

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892, age 58 years at death), of London, England, when dedicating a huge new church in 1854, declared: *"As for our faith as a church, you have heard of that already; we believe in the five great points commonly known as Calvinistic."* In something of a biographical sketch we learn much more of this amazing man who began preaching the Gospel when he was sixteen and only ceased preaching upon his death.

Queen Victoria and The Parliament attended his sermons. His valuable library of Puritan jewels rests today in the library building of William Jewel College, Liberty, Missouri. Let us mine for some of those "Jewels." We will be richly rewarded; to wit: C. H. Spurgeon was born June 19, 1834, at Kelvedon, Essex, England. His parents were Congregationalists, his father and grandfather both ministers. Mr. Spurgeon was very early impressed with things divine, and was converted to Christ at the age of 15 while listening to an uneducated primitive Methodist layman, speaking to a small group, roughly commenting upon **Isaiah 45:22**:

**"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."
(Isaiah 45:22)**

Spurgeon describes the occasion as follows: *"When he (the layman) had gone to about that length, and managed to spin out ten minutes or so, he was at the end of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay, with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger. Just fixing his eyes on me, as if he knew my heart, he said, 'Young man, you look very miserable.' Well, I did; but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made from the pulpit on my personal appearance before. However, it was a good blow, struck right home. He continued, 'and you always will be miserable – miserable in your life, and miserable in death – if you don't obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.' Then lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do, 'Young man, look to Jesus Christ Look! Look! You have nothin' to do but to look and live.' I saw at once the way of salvation."* Immediately after he was saved, Spurgeon began to work for the Master. A few months later he was baptized.

Being born into a Congregationalist family, it took him a brief period to see his way clear as to the sacred ordinance. But when he did, he went to a Baptist church and was baptized. Mr. Spurgeon said, *"According to my reading of Holy Scripture, the believer in Christ should be buried with Him in baptism, and so enter upon his open Christian life."* *"I became a Baptist through reading the New Testament – especially in the Greek – and was strengthened in my resolve by a perusal of the Church of England Catechism, which declared as necessary to baptism, repentance and the forsaking of sin."* Spurgeon's godly mother later said to him, *"Ah, Charles! I often prayed the Lord to make you a Christian, but I never asked that you become a Baptist."* Spurgeon could not resist the temptation to reply, *"Ah, mother! The Lord has answered your prayer with His usual bounty, and given you exceeding abundantly above what you asked or thought."*

In 1851, at the age of almost seventeen, Mr. Spurgeon preached his first sermon to a group of farmers and their wives, gathered in a small cottage. His text was **1 Peter 2:7** – *"Unto you therefore which believe he is precious."* From then on, Mr. Spurgeon never ceased to preach *"Christ and Him crucified,"* except when the afflictions he had to endure were too sore for him to speak or write.

From "The Boy Preacher" in the villages, he became "The Boy Preacher" in the great city of London. He was called as pastor of the New Park Street Baptist Church in 1854, after having pastored a church at Waterbeach, his very first pastorate. This London church was the church that in years past had for its pastor such spiritual giants as Benjamin Keach, John Gill, and John Rippon.

Once he had begun his ministry in London, it never ceased to prosper. The church was a praying church, and undoubtedly God had prepared the church and the minister for each other. Immediately the crowds began to flock to hear the young minister, and though some perhaps came out of curiosity, their hearts were captured by the Christ the young man preached. The conversions were quite numerous, though Mr. Spurgeon used none of the tactics of our moderns. His were conversions, not "decisions." He plainly preached the Word, pressing the Law and the Gospel upon his hearers – the Law to convict and break the hardened, and the Gospel to heal the broken. With the great increase in membership and attendance came need for more space.

In 1854, the church took steps toward this end, and in 1861, an enormous, beautiful tabernacle was completed. It was called "Metropolitan Tabernacle." Here Spurgeon preached until his death in 1892. In 1856, Mr. Spurgeon was married to Miss Susan Thompson, who proved to be a Godsend to the young minister's busy life. Mrs. Spurgeon gracefully and lovingly attended to her husband in his afflictions, and later, Mr. Spurgeon was called upon to do likewise for his wife, as she became an invalid. Two sons – twins – were born to this godly home, Charles and Thomas, and both of them became Baptist ministers of great usefulness.

In 1856 beginning with one student, Spurgeon began what developed into The Pastors' College: Mr. George Rogers was the teacher, and Mr. T. W. Medhurst the young student-minister. Soon there were eight others, then twenty, and soon nearly one hundred men were enrolled in The Pastors' College. Mr. Spurgeon was very careful about the faculty and students that came into the College. The theological views were Calvinistic, after the Puritanic fashion. It was not an interdenominational school, but Baptist. Spurgeon said, *"We know nothing of new ologies; we stand by the old ways . . . Believing that the Puritanic school embodied more of gospel truth in it than any other since the days of the apostles, we continue in the same line of things; and by God's help, hope to have a share in that revival of Evangelical doctrine which is as sure to come as the Lord Himself."* *"We confine our college to Baptists; and in order not to be harassed with endless controversies, we invite those only who hold those views of divine truth which are popularly known as Calvinistic . . . Latitudinarianism with its infidelity, and Unsectarianism with its intolerance, are neither of them friends of ours; we delight in the man who believes, and therefore speaks."*

In 1856, Mr. Spurgeon's sermons began to be published each week, first under the head, The New Park Street Pulpit; later, The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit. In his magazine, The Sword and Trowel, for February 1897, five years after Spurgeon's death, a report was given, stating that the 2,500th publish sermon had been reached. Hundreds of thousands of his sermons were reprinted – printed in pamphlet form, in newspapers, magazines, with many of them translated into other tongues. Through his great sermons, Spurgeon continues his ministry on earth, though he is *"absent in body."* It can be said of him in a very real sense, *"he being dead yet speaketh."*

People today still read his messages and are blessed by the Christ-centered spiritual food Mr. Spurgeon set upon the Gospel-table. The late well-known W. Robertson Nicoll wrote: *"Spurgeon's sermons are invariably worth buying, and a man who has a set of them possesses a very good theological library."* A "set" at that time comprised fifty volumes, containing 2,915 sermons. Though outstanding as a fluent and gifted preacher, Mr. Spurgeon was also blessed with the mind of a theologian, and fathomed deep theology as easily as a Gill or an Owen. Actually, his sermons are as full of theology as anyone's Body of Divinity or Systematic Theology. But his theology is in plain, simple language, set forth in a straight-forward, to the point, common-sense manner.

Mr. Spurgeon's theology flowed from his experience with God and His Word. His spiritual life and his theology were one and the same – two, yet one. He believed that the Lord alone was his Saviour, and thus could see nothing but Calvinism as the truth. He said, *"I ascribe my change wholly to God."* *"If anyone should ask me what I mean by a Calvinist, I should reply, 'He is one who says, Salvation is of the Lord.' I cannot find in Scripture any other doctrine than this. It is the essence of the Bible. 'He only is my rock and my salvation.' Tell me anything contrary to this, and it will be heresy; tell me a heresy, and I shall find its essence here, that it has departed from this great, this fundamental rock-truth, 'God is my rock and my salvation.'"*

Though often railed upon by Arminians as a hyper-Calvinist, his doctrine and practice gave the lie to the slander. He freely preached the Gospel to all, but he knew that the purpose of his preaching was to call out the elect, through the Spirit's power going before and accompanying the Word. Once he said, *"If, indeed, I believe there was not a number who must be saved, I could not go into a pulpit again. Only once make me think that no one is certain to be saved, and I do not care to preach. But now I know that a countless number must be saved; I am confident that Christ 'shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days.' I know that, if there is much to dispirit me in my ministry, and I see but little of its effect, yet He shall keep all whom the Father has given to Him; and this makes me preach. I come into this chapel tonight with assurance that God has some child of His, in this place, not yet called; and I feel confident that He will call someone by the use of the ministry, so why not by me?"*

On the other hand a few hyper-Calvinists denounced Spurgeon as an Arminian because he followed in the path of John the Baptist and the Apostles, using the Law, the Gospel, exhortations, promises – God's appointed means – to warn sinners to *"flee from the wrath to come."* But Mr. Spurgeon knew well that God had ordained the means as well as the end, and the jeers of neither of "free-will" loving Arminians, nor the anti-Gospel hyper-Calvinists moved him from his Calvinistic ground. Holding to a system of doctrine throughout one's life does not necessarily mean that the system is the truth, nor does it mean that the one who holds to it is possessed of superior qualities.

In the year 1861, the church of which Spurgeon was pastor, completed its new structure, the Metropolitan Tabernacle. The first sermon was preached on March 25th. A few days later in this new building, on Thursday, April 11th, Mr. Spurgeon had what we today would call a Bible Conference. The theme of the conference was, "Exposition of the Doctrines of Grace." The main body of this message is as follows.

*“There is nothing upon which men need to be more instructed than upon the question of what Calvinism really is. The most infamous allegations have been brought against us, and sometimes, I must fear, by men who knew them to be utterly untrue; and, to this day, there are many of our opponents, who when they run short of matter, invent and make for themselves a man of straw, call that John Calvin, and then shoot all their arrows at it. We are not come here to defend your man of straw – shoot at it or burn it as you will, and, if it suits your convenience, still oppose doctrines which were never taught, and rail at fictions which, save in your brain, were never in existence. We come here to state what our views really are, and we trust that any who do not agree with us will do us the justice of not misrepresenting us. If they can disprove our doctrines, let them state them fairly and then overthrow them, but why should they first caricature our opinions and then afterwards attempt to put them down? Among the gross falsehoods which have been uttered against the Calvinists proper, is the wicked calumny that we hold the damnation of little infants. A baser lie was never uttered. There may have existed somewhere, in some corner of the earth, a miscreant who would dare to say that there were infants in hell, but I have never met with him, nor have I met with a man who ever saw such a person. We say, with regard to infants, Scripture saith but very little, and therefore, where Scripture is confessedly scant, it is for no man to determine dogmatically. But I think I speak for the entire body, or certainly with exceedingly few exceptions, and those unknown to me, when I say, we hold that all infants are elect of God and are therefore saved, and we look to this as being the means by which Christ shall see of the travail of His soul to a great degree, and we do sometimes hope that thus the multitude of the saved shall be made to exceed the multitude of the lost. I believe that the Lord Jesus, who said, **“Of such is the kingdom of heaven,”** doth daily and constantly receive into His loving arms those tender ones who are only shown, and then snatched away to heaven. Our hymns are no ill witness to our faith on this point, and one of them runs thus: “Millions of infant souls compose the family above.” Toplady, one of the keenest of Calvinists, was of this number. “In my remarks,” says he, “On Dr. Nowell, I testify my firm belief that the souls of all departed infants are with God in glory; that in the decree of predestination of life, God hath included all whom He decreed to take away in infancy, and that the decree of reprobation hath nothing to do with them.” Nay, he proceeds farther, and asks, with reason, how the anti-Calvinistic system of conditional salvation and election, or good works foreseen, will suit with the salvation of infants? It is plain that Arminians and Pelagians must introduce a new principal of election; and in so far as the salvation of infants is concerned, become Calvinists. It is not an argument in behalf of Calvinism, that its principle is uniform throughout, and that no change is needed on the ground on which man is saved, whether young or old? John Newton, of London, the friend of Cowper, noted for his Calvinism, holds that the children in heaven exceed its adult inhabitants in all their multitudinous array. Gill, a very champion of Calvinism, held the doctrine, that all dying in infancy are saved. Another writer, (Dr. Russell, of Dundee) also a Calvinist, maintains the same views; and when it is considered that nearly one-half of the human race die in early years, it is easy to see what a vast accession must be daily and hourly making to the blessed population of heaven.”*

I love you. Amen.