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DOERS OF THE WORD.

To persuade men even to hear the Word is a hard matter; we have much ado to get them within the sound of the Gospel. Many shrink even from this the lowest step of the ladder by which we mount to heaven. The first thing we have to contend with is an unwillingness to hear. Speak of this duty to those that neglect it, and they will have an excuse ready at hand. As regards Church, the weather, their clothes, the length of the service, the distance, a seat to their mind, their farm, their merchandise, something there is always in the way; they hope to be better soon, they have resolved to change—so they run on deceiving their own selves with such excuses for not hearing the Gospel preached as they will not dare to utter before the throne of God when they come to be judged at the last day. But let us take the case of those who hear. Is it all well now? nay, we have another form of deceit to meet; how much ends in hearing, how many are mere listeners and go away and do just those very things they have been charged to forsake, and leave undone those very things they were besought to fulfil. If there had been none such, there would have been no need of our Saviour's words; He knew what was in man when He gave us the exhortation, "Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only." He knew the deceitfulness of the heart of man; how disposed we are to lessen our measures of religious service, to relax His holy law, to deceive ourselves in our religious duties, to smooth down the

sharp edges of the Gospel law, and to sit in the shadow of the cross instead of taking it up. He knew that we should be tempted and should tempt ourselves to put the form of godliness for the power, to do the easier parts and leave the harder parts of Christian obedience undone. Hence came this exhortation, "Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only;" that is, first hear and then do; hear the Gospel for the sake of doing it, not for the sake of hearing it; carry out the Gospel into your daily life; do not stop at hearing; get forward beyond that; that is good, but it is only good as the beginning of godliness; do not content yourselves with feasting your ears on the blessed promises of God, nor with satisfying the appetite of your ears, nor with having strong feelings of devotion to Christ, nor with fair resolutions for your future life. In this way we may expand these words of our Lord. Our Saviour charges us to go forth instantly and to act as becometh children of light and heirs of heaven, to set ourselves to the high and sublime work of preparing ourselves for heaven in the midst of the common cares of our station and daily life. It is our Saviour Himself who counsels, now speaking from heaven, now looking down from heaven on us who have drunk of the Spirit of grace and tasted that the Lord is gracious. By God's help let us hear this counsel and keep it; add, brethren, good actions to good thoughts, doing to hearing, deeds to words, performance to promises, fulfilment of good desires to desires formed, habits of devotion to feelings of devotion. It is good for us that we came to hear, but we must guard against barren, unfruitful hearing. The Gospel is not a mere sound. It is designed to change our hearts, and our hearts should change our lives, God's Spirit helping us in that work. The more other men refuse

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to hear, the more must we not only hear but do, that the light of truth waste not utterly away, that the whole land may not become dim in heavenly things, and gross darkness cover the people. If there be many who sleep and are deaf, those that watch must watch all the more, lest they also be tempted to sleep like others, or lest by reason of so much unwatchfulness the Lord refuse to keep the city. It is high time for us all to become more holy in our lives, more like our Lord in all holy conversation and godliness, for we have all had our dull seasons, our careless days, our sleep, our unwatchful times, nay, our times of sin and wickedness, when we were almost without God in the world.

Few can say they have been growing in grace continually from their youth; that they have walked consistently all their lives in the fear and love of God. Of those who are now seeking to be saved, that they may be with Christ for ever and with the brethren who sleep in Christ, many were in times past, cold and deaf, dead and unconcerned. Their godliness is of recent growth, and though God hath quickened them with His Spirit and given them grace to turn from sin, yet think of the waste of His former gifts of grace, time, and health, that has taken place. It is high time, then, to make great growth in the things of God after those bare and unfruitful times, for our term of grace shortens; the Gospel is passing on; it will soon be preached in the ears of others and no more in ours. We are but strangers and sojourners, as all our fathers were; the world will not stop for us, nor the wheel of time cease to whirl. Our generation will not keep the world standing still till we have got rid of all our worldly cares, and till all is made smooth for the service of our Lord. Though we may each have

something now in our way which seems to hinder us from a more complete devotion of ourselves to Christ, think not, brethren, that whatever that hindrance be, we shall not have other hindrances, other cares, other pleasures, other interests, to choke up the way afresh between us and God when these are gone. We must not stand on the brink waiting for the river of worldly temptation to dry, that we may cross over dry-shod to God's side. Burst the bonds of present cares, be resolute and brave, quit yourselves like men. It will be no easier next year than this to overcome sin, to serve your Lord acceptably; the way is narrow now, it will be narrow then; nay, narrower and steeper and rougher still, for a year's idleness in the things of God weakens the spiritual man, unfits him for spiritual work, unnerves his hand, and the unpracticed arm, clumsy at its work, will shrink from all severity of toil. Think how many have been hearers of the Gospel in past time, and not doers, who were ever intending to do, and having visions of devotion and dreams of holiness and fair resolutions and deceiving purposes, and nothing at last to take before the throne of God but a multitude of barren wishes and unfulfilled intentions. Like the careless virgins they had lamps in their hands but no oil in their lamps, leaves but no fruit, the form of godliness but not the power, profession of the faith but not faithful practice, a full ear but empty hands, a store of truth in the head but a lack of holiness in the life. Felix heard, and trembled at the hearing of the Word; Agrippa heard, and was almost persuaded to be a Christian; Herod heard John the Baptist gladly and observed him; Judas both heard and preached the Gospel: yet what came of all that hearing? Other professing Christians, less marked with sin, have loved the sound of truth but served

the world, have gone on listening to the Book of God and exhortations agreeable to the same, without acting up to what that Book and those exhortations teach; having their devout thoughts and stirrings of conscience, and yet letting their passions rule, clinging to their favourite sins, making no hearty efforts for victory over sin, easily drawn aside by evil companions or entangled in their old ways. O the thousands that have been lost that thought to be saved, the thousands that are lost who were all their lives purposing to be Christ's but ended in being the world's, that have gone forth without fruit of real living faith to lay before Christ at the day of judgment, though they were always exhorted to seek the Lord while He might be found, and though they were ever intending to be doers of the Word before their deaths! If the spirits of the dead could come back and speak to us on earth, the spirits of those who were always hearing without doing, with what an intense earnestness would they beseech us who as yet can do the Word as well as hear, instantly to give ourselves with all the energy of a resolute and devoted will to the work of Christ! with what passionate pleadings would they press us not to waste any more this short hurrying life in mere intentions to be Christ's, but now at once and without delay to break the bonds asunder that separate us from Him; and at once to enter upon a "godly, righteous, and sober life!" They cannot speak; but we have Moses and the prophets, nay, we have Christ and the Apostles. The voice of Christ is heard amongst us, though the voice of the dead is not suffered to rise up; the voice of Christ our future Judge, who knoweth what He will require in the judgment, tells us what He will require. Our Judge Himself forewarns us what witnesses we must bring before Him

at our trial if we would escape the fiery indignation that will devour His adversaries. "Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves;" He shows us to what manner of self-deceit we are exposed. He now bids us mortify our sins, purify our lives, cleanse our consciences, resist our lusts, deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and thus to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

And think, brethren, how great this word is which we have to do, really to become more and more like our blessed Lord; to purify ourselves even as He is pure, to strive for a sort of angelic and heavenly state of soul which even the appearance of evil would disturb. When we think of those words that the pure in heart shall see God, and then consider all the impurities of our thoughts, all our angers and all our acts of selfishness, all our harshness of speech, all our love of worldly opinion, and all our hot and eager interest in worldly things, we feel how far we are from that gentle, unselfish, holy, guileless mind which becomes men who are waiting for Christ, and are called by Him "the children of light." Who after all is equipped for heaven? In whom is heaven beginning now and the light breaking through? Who is weary of the world and longing to pass away and crying out like St. John, "Come, Lord Jesus," and wishing that he had the wings of a dove that he might flee away and be at rest? So cold are we and earthy and full of worldly ways, worldly habits, and worldly views, that we cling to the world and could not say we are longing for Christ to come. And yet how soon our change may come! How soon all these scenes may swim before our eyes and our homes pass from our sight, and friends' faces, and the speech of

men and the bustle of the world, farms, fields, and all that makes up the scene of human life, how very soon may all have vanished as a dream when one awaketh! He, who is gone from us into heaven, beseeches us to prepare for that day. He wants us to watch for that coming. He tells us how to watch; He helps us with His Spirit, when we desire to consecrate our lives to Him; He accepts our prayers when we try to pray; and leads us mercifully on, and is gentle with us when we turn to a holy life. He gives us peace and lightness of heart as a present reward for doing His will. What more can He do? He is sparing us for our good; He has borne with us and with our sin; He has lifted us up when we have fallen; He has comforted us in our sorrows; He has refreshed us in our repentances, and succoured us in our need. When our father and mother forsake us, He taketh us up; when our friends fail or when they die, He that never faileth and never dies is our friend instead; when our worldly means lessen, He is our riches; when we are sick he is our comforter; when we desire to do good it is by the inspiration of His Spirit; when we do good He helps us in the work.

Give, then, yourself to your Lord; give yourself afresh; you owe Him all things, and He has done all things for you that partake of good; every good gift and every perfect gift is from His bountiful hand. Turn not away from Him; seek not your own way; befriend yourself by being the friend of Christ. Follow not evil ways; tear not yourself out of your Saviour's hands, who has apprehended you for your good, and whose prisoner you are, that you may have His recompense of reward. Yield your neck to His blessed yoke; be not wanton and self-willed; neither be a mere talker of religion. Do not say

"Sir, I go," without going. Do not hear a command from God without fulfilling it: but cast yourself at once, thoroughly and with all your heart, into the way of obedience and of active service for your Lord. Prove yourself a soldier, not by having a soldier's name and a soldier's dress, not by using soldiers' words and talking like a man of war, but by quitting yourself like a man in the field of battle. God will defend you as with a shield; God will help you and that right early.

"LORD, REMEMBER ME."

O Thou, from Whom all goodness flows,
I lift my soul to Thee;
In all my sorrows, conflicts, woes,
Good Lord, remember me.

If on my aching, burdened heart,
My sins lie heavily,
Thy pardon grant, Thy peace impart;
Good Lord, remember me.

If trials sore obstruct my way,
And ills I can not flee,
Then let my strength be as my day;
Good Lord, remember me.

If, worn with pain, disease, and grief,
This feeble frame should be,
Grant patience, rest, and kind relief;
Good Lord, remember me.

And oh! when, in the hour of death,
I bow to Thy decree,
Jesus receive my parting breath;
Good Lord, remember me.—Amen.

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