.

What are you doing? There are districts where there are tracts to be distributed. Do you know anything about house-to-house visitation? I speak to some who do nothing whatever, unless it is a little grumbling. I wonder whether we shall ever have a day such as the bees celebrate in its due season. You may, perhaps, have seen them dismissing the unproductive bees. It is a remarkable sight. They say to themselves, “Here are a lot of drones, eating our honey but never making any. Let us turn them out.” There is a dreadful buzz, is there not? But out they go.

I do not propose either to turn you out, or to make a buzz. But if ever those who do work for Christ should burn with a holy indignation against do-nothings, some of you will find the place too hot for you! I am sorrowfully afraid that it will thin my congregation and lessen the number of Church members. I have but little to complain of among my people.

But still, as there is a lazy corner in every village, there is the same in this community. You increase the burden of those who do work, if you are not working with them.

But the greatest increase of the burden comes from those who do not receive the Gospel at all. May there not be one such here tonight, but may everyone now look to Jesus and live! I shall close by asking you to sing the Gospel. Oh, that you may have it in your hearts! The final closing word is this—“There is life in a look at the Crucified One. There is life at this moment for you. Then look, Sinner—look unto Him and be saved—look unto Him who was nailed to the tree.” Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307