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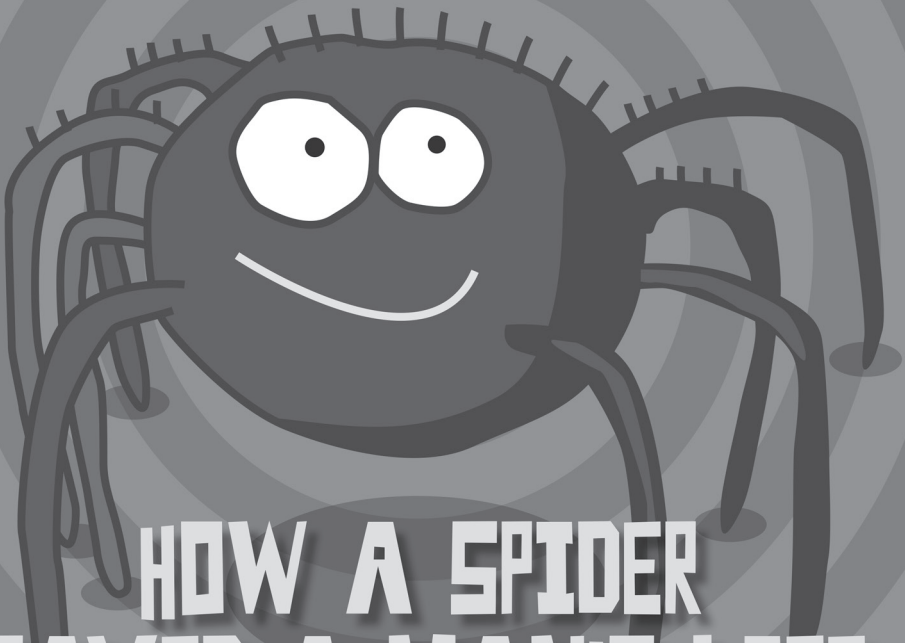


52

SPURGEON


STORIES for CHILDREN

BOOK I




**HOW A SPIDER
SAVED A MAN'S LIFE
AND 51 OTHER GREAT STORIES**


DayOne



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Introduction



Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born in 1834, and he died in 1892. After he was converted at the age of fifteen, the Lord used him a great deal. During his long ministry in London many people came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord. No one else in history up to that time had kept such a large congregation for such a long time.

Here are some stories about him. Each one has a Bible reference, so that you can learn more about the Lord Jesus Christ and God's will.



1

The Devil Doesn't Want Us to Pray



“Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

James 4:7

When Spurgeon was quite young, he very often stayed with his grandparents who were called James and Sarah Spurgeon. First I want to tell you some true stories about his grandfather.


James lived in Essex when he was young, and there was a wood near his home called Honeywood Park. In this wood there was an oak tree, and one day he was under this tree thinking of his life and of God, and he knew that his sins needed to be forgiven and he needed to be right with God. So there, under that tree, James turned from his sins and trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ. That oak tree, the place where he became a Christian, became a very precious place to James, and there he would often go to praise and pray to God.

Have you ever had a horrible dream, a nightmare? Well, that is what happened to James one night. The next day he had to go through the wood on a journey, but in his dream the devil had threatened to tear him in pieces if he dared to go to that tree in the wood and pray to God. The devil had suggested that James should go by another route, through a farmyard, and not go to the tree and pray.

James woke up and thought to himself, “I don’t know if that was just a silly dream or a temptation from Satan, but anyhow I will go there and pray.”

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So the next day he went on his journey, and he got to a stile, and there he had to decide—would he go through the wood and to the tree and pray, or would he go the other way through the farmyard? He was a little frightened. Better take the farmyard path! But no, that would be yielding to Satan! So he went towards the wood and the tree. And, of course, he was quite safe. He said in his heart, “Ah cowardly devil! You threatened to tear me in pieces and now you do not dare to show your face!”

James spent a while in praise and prayer. Just as he was about to go he looked on the ground and saw a large solid gold ring, as big as a curtain ring! He picked it up, and later when he got home he tried to find out who it belonged to, but no one knew and no one claimed it. So he was able to keep it, and later on he had it made into a wedding ring when he married. And every year on the date of his conversion James would go to that tree, and thank the Lord. The Lord had saved him, helped him to overcome the temptation of Satan, and given him a gold ring!

The devil doesn't want us to pray, and he will do whatever he can to stop us praying. But we ought to pray. We have so much to praise and thank God for, and so many things to ask Him for. James found out the truth of *James 4:7*: “*Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*”

What Do You Think About in Church?




“Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears.”

(1 Samuel 3:9)

I wonder what you think about when you are in church, or maybe at Sunday School? We should be thinking about what God is saying to us through His Word, the Bible, but sometimes our minds wander and we think of all kinds of things—what we will eat when we get home, what we will be doing in the coming week, about our friends—so many things!

Spurgeon’s grandfather, James, became the pastor of a church, and one day he was in the pulpit conducting the service when he started thinking of the manse in which he lived—a manse is the house where a pastor lives. This manse had a brick floor, and every now and again sand was put on the floor so that the floor was not too rough. He thought about the place where the sand was kept, and he thought that really it ought to be boarded-in so that it was not a danger to anyone. And then he suddenly realized what he was doing! Conducting a worship meeting and thinking about the manse and sand! He thought to himself, “What business has the devil to make me think about the sand on a Sunday, and in the pulpit too! It shall not be boarded-in at all! I will let the devil see that he shall not have his way with me!”

We thought in the last story of how the devil doesn’t want you to pray—that is to speak to God. He doesn’t want you to



listen to God speaking to you either. When you are in church he will try to put other thoughts in your mind. Ask the Lord to help you to concentrate on what He is saying to you. If you were in the presence of the Queen, and she spoke to you, you would try to listen very carefully. But when Christians meet in church in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, He keeps His promise and is there. We ought to listen very carefully to what He says when the Bible is being explained. A good prayer to pray as you prepare for every church service is the one that old Eli the priest taught young Samuel, “*Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears*” (1 Samuel 3:9).





3

Every Little Helps



“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper...”

(1 Corinthians 16:2)

James became the pastor of a church in Stambourne, which is in Essex in the South of England, and he was the pastor there for 54 years! That is a long time! The New Testament tells us that usually in local churches there should be pastors or elders and also deacons. We call them the officers of the church. Do you know who the officers are in the church you go to?

Well, one of the deacons in James' church died, and so James went to visit his widow. Sadly, she was very ill, and had spent a lot of her life ill in bed. James talked with her, and she told him something that really concerned her—her lack of money. In fact, she hadn't enough money to pay the rent, and if, because of this, she had to move, how could she manage, and where would she go?

The deacon's widow was certainly in need. How could James help her? He thought about his own money, but he just didn't have enough to pay her rent. By then, he had a large family—eight children to look after—so he couldn't help. Then he thought about the money his church had, but he knew that the church didn't have enough money either. Most of the members were very poor themselves, and especially just then church funds were very low. So what could be done?

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James had an idea. He went to all the members of his family and all the members of the congregation of the church and told them about the widow's need. Then he asked each one to glean—or take from the fields around—just one handful of corn. And that is what they did, all 600 of them! 600 handfuls of corn! When it was all put together, and was sold, and the poor widow's rent was paid, there was quite a bit of extra money left over which was also given to her. I'm sure she was very thankful—to all those 600 people, to James, and especially to the Lord.

You might feel that you haven't got much money to give to the Lord's work and to help those in need, but you may have heard of this saying, "Every little helps!" More importantly, the Bible says, "*On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper...*" (1 Corinthians 16:2). Notice what it says: "as he may prosper." That means that Christians should give according to how much they have. And the Lord loves a cheerful giver!

God Will Supply Our Needs if We Trust Him



*“And my God shall supply all your need according
to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”
(Philippians 4:19)*

So James had eight children, and he didn't have much money, but he and Sarah, his wife, and the eight children needed to eat, and growing children need a lot to eat! What could he do?

The area around was quite rural, which means there was a lot of land and farms nearby. So James grew vegetables on a few acres of ground. But what could the family drink? Milk is very good, so James got a cow, and so the family had something to drink. The family got by, although it wasn't easy.

One day James went out to milk the cow, and it suddenly fell down and died! James went back home and told Sarah the sad news, and she said, “James, how will God provide for the dear children? What shall we do for milk?” He replied, “God has said that He will provide, and I believe that He could send us fifty cows if He please!”

The death of the cow was bad news for the family, but the next day there was more bad news. The postman called with a letter for which there was nine pence to pay before they could open it. It so happened that Sarah had nine pence, but

she wasn't very pleased to have to part with it. But can you imagine their surprise and joy when, on opening the letter, they found twenty pounds inside! Twenty pounds was a lot of money in those days. That wasn't bad, was it, paying nine pence for twenty pounds?

What had happened was this. The day before (the day that the cow died) a committee of Christians met in London. They were responsible for giving out money to poor pastors. After a while they had decided which of the pastors who had asked for money should receive it. James hadn't told any of them of his need. One of the committee members asked, "How much is there left?" "Five pounds," was the answer. "What shall we do with it?" One man said, "Well, there is a Mr. Spurgeon down at Stambourne, in Essex, a poor minister, who needs some help." Someone else said, "Oh, don't send him five pounds! I will put five pounds to it." Someone else said, "No, don't send him ten pounds! I will give five pounds if someone else will add another five pounds, and make it twenty!" And that is how James and his family received twenty pounds, just when they needed it!

When James saw the twenty pounds he said to Sarah, "Now, can't you trust God about an old cow?" When Spurgeon told this story much later, he said that if James, his grandfather, was still alive he would say, "I did find Him a faithful God!"

We, too, will find Him a faithful God if we trust Him. His promise to those who love Him is "*And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus*" (*Philippians 4:19*).



5

Catching a Fly!



“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

(John 10:10)

Now for some true stories about Spurgeon himself. He was born in 1834 in a village called Kelvedon in Essex. If you are ever in that area, you could find the house in the High Street where he was born, and you will see a blue plaque on the wall. One day when he was at home and he was still quite young, he happened to look at the window, and he saw something on the window pane. It was a fly! He thought to himself, “I’ll catch it!”

Have you ever tried to catch a fly? If you have you will know that it flies away very quickly! Spurgeon knew this too, so he went towards the window, very carefully, very quietly. Just before he got to the window he cupped his hands, and quickly put them on the window pane, and then brought his hands together. “I’ve got it!” he thought to himself. He took his hands away from the window, and opened them just a little so that he could look at the fly he had caught. But it wasn’t there! He looked back at the window, and there was the fly still on the pane. He couldn’t understand how he could have missed it, but he thought that he would try again. So carefully, quietly, he went to the window; carefully, quietly he cupped his hands, and carefully, quietly, brought them together again. This time he must have caught the fly! But



when he looked, the fly still wasn't in his hands! And when he looked at the window, there was the fly!

Spurgeon couldn't understand it ... until he realized that the fly was on the *outside* of the window pane, not on the inside! No wonder he couldn't catch it!

Later on, Spurgeon saw that many people are like that, and I'll tell you how.

What do people want from life? They want to be happy, to have peace deep in their hearts, they want to know that they are loved, and they don't want to feel guilty because of the wrong things they have done. But they try to get these things from anyone but the Lord Jesus Christ. They are trying to get what they want and need on the wrong side of the window! You can only get these things when you are on the side of Jesus, when you have trusted in Him. On the wrong side of the window you won't get what you need—on the right side of the window, where the Lord Jesus is, you will get what you need in life. Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly"* (John 10:10).

Read Only Good Books



“Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report ... meditate on these things.”

(Philippians 4:8)

Do you like reading? Spurgeon from an early age loved to read! He spent some of his early years living with his grandparents, James and Sarah, in the manse at Stambourne. One of the rooms in the manse was small and dark. Can you guess why it was so dark? Because there were no windows in it! There was a reason for this. In those days people had to pay tax for each window in a house, so what people did to pay less tax was to brick up as many windows as they could! Have a look at some very old houses when you go out for a walk, and see if you can see any bricked-up windows.

James kept in this dark room many of his books, especially big books written by some of the Puritans, who were Christians who loved the Bible and who lived many years before. Young Spurgeon loved to go into this dark room, and look at the books there. Some of these books were so big and heavy that he could hardly lift them up and carry them. Sometimes, struggling to carry them, he would take them into another room and read them by the light of the fire. Among the books he read were *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel

Defoe, *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan, and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*.

One day he read a book that wasn't in the manse at Stambourne. A friend lent him a book entitled *Spanish Bullfights*. His parents, John and Eliza, found out that he had read it, and they punished him, because they realized that it was not a good book to read. It was all about cruelty to bulls. Spurgeon soon after said to one of his sisters, "They were right to punish me, for I should like to forget even the half I read in the book, but I cannot. It sticks like glue! Bad books are a terrible thing."

Spurgeon was right—bad books are a terrible thing, and it is almost impossible to forget some of the things we read. The best thing is to read good books, and especially the Bible. "The best book to read is the Bible." Here is what the Bible says about the things that we should think about, "*Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report ... meditate on these things*" (*Philippians 4:8*).

An Apple in a Bottle




*“Remember now your Creator in the days of
your youth, before the difficult days come.”*

(Ecclesiastes 12:1)

When Spurgeon was still quite young and was staying with his grandparents at Stambourne, he found many interesting things there in the manse. One thing that especially fascinated him stood on a shelf in the parlour. It was a bottle, and in the bottle was a large apple. The bottle had a narrow neck, and Spurgeon couldn't understand how the large apple got into the bottle through such a narrow neck. He thought about it, and puzzled over it, but still couldn't see how it could have got there. He had to find out!


One day Spurgeon asked his grandfather, James, how the apple got into the bottle. “Find out!” said James. Spurgeon then asked his grandmother, Sarah, and she said, “Find out!” He went back to the bottle to examine it. He looked for any joins or marks where it might have been put together around the apple, but he couldn't see any. So he asked his grandfather again, but got the same reply, “Find out!”

He went back to the bottle, and, thinking that it might help him, he put on his grandmother's glasses. He looked very carefully into the bottle to see if the apple had been put there in sections, but, no, it was quite whole. Spurgeon just couldn't work it out. Have you any idea? How could that large apple have got into the bottle?



One day Spurgeon was walking in the manse garden, and he saw an apple tree. He looked closer, and saw a bottle tied on to one of the branches, and a tiny apple growing inside the bottle! Now he had discovered the secret! He ran into the house, saying, “Now I know how that big apple got into the bottle—it grew inside!”

Spurgeon’s grandfather took him on his knee, and said, “I want you always to remember that the Sunday School and the church are like this bottle—they shield many who enter them while they are growing from a cruel, cold world, and from many temptations.” The little apple grew in the bottle, and the bottle kept it from the frost while it grew, so if you are able to go to Sunday School or church, and you listen well, and obey God, you will be kept from many bad things and temptations. It is an important time in your life while you are growing. The Bible says, “*Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come*” (*Ecclesiastes 12:1*).





8

The Story of a Spider



*“And the LORD shall help them and deliver them;
He shall deliver them from the wicked, and
save them, because they trust in Him.”*

(Psalm 37:40)

I'm sure that you like to listen to an interesting story—even better if it's exciting! Young Spurgeon certainly did. He was sitting on his grandfather's knee one day, and James told him this true story, and it all happened in the town where they were, in Stambourne.

Many years before a man called Havers lived there, and he was a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a difficult time for Christians then, and they were often persecuted and arrested and put in prison. One day someone heard that Havers was going to be arrested, and told him about it. He hid in a malt-house, a place where beer was made. He found an empty kiln, which is like a large oven, so he hid in there.

There was not much to look at in this dark kiln, but he did notice a spider. He watched as the spider went to the narrow opening into the kiln, and fixed the first line of a web across the entrance. It was fascinating watching the spider weave his web, crossing and re-crossing the entrance. Havers quite forgot about the danger he was in! He thought of how great and wise God is to have made a spider who could weave such a beautiful web.

But then he heard the men who had come to arrest him.

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They came into the malt-house. Surely they would find him! One of them came over to the kiln where he was hiding. He was going to be caught! But then he heard the man say, "It's no use to look in there. The old villain can never be in there! Look at that spider's web. He could never have got in there without breaking it!" The men who had come to arrest Havers left, and he escaped.

It is sad that those who love and follow the Lord are sometime persecuted. That happened in Old Testament times, and in the New Testament as well, and ever since. Many Christians have been put in prison or even martyred because of their faith and obedience. Still today in some parts of the world Christians face this danger, and even in our own country it is often difficult to live the Christian life and to please the Lord. Whatever happens to the Christian, the Lord will look after him, maybe in an amazing way, as Havers found out, or maybe by giving him the help he needs to suffer for the Lord, or maybe by taking him straight to heaven! The Lord knows what is best for all His children. Havers might well have read this verse, and said, "Amen!" after it—"*And the LORD shall help them and deliver them; He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him*" (Psalm 37:40).

How Young Spurgeon Made Some Money



*“Your word I have hidden in my heart,
that I might not sin against You.”*


(Psalm 119:11)

One day Spurgeon’s grandmother, Sarah, thought that it would be a good idea for him to memorize some hymns, but how could she get him to do it? This is what she did: she offered him a shilling for every hymn he could correctly repeat from memory. At once he started memorizing hymns, and he did so so quickly that soon Sarah said to him, “Charlie, I see the danger of becoming bankrupt (which means having no more money left!), and I must reduce the price to a penny a dozen.” Even at this price Spurgeon memorized almost all of Isaac Watts’ hymns.

Can you guess how many hymns Isaac Watts wrote? About 600! See if you can find one of his hymns. I don’t know how many of those 600 Spurgeon memorized, but it must have been a lot!

But then, quite suddenly, Spurgeon stopped memorizing hymns, and you would never guess why.

Stambourne was a rural area, which means that it wasn’t a big town or city. Near the manse where Spurgeon’s grandparents lived was a farm. I’m sure you have seen a farm, and maybe been on a farm. You might see sheep and cows



and pigs on a farm, but on this farm there were other animals that the farmer didn't want there. They were rats! Because the farm was so near the manse, the rats came near the manse, and probably in the manse sometimes! Spurgeon's grandfather, James, didn't like this at all, so he had an idea. He offered Spurgeon a shilling a dozen for all the rats he could catch. Spurgeon thought to himself, "A shilling a dozen for rats is better than a penny a dozen for remembering hymns—and quicker too!" So he stopped memorizing hymns and started catching rats! He caught so many that he got quite a lot of money!

When you are a little older you can read some of Spurgeon's sermons, and when you do you will see that he often quotes verses from hymns. In most cases these were hymns he learnt when he was a boy. Much later in life he said, "No matter on what subject I preach, I can now, in the middle of any sermon, quote some verse of a hymn in harmony with the subject. The hymns have remained with me, while those old rats have passed away, and the shillings I earned by them have been spent long ago."

When he was grown up, Spurgeon was often unwell, and especially then he was comforted by the hymns he learnt when he was a boy.

Why don't you memorize some hymns? Better still, try to memorize some verses from the Bible, too. These will be a help to you now, and later in life as well. The Psalmist in the longest Psalm of all wrote, "*Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You*" (Psalm 119:11).



10

Old Roads



“What are you doing here, Elijah?”

(1 Kings 19:9)


James, Spurgeon’s grandfather, was the pastor of a church in Stambourne, and when Spurgeon was quite young, not yet six years old, he heard about an elderly man called Roads who came to the church, but who caused James a lot of sorrow. Roads claimed to be a Christian, and was a member of the church, yet often he went to the local pub, drinking and smoking with very ungodly people. Spurgeon could see how sad this made James, and he also saw that this was not how a true Christian should act.

One day Spurgeon astonished James by saying, “I’ll kill old Roads, that I will!” James told Spurgeon that he mustn’t do anything wrong, and if he did the police would come and arrest him. But Spurgeon very seriously repeated that he would kill Roads, though he would not do anything wrong.


Not long afterwards Spurgeon came into James’ room, saying, “I’ve killed old Roads! He’ll never grieve my dear grandpa any more!” James by now was very worried. He said, “My dear child, whatever have you done?” Spurgeon replied, “I haven’t been doing any harm, grandpa! I’ve been about the Lord’s work, that’s all.” And he wouldn’t say any more. James couldn’t imagine what Spurgeon had done.

Before long there was a knock at the door, and there on the doorstep stood old Roads. At least he was still alive! This






is what he told James, “I was a-sitting in the pub having my pipe and mug of beer when that child comes in—to think an old man like me should be reproved by a bit of a child like that! Well, he points at me with his finger, just so, and says, ‘*What are you doing here, Elijah?*’—and you a member of the church and breaking your pastor’s heart! I’m ashamed of you! I wouldn’t break my pastor’s heart, I’m sure!’ And then he walks away. Well, I did feel angry, but I knew it was all true and I was guilty. So I put down my pipe, and did not touch my beer, but hurried away to a lonely spot and cast myself down before the Lord confessing my sin and begging for forgiveness. And I do know and believe the Lord in mercy pardoned me. And now I’ve come to ask you to forgive me, and I’ll never grieve you any more, my dear pastor.” James was so pleased to hear this.



Roads was as good as his word, and from then on he lived a godly life, attending church and serving the Lord—and it was all because young Spurgeon went to him, and reproved him, and quoted words which the Lord said to Elijah in *1 Kings 19:9*.



Some things a Christian must not do because they are sinful. Some places are places of sin, so we should avoid them. Some people are so ungodly that they would try to make us stop following the Lord Jesus. Old Roads learnt that, and it is a lesson we all need to learn.



Prayers or Potatoes



“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”

(Mark 8:36)

Spurgeon’s grandfather, James, lived in the manse, and behind the manse was a very nice garden, with a long hedge and a grassed area, looking out on to fields. For many years the different pastors of the church had walked in this garden, and prayed there, and meditated there on the truths of the Bible. That is what James also did. Up and down he would walk when preparing a sermon, thinking about God’s Word, and praying that the Lord would help him. Every Sunday, if the weather was good, he would spend half an hour there before preaching. Young Spurgeon was told not to go into the garden when James was praying and meditating there.

It is good to not only read the Bible, but think about what it says. We can ask the Lord to help us to understand it, and how it applies to us.

One day Spurgeon overheard a farmer say something about the manse garden which shocked and horrified him. The farmer said, “It would grow many ’taters if it wor ploughed up!” I’m sure that was true. If the garden was ploughed up, there would be a lot of room to grow potatoes and other vegetables. But the farmer was thinking only on



a worldly level. But I'm sure James knew there are more important things than growing potatoes!

It is easy for us to think only about material and physical and worldly things, and easy for us to forget spiritual and eternal things. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "*For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?*" (*Mark 8:36*). You have a body, and you have a soul as well—in fact your soul is the real you. Your body will only last for a number of years, but your soul will last for ever. Your body needs food, and so does your soul—it needs the Word of God.



Mustardy Tea!



“So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.”

(Nehemiah 8:8)

One day when Spurgeon was living with his parents he was given a basket and told to go to the local shop and buy a pound of tea, a quarter of a pound of mustard, and three pounds of rice. Today if you go to a shop usually the food will already be in sealed plastic bags, but in those days what you bought would often be put in loose in paper bags. Spurgeon went to the shop and bought the tea, mustard and rice, all in separate bags, and put all three bags in the basket.

On his way home he saw something which to him at that young age was very exciting—he saw people on horseback fox-hunting, with their pack of hounds. Fox-hunting is very cruel, but to Spurgeon it was so exciting that whenever he saw the horses and hounds he would try to follow them. The horses would jump over hedges, the men would blow their horns, and the dogs would bark and run very fast. So Spurgeon, with his basket with the tea and mustard and rice, ran after them as best as he could, through hedges and over ditches! What happened to the poor fox I don't know, but eventually Spurgeon got home—and then he looked in the basket. The tea and mustard and rice were still there—but

they were all mixed up, and no good at all! I don't suppose his mother was very pleased, do you?

Later in life Spurgeon told this story, and he saw in it a lesson about sermons. He thought that sermons ought to have points, so that the people listening could think of *this* first, *then* that, and *then* the other, just like the tea ought to have been kept separate from the mustard, and the mustard kept separate from the rice. He said, "People will not drink mustardy tea, nor will they enjoy muddled-up sermons."

When people go to church they ought to pray for the preacher, because he needs the Lord's help to explain the meaning of the Bible clearly. When you go to church next time ask the Lord to help you to understand the sermon. Think of the verse or passage in the Bible that is being talked about. Try to remember or even write down the main points of the sermon. In that way you will learn more about the Lord, more about yourself, and more about how to please Him.

Many years ago the people of Israel heard Ezra read God's Word, and others were there to help the people understand. The Bible says, "*So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading*" (*Nehemiah 8:8*). A little later we are told that the people rejoiced greatly, because they understood the words that they had heard (verse 12). It is good to hear the Word of God and to understand it.

Alphabet Verses

*“Behold! The Lamb of God Who takes
away the sin of the world!”*

(John 1:29)

Spurgeon had one brother and six sisters! Can you imagine that? In fact, his parents had seventeen children altogether, but sadly nine of them died when they were still babies. That often used to happen in those days, so today we should be very thankful for doctors and hospitals and medicine. But can you imagine being in a family of eight children! What did they all do in the evenings? In those days there were no radios or televisions or computers. So what did they do? Well, I can tell you of one thing that they did.

Sometimes in the evening they would all sit round the fire, and try to repeat in turn in alphabetical order a verse of a hymn! Spurgeon himself was best at this, because he was the eldest of the eight children, and also because he had a very good memory. It was said that he could repeat a verse from a hymn going all the way through the alphabet. Can you find a verse beginning with the letter Q? Or how about Z? You might find some, but I couldn’t find one beginning with the letter X—maybe they were allowed to cheat just a little, because there are some hymn verses that begin with Ex, like “Exalt Thy precious Name,” or, “Expecting I may some day come.” At least they sound like the letter X, don’t they?

One of Spurgeon’s sisters was always pleased when they

got to the letter N. She knew that his favourite verse began with that letter, and she would always ask that he should say it, even if it was not his turn. This was the verse he would quote:

Now will I tell to sinners 'round
What a dear Saviour I have found!
I'll point to Thy redeeming blood,
And say 'Behold the way to God!'

Spurgeon would not only repeat the verse, he would also do something. He would always lift up his finger when he got to the word “point.”

If you see any photos of Spurgeon taken later in life, you might see that he is shown with his finger pointing, just as he used to do when he was a young lad sitting round the fire with his family. Maybe John the Baptist pointed with his finger to the Lord Jesus Christ when he said, “*Behold! The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!*” (*John 1:29*). Certainly later in life Spurgeon pointed people away from himself and away from other things to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what all the Lord’s people ought to do.

Spurgeon Gets into Debt



“Owe no one anything.”

(Romans 13:8)

Spurgeon was attending his first school, and he was six years old. He had to take his own pencils to school, but he was always losing them! How easy to lose things! This particular day he just couldn’t find any of his pencils. He had lost them all! He was too frightened to go to school without a pencil, and too frightened to tell his parents that he had lost them all. So what could he do?

In the village where he lived there was a shop which sold all kinds of things—nuts, cakes, balls—almost anything, including pencils. But Spurgeon still had a problem—he had no money!

He had been in the shop many times before, and he knew that sometimes the old lady who owned the shop let boys and girls have what they wanted, and because they didn’t have any money at the time, she would let them pay her later. He thought to himself, “Christmas is coming soon, and I’m sure that then I will be given some money—so I could ask for a pencil now, and pay for it later.” So he went into the shop, feeling a little uneasy, and asked the lady, and she agreed. He was able to go to school with a pencil.

Spurgeon was now in debt. He owed a farthing (see if you can find out what a farthing is, or, better still, ask maybe your

grandparents if they still have one, and have a look at it). And in his heart he wasn't at all happy about it.

How Spurgeon's father, John, heard of it I don't know, but he did find out how Spurgeon got his pencil, and he wasn't pleased. He gave Spurgeon a good telling-off. He said that many people ruined their lives by getting into debt, and how a boy who owed a farthing might one day owe £100, which was a lot of money in those days, and go to prison and bring his family into disgrace. Then John marched Spurgeon off to the shop, with Spurgeon crying bitterly all the way, feeling dreadfully ashamed because he thought that everybody in the village knew that he was in debt. John paid the lady the farthing, but it was a lesson Spurgeon never forgot.

We all ought to avoid getting into debt, owing money to people. If you want to buy something, then save up your money until you've got enough to buy it. The Bible says, "*Owe no one anything*" (Romans 13:8).

Top or Bottom of the Class?




“A wise man will hear and increase learning.”

(Proverbs 1:5)

As Spurgeon grew, he went to a school for older children. He got on very well there, and was soon top of the class! But as time went by, he didn't do so well at his studies, and then he got to be bottom of his class! His teacher couldn't understand this, especially because he thought that Spurgeon was quite clever, and also because Spurgeon didn't seem to make any effort to do any better. In fact, he seemed quite content to be the dunce of the class!

Why did Spurgeon move from being top of the class to bottom, and why didn't he seem to care? You would never guess, and at first the teacher couldn't work it out either.

In those days, in Spurgeon's school at least, the children were seated at their desks according to how they were getting on in their studies. The top of the class was seated next to the door, all the way down to the bottom of the class who was seated close to a warm stove. The teacher thought about this. Could this be the clue as to why Spurgeon was now the dunce? It was draughty near the door, but nice and warm near the stove! The teacher wondered if that was why Spurgeon was content to be the bottom of the class, nice and warm by the stove, instead of top of the class near the draughty door. So the teacher tried an experiment. He changed the order of the class, putting the top child near the stove, and the bottom



child near the door. And that did the trick! Spurgeon started studying and working harder, and was soon top of the class again, enjoying the warmth of the stove!

It is not easy learning, and there are so many things to learn about. English, maths, science—so much! But God gave us minds to use, so we ought to do our best in our studies. We must never forget to learn about God Himself, for He is the most important Person we could think about. The Bible says, “*A wise man will hear and increase learning*” (*Proverbs 1:5*). Ask the Lord to help you in your studies, and especially that He might help you understand Him better.



16

Praying for You



*“We give thanks to God always for you all,
making mention of you in our prayers.”*

(1 Thessalonians 1:2)

I've told you that Spurgeon's grandfather, James, was the pastor of a church, and so was Spurgeon's father, John. John had sermons to prepare and preach, people to visit, the church to look after, and he also worked as a clerk in a coal merchants' office. He was a very busy man!

One day John was on his way to church, leaving his wife Eliza and the children, including young Spurgeon, at home. But on the way he suddenly thought that maybe he was neglecting his family. So he turned back. He went into the house, but nobody was on the ground floor. Very quietly he went upstairs, and he heard a voice. It was Eliza, and she was praying. He listened to her prayer. Especially she was praying that all the children in their family would trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. And then she particularly prayed for the eldest, that was Spurgeon, for he was a strong-willed child.

John, hearing Eliza pray so earnestly for the children, felt he could go about the Lord's work, knowing that they were cared for so well by their mother. Spurgeon much later in life said, “How can I ever forget when she bowed her knee, and with her arms about my neck, prayed.”

The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica,



“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers” (1 Thessalonians 1:2). Did you realize that people are praying for you? If your parents are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, they certainly have been praying for you for many years, and will continue to pray for you. There are others, too, who remember you in prayer before the Lord. They ask that you might become a true believer in Him, that you might live for Him and serve Him all the days of your life. Spurgeon came to realize what a wonderful thing it was to have people praying for him, and you should be thankful for this, too!



17

Unhelpful Sermons



“We wish to see Jesus.”

(John 12:21)

We move on a little now to when Spurgeon was fifteen years old. At that age he went to a boarding school in Newmarket—not only as a student, but as a part-time teacher as well! He went to church on Sundays, and so did the cook who worked in the school. Now this lady who was the cook was a Christian. She had a good understanding of the Bible and its teaching. She also had a very broad accent, and a quaint way of putting things.

One Sunday they both went to church, and the sermon in the morning didn't help them at all. I don't know what the sermon was about, but sadly the preacher didn't preach anything that was really helpful to the congregation. When Spurgeon got back to the school he went down to the kitchen, and said to the cook, “How did you get on this morning, cook? I did not find a crumb for my soul in the whole sermon!” She said, “Well, Spargon (that was how she pronounced his name), I got on very well indeed; for, all the time the man was preaching, I was like an old hen scratching away with her leg, turning over a heap of rubbish; and though I could not find any food, the continual scratching kept me warm!”

They both went to the evening service at the church, but the sermon was no better. Again afterwards Spurgeon went down to the kitchen, and spoke to the cook. She said, “Well,



Spargon, I got on better tonight; for to all the preacher said, I just put a *not*, and this turned all his talk into the real gospel.”

I don't know what that preacher said, but a lot of it must have been wrong, so whatever he said the cook took it the other way! Maybe he said that the Bible isn't true in all that it says, so she thought to herself, “The Bible *is* true all the way through.” Maybe he said that trusting in the Lord Jesus isn't enough to save the soul, so she thought to herself, “Trusting in Jesus *is* enough!” Maybe he said that some sins don't matter very much, so she thought to herself, “*All* sins are very serious.”

Have you ever been in a pulpit? I have been in quite a few, and in some of them I have seen these words, “*We wish to see Jesus*” (*John 12:21*). That is a very good prayer to pray whenever we go to church. We are asking the Lord to help the preacher show Jesus to us in the sermon, and we are asking the Lord Himself to help us to see Him as our Lord and Saviour and Friend.



18

Conversion



“Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.”

(Isaiah 45:22)

I'm sure that you like the snow! You can make a snowman and throw snowballs and have a lot of fun. I want to tell you what happened to Spurgeon one very snowy morning.

He was fifteen years old, and it was early January. During the Christmas holiday he went to stay with his parents who were then living in Colchester in Essex. It was a Sunday morning, and it was snowing hard. But because it was Sunday he knew that he ought to go to church, so he set out on his own to go to a particular church. But it snowed, and snowed, and was getting deeper and deeper. In the end he thought that he would never get to that church, or at least, he would be very late. So he turned down a little street which was called Artillery Street, and came to a small Methodist Church. If you are ever in Colchester you can still see this church, and you might be able to see inside, where you will find a plaque put there to remind people of what happened to Spurgeon on that snowy morning. Today the church is an evangelical church where the gospel is preached.

Spurgeon had never been in this church before, but he went inside. There were not many people there, perhaps twelve or fifteen. The preacher went into the pulpit, and his text was, *“Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am*



God, and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:22). The preacher was a simple man, and he put the message very simply. He said, “It ain’t lifting your foot or your finger; it is just look! Well, a man needn’t go to college to learn to look! You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look! Jesus Christ says, ‘Look to Me!’”

Then the preacher seemed to notice Spurgeon, sitting near the back under the gallery. He looked straight at Spurgeon, and said, “Young man, you look very miserable, and you will always be miserable—miserable in life, and miserable in death—if you don’t obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.” Then the preacher shouted, “Young man, look to Jesus Christ! Look! Look! Look! You have nothing to do but to look and live!” And that is what Spurgeon did, he looked to Jesus, he trusted Him, he gave himself to Him, he saw Jesus as his own Saviour and Lord. He was converted! He was forgiven! He was saved! And he later said that between 10:30 when he entered that church, and 12:30 when he was back home, what a change had taken place in him.

Maybe you thought that Spurgeon was already a Christian because he had been brought up in a Christian home, and had had the Christian influence of his grandparents and parents, and had regularly gone to church, and knew the Bible very well. But all those things don’t make anyone a true Christian. It is only by turning from our sins and looking in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ that we become real Christians. Only then are we saved and converted.

19

Telling Others



“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

(Matthew 28:19–20)

So Spurgeon had been converted. Now he knew and loved the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. There were many things that he couldn't do for the Lord, but he knew he had to make the gospel known to other people, so I'll tell you some of the things he did so that people might understand and trust in Jesus.

He wrote verses from the Bible on little bits of paper, and dropped them in the street! I wonder how many people saw them, and picked them up, and read them. But I don't think that you ought to do that, for it is against the law to drop paper and rubbish in the street, and you might find yourself in trouble with the police!

When Spurgeon went on a train journey, he would take some tracts with him—tracts are short printed gospel messages—and he would drop them out of the train window! Maybe people would find them and read them. Again, you might get into trouble if you did that!

More sensibly, he put tracts in envelopes and sent them to

different people. I'm sure that he also prayed that the Lord would use these, and bring people to the Saviour through them.

Spurgeon then heard about a lady who regularly delivered tracts to thirty-three homes, but she was giving up that work, so he took it over. He did all these things because he wanted others to find out how their sins could be forgiven, so that they would go to heaven when they died. He had been saved; he wanted others to be saved too. If you have been converted, you will want others to be converted as well.

Can you think of a great missionary in the New Testament? How about the apostle Paul? The book of Acts tells us about some of the missionary journeys he went on. Have you read about some of the missionaries who lived after New Testament times? Have you heard of William Carey? See if you can find out which country he went to as a missionary. Have you heard a missionary speak? Can you remember which country they work in?

Just before He left this world and went back to His Father in heaven, the Lord Jesus gave this great commission to His disciples, "*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*" (Matthew 28:19–20). You don't have to go to a foreign country to be a missionary. You can be a missionary right where you live, among your friends and neighbours.

A Big Family



*“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father
of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole
family in heaven and earth is named.”*

(Ephesians 3:14-15)

James, Spurgeon’s grandfather, had baptized Spurgeon when he was a baby, but now Spurgeon saw from the Bible that only believers in the Lord Jesus ought to be baptized. The Ethiopian Philip met in the Book of Acts asked, “What hinders me from being baptized?” He got this answer, “If you believe with all your heart, you may” (Acts 8:36,37). So it was that one Friday morning, May 3, 1850, Spurgeon walked eight miles to Isleham in Cambridgeshire, and there, in the River Lark, he was baptized. As he went down into the water and came up again, he was showing that he had been united with Christ in His death and resurrection and was now going to follow Him. Many people were watching, and he said later, looking back to that special day, “I lost a thousand fears in that River Lark.”

Spurgeon’s mother wasn’t too pleased that he had wanted to be baptized as a believer. She said to him, “Ah, Charles, I often prayed the Lord to make you a Christian, but I never asked that you might become a Baptist.” He replied, “Ah, Mother, the Lord has answered your prayer with His usual bounty, and has give you exceeding abundantly above what you asked or thought!”



He was now living in Cambridge and he was sixteen years old. He joined the Baptist Church there, a large church with many members and a few weeks later, the Lord's Supper was held. At the Lord's Supper, those who trust in the Lord Jesus remember His death upon the cross. After the service, Spurgeon noticed a man sitting nearby. He didn't know him, but he said, "I hope that you are well, sir?" The man said, "I do not know you." Spurgeon replied, "But I believe you are my brother!" The man said, "I do not understand you."

Spurgeon explained that he was a stranger in the town, but he was now a member of the church, and he had just sat at the Lord's Table with this man. Spurgeon went on to say, "The minister said we were all brothers, and I believed him, so I thought I would come and speak to you!"

The man looked at him in astonishment for a while, and then said, "There now, that is what I call genuine! Come to my house! You shall be my brother as long as we live!"

So Spurgeon went to the man's house for tea, and they had a good time of fellowship together, talking of the Lord and what He had done for them. The man asked Spurgeon back to his house every Sunday, and they became lifelong friends.

All Christians are in the same spiritual family. They are all brothers and sisters together. It is the biggest family in the world! Paul wrote, "*For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named*" (Ephesians 3:14-15). If you are a Christian, you belong to God, you are in His family. He is your Father, and all other believers are your brothers and sisters.



His First Sermon



“Therefore to you who believe, He is precious.”

(1 Peter 2:7)

Spurgeon was now a baptized member of the church in Cambridge, and he wanted to serve the Lord and tell other people about the gospel. One of the ways he did this was to teach in the Sunday School.

There was a man in the church called James Vinter who arranged for men to go out to the little villages round about and preach in the churches. One day James heard Spurgeon teach in the Sunday School, and he thought that maybe Spurgeon might be able to preach in some of the villages. He also thought that if he asked Spurgeon to preach, Spurgeon would probably say, “No.” How could he get Spurgeon started? He had a crafty idea.

James asked Spurgeon if he would go on the next Sunday evening to a village called Teversham, which is not far from Cambridge—see if you can see this village on a map. James said that a young man was to preach there who was not much used to preaching, and he would be glad of someone to go with him. Spurgeon agreed to go.

On the Sunday evening Spurgeon met the young man, and they both started out walking to get to the village. As they walked they talked, and Spurgeon said, “I hope you get on well preaching this evening.” Said the young man, “Me? I’ve never preached in my life! I couldn’t!” Spurgeon thought the

other young man was to preach, and the young man thought that Spurgeon was to preach! Spurgeon replied, "But I can't—I'm not prepared!" The young man said, "Well, whatever you say, I certainly can't. If you don't preach, there won't be any preaching! Why don't you give one of your Sunday School talks?"

Well, Spurgeon prayed as they walked along, and it seemed to him that if nothing else he could tell a few poor people about the love of Jesus.

They got to Teversham, and went to a cottage where the meeting was to be held. Spurgeon's text was, "*Therefore to you who believe, He (the Lord Jesus) is precious*" (1 Peter 2:7).

At the end of the sermon Spurgeon took up a hymn book for the closing hymn, when a lady there said loudly, "Bless your heart, how old are you?" Spurgeon replied, "You must wait till the service is over before making any such enquiries."

After the meeting many of the people there started talking about his age, for he certainly looked and was quite young. He answered them, "I am under sixty!" The lady said, "Yes, and under sixteen!" Spurgeon said, "Never mind my age, think of the Lord Jesus and His preciousness."

What a wonderful text for Spurgeon's first sermon! The Lord Jesus is very precious to all those who know Him. They realize something of what He went through in order to save them, going to the cross, and bearing their sin. He did and does so much for His people that to them He is more precious than anything else, even life itself.

A Monster!

*“For by You I can run against a troop, by
my God I can leap over a wall.”*

(Psalm 18:29)

Once Spurgeon had started preaching, he could hardly stop! Many other churches wanted him to come and take their services as well, so very often on Sundays he would walk out to the villages near Cambridge and preach from the Bible, and tell people about the Lord Jesus.

One evening on the way back from one of the villages he had a very frightening experience. He was walking on his own, and it was very dark. If you live in a city or town, at night the street lights come on, and it's not very dark, but if you live in a village or in an isolated place, probably there aren't any street lights, and in the evening and at night it's very dark outside.

Usually Spurgeon wasn't scared of anything, but this particular evening he really was frightened. He suddenly saw something awful, horrible, terrible! It was like a giant, a monster, with great outstretched arms! Whatever was it?

Between him and this terrible thing there was a ditch, and it stood right in a hedge. Spurgeon wondered if it was a ghost! But then he thought to himself, “But I don't believe there are ghosts, so it can't be a ghost!” What could it be? And what could frightened Spurgeon do?

He plucked up his courage, and he leapt across the ditch

and grabbed the awful monster! And do you know what it was? It was a tree!

Someone for a joke had painted a big monster on the tree with whitewash or white paint. It certainly looked frightening, especially on a dark, lonely evening, but really it was nothing to be scared of. It was only a tree with some paint on it!

Spurgeon learnt a lesson from his terrifying experience. He learnt to leap at difficulties, and often he found that they were not so bad after all. That is something that David the Psalmist also found to be true. He wrote, “*For by You I can run against a troop, by my God I can leap over a wall*” (Psalm 18:29). What you can’t do on your own, you can do with the Lord’s help. And you will also find that many of the things you fear are not really so bad after all.



Spurgeon's First Church



*“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life;
and he who does not believe the Son shall not see
life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”*

(John 3:36)

Spurgeon was preaching more and more, and one of the places where he preached was Waterbeach, in Cambridgeshire. The people in the Baptist Church there liked listening to him a lot, and after a while they decided the Lord wanted them to call him to be their pastor, although he was only seventeen years old! Waterbeach Baptist Church was Spurgeon's first church.

When he went there, about forty people attended the church, but the number grew very quickly, until in less than two years more than four hundred people went along to hear him! There were so many people that there wasn't room for them all in the church building! Often doors and windows were left open so that people who couldn't get in could stay outside and hear Spurgeon preach God's Word. The church building in Waterbeach today is not the one in which he preached; that was a much smaller and older building.

Often when children are quite young, do you know what they do after lunch? They have a little sleep! And do you know what older people sometimes do after lunch, especially if it's a big Sunday dinner? They sit down, their eyelids seem to get very heavy—and they fall asleep!



The church in Waterbeach had three services on Sundays, one in the morning, one in the afternoon, and one in the evening. Spurgeon noticed what was happening at the afternoon services—can you guess? Some of the people were falling asleep! They should have been worshipping the Lord, and listening to His Word, but they found it very difficult to stay awake.

Spurgeon saw this, and he knew he had to do something about it. And this is what he did. One Sunday afternoon in the service he looked round and saw some of the people had fallen asleep. He suddenly shouted out, “Fire! Fire! Fire!” He had a very loud voice, and it must have given all the people a big shock. They woke up and they jumped up, and some of them asked, “Where’s the fire?” Spurgeon answered their question and said, “In hell, for sinners who will not accept the Saviour!”

I’m sure that the people after that made more of an effort to stay awake in church, which is what we all ought to do. You won’t get anything out of going to church if you sleep through the service!

What Spurgeon said was true. Sinners who will not accept the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, will go to hell, which is very sad. The Bible says, *“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him”* (John 3:36). How thankful we should be that there is a Saviour, and if we turn from our sins and trust Him, He promises to take us one day safely to heaven.



Perfect People



“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”

(1 John 1:8, 10)

While Spurgeon was at Waterbeach he met many interesting people and learnt many lessons. I want to tell you about two people he met who both thought that they were perfect. They claimed to be Christians, but they thought that they had become so good and so holy that they were perfect!

The first man we could call *Mr. Hump-Back*. He had a big hump on his back. Spurgeon said to him, “If you were perfect, I would have thought that you would have a perfect body!” We should never make fun of people who have something wrong with their bodies; instead we should feel sorry for them and try to help them if we can. Spurgeon wasn’t making fun of the man’s hump, but he was trying to teach him a lesson.

Do you know how the man reacted to what Spurgeon said? He got very angry! And then he realized that getting so angry was a sin—and so he came to see that he wasn’t perfect after all!

The other man we’ll call *Mr. Know-It-All*. This man called upon Spurgeon and asked him to go and visit him, and told Spurgeon that he would receive valuable instruction if he did. Spurgeon said to him, “I have no doubt I should, but I



don't think I'd better come to your house, because I probably shouldn't be able to get into any of the rooms." "How is that?" asked the man. Spurgeon answered, "Well, I suppose that because you are perfect, your house would be so full of angels that there would not be room for me to get in!"

The man didn't like what Spurgeon said, but he went on to make a few similar remarks. And do you know how the man reacted? In just the same way as Mr. Hump-Back—he went into a terrible rage! Spurgeon, seeing this, said to him, "Well, I think, after all, I am as perfect as you are! But do perfect men ever get angry?" The man replied, "I'm not angry," but when he said this his face was red and his eyes were flashing. The man then went home, perhaps wondering if he was perfect after all!

The only person who ever lived a perfect life in this world was the Lord Jesus Christ. Everybody else is far from perfect. We are all sinners, and that is why we need the Saviour, so that we might be forgiven. The Bible says, *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us"* (1 John 1:8, 10).

Do Angels Have Pockets?



“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

(2 Corinthians 5:17)

One day when Spurgeon was preaching in the church at Waterbeach, he said that if a thief got to heaven without being converted, without having his heart changed by the Lord Jesus, then he would continue as a thief and would pick the pockets of the angels! Well, the people remembered that, and told other people, until the Mayor of Cambridge heard about it.

Later Spurgeon met the Mayor, who asked him, “Did you really say that if a thief got to heaven without being converted, he would pick the pockets of the angels?”

“Yes, sir,” said Spurgeon. “I told them that if it were possible for an ungodly man to go to heaven without having his nature changed, he would be none the better for being there, and then, by way of illustration, I said that were a thief to get in, he would remain a thief still, and go round the place picking the angels’ pockets!”

“But, my dear young friend, don’t you know that the angels have no pockets?”

“No, sir,” replied Spurgeon, “but I am glad to know that from a gentleman who does know. I will put it right.”

The following Monday morning Spurgeon walked into

the Mayor's shop, and said to him, "I put that matter right yesterday, sir."

"What matter?"

"Why, about the angels' pockets!"

"What did you say?"

"Well, I told the people I was sorry to say that I had made a mistake the last time I preached, but that I had met a gentleman—the Mayor of Cambridge—who had told me that the angels had no pockets, so I must correct what I had said, as I did not want anybody to go away with a false notion about heaven. I would therefore say that, if a thief got among the angels without having his nature changed, he would steal the feathers out of their wings!"

The Mayor, who had already been quite critical of Spurgeon, gave up, and said, "I'll never try to put you right again."

Of course, the point that Spurgeon was making was not about angels' pockets or feathers. He was telling the people that they must be changed by the Lord Jesus before they could get to heaven. Only people who have trusted in Jesus get to heaven. The Bible says, "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new*" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Giving and Praying



“One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination.”

(Proverbs 28:9)


One day at Spurgeon’s church a meeting was held about missionary work in Britain. When we think about missionaries we usually think of them going abroad to tell people in other countries about the Lord Jesus Christ, but there are very many people in our own country who know very little about Him, and do not realize that they need to trust in Him. That was true also of Spurgeon’s day.

Just as the meeting was about to end, one of the old members of the church, known as Father Sewell, came in! We should always try to get to church on time, but sometimes things hold us up and we are late. Better late than never! Why Father Sewell was so late getting there I don’t know!

Spurgeon saw him come in, and said, “Our brother who has just come in will, I am sure, close the meeting by offering prayer for God’s blessing on the proceedings of the evening.”

Father Sewell stood up, but instead of praying, began to feel in his pockets. Why do you think that he did this? Spurgeon knew—the man was feeling in his pockets for some money to give for the missionary work.

Older people are sometimes a little deaf, and they mishear things, and Spurgeon thought that was why Father Sewell didn’t pray but felt in his pockets. Spurgeon said, “I’m afraid



that my brother did not understand me. Friend Sewell, I did not ask you to give, but to pray.”

Father Sewell said, “Aye! Aye! Aye! But I could not pray until I had given! It would be hypocrisy to ask a blessing on that which I did not think was worth giving to!”

Christians pray, but they mustn’t think of prayer as a substitute for other things. Father Sewell knew this. He realized that he ought to give and he ought to pray. Maybe he knew this verse from the Bible: “*One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination* (which means something that God hates)” (*Proverbs 28:9*).



A Soft Answer

*“A soft answer turns away wrath, but
a harsh word stirs up anger.”*

(Proverbs 15:1)

There lived in the town of Waterbeach a lady who was critical of almost everyone and everything! She had nasty things to say about everything. Spurgeon was warned about her. She wasn't a Christian, of course, nor did she go to church, but because Waterbeach was quite a small place Spurgeon knew that one day he would meet her. So he prepared beforehand how he would deal with her.


The day came. It was one morning and Spurgeon was passing by her house, and there she was at her gate! She looked at him, and she recognized him. Surely she would have something bad to say about the young pastor at the church! And she did. She started criticizing him and saying nasty things about him. What could Spurgeon say? He could have defended himself, or said unpleasant things back about her. It was time to put his plan into action!

He smiled back at her, and said, “Yes, thank you—I'm quite well; I hope you are the same?”

This just brought another outburst of ugly words.

Still smiling, Spurgeon said, “Yes, it does look rather as if it's going to rain! I think I had better be getting on.”

Finally the old lady exclaimed, “Bless the man, he's as deaf as a post! What is the use of storming at him?”



Spurgeon knew that it wasn't worth getting into an argument with her. He might have got cross, and she would have said even worse things, and it wouldn't have helped at all. The Bible says, "*A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger*" (*Proverbs 15:1*). That is a verse we should try to remember when people say nasty things to us. We could say unpleasant things back, and then we might get into a big argument. A much better way is to answer kindly and gently—and then maybe the other person will see how unkind they have been.

Mrs. Much-Afraid

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”

(1 John 5:13)

Spurgeon called another lady who lived in Waterbeach *Mrs. Much-Afraid*. She was quite elderly, and in fact she had been a Christian for fifty years, but she was always afraid that she wasn't a true Christian and wouldn't get to heaven. She was always ready to help her neighbours, or to speak about the Lord Jesus Christ to unconverted people, but she had doubts and fears about her own soul. Spurgeon could see that she really trusted in the Lord Jesus, and lived a life that pleased Him, but she had no assurance about her own salvation.

One day when talking to Spurgeon she told him that she had no hope at all of being saved, that she had no faith, in fact she said that she believed that she was a hypocrite. A hypocrite is someone who pretends that they are what they are not.

Spurgeon had an unusual way of helping *Mrs. Much-Afraid*. He said to her, “Then don't come to chapel any more! We don't want hypocrites here! Why do you come?”

“I come because I can't stay away,” she said. “I love the

people of God! I love the house of God! And I love to worship God!”

“Well, you are an odd sort of hypocrite!” said Spurgeon. “You are a queer kind of unconverted woman!”

Then he offered her five pounds, which was a lot of money in those days, if she would give up her Christianity.

“Why,” she answered, “I would not sell it for a thousand pounds!”

It is very sad for a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to be like Mrs. Much-Afraid, and always wonder if they are forgiven and are going to heaven. I’m sure that talk with Spurgeon was a great help to her. She showed in her life that she was a true believer. She loved the people of God, and the house of God, and she loved to worship Him, and she wouldn’t give up her faith for lots of money. What she needed was an assurance that all was well with her soul.

True Christians should know that they are saved. In John’s first letter we find these words, “*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God*” (1 John 5:13).

A Terrible Dream



“Then I saw a great white throne and Him Who sat on it, from Whose face the earth and the heaven fled away... And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books... And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

(Revelation 20:11, 12, 15)

One of the things that Spurgeon greatly longed for was that other people should be converted and saved. He knew that his sins were forgiven, and he wanted many others to know that for themselves.

Although he pastored the church in Waterbeach, he lived in Cambridge, which was six or seven miles away. He would usually travel to Waterbeach on Saturday, and spend the night there in one of the member’s homes. I want to tell you about two of the things that happened while he stayed there.

One Saturday another young man was staying in the house, and shared the same bedroom as Spurgeon. Spurgeon wondered if he was a Christian.

He knew that he had to say something to the man, so, before long, he spoke about the Lord Jesus Christ. He had been right about the young man: he wasn’t a Christian. In fact they spent two hours together, talking about the gospel, and wonderfully



that young man was converted and asked the Lord Jesus to come into his life and change him. Spurgeon was full of joy about this, and was thankful to the Lord for saving him.

On another occasion, when Spurgeon was sleeping in that same room, he had a tremendously disturbing dream! It was quite frightening! We all dream sometimes. Can you remember a strange or funny dream you have had? Very odd things sometimes happen in our dreams, don't they? Some of our dreams are nightmares, and are best forgotten!

In his dream Spurgeon saw the great Judgement Day, when everyone will appear before God the Judge. He saw some people going into eternity without having trusted in the Lord Jesus, unsaved and unforgiven. That's what he found so frightening and sad. There is a Saviour, but these people had not come to Him and asked to be forgiven.

That dream had a great effect upon Spurgeon. The next day he preached a sermon to the people in Waterbeach about the fate of the unsaved. It was reported that the people who were there turned white with fear, and their knees trembled! For years afterwards, people remembered the impact of that powerfully disturbing sermon.

There is going to be a Judgement Day. The apostle John wrote, *"Then I saw a great white throne and Him Who sat on it, from Whose face the earth and the heaven fled away... And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books... And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire"* (Revelation 20:11, 12, 15). The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ need have no fear, for the names of all those who trust in Him are written in that book.





A Wicked Village



“So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.”

(Jonah 3:5)

There was a village near Waterbeach, and it was a very evil place. Most if not all of the people who lived there committed all kinds of sins and wickedness.

Once there had been a Methodist church there, but the sinful people of the village forced all the members to leave, and it seems that there was no gospel witness there. Spurgeon wanted all people to hear about the Lord Jesus, and he knew that great sinners need a great Saviour, so he decided to go there with a few friends from his church.

The day came when Spurgeon and his friends set off to go to the village, but somehow the people there had heard that they were coming. Would they give them a welcome? What would they do?

The people gathered up stones to throw at Spurgeon and his Christian friends, but before they could start throwing them, he said something like this, “I’m so glad that you drove the Methodists away! They would only have preached error! We have come to preach right doctrine! I’m very glad you drove them away, for that shows that you are sensible people!”

The villagers were so surprised by what Spurgeon said that they dropped their stones and listened to what he had to say. He wasn’t really criticizing the Methodists, but he wanted





to get the people's attention. Then he told them about the Saviour, and that if they would turn from their sins and trust in Him, all their sins would be forgiven, no matter how serious those sins might be nor how dark their hearts might be.

Spurgeon returned to that village several times, and in a few months it was a completely different place, because many of the people there were different! They had been converted, and their lives had changed. The village that was so wicked became a village where Jesus was loved, and where many people now lived godly lives.

The Lord can change people, and sometimes He has changed many people in a short space of time. That is what He did in Old Testament times. He sent His prophet Jonah to the wicked city of Nineveh. Jonah warned the people, and God worked in their hearts. *“So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them”* (Jonah 3:5).





How Many Christians?



“The Lord knows those who are His.”

(2 Timothy 2:19)

While Spurgeon was in the church in Waterbeach he met all sorts of people, and some were very strange! I’ve already told you about Mr. Hump-Back, Mr. Know-It-All, Mrs. Much-Afraid and the lady who criticized almost everything and everyone, and now I’ll tell you about another rather odd man.

This man told Spurgeon one day that he knew exactly how many true Christians there were in the parish. He said that there were five. Spurgeon then asked him for the names of the five. Can you guess who he mentioned first? It certainly wasn’t Spurgeon, so who was it?

The man began by saying, “There is myself...” He started with himself!

Spurgeon replied, “Stop! Are you quite sure about the first one?” He said that because he realized that the man was not only proud of himself, but was also judging others, deciding whether or not they were true believers.

Do you know how many true Christians there are in the street where you live, or in the village or town or city where you live, or among your friends, or in the church you go to? Of course you don’t! You cannot look into the hearts of all the people round about you. The Bible says, *“The Lord knows*



those who are His” (2 Timothy 2:19). He knows what we do not know! He knows each person who truly trusts in Him.

The best thing to do is not to try and work out how many Christians there are, which is something that we cannot do anyway. The best thing to do is to make sure that *you* are a Christian, by turning from your sins, trusting in Jesus and following Him.

Young Versus Old



*“The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if
it is found in the way of righteousness.”*

(Proverbs 16:31)

Spurgeon mostly preached in his own church in Waterbeach, but sometimes he was invited to preach in other churches round about. On one occasion he was invited to preach at the Anniversary Services of a church in a nearby village, and so on the day he turned up there. He was met by the pastor of the church, who was quite elderly. I think that probably this pastor had not met Spurgeon before, and maybe he didn't realize how young Spurgeon was. He was only in his late teens! The old man spoke scornfully of “boys going up and down the country preaching”, and so clearly he didn't think much of Spurgeon!

The service started, and before long Spurgeon turned to the Book of Proverbs, chapter sixteen, for the Bible reading. He read the first half of verse thirty-one, expressing surprise as he did so: *“The silver-haired head is a crown of glory.”* Do you know what is meant by a “silver-haired head”? When people get older their hair usually turns grey or even a silver colour, so it means an older person.

Then Spurgeon said, “Is Solomon right in this statement? I have this day met a silver-haired head who seems to me anything but a crown of glory, and who didn't treat me well!”

Of course, he was referring to the elderly pastor who was sitting in the congregation listening to him!

Spurgeon then asked, “What can it mean?”

Then he looked down at the Bible and read the second half of the verse, which says, “*If it is found in the way of righteousness*” (*Proverbs 16:31*). He continued, “Ah, now we have it! Not all silver-haired heads are crowns of glory, but only such as are found in the way of righteousness.”

I expect the old pastor felt quite uncomfortable hearing this, and he realized that he had been very rude to young Spurgeon. He greeted Spurgeon after the service, and called him “the sauciest dog that ever barked in a pulpit!”

Young people ought to respect those who are older, but also older people ought to realize that the Lord can use young people. In the Lord’s wisdom He used Spurgeon very much not only in Waterbeach, but in many other places as well. He chooses His servants, and sometimes they are not the people we would have chosen, and this brings greater glory to Him.



Outward Appearance



*“Do not judge according to appearance,
but judge with righteous judgment.”*

(John 7:24)

On another occasion Spurgeon was to preach in a village because the man who was to preach there for some reason couldn't: maybe he was unwell. This village was much further away from Cambridge, so Spurgeon had to go there by train on the Saturday.

When he got off the train at the station he was met by a rich gentleman in his carriage who had been asked to look after him. Again it was Spurgeon's age that was a problem! The rich man took one look at him, and thought that he wouldn't bother himself with a preacher so young. So instead of driving Spurgeon to his mansion, and looking after him there, which is what he was going to do, he changed his mind. He stopped at the house of his gardener, whose name was John, and asked him to look after Spurgeon. Now John and his family were all Christians, and they were happy to have Spurgeon in their home. They all had supper together, and afterwards they had a good time of fellowship, talking about the Lord and what He had done for them. I expect that they had a time of prayer together as well, and then they went to bed, all of them feeling very happy!

The next day was Sunday, of course, so they all went to church—Spurgeon to preach, John and his family to listen,



and the rich man was there as well. Spurgeon hadn't got very far in his sermon when the rich man realized that Spurgeon, although so young, was an exceptional servant of God, and that he shouldn't have been put off by his young age.

After the service the rich man went to Spurgeon and told him that he must come and have lunch with him in his mansion. Spurgeon said, "No. I have had supper with John, and I have had breakfast with John, and I have slept under John's roof, and I shall now go to have lunch with John!"

Again all those in John's house that afternoon had a good time together, enjoying each other's company, and I expect that they talked about Spurgeon's sermon.

Before long it was time for the evening service, and all of them were there again—John and his family, the rich man, and Spurgeon the preacher. By now the rich man was feeling thoroughly ashamed of himself.

After the service the rich man again went to Spurgeon and said that he must come to his mansion and have supper with him. This time Spurgeon said he would—but only if John be invited to come as well. And that is what happened!

I think that the rich man learnt an important lesson, don't you? He judged Spurgeon when he first met him by what he saw, a very young man who was to preach in the church. It wasn't until he actually heard him preach that he realized that Spurgeon was very gifted by God. He had judged by outward appearance. Jesus said, "*Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment*" (John 7:24). How easy it is for us to look at someone and judge them, maybe because they look young or look old, or are wearing certain clothes. Often we will be wrong in our judgement. We shouldn't jump to conclusions based on what we see.

*In the Middle*

“Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and truth... And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

(Joshua 24:14–15)

The church in Waterbeach grew as people came to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, which, of course, made Spurgeon very happy. His greatest wish was to see Jesus honoured in people’s lives. But he also had some disappointments, and I want to tell you about one of these.

One young man who lived in the village said that he had been converted, and he joined the church. He seemed to be getting on well. But in Waterbeach every year a village feast was held. Now that sounds nice, doesn’t it? But sadly many of the people who went to it would get drunk, and get into all kinds of trouble, and commit all sorts of sins.

At the village feast this young man went to the dance hall where the people were getting drunk and doing silly things. He hadn’t been there many minutes before someone said to him, “Don’t you belong to Spurgeon?” Of course, Waterbeach was quite a small village, and people knew one another very well.

The young man tried to deny it, but there were many others there who knew that it was true, and guess what they did? They threw him out of the window! So the unconverted people didn’t want him.





Those who are members of a church must live a life that honours the Saviour, and if they don't do that they cannot remain members. So it was soon that the church had to remove this young man's name from the membership list. The unbelievers didn't want him, and the believers couldn't have fellowship with him! He was put out by both!

The story has a happy ending, because being thrown through the window and being removed from the church members' list made the young man think, and he turned back to the Lord, asked for forgiveness, and, of course, the Lord was kind to him and forgave him. And the church took him back into membership.

That young man tried to be in the middle, a believer and an unbeliever, a Christian and a non-Christian, at the same time, but it can't be done. You have to be one thing or the other, you have to be completely for Christ or stay in the world. You cannot have a foot in both camps!

Think about these words Joshua spoke: *“Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and truth... And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”* (Joshua 24:14–15).



London!

*“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above,
and comes down from the Father of lights, with
Whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”*

(James 1:17)

Spurgeon had been the pastor of the church in Waterbeach for only about two years, when something was waiting for him one Sunday in church. He had walked the six or seven miles from Cambridge, and there it was—a letter! He looked at the post-mark. It was from London. He opened the envelope and saw that it was from a church there—New Park Street Baptist Church. It certainly was addressed to a Mr. Spurgeon, and it was an invitation to preach there. He read it and said, “It couldn’t be for me! It must be for another Mr. Spurgeon I have heard about who lives up in Norfolk.”

One of the old deacons in the church thought that the letter really was for their pastor, and he shook his head sadly, and said that he had been afraid that such an invitation would come, but that it had come sooner than he had expected. You see, he realized that Spurgeon was being used much by the Lord, and was a great blessing to the church and to the village, but that sometime another bigger church would want him to be their pastor. If Spurgeon left Waterbeach, all the members would be very sad.

Spurgeon, though, still couldn’t believe the letter was meant for him, so on Monday he wrote to the church in London,



saying that he had received their letter, but surely someone else should have got it! After all, he was only nineteen years old, and was not known outside of Waterbeach and a few villages round about.

Back came a reply from London, saying, “You’re the one, no mistake!”

So it was that towards the end of 1853 Spurgeon travelled to London. He spent the Saturday night in a boarding-house, where he met some other young men. They told him that some of the really brilliant preachers in London had very big churches with perhaps a thousand people attending them, although often they had a hard time keeping this number of people. The young men in the boarding-house also seemed to look down on this young man from the country! All this made Spurgeon feel even worse!

On the Sunday Spurgeon arrived at the church which could seat 1,200, although at the morning service only about eighty people were present. His text was *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation or shadow of turning”* (James 1:17).

The people warmed to the preacher and his preaching, and they encouraged others to come to the evening service, which they did, and so there were many more to hear Spurgeon in the evening. Afterwards some of the members refused to leave the building until the deacons promised to ask him to come and preach again. Well, they did ask him, and he was soon called to become pastor of the church. So began Spurgeon’s ministry in London, in April 1854, which lasted for thirty-seven years!

Just as God had a plan for Spurgeon and his life, so He has a plan for each one who trusts in Him. If you follow the Lord, and ask for His guidance, He will lead you in the right way, and use you for His glory.





36

Humility



“Likewise, you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, of all you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.”

(1 Peter 5:5–6)

Shortly after Spurgeon became the pastor of New Park Street Baptist Church in London, he and some other pastors were invited to the house of a well-known pastor, a man called John Aldis. I don’t know how many pastors were there, or how old they all were, but I expect that Spurgeon was the youngest of them all, still only about nineteen or twenty.

Before they all left and went home, one old pastor was asked to lead in prayer, which he did. In his prayer, he said, “O Lord, You know that Your young servant Spurgeon has a great deal to learn, and very much more to unlearn. O Lord, lead him aright!”

Mr. Aldis wondered if Spurgeon felt insulted by that prayer, and if perhaps there might be an argument. After the prayer Spurgeon got up and went straight to the elderly pastor who had prayed. What was he going to do? What was he going to say? Was Spurgeon angry, and would there be a big argument?

What happened was this: Spurgeon clasped the man’s



hand, and said, “My dear brother, may God in His mercy answer your prayer in my behalf!” He wasn’t at all angry or upset. He was ready to admit that there were many things for him to learn, and some things for him to unlearn! Especially he wanted the Lord to lead him aright.

Mr. Aldis had heard what Spurgeon said, and he later stated that Spurgeon’s reply was a life-long lesson in humility for him.

How easy it is for us to be proud, and how difficult to be humble! Peter wrote these words, “*Likewise, you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, of all you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time*” (1 Peter 5:5–6). We really have no good reasons for being proud, because we are all great sinners, and we have many reasons for being humble. God promises to give His grace to those who are humble.

A Terrible Illness



*“Seek the LORD while He may be found,
Call upon Him while He is near.”*

(Isaiah 55:6)

I expect that sometimes you are ill, and maybe you have to take some medicine, or go to see the doctor, or even go to hospital. We should thank God when we are well.

Spurgeon hadn't been in London long when many people there got very ill, and, sadly, many of them died. The disease was called cholera. Every day people were dying, some members of the church included. Of course, all this happened many years ago when many medicines that we have today hadn't been discovered, and doctors didn't know as much as they do today. We should be thankful for medicines and doctors and nurses and hospitals.

So it was that every day Spurgeon had to visit ill people, or the families of those who had died, or conduct funerals. Not only did he visit people in the day, but sometimes he had to get up in the middle of the night to see someone who was very ill, and who wanted to talk to him. I want to tell you about two people he visited one night.

It was very early Monday morning, at three o'clock, and the door-bell rang! I expect you can guess what Spurgeon had been doing the day before, can't you? Yes, he had preached in the church, so he was probably feeling tired and wanted a good night's sleep. But up he got. "Please will you come and visit

someone who is very ill, and who lives near London Bridge?” So Spurgeon went out, found the house, went up two flights of stairs and was shown into a room. In the room was a man who was dying, and a nurse was there to look after him.

The nurse said to Spurgeon, “Oh sir, about half-an-hour ago Mr. So-and-so begged me to send for you!”

“What does he want?” asked Spurgeon.

“He is dying, sir!” said the nurse.

“Yes,” replied Spurgeon, “I can see that he is. What sort of man was he?”

Spurgeon learnt that the man had often criticized him, and had never trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ. Spurgeon spoke to him, but he didn’t answer. In fact as he stood there by the bedside the man died. He felt very sad, because the man had never had his sins forgiven. He could do nothing to help him.

So Spurgeon went home, and got to bed. But the door-bell rang again! Someone else who was very ill wanted to see him. Out he went again, this time to visit a young woman, who, again, was dying. But what a difference! She was a Christian! As Spurgeon listened she told her brothers and sisters to follow the Lord Jesus, and go to heaven where she knew she was going. She said Goodbye to her father, and all the while she was smiling!

Spurgeon saw that early Monday morning the difference between those who trust the Lord Jesus Christ and those who don’t when they face death. Just as he went home sad after seeing the man, so he went home happy after visiting the young woman. All of us will have to die, unless Jesus comes again in our lifetime. If we trust in Him we need have no fear, for He has promised that we will go to be with Him in heaven. But there is a warning: we must seek Him while He may be found. “*Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near*” (Isaiah 55:6).



38

In the Dark!



“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

(1 John 1:6–7)

Has anything unusual happened when you have been at a service in church? Well, I want to tell you of something unusual that happened when Spurgeon was conducting an evening service in his London church.

It takes a long time to prepare a sermon! The preacher has to ask the Lord for help, he has to choose the verse or passage to preach from, he has to make sure that he understands what the Bible actually says, then he has to decide what he is going to say and how he is going to say it. In his preparation he will probably look at good Bible commentaries to help him. Spurgeon did all his preparation, and went to church that Sunday evening knowing what he was going to preach about.

The hymn was being sung just before the sermon, and he opened his Bible at the passage he had prepared to preach from. As he looked down at the Bible a verse on the opposite page seemed to spring out at him! As the congregation continued to sing the hymn, he felt very unsure which verse he should preach from! He had prepared a sermon on one verse, but the other verse seemed the right one! He thought that this



was the Lord guiding him, so he began to preach from the verse that caught his eye.

If you look at any of Spurgeon's sermons (and they are still in print) you might see that often he would announce the main points of his sermon almost at the beginning, so that the people would know what he was to say. But he couldn't do that this time because he didn't know what they would be!

Usually he had three main points in his sermon, as preachers often do, and so he preached on the first point, and was getting near the end of the second point, but he had no idea what his third point would be! Now that was unusual, but it was something else unusual that gave all the people in the church a shock—all the gas lights suddenly went out! Have all the lights in your home, or in your church, ever gone out like that?

Well, there were no torches in those days, so the church was in complete darkness! Spurgeon, though, continued to preach. Can you guess what he spoke about? He talked about the Christian walking in the light! I don't know, but perhaps he quoted these words, *"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"* (1 John 1:6-7).

Spurgeon continued to preach in the dark. After a while the lights came back on, and he was able to see the congregation: they were still there, and still listening!

Later he found out that at least two people came to trust in the Lord Jesus that evening, one through the first part of the sermon when the lights were on, and one during the time when the lights were out!



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Hearing



“How then shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?”


(Romans 10:14)

Do you know anyone who is a little deaf? I expect you do. Often as people get older they cannot hear so well. Perhaps you know someone who uses a hearing aid that they put in their ear to help them to hear better. Some churches have a special system to help people who are hard of hearing to hear what the preacher says. Many churches today also have microphones and loudspeaker systems so that people can hear well.

Of course, all those years ago when Spurgeon lived, there were no hearing aids, microphones or loudspeakers, but the church in New Park Street did have something which was designed to help deaf people hear him preach. I suppose that it looked like a funnel, which was placed in the pulpit, and rubber tubes came down to some of the nearby pews. The people who couldn't hear very well would put their ears to the ends of these tubes, and hopefully they would be able to follow the service.


You would never guess what Spurgeon did! He went into the pulpit and stuffed his handkerchief into the funnel! The next Sunday, when the service began, those who were hard





of hearing put their ears to the ends of the tubes, but what did they hear? Nothing! They must have been most disappointed at first, so they looked up at Spurgeon, and then they were surprised: they could hear him! He had a marvellous voice, and it was very clear and loud, even in that big building. Do you remember how many it seated? 1,200! So it was very big, but his voice could be heard all over the building, and even by those whose hearing wasn't very good!

The Bible says, “*How then shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?*” (Romans 10:14). Do you notice four things in that verse that are needed? The first is a preacher, someone to tell people the good news of the gospel—that the Lord Jesus saves. The second thing that is needed is that people should hear, should listen, and take in what is said. I hope that you are not deaf, but people with very good hearing can still not really listen! They may as well be deaf, because they do not listen to God's message. But hearing is not enough. The third thing that is needed is to believe the message about Jesus and what He has done. And the last thing is to call on the Lord by giving ourselves to Him as our Saviour and Lord.



A Bigger Building



“With God all things are possible.”


(Matthew 19:26)

Have you already imagined the New Park Street Baptist Church building? Try to think of a building seating 1,200 people! It must have been quite big, mustn't it? But before Spurgeon had been there very long, it proved to be too small! So many people wanted to come and hear him that not all of them could get in!

Spurgeon suggested that they had the building enlarged, so that all who wanted to hear him preach the Word of God could come and listen. By now he was still quite young, only 21. However many of the older members who had been there for many years didn't like the idea of change, so meetings were held to discuss what should be done.


One lady spoke up and said that they ought first to count the cost of enlarging the building, and not go ahead until they had enough money to do the work. Then a young man stood up and said that enlarging the church would be a waste of time and money! Can you guess why he said that? It wasn't that he thought that people would stop coming to hear Spurgeon; it was the very opposite. He said that even if they enlarged the building as they were thinking of doing, before long it wouldn't be big enough again! He thought that more and more people would want to come!

After a lot of discussion the church decided to go ahead




with the enlargement, paying for things as they were done. So the work began. Sometimes, on at least two occasions, they had only one shilling (which means five pence of English money today) left in the church accounts, but all the way through they were able to pay the bills as they came in. Walls were torn down, bigger foundations put in, and eventually the work was completed. Now the church could seat 1,500, 300 more than it could before. If the Sunday School hall and other rooms were used then a total of 2,000 could attend!

Do you remember what that young man had said? He thought that enlarging the building like that would be a waste of time and money—and he was right! The enlarged church was soon not big enough for the thousands of people who wanted to hear Spurgeon!



It may be hard for us today to imagine all those people wanting to hear God’s message preached from the Bible. But really it wasn’t Spurgeon who drew them to come, it was the Lord Himself. He was working in a mighty way, giving them the desire to come, helping them to understand the gospel, and opening many people’s hearts to receive Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Jesus Himself said, “*With God all things are possible*” (*Matthew 19:26*). What the Lord did all those years ago He can still do, for He is the God of the impossible!



Susannah

“...that in all things He may have the pre-eminence.”


(Colossians 1:18)

That first Sunday evening when Spurgeon preached at the church in New Park Street, a young lady called Susannah Thompson was there to hear him. She wasn't there in the morning, but in the evening she came, and she didn't think too much of him! To her, he seemed a bit of a country lad, not posh enough to be preaching in London! But as time went on she grew to like him, and he got to know her, and he liked her a lot. You can guess what happened—they started to go out together, fell in love and after a while they were married!

The Bible teaches that a Christian ought not to marry someone who is not a Christian. Susannah was a believer, and so was Spurgeon, and they were both very happy together. But I can tell you of one time when Susannah wasn't at all happy.

One day, before they were married, Spurgeon asked her if she would like to go with him to a meeting at which he was to preach. It wasn't in his own church, but a mid-week meeting in a large hall. In fact, by this time he was preaching twelve or thirteen times a week!

Susannah was then still living with her parents, and Spurgeon was invited to lunch, for the meeting was in the afternoon. After lunch they got a cab to take them to the hall. They were very happy, chatting to each other on the journey. Then they got to the hall. There were lots of people going in, and there was a big staircase up to the entrance. Susannah tried to stay



close to Spurgeon as they walked up the steps, but Spurgeon seemed to have forgotten all about her! And when they got to the top of the stairs, he just walked into a small side door where the organizers of the meeting were waiting for him, without saying anything to Susannah. He didn't even say, "Goodbye!" or, "See you later." He had completely forgotten her!

Can you guess how Susannah felt? She got very angry! I don't know if she stamped her foot, but she was so angry that she didn't go into the meeting at all to hear Spurgeon. She went straight back home! Susannah's mother was very surprised to see her home so early. She said, "Why are you back home so soon? What's happened?"

Susannah told her all about it. Now mothers are usually very sensible, and, believe it or not, they often say very sensible things. Susannah's mother reminded her that Spurgeon was absolutely dedicated to God and His service, and that the Lord had to come first in his life. She also said that she was sure that Spurgeon hadn't meant to be rude or unthoughtful to her, but he was the Lord's servant, and His work had to come first.

Well, Susannah thought about what her mother said, and knew that she was right. She went upstairs to think things over. Later, a cab drew up at the door, and out jumped Spurgeon, and he ran to the front door. Susannah's mother answered the door. "Where's Susie?" Spurgeon asked. "I have been searching for her everywhere, and cannot find her. Has she come back by herself?"

Susannah's mother told Spurgeon what had happened, and then called Susannah downstairs, and soon they were friends again. Spurgeon was very sorry for forgetting and upsetting her, and she had learnt a very important lesson—the Lord and His work must come first. Paul the apostle wrote "*that in all things He may have the pre-eminence*" (*Colossians 1:18*). That means that the Lord Jesus should have first place in our lives.

A Poor Pastor

“Freely you have received, freely give.”

(Matthew 10:8)

Spurgeon was asked to preach in many different places, and during his first year in the New Park Street church, he went to preach in a place called Tring, a little way outside London. The pastor of the church there was a man called William Skelton. He invited Spurgeon and one of the deacons in his church to go to his home for tea before the meeting.

Can you guess how much William was paid by the church every week? Only fifteen shillings, which is seventy-five pence in English money today! Of course, money was worth more in those days, but that was still very little. It’s not surprising, then, that his home was very humble, and there wasn’t much food to eat for tea either! William, though, shared what he had with Spurgeon and the deacon.

Spurgeon felt bad as he ate—he was eating the poor man’s food, and maybe William would have nothing to eat the next day. Then Spurgeon noticed William’s coat. Parts of it were very shiny! Do you know why? Because it was very worn. And in some places it was so worn and thin that you could see right through it!

After tea they all went to the church for the meeting, but Spurgeon was wondering what could be done to help William. The meeting started, and during the singing of one of the hymns, the deacon came up into the pulpit and said to

Spurgeon, “The pastor of this church is a very poor man, and the people are able to give him very little. It would be a great kindness if you could have a collection for him, and get him a new suit.” And that is just what Spurgeon was thinking of doing.

At the end of the meeting Spurgeon said, “Now, dear friends, I have preached to you as well as I could.” Then he quoted something that Jesus said: “*Freely you have received, freely give*” (*Matthew 10:8*). He continued, “I don’t want anything from you for myself, but the minister looks to me as though he needs a new suit of clothes.” Spurgeon then pointed to another of his deacons who was there, “I am sure that he will start by giving half a sovereign! I will give the same, and if we all give what we can, the pastor of this church will soon have a new suit, and that a good one too!”

A collection was held, and quite a lot of money was given. After the meeting Spurgeon spoke to William, and said that he hoped William didn’t mind him drawing attention to his worn out clothes.

William said, “Ever since I have been in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, He has always looked after me! I have often wondered where my next suit would come from, and I really was wanting a new one and badly, but now you have provided it for me, and I am very grateful both to the Lord and also you!” There was quite enough in the collection for William to get his new suit!

We have received so much from the Lord, but we also ought to give to others if and when we can, especially to those who serve the Lord.

Two Preachers in the Same Pulpit!



*“For by grace you have been saved through faith,
and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”*

(Ephesians 2:8)

Spurgeon went to preach in another church, this time in a town called Haverhill, in Suffolk. We always ought to get to the church on time if we can, but sometimes things go wrong and we are late! Has that ever happened to you?

Well, the train on which Spurgeon was travelling to Haverhill broke down, and so he was late. The people had waited, and waited, and eventually decided to start the meeting. As he got near to the church, Spurgeon heard someone preaching, and he recognized the voice! It was his grandfather, James! The people had asked him to preach as Spurgeon hadn't arrived.

Spurgeon entered the church, and, of course, from the pulpit James saw him come in. He stopped preaching, and said, “Here comes my grandson! He may preach the gospel better than I can, but he cannot preach a better gospel, can you, Charles?”

Spurgeon said, “You can preach better than I can! Pray go on!”

But James would not agree to that. He said, “I was preaching on, ‘*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*’ (Ephesians 2:8). I have been setting forth the source and fountain-head of salvation,

and I am now showing them the channel of it, through faith. Now, you take it up, and go on!”

So Spurgeon went up into the pulpit and preached about the fact that it is through faith that believers are saved and forgiven. Then he got to the next part of the verse, “and that not of yourselves,” and he was going to explain that we couldn’t save ourselves because we have a sinful nature, but just then he felt someone tugging on his coat! It was James, who wanted to preach a bit more!

James said, “I know most about that, dear friends,” and so he explained how sinful we are, and how unable to please God without His help. And then he let Spurgeon finish the sermon! As he was doing so, James said to him, “Tell them that again, Charles!”

So the congregation that day had two preachers in the pulpit, a grandfather and his grandson, and they had a sermon in four parts. James reminded them that believers are saved by the grace of God, which means His undeserved kindness and love; Spurgeon told them that they must have faith, they must trust in the Lord Jesus; James then said that even the faith they had didn’t come from themselves, and finally Spurgeon pointed out that faith is a free gift given by God to those He saves.

Coming in Late!



“I will remember the works of the LORD; surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will also meditate on all Your work, and talk of Your deeds.”

(Psalm 77:11–12)

So Spurgeon got to church late when he went to Haverhill, but on another occasion, when he was to preach in a different church, he got there on time—but not everyone did!

Imagine this situation. You get to church on time, and the service begins. Before long, you hear the door opening and someone comes in, and then someone else, and then someone else! What would you do? Well, if you are honest you would probably say that you might look round for a sneaky look to see who had come in! Am I right?

Well, when Spurgeon was conducting the service, quite a few people started to come in late, and he noticed that many people who were there already were continually looking round to see who was coming in! After a little while Spurgeon said, “Now, friends, as it is so very interesting to you to know who comes in, and it disturbs me so very much for you to look round, I will, if you like, describe each one as he comes in, so that you may sit and look at me, and keep up at least a show of decency!”

I’m sure that surprised the people! Sure enough, before long the door opened again, and in came a man. The people were too ashamed to look round, but, true to his word, Spurgeon



said, “A very respectable gentleman has just come in, and has taken his hat off!” Then he gave a few more details about the man!

When someone else came in, again the people didn’t look round, and it seems that they had learnt an important lesson. They were shocked at Spurgeon’s way of getting his point across, and he told them that he was shocked that they were not concentrating on worshipping the Lord and listening to His Word.

There are so many things to distract us in church, but we ought to try to concentrate on the Lord and His Word. Next time you hear someone coming in late, ask the Lord to help you to think more about Him. The Psalmist said, *“I will remember the works of the LORD; surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will also meditate on all Your work, and talk of Your deeds”* (Psalm 77:11–12).



No Ticket!

*“Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins?
And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the
very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear
therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”*

(Luke 12:6–7)

Spurgeon continued to preach in his own church, and in many other places as well. Often, if his preaching engagement was outside London, he would have to travel by train.

I expect that you have been on a train journey, but in those days there were steam trains. You can still ride on them on some special lines, and maybe you have been on one of those old trains too.

Do you know what you must have if you ride on a train? A ticket! On this occasion Spurgeon was travelling back from his preaching engagement, and he had settled down in a carriage, when he couldn't find his ticket. He started fumbling through all his pockets, but he just couldn't find it anywhere! It was lost!

There was only one other passenger in the carriage, and of course, he noticed Spurgeon searching through all his pockets. The man said, “I hope that you have not lost anything?”

Spurgeon told him that he couldn't find his ticket, and, even worse, he hadn't got any money with him. What little money he had taken with him he had probably given at the church.

He said, "But I am not at all troubled, for I have been on my Master's business, and I am quite sure all will be well. God has always looked after me in small things and in big things."

The other man seemed very interested in what Spurgeon said, and they continued talking for the rest of the journey. After a while the train got near to the station in London where Spurgeon had to get off. The train had a corridor, and just then someone opened the door of the carriage. It was the ticket collector who had come round for the tickets! What could Spurgeon do?

Spurgeon was in for a surprise! The ticket collector touched his cap as soon as he saw the other man in the carriage! "All right, William!" said the man. And the ticket collector saluted the man and went to the next compartment.

Spurgeon couldn't understand what had happened. He said, "It is very strange that the collector did not ask for my ticket!"

The man replied, "No, Mr. Spurgeon, it is only another illustration of what you told me about God looking after you even in little things. I am the General Manager of this line of the railway, and so it must have been that God arranged that I should be here to help you. I knew you were all right, and it has been a great pleasure to meet you under such happy circumstances!"

The Lord does look after those who trust in Him, and sometimes in the most remarkable and unusual ways. Jesus said, "*Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows*" (Luke 12:6-7).

Printed Sermons

“Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments.”

(2 Timothy 4:13)

One day a lady asked if Spurgeon could go and visit her. She had been ill for a long time—in fact she had been ill in bed for ten years! Of course, in those days doctors didn’t know as much as they do today about how to cure people.

Spurgeon went to see her, and she said to him, “For nine years I lay here on my bed, and wasn’t a Christian. I didn’t trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. But then my husband brought me one of your sermons, and the Lord converted me through it! Every Sunday now I wait for your sermon, and think about it all week!” She couldn’t get to church to hear Spurgeon so she did the next best thing—she read his sermon every Sunday.

Spurgeon had been in London only six months when one of his sermons was printed, and lots of people read it, and wanted to read more! So soon every week a sermon of his was printed, and they were eventually sent all over the world! They were translated into many languages, and through almost every sermon people were converted. They were especially popular in Scotland, where there was one remote part where the people had no idea who the Prime Minister in London was, but they knew all about Spurgeon!

At an agricultural show a few years ago there was a bookstall selling Christian books, including some by

Spurgeon. One man came to the stall, and bought all the books by Spurgeon! The man who was selling them asked him why he wanted all Spurgeon's books. He answered, "I was converted under his ministry!"

The poor bookseller couldn't understand that, because Spurgeon died well over a hundred years before! How could this man have been converted under his ministry? He didn't look 150 years old! Can you guess? The man had been converted through reading one of Spurgeon's sermons!

Spurgeon's sermons are still in print today. Are there any in your house, or maybe in your church library? Maybe you are too young to read them now, but when you are a little older I am sure that you would find them very helpful.

Good Christian books can help us to understand the Bible better. When the apostle Paul was in prison he asked Timothy for a number of things. He wrote, "*Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments*" (2 Timothy 4:13). Maybe you could read a good Christian book this week!

A Murderer Converted!



“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”

(Hebrews 7:25)

Spurgeon’s sermons were printed week by week, and went to many different places. One man who had quite a lot of money thought that more and more people would be helped by reading the sermons, and he hoped that many people would be converted through them. So he had a good idea: he paid for some of the sermons to be nicely printed and bound, and he had them sent to every King and Queen in Europe, and to all the students in all the universities in Britain!

But I want to tell you about one man who certainly wasn’t a King or Queen. He was English, but he went to live in Brazil. He wasn’t a Christian, and one day he got very drunk. Now, it is very silly and dangerous to get drunk. It doesn’t do people any good, and sometimes it gets them into all kinds of trouble. The best thing is not to drink alcohol at all.

He got very drunk, and I don’t know all the details, perhaps he got into a fight as drunken people often do. But while he was drunk he murdered someone! He was arrested and sent to prison for the rest of his life. So there he was—very unhappy, and in prison in Brazil, far away from his family, and with no hope of ever getting out of prison.

It so happened that another Englishman was returning

home after staying for a while in Brazil, but he heard of this English prisoner, and before leaving decided to go and visit him. I suppose it must get very boring in prison, with little to do, so the visitor thought that some books might help the prisoner to while away some of the time. He went to the prison, and gave the man a parcel of books. The prisoner opened the parcel and found that most of them were novels, that is, made-up stories. Having nothing better to do, he began to read them. Then, in among the books, he found one of Spurgeon's sermons! How it got there I don't know, but God wanted it there! So he read the sermon. The text was, "*Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession (to pray) for them*" (Hebrews 7:25). How interested and surprised he must have been to read what Spurgeon said in that sermon, for he pointed out that even a murderer would be forgiven if he turned from his sin and trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ!

God spoke to that murderer through the sermon, and he was converted. Of course, he had to stay in prison, and he felt very sad that he had killed someone, but he also knew that now the Lord had forgiven him. If we trust in the Saviour, all our sins are forgiven, no matter how bad they might have been!

A Bigger, Bigger Building!



“...I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’”

(Revelation 6:9–10)

All the time more and more people wanted to come and hear Spurgeon preach. I told you how the church in New Park Street was enlarged, but still wasn’t big enough for all the people who wanted to get in. It was decided, therefore, that a new building should be erected. The big question was this: whereabouts in London? London then was not so large as it is today, but still there were many places where the new church building could be put up. Different people had different suggestions. Some said Kensington, others Holloway, or maybe Clapham. What did Spurgeon think? He said, “The Elephant and Castle, Newington Butts!”

The Elephant and Castle is an area in South East London. If you live in London you might know where it is. See if you can find it on a map.

Why did Spurgeon choose the Elephant and Castle? Well, for one reason, several main London roads met there, and today there is a big roundabout there. From that point of view it was a good place, because many people would be familiar with it and would easily see the new church building.



But there was another reason in Spurgeon's mind. He knew that many years before, three Christians who were Baptists had been martyred there, which means that they were killed because of their obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. They were burned at the stake. That was in the year 1546. Another three Christians were martyred not far away. Spurgeon felt that this was a good place to build the church, and he quoted the words of a Christian who lived in the third century, a man called Tertullian, who said, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

The Bible in the Book of Acts tells us of the first Christian martyr, Stephen. He didn't commit any awful crime, like murder or robbery. He was just living the Christian life and being obedient to Jesus, but wicked men had him killed. You can read about this in Acts chapter seven. That was the first of very many martyrdoms, and is something which continues even today.

It is very sad, but in many places Christians have been martyred. See if you can find out if any died for their faith near where you live.

We ought to be thankful for those who gave their lives for the Lord and for the sake of the gospel. The apostle John was shown the martyrs in heaven. He said, "*...I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'*" (Revelation 6:9-10). God's people are very precious to Him, and He loves them very much, and one day He will punish all those who have persecuted and killed them.



Crying Wolf!



“Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbour’.”

(Ephesians 4:25)

U ntil the new church was built, what could be done for all the people who wanted to hear Spurgeon? It was decided to hire a very big building called the Surrey Gardens Music Hall, which could seat ten thousand people, and it had three galleries! I want to tell you what happened the first night a meeting was held there, and it is a very sad story.

The meeting was to start at half past six in the evening, but as early as four o’clock more people than could get into the Hall were waiting outside! Can you imagine it—more than ten thousand people waiting to get in! At six o’clock the gates were opened and about ten thousand people went in, leaving five or six thousand outside! When Spurgeon saw all these people he was nearly overcome.

The meeting started, and all was well. But just after Spurgeon began to pray, someone in one of the galleries shouted out, “Fire!” Then someone on the ground floor shouted, “The galleries are falling!” Then a third voice exclaimed, “The whole place is collapsing!” Really, there was no fire, and the building was quite safe.

All the people, of course, were very alarmed and afraid, so they started running for the doors all over the building. Those in the galleries came rushing down the stairs. A stair

railing gave way, and some people fell all the way down. Some jumped from the gallery, others fell on the stairs. It was terrible! Spurgeon did his best to calm everybody, but most people were panic-struck. Afterwards, it was discovered that seven people were killed, and twenty-eight seriously injured!

Spurgeon and others from the church visited those in hospital, and the homes and relatives of those who had died.

Why did those people shout out during the meeting? Nobody ever found out. It seems that they were trouble-makers who wanted to disrupt the meeting. They probably didn't realize that their actions would have such serious consequences, but in any case it was a very silly and foolish thing to do.

That day affected Spurgeon very much, and whenever he was reminded of it, even years later, he became very weak, and sometimes seemed about to faint.

Did you hear the old story about a boy who "cried wolf"? He was a shepherd boy, and he tricked people into thinking that a wolf was attacking his flock of sheep. When they came to his rescue they found that there was no wolf and they had wasted their time. But when the boy was actually confronted by a wolf, the people thought he wanted to trick them again, and they did not believe his cries for help, and the wolf attacked the flock!

We always ought to speak the truth, and we must never lie. The Bible says, "*Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbour'*" (Ephesians 4:25).

A Very, Very Big Meeting!



*“Behold! The Lamb of God Who takes
away the sin of the world!”*

(John 1:29)

So ten thousand people would go to the meetings at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall, but I want to tell you of an even bigger meeting!

At that time Britain ruled over many countries, including India. See if you can find India on a map. But there was a mutiny in India (that is many people there were against British rule), and so there was a lot of trouble and fighting. A special day was planned in Britain for fasting and prayer, a day when people would come together and pray for peace in India. Spurgeon was asked to speak at this meeting which was going to be held in a very large building in London called the Crystal Palace. It was called that because much of the building was made of glass. Can you guess how many people heard Spurgeon preach that day? 23,654! That was the largest number of people Spurgeon ever spoke to in a building, in fact it was the largest indoor congregation ever reached with the human voice in all history to that time! There may be bigger numbers of people spoken to today in meetings, but that is because today we have microphones and amplification. In Spurgeon’s time such things hadn’t been invented. What a powerful and clear voice he must have had!

The meeting was held on a Wednesday, and when

Spurgeon got back home and went to bed he was so tired that he didn't wake up until Friday! He was very surprised that it was Friday so soon!

But I want to tell you about something that happened a day or two before that big meeting. Spurgeon went along to the Crystal Palace to see where the pulpit was going to be, and also to test out his voice in that very large building. I wonder if you have ever heard anyone testing out an amplification system? They often say something like this, "One, two, three, four, testing!" What did Spurgeon say that day to test his voice? This is what he said: "*Behold! The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!*" (John 1:29).

It so happened that up in one of the galleries in that great building there was a workman. I don't know what he was doing—perhaps he was a carpenter or something like that. Just as he was working away he heard, as if from nowhere, these words, "*Behold! The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!*" And God spoke to him through that verse. He put down his tools, and went home, and before long he repented of his sins and trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Foundations Laid



“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.”

(Matthew 7:24, 25)

Plans were drawn up for the big new church building at the Elephant and Castle because so many people week by week wanted to come and hear Spurgeon preach the truths of the Bible. It was to seat 3,600, and also to have temporary seating and standing room for almost 2,000 more! Many people and churches gave money for the building, and so the work began. A big meeting was held in August 1859 at which the foundation stone was laid. There were 3,000 people at the meeting. A bottle was placed under the foundation stone in which were put several important items. I can tell you of one item that was not put in the bottle—there was no money! Spurgeon said that they didn’t put any money in the bottle because they had none to spare!

Five things were put in the bottle, and I want to tell you what they were.

The first was a copy of the Bible, the Word of God.

The second was a copy of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith. This is a statement of what Reformed Baptist Churches believe that the Bible teaches. It gathers together the teaching of the Bible about different doctrines and puts



them together in helpful sections. See if you can find a copy of this Confession.

The third item put in the bottle was a statement by the deacons of the church, saying a little about the way the Lord had blessed Spurgeon's ministry. This was only about five years after he came to London, but already the Lord had used him in a remarkable way!

The fourth was a copy of Dr. Rippon's hymn book. John Rippon was the pastor of the church some few years before Spurgeon went there, and he had put together a hymn book which the church there used until a little later when Spurgeon compiled his own. God's people have always sung His praise, so that is why a hymn book was put in the bottle. See if you can find a hymn by John Rippon.

Lastly, there was a programme of the day's events.

The Bible was the first and most important item put in the bottle, because that book must be the foundation of every true church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every building must have a foundation, otherwise it will fall down. And if a church is not built on the Word of God, one day it will collapse. Jesus spoke about this in what we call the Sermon on the Mount. He said, *"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall"* (Matthew 7:24-27). Just as churches need to be built on the Word of God, so do people. Is your foundation in life the unchanging Word of the unchanging God?



Building the Tabernacle




“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you.”

(2 Thessalonians 3:1)

The work went ahead building what was to be known, and still is, as the Metropolitan Tabernacle. It cost quite a large sum of money, it needed lots of bricks and mortar and wood and all kinds of things like that, and many workmen were needed to actually put up the building. The foundations were laid, and the walls came next. One evening, when all the workmen had gone home, Spurgeon went with one of the deacons of the church, a man called Thomas Cook, to the building site. They looked round, and then Spurgeon suggested that they both kneel down and pray. And that is what they did. With bricks and mortar and stone and scaffold poles all around they knelt down and prayed. They asked that the Lord would bless the building work and the ministry of the Tabernacle in days to come.


Sometimes it is very dangerous work putting up big buildings. Still today sometimes builders get injured or even killed in their work. The Tabernacle was built over 150 years ago, and people then didn't know so much about building as we do today, they didn't have some of the big cranes that we have today, nor did they have such strict safety laws. So Spurgeon and Thomas Cook prayed that none of the workmen building the Tabernacle would be killed or injured



while doing the work. Spurgeon was always concerned about other people. Wonderfully, later on, after the building was put up, he was able to say that their prayer was answered—not one workman was killed or even injured! How good was the Lord!

The two men also prayed that the Lord would bless the ministry of the Tabernacle. That prayer also was wonderfully answered, because God used Spurgeon very much in the coming years, and many people came to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ there. In fact, the Lord is still answering that prayer, because the Lord’s work in the Tabernacle continues, and people are still being blessed through the ministry there!

We said in the last story that the Bible is the foundation on which the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is built. Prayer is important as well. The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica, “*Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you*” (2 *Thessalonians* 3:1). Churches and those who preach the gospel need the prayers of God’s people.



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