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B & H Editorial Staff's "Prayer: Selections from Spurgeon's Library" (book review)

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Book Review



B & H Editorial Staff. (Eds.). (2018). *Prayer: Selections from Spurgeon's Library*. Nashville, TN: B & H Academic. 176pp. ISBN 9781535937580

B & H Editorial Staff. (Eds.). (2018). *Suffering: Selections from Spurgeon's Library*. Nashville, TN: B & H Academic. 160pp. ISBN 9781535937566

You will neither suffer nor plead with prayer to get through these two books that give background to the reading and thought of the Prince of Preachers.

Charles Spurgeon was the great Victorian pastor of Metropolitan Tabernacle in London (1854–92). His writings and sermons fill 150 volumes. The titles of these twin texts might lead one to believe that you are reading selections from the works of Spurgeon himself. That is not the case. You are reading selections from the 12,000 books amassed by Spurgeon and used as the resource for his writing and preaching. He is said to have read six books a week (librarians and bibliophiles, you may need to pray for deliverance from coveting!) These books are anthologies harvested from his personal theological library.

The series is a production of B & H Academic publishing and the resources and labor of the Spurgeon Center at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Seminary President Dr. Josh Allen writes the introductions to both books – the introductions being only slightly modified for each text. Short biographies reference all the authors selected – which tend to be Puritan Divines of the Reformed, Congregational, and Anglican Traditions.

The book on prayer has readings from James Hamilton (1814–1867), a Scottish minister and author; William Paley (1743–1805), a minister, apologist, and philosopher famous for the “watchmaker analogy” regarding God’s creative design; Thomas Boston (1676–1732), a moderate Calvinist; William Jay (1769–1853), a non-conformist revivalist; Isaac Barrow (1630–1677), a theologian and mathematician who taught Isaac Newton; and Robert Hawker (1753–1827), an Anglican Priest, preacher, and social activist.

The book on suffering contains readings from John Willison (1680–1750), a Church of England minister and author of *The Afflicted Man's Companion*; Ralph Erskine (1685–1752) Scottish churchman and gospel sonneteer; John Owen (1616–1683)

Congregationalist pastor and chaplain to Oliver Cromwell; Robert Leighton (1611-1684) Church of Scotland minister; George Smalridge (1662-1719) Anglican Bishop of Bristol.

The writers of these eras, even anthologized, offer deep slow reading. But the relative shortness of the selections and the compact nature of the book give modern readers a taste for writers known for their piety and deep logic on life's difficulties. Says Willison: "You have cause, O Believer, to bless God, that all the afflictions he brings on you are in love." A Scripture index, as well as a Name and Subject Index make it a usable book for theological referencing.

Pastors, Teachers, Students, Seminarians, and Spurgeon Fans will find these books helpful. They offer an introduction to the mind and heart of Spurgeon as well as a door to the theologians who shaped his ministry – and might hopefully, shape ours.

Reviewer

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