

Spurgeon a New Biography #2

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon's early ministry at Water Beach showcased his extraordinary preaching ability and deep commitment to transforming lives through the gospel.

Duration: 1:33:19

Scripture: Psalm 27:1, Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, Romans 8:28, Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 13:8, James 1:17

Topics: "Church History", "Christian Biography"

Description

I apologize, but I am unable to watch videos or access specific content. However, if you provide me with a transcript or any written information from the video, I would be more than happy to help summarize it for you.

Transcript

Because of his youth he was known as the boy preacher, but it must be pointed out he had in no way referred to himself under this term or used it as a kind of gimmick to draw a crowd. Nevertheless he soon preached to a crowd and did so each Sunday. When he went to Water Beach the congregation numbered about 40, but it grew with great rapidity.

People came not only from the village itself but also from the surrounding countryside till the attendance mounted regularly to 400 and more. Of course they could not all get into the little building, but doors and windows were left open and people stood outside listening to a preacher such as they had never heard before. During his days at Water Beach Spurgeon manifested a gift for which he was to be preeminent throughout his later ministry, the gift of understanding and influencing people.

He talked to men and women on the street and he visited them in their homes. He knew them and their teenagers and their children by name. He recognized sin and it was everywhere.

He witnessed the people's manner of life. He prayed by the sick, comforted the suffering and watched the dying. In public and in private he ever presented the gospel and great was his joy when he heard the news of the first convert.

This was a woman who came to tell him that under his preaching she had been brought into a deep conviction of sin but that she had received the Savior and was now rejoicing. A great many others followed till Water Beach was virtually transformed. Did you ever walk through a village notorious for its

drunkenness and profanity? Did you ever see poor wretched beings that once were men standing or rather leaning against the posts of the ale house or staggering along the street? Have you ever looked into the houses of the people and beheld them as dens of iniquity at which your soul stood aghast? Have you ever seen the poverty and degradation and misery of the inhabitants and sighed over it? Yes, you say, we have.

But was it ever your privilege to walk through that village again in after years when the gospel had been preached there? It has been mine. I once knew such a village as I have pictured, perhaps in some respects one of the worst in England, where many an illicit still was yielding its noxious liquor and where in connection with that evil all manner of riot and iniquity was rife. There went into that village a lad who had no great scholarship but who was earnest in seeking the souls of men.

He began to preach there and it pleased God to turn the whole place upside down. In a short time that little thatched chapel was crammed. The biggest vagabonds in the village were weeping floods of tears and those who had been the curse of the parish became its blessing.

Where there had been robberies and villainies of every kind all around the neighborhood there were none because the men who used to do the mischief were themselves in the house of God rejoicing to hear of Jesus crucified. I am not telling an exaggerated story nor a thing I do not know, for it was my delight to labor for the Lord in that village. It was a pleasant thing to walk through that place when drunkenness had almost ceased, where debauchery in the case of many was dead, when men and women went forth to labor with joyful hearts singing the praises of the ever-living God, and when at sunset the humble cottager called his children together, read them some portion of the book of truth, and then together they bent their knees in prayer to God.

I can say with joy and happiness that almost from one end of the village to the other at the hour of eventide one might have heard the voice of song coming from nearly every roof tree. I do testify to the praise of God's grace that it pleased the Lord to work wonders in our midst. He showed the power of Jesus' name and made me a witness of that gospel which can win souls, draw reluctant hearts, and mold afresh the life and conduct of sinful men and women." Spurgeon's pastorate at Waterbeach continued until he was 19.

During that period, although he manifested a rare maturity, he had also much to learn about the day-by-day conducting of the ministry. That experience was evident, for instance, in his sermon preparation. He sought to be led by God to some passage of Scripture, endeavoring in prayer and study to understand it thoroughly.

After filling his soul with its message, he marshaled its truths into organized form in readiness for delivery. He found the main points and then the secondary points that the Scripture contained, wrote them out in two or three pages of notes, and carried those into the pulpit with him. Some 200 or so Waterbeach sermon outlines are still extant, and they manifest the nature of his early preaching.

He did not, like most men during their first few years in the ministry, merely touch the surface of gospel truths. On the contrary, the great system of doctrine that he had been weighing in his mind since childhood, and that had largely constituted the body of his study, underlay virtually all he said, and provided the strength of his ministry. Spurgeon's experience also grew in his handling of people during those days.

When the town scourge unloosed her tongue upon him one day, he replied as though he had barely heard her and incorrectly understood her words. After two or three outbursts, she hurried away, saying, The man is as deaf as a post. A certain minister who invited him to come and preach, upon seeing how boyish he looked, treated him with contempt.

But Spurgeon, in his sermon, replied by quoting a verse from Proverbs that rebuked the man's uncivil behavior, and then he went on to preach so powerfully that when the service was over, the man patted him on the back and said, You're the sauciest dog that ever barked in the pulpit. The occasion marked the beginning of a warm friendship between them. There was a woman who, though a true saint, constantly lacked Christian confidence.

She told Spurgeon she was such a hypocrite that she ought not to attend church, and that she had no Christian hope whatsoever. Knowing her true earnestness and desiring to help her, he offered to buy her hope for five pounds, to which she exclaimed, Oh, I would not sell my hope in Christ for a thousand worlds. During those teenage days in Water Beach, Spurgeon revealed much of the character that later shone in him so prominently.

Admittedly, he was audacious and fearless, and any who saw this feature alone could well assume that he was impudent. But he was also very real. He had not the slightest element of pretense, and in both his public ministry and his pastoral relationships, his unrelenting earnestness was manifest to all.

His extraordinary preaching powers were also evident, a voice of tremendous strength together with the sweetest moving tones, and all under constant control. Spurgeon exercised an unyielding self-discipline. To him, the Christian life must be fully governed, and he put that ideal into stern practice.

Rising early, he filled the day with labor, studying and visiting, praying and preaching. He gave no attention to sports, and had no personal friendships with members of the opposite sex, but all his time and thought were given to the Lord. In many senses, though yet so young, he was far ahead of many older ministers in knowing and doing the work of that office.

As his brother James expressed it, he has a marvelous example of a preacher leaping out of bound, full-grown into the pulpit. Charles's extraordinary advancement in the work of the ministry was not understood, however, by his father. John Spurgeon, wanting the best for his son, made plans to put him into Stepney College, the Baptist ministerial training school.

The universities had long been closed to all who were not members of the Church of England. Charles was not happy about his father's idea, but he was willing to go along with it if necessary, and he agreed to meet the college principal, Dr. Joseph Angus. The interview was to take place at a home in Cambridge, that of Daniel Macmillan, the prominent publisher.

Charles arrived at the appointed hour, and was shown by a maid into a sitting room, and there he waited for Dr. Angus to arrive. But at the end of two hours, he called for the maid, only to discover she had shown the gentleman into a room at the other side of the house. He too had waited all that time, but having to catch a train, he had left the house some moments earlier.

Later that day, Spurgeon was walking through the fields on his way to a village service. As he thought of the strange event of the afternoon, there came an overwhelming impression in his mind, almost as though he actually heard a voice that said very distinctly, Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not. He

immediately rejoiced in his counsel, and then and there he determined not to enter the college.

He already knew God had already made him a minister, and he purposed to continue the manner of life that had been his for the past two years. The decision allowed no room for earthly ambition. It marked another step forward in the mortification of self, and in the growth of his soul's devotion to the Lord.

In later years, Spurgeon referred to the event of his missing Dr. Angus as the Lord's hand behind the maid's mistake. The college gave its students valuable knowledge of the Bible and of general theological subjects. It provided classroom instruction in how to prepare sermons and how to deliver them, and it endeavored to lead the young men into a well-ordered and disciplined manner of life.

But those things were hardly necessary to Spurgeon. He was already far beyond the college's students, and undoubtedly beyond most of its faculty in theological knowledge and preaching ability, and he already possessed a wide pastoral experience. Moreover, though strictly subject to all that was righteous and true, he was in some senses a free spirit, without fear of man and entirely unfettered by human conventions.

He had received in birth a unique genius of spirit, and that would surely have suffered had he entered an environment where efforts would have been made to force it into the mold of ordinary individuals. He had been prepared for a divinely ordered ministry, and did not need the usual shaping by the hands of man. After Spurgeon had been in Water Beach two years, an event took place which, in the plan of God, drew his ministry there to its close.

In November of 1853, he spoke at a meeting of the Cambridge Sunday School Union. He was followed by two other ministers, each of whom referred belittlingly to his youthfulness. One, in fact, was particularly nasty, and stated, It is a pity.

Boys do not adopt the scriptural practice of tarrying at Jericho till their beards are grown, before they try to instruct their seniors. When the speaker had concluded, Spurgeon secured the chairman's permission, and made a reply. I reminded the audience, he says, that those who were bidden to remain at Jericho were not boys, but full-grown men whose beards had been shaved off by their enemies, as the greatest indignity they could be made to suffer, and who were, therefore, ashamed to return home until their beards had grown again.

I added that the true parallel to their case could be found in a minister who, through falling into open sin, had disgraced his calling and needed to go into seclusion, till his character had, to some extent, been restored. Spurgeon knew nothing of the man who had attacked him, but he had unwittingly described his condition. The poor man had fallen into sin, and since his behavior was known to the people, one can but imagine his embarrassment.

This meeting, however, though of no special importance in itself, proved of pivotal significance in Spurgeon's life. It led in an indirect way to the placing before him of the supreme opportunity of his career, the opening of a great door and effectual, a call to the pastorate of the New Park Street Baptist Church in London. Now we begin another subsection of the book, The First Years in London, 1855 to 1864.

And this section begins with chapter 5, a great door and effectual is opened. And it begins with a quote from the Prince of Preachers, written in 1894 by James Douglas. Here's the quote.

To what then was Spurgeon's swift and decisive promotion due? We infer it was due to this fact, that there was nothing in him necessitating delay. He could be placed in the seat of honor, for he had the spiritual

grounding requisite. He could serve the relative end, for the basis of it had been laid in his own heart.

The light was there. It needed but a stand adequate to its power of illumination. And specially should be instanced this point, that he had the true Christian foil in respect of honor, namely, humility.

He had, as we have just seen, forsworn the search of great things for himself. And what is this? In the economy of grace, but the forerunner of promotion. He had no great stalking ambition.

The role of a country village pastor was as ample as his heart's desire. London might make him greater. It could hardly make him happier.

And now chapter 5, a great door and effectual is opened. A man named George Gould was present at that meeting in Cambridge. He was deeply impressed by Spurgeon's ministry and gave a London friend, William Olney, a glowing report of the young Water Beach preacher.

Olney was a deacon of the New Park Street Baptist Church, and since it was without a pastor at the time, Gould urged that it seriously consider this remarkable youth. The New Park Street Church invited Spurgeon to supply its pulpit for a Sunday. He was amazed at the request and replied to their letter saying they must have the wrong Spurgeon, for he was merely a lad of nineteen.

They replied that he was the one they had intended, so he agreed to spend Sunday, December 18, 1853, with them. Reaching London on Saturday, he went, as they had arranged, to a boarding-house in the Bloomsbury district. Several young gentlemen lived at this house, and as they looked upon the visitor, his clothes anything but stylish, his hair unkempt, and his whole appearance countrified, they were much amused.

At the supper-table they told him of the extraordinary abilities of many of the London preachers, men, they said, of thorough scholarship and rare oratorical powers, and the suggestion was that Spurgeon was entirely out of place in one of the city's most prominent nonconformist churches. Spurgeon felt that much would be expected of him in this pulpit, especially because of the personal greatness and lengthy ministries of three of the men who had filled it. The first of those was Benjamin Keech, an outstanding preacher and author who had suffered in the pillory for his faith during the 17th century.

The second was John Gill, a man of tremendous learning, the author of ponderous volumes of theology and biblical commentary, who had exercised his ministry there for 51 years. The third, John Rippon, had proved himself an able preacher and had edited a widely used hymn book, and his ministry in this pulpit had lasted for the amazing length of 63 years. These men were yet highly revered, especially by Baptists throughout England, and their greatness served all the more to discourage Spurgeon as he came now to spend the Sunday in their pulpit.

After having supper with the young gentleman, Spurgeon went to his room. It was not actually a room, merely a kind of cupboard over the stairs, and so small he could barely kneel beside the bed. Throughout the night there was almost constant noise from horses and carriages on the street below, and he found it difficult to sleep.

As he awoke in the morning he felt lonely and friendless. The great city seemed forbidding, and he longed for his flock in Waterbeach, who would be that day meeting without him. Nor were matters improved when he made his way to the church.

The building had been a rather grand place. It was of stone and brick construction, now much blackened by the city's grime. Nevertheless, it remained one of the largest Baptist chapels in Britain, and he says that upon first viewing it, I felt for a moment amazed at my own temerity, for it seemed to my eyes to be a large, ornate, and imposing structure, suggesting an audience wealthy and critical, and far removed from the humble folk to whom my ministry had been sweetness and light.

But although the building was imposing, the location was deplorable. It lay south of the Thames, and the only immediate access from the other side of the river was by a toll bridge. The area was low and flooded easily, and smoke and soot were everywhere.

Around the chapel stood a brewery, warehouses, and factories. The only homes close by were impoverished hovels. Among the members of the church, however, were several very earnest Christians.

Some were men of professional status, and others operated their own businesses, and in general the congregation was composed of very respectable middle-class people. During the months without a pastor, the church had heard several supposedly capable men, but they had never asked one of them twice, for they gave them such philosophical or dry-learned sermons that once was enough. As a result, attendances had decreased, the work was at a low ebb, and the people were discouraged.

As Spurgeon entered the pulpit that morning, though the church had seats for twelve hundred, he saw a congregation estimated by some as high as two hundred, and by others as low as eighty. All feelings of depression vanished from his mind before the responsibility that was now his, that of preaching the word. The people saw a man strong in confidence in God, and they listened to a voice like that of which they had never heard before.

Taking as his text, every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. He spoke of God as described in the term, the Father of Lights. He enlarged upon the divine attributes, especially God's unchangeableness, and closed by declaring his giving of gifts, even the gift of his Son, the Lord Jesus.

The sermon was not in any way an effort to produce something profound to win the favor of the London audience. It was simply the kind of sermon he would have delivered to his rustic congregation in Waterbeach. But the result was extraordinary.

A few hearers knew not what to think of him, for he was so young, yet seemed so mature, and he was entirely different from any preacher they had ever heard. But most were excited, and could hardly find words to express their delight. During the afternoon, several of them called on members who had been absent in the morning, and on various neighbors and friends, telling them of the marvelous youth from the country, and declaring they must come and hear him in the evening.

Accordingly, the evening congregation was much larger than that of the morning. Spurgeon was more at home in his surroundings as well, and as he preached on, they are without fault before the throne of God, the people were lifted to new heights of understanding, and to new raptures of feeling. When the service closed, most were unwilling to leave the church.

They stood around in clusters, greatly moved, overwhelmed by the glory of what they had heard, and urged the deacons to make sure this amazing preacher returned. The deacons were equally enthusiastic. They asked Spurgeon to set dates to minister to them again, and they declared that if he were in the pulpit

for three Sundays, the building would be filled.

They were spiritually so starved that a morsel of gospel was a treat for them. Deeply affected by the need, and assured that this door was being divinely opened, he agreed to return on three Sundays the following month, January of 1854. During the conversation, he informed the deacons that he was not a college man, but they had heard so many college graduates and had been wearied with their preaching that they replied, that is to us a special recommendation, for you would not have much savor or unction if you came from college.

Spurgeon walked back to the boarding house a different man. I wanted no pity from anyone, he says. I did not care a penny for the young gentlemen lodgers and their miraculous ministers, nor for the grind of the cabs, nor for anything else under the sun.

God had anointed his ministry. The people had been delighted, and he was to come again. After two weeks he again spent a Sunday at New Park Street.

He returned immediately to Waterbeach, but the London church would not wait for him to fulfill the arrangement he had made with them. The deacons wrote immediately, expressing the people's unbounded satisfaction with his ministry and extending him a call to become their pastor right away. The Sunday school superintendent wrote separately and told of him, I never saw such a desire toward a minister as there is at the present time toward you.

You will find a great many faithful friends, and should the Holy Spirit lead you to decide for New Park Street, I hope and pray you will prove a blessing to thousands. Spurgeon had apparently mentioned his sense of the awesome spiritual responsibility of this task. The letter from the deacons suggested that he might want to accept the pastorate on a trial basis.

They added that at the end of six months he might reconsider the matter, and if he then felt it necessary, but he replied that he would come on three months trial, and concluded by stating his urgent request that all the people pray for him. One thing is due, he declared, namely that in private as well as public they must all wrestle in prayer that I might be sustained in the great work. His parting from his people in Water Beach was sad for him and sad for them.

Some had realized they could not long hope to keep such a man in so small a place, but now that the removal was imminent, though they rejoiced in the prospect for him, they shed many tears at the thought of seeing him go. He had loved them, and they had loved him, and the bonds of affection could not easily be broken. Throughout the rest of his life, some of the warmest friends he had anywhere were to be found in the Baptist Chapel at Water Beach.

In February 1854, at the age of 19, Spurgeon entered his ministry in London. He came on three months trial, but his labor there was to last till his death nearly 40 years later. As the people had expected, the new Park Street attendants jumped immediately.

Within a month the chapel was crowded, with the seats filled, the aisles packed, and the people sitting in the windows and standing shoulder to shoulder in the Sunday school area. All manner of reports about this ministry spread across London. In the midst of this happy situation, the deacons brought up the matter of ordination.

During his days at Water Beach, Spurgeon had been unordained, but he was assured he was ordained of God, and as far as he was concerned, that was all that mattered. But human ordination was everywhere practiced by Baptists, and among the new Park Street people, there were several who felt the church should now call an ordination service. Spurgeon told them he did not believe this was a scriptural practice, and that he did not need it to validate his ministry.

The blessing of God, he declared, was the divine seal upon his holding of the office. Man could add nothing to it. Nevertheless, he was willing to go through with the ceremony if the church thought it necessary, and although it would do him no harm, neither would it do him any good, and there the matter rested.

Similarly, Spurgeon rejected the title Reverend. He said it was a remnant of Romanism that the Reformers ought to have dropped, but his publishers inserted it before his name at the head of his printed sermons, and the fact that for some years he did not forbid it was probably a concession to those who felt they were honoring him by using it. Finally, in 1865, he had the practice stopped.

He urged his students to use instead the scriptural term, Pastor. The lack of the title, however, did not hinder. It probably helped Spurgeon's acceptance by the common man.

The crowd came every time he preached, and for this reason he was constantly spoken of as a second Whitefield. But, like Whitefield, Spurgeon did not make the gathering of a crowd his first interest. In view of the spiritual warfare in which the Christian is placed, he was concerned, first of all, that his people learn truly to pray.

Of course, during previous months, the New Park Street people had prayed, but their prayers were a little more than nicely worded phrases, unctious petitions uttered in a rather formal manner. To Spurgeon, prayer was something far superior to mere service activity. He talked with God in reverence, but with freedom and familiarity.

In his prayers, there were none of the tired expressions many ministers use, but he spoke as a child coming to a loving parent. A fellow minister declared, prayer was the instinct of his soul and the atmosphere of his life. It was his vital breath and native air.

He sped on eagle wings into the heaven of God as he prayed. So real was Spurgeon's praying that the formal effort showed in glaring contrast beside it. I can readily tell, he stated, when a brother is praying or when he is only performing or playing at prayer.

Oh, for a living groan, one sigh of the soul has more power in it than half an hour's recitation of pretty, pious words. Oh, for a sob from the soul or a tear from the heart. And he was equally opposed to the hallelujah or praise the Lord that was only a formality and arose not from the inner man.

Spurgeon truly expected to see God answer prayer, both in the individual life and in the life of the church. He recognized unanswered prayer beyond human understanding, but he also experienced numerous instances in which God moved in response to his cry. He knew that God's power was manifested in the services in proportion as God's people truly prayed and that in such proportion also souls were brought under conviction and drawn to Christ.

Spurgeon's own praying proved of great influence upon his people. Deeply moved by the reality of his intercession, many of them became ashamed of their own pretty, pious words. Some of them undoubtedly

had a difficult struggle to overcome the formal practices of previous years, but they persisted and little by little they began to wrestle with God in true prayer.

I can never forget how earnestly they prayed. Sometimes they seemed to plead as though they could really see the angel of the covenant present with them. More than once we were all so awestruck with the solemnity of the meeting that we sat silent for some moments while the Lord's power appeared to overshadow us.

We had prayer meetings in New Park Street that moved our very souls. Each man seemed like a crusader besieging the new Jerusalem. Each one appeared determined to storm the celestial city by the might of intercession, and soon the blessing came down upon us in such abundance that we had not room to receive it.

As we go on to consider the rest of Spurgeon's life, we must bear in mind the manner in which his people prayed. Numerous men and women were converted, several institutions developed, various buildings were erected, and their work had its effect to the ends of the earth. All the time true prayer rose to God.

When someone once asked Spurgeon the secret of his success, he replied, My people pray for me. He meant not prayer in the usual formal and unexpected manner, but wrestling with God in living faith that he would answer. The arrangement under which Spurgeon had come to London was soon overruled by the members of the church.

Well before that period had elapsed, a business meeting was held, and the people urged him to receive the pastorate on a permanent basis. He replied, There is but one answer to so loving and cordial an invitation. I accept it.

But he continued, I entreat of you to remember me in prayer that I may realize the solemn responsibility of my trust, remember my youth and inexperience, and pray that these may not hinder my usefulness. I trust also that the remembrance of these will lead you to forgive mistakes I may make, or unguarded words I may utter, O that I may make no injury to you, but be a lasting benefit. In April 1854, at the age of nineteen, Spurgeon fully undertook the pastorate in London.

The crowds soon created a problem. Sunday by Sunday, morning and evening, every foot of space in the chapel was filled. In turn, the place became unbearably hot, and the oxygen was used up, yet there was no possibility of fresh air for the windows had not been constructed to open.

Spurgeon repeatedly suggested to the deacons that the small upper panes of glass be removed, but they did nothing about it. One morning it was discovered that the panes had been smashed out. Spurgeon was delighted, and proposed that a reward of five pounds should be offered for the discovery of the offender, who when found should receive the amount as a present.

Of course, he had removed the glass himself. I have walked with the stick which let the oxygen into that stifling structure. Thus he made it a bit of a game in doing what the deacons ought to have engaged a workman to do.

The additional air was a help, but it was evident a much larger seating capacity was needed. After the church had put up with the difficulty of the overcrowding for a few more months, construction operations were begun to enlarge the building. While this work was in progress, the services were held at Exeter Hall.

This was a large auditorium in the heart of the city, but despite its 4,000 seats and standing room for another 1,000, it proved much too small, and hundreds were turned away. Upon completion of the enlargement at New Park Street, the services were again held there. It now seated 1,500, and with the filling of the Sunday School Hall and other rooms, a total of 2,000 could be squeezed in.

But numerous persons who had heard Spurgeon at Exeter Hall now came to hear him at the chapel, and the crowding was worse than ever. The only recourse was to move the evening service to the hall again and try to make do with the chapel in the morning. Thereafter, evening by evening, the hall was crowded to its utmost capacity.

Thousands who arrived, hoping to get in, failed to do so and remained outside, a noisy, milling multitude that blocked the movement of traffic on the street. News of this activity spread throughout London and even to much of the British Isles. Exeter Hall was normally used for musical concerts and educational lectures, but it was almost unheard of for such a place to be used for religious services.

Many persons looked on the whole procedure with strong disapproval, and knowing that Spurgeon was not a college graduate and that he was unordained, they quickly assumed he must be a charlatan, a man who knew how to attract and sway an audience and get them to give their money. But circumstances arose in which Spurgeon gave evidence of his love of mankind and of his willingness to devote himself to comforting those in need. An epidemic of Asiatic cholera at that time began to rage in London, particularly in the area south of the Thames.

Spurgeon cancelled all out-of-town engagements and gave his time to visiting the sick. The disease entered numerous homes. Almost everywhere there was suffering and often there was death.

Family after family, he says, summoned me to the bedside of the smitten, and almost every day I was called to visit the grave. With loving kindness to the sick and in heartfelt sympathy with the bereaved, he conducted this labor, and at any hour of the night he might be awakened with an urgent request to come and pray with someone who seemed about to pass into eternity. Under this unremitting labor, he soon became utterly exhausted.

He was not only tired but was becoming sick himself. In this condition, as he returned one day from a funeral, he noticed a piece of paper pasted up in a shoemaker's window. To his delight he found it carried a verse of Scripture.

Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most high, thy habitation. There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. As Spurgeon read this verse, his outlook was suddenly lifted.

Faith appropriated the passage as her own, he says. I felt secure, refreshed, girt with immortality. I went on with my visitation of the dying in a calm and peaceful spirit, and I suffered no harm.

Thus passed Spurgeon's first year in London, and as months succeeded months, his fame increased. Although he was cruelly attacked in much of the press, he was greatly loved by his own people, and had a host of admirers among the population at large. A former actor, Sheridan Knowles, had been converted at Bloomsbury Baptist Church, and his life had been changed.

He was asked to speak at the Stepney College, and a student wrote, quote, Immediately upon entering, Mr. Knowles exclaimed, Boys, have you heard the Cambridge sure lad? Go and hear him at once, if you

want to know how to preach. His name is Charles Spurgeon. He is only a boy, but he is the most wonderful preacher in the world.

He is absolutely perfect in his oratory, and beside that a master in the art of acting. He has nothing to learn from me or anyone else. I was once lessee of Drury Lane Theatre, and were I still in that position I would offer him a fortune to play for one season on the boards of that house.

Why, boys, he can do anything he pleases with his audience. He can make them laugh and cry and laugh again in five minutes. His power was never equaled.

Now mark my words, boys, that young man will live to be the greatest preacher of this or any other age. End quote. Statements equally praiseful from many other persons raised the question as to what effect such admiration had upon him.

Many a man has been ruined by a mere fraction of the adulation Spurgeon received, and he was conscious of the temptation to self-esteem it provoked. He paid a visit to Scotland, and although he won the favor of numerous ministers there, some of the Scottish divines thought his strong confidence manifested a somewhat proud spirit. In England he was more than once spoken of as impudent, and there were occasions when he conducted himself with a boldness and an authority that seemed to support that view.

Nevertheless, we must remember that he was merely twenty and twenty-one. During such immaturity some measure of overconfidence was to be expected. Yet the very reason for the praise lay to some extent in his humility.

More than most men he knew a deadness to self and was concerned above all things with bringing glory to God. What he was at heart is manifest in a statement that he wrote later. When I first became a pastor in London, my success appalled me, and the thought of the career which it seemed to open up, so far from elating me, cast me into the lowest depths.

Who was I that I should continue to lead so great a multitude? I would betake myself to my village obscurity, or emigrate to America, and find a solitary nest in the backwoods where I might be sufficient for the things which would be demanded of me. It was just then that the curtain was rising upon my life work, and I dreaded what it might reveal. Spurgeon needed someone in whom he could confide, someone who could comfort and encourage him, who could share his innermost desires and feelings.

In the divine workings such a one now entered his life, and became his magnificent help till death did them part. Chapter 6 begins with a quote from H. L. Weyland, from his work entitled Charles H. Spurgeon, His Faith and Works, 1892. It begins with this quote.

The fact is that Mrs. Spurgeon's aid and sympathy were invaluable in the molding of her husband's character and life, so that he never could have been what he was without her. His mind was finely balanced, so was hers. His common sense was large, hers was equally so.

His heart throbbed with love to God and mankind, and hers glowed in fully as warm a flame. He was equal to the perfecting and execution of every form of benevolence, and in this she was a true yoke-fellow at every step. While at every turn in his public life he was the next target for many a rude attack, she, next to God, was his shield and helper.

No two souls on earth from the first fair dawn were more perfectly adapted to each other than Charles and Susanna Spurgeon. Thus the quote now begins Chapter 6 entitled Spurgeon's Marriage, This One Truly Made in Heaven. Although most boys during their late teen years are busy seeking the company of girls, Spurgeon had thus far given no attention to the opposite sex.

Till the age of nineteen he had devoted himself totally to studying and preaching. But now all became changed. A young lady, Susanna Thompson, was present at the evening service of his first Sunday at New Park Street.

On this occasion she viewed him as something of an oddity. I was not at all fascinated by the young orator's eloquence, while his countrified manner and speech excited more regret than reverence. I was not spiritually minded enough to understand his earnest presentation of the gospel and his powerful pleading with sinners, but the huge black satin stock, the long badly trimmed hair, and the blue pocket handkerchief with the white spots, these attracted most of my attention and I fear awakened some feelings of amusement.

Those first impressions did not last long. Susie was a close friend of the Olney family, and Spurgeon was often in the Olney home. In this frequent crossing of their paths she began to see something of his qualities, and he began to be attracted to her.

By the time he had been in London merely two and a half months he sent her a gift. It was a copy of Pilgrim's Progress, and in it he had written, Miss Thompson, with desires for her progress in the Blessed Pilgrimage, from C. H. Spurgeon, April 20, 1854. From that point he became her spiritual guide.

Susanna had earlier believed in Christ for salvation, but had not grown during the period the church was without a pastor. Now as the days passed he gently led me, she says, by his preaching and by his conversations, to the cross of Christ for the peace and pardon my weary soul was longing for. Their friendship soon became more personal.

On June 10 of that year there was a gala event in London, the opening of the Crystal Palace. This was a great exhibition hall that housed displays of goods from the ends of the earth, and it had its own walks and planted areas. Charles and Susanna attended with a party of friends, and he saw to it that he sat next to her.

During a lull in the proceedings he pointed out some lines in a book he had brought with him, lines that admonished any young man seeking a wife to pray for her will. As she read them he asked, Do you pray for him who is to be your husband? She was strangely excited, even by the mere reference to marriage, although she made no reply. When the ceremonies were ended, the same low voice whispered again, Will you come and walk around the palace with me? Thereupon, leaving the rest of the party, they walked away by themselves, and she later wrote, We wandered together for a long time, not only in the wonderful building itself, but in the garden and even down to the lake.

During that walk on that memorable day in June, I believe God himself united our hearts in indissoluble bonds of true affection. From that time our friendship grew apace and quickly ripened into deepest love. Within a few more weeks, on August 2, they were at her grandfather's home and walked together into the garden.

There, in solemn joy, he pledged his love and asked her to marry him. I think of that old garden as a sacred place, a paradise of happiness, since there my beloved sought me for his very own, and told me how much he loved me. Though I thought I knew this already, it was a very different matter to hear him say it, and I trembled and was silent for very joy and gladness.

The sweet ceremony of betrothal needs no description. To me it was as solemn as it was sweet, and with a great awe in my heart, I left my beloved and hastening to the house and to an upper room, I knelt before God and praised him with happy tears for his great mercy in giving me the love of so good a man. During the months that followed, Susanna became spiritually stronger.

Early in the new year, 1855, she applied to be baptized. Spurgeon had tried to keep their relationship a private matter, but the news had apparently leaked out. As the list of candidates for baptism was being read to the church, the name immediately preceding hers was that of an elderly man, Johnny Deer.

Two maiden ladies, sitting at the back of the room, were overheard to say, What was that man's name? Johnny Deer. Oh, I suppose the next will be Susie Deer, then. Throughout this period, Spurgeon was enduring bitter attacks in much of both the secular and religious press.

They were distorted, false and cruel, and although he bore up well, he was often sorely wounded. He needed help and encouragement, and these, with marvelous understanding and sympathy, Susanna provided. The time they were able to spend together was very limited.

He usually came to her home each Monday morning, yet he had no choice but to bring with him the secretary's transcript of one of the Sunday's sermons, which he edited. The sermon, when printed, had to fill eight pages. He might need to remove or add a portion, and there was also paragraphing to be introduced, and various changes to be made.

He hastened to have it ready for a messenger boy, who would arrive on a bicycle at a given time in the afternoon, and would hasten with it to the printer, who would immediately set about putting it into print, that it might be in the hands of the readers by Thursday morning. This labor marked, or marred, his Monday visits to Susie. They also sought to have an hour or two together on Friday afternoons.

The Crystal Palace, which always had displays of an interesting and instructive nature, with its walks and botanical life, was usually their trysting place. This afforded him a temporary rest from his tremendous round of activity, and gave him relaxation in a quiet atmosphere, and in company he loved the best. But all was not ideal in their relationship.

There were times when he wounded Susie by forgetting all about her. This happened once when he took her as he went to preach on a certain afternoon in a large London auditorium. She says, quote, We went together in a cab and I well remember trying to keep close by his side as we mingled with a mass of people thronging up to the staircase.

But by the time we had reached the landing he had forgotten my existence. The burden of the message he had to proclaim to that crowd of immortal souls was upon him, and he turned into the small side door where the officials were awaiting him, without for a moment realizing that I was left to struggle as best I could with a rough and eager throng around me. At first I was utterly bewildered, and then I was in anger.

I at once returned home and told my grief to my gentle mother. She wisely reasoned that my chosen husband was no ordinary man, that his whole life was absolutely dedicated to God and his service, and

that I must never, never hinder him by trying to put myself first in his heart. Presently, after much good and loving counsel, my heart grew soft and I saw I had been very foolish and willful.

And then a cab drew up at the door, and dear Mr. Spurgeon came running into the house, in great excitement, calling, Where's Susy? I have been searching for her everywhere and cannot find her. Has she come back by herself? My dear mother went to him and told him all the truth, and I think when he realized the state of things she had to soothe him also, for he was so innocent at heart of having offended me in any way that he must have felt I had done him an injustice in thus doubting him. Quietly he let me tell how indignant I had felt, and then he repeated mother's little lesson, assuring me of his deep affection for me, but pointing out that before all things he was God's servant, and I must be prepared to yield my claims to his.

I never forgot the teaching of that day. I had learned my hard lesson by heart, for I do not recollect ever again seeking to assert my right to his time and attention when any service for God demanded them. There were occasions when Susy walked into his vestry at the chapel just before he was to go out to preach, and so intent was he on the task ahead of him that he stood and shook hands with her as though she was a stranger.

Upon noticing his error he immediately apologized, but the mistake manifests the concentration of his mind in anticipation of the tremendous responsibility he felt in preaching. Charles and Susanna had been engaged for eighteen months when she wrote, The year 1855 was now drawing to a close, and we were looking forward with unutterable joy to having a home of our own and being united by the holy ties of a marriage made in heaven. On January 8, 1856, the two lives were joined.

Their ceremony was held at New Park Street, and was conducted by a neighboring pastor, Dr. Alexander Fletcher. For some hours before the event, people were waiting at the church, and although by this date it had been much enlarged, it was filled to overflowing. A whole detachment of police arranged themselves outside to control the great number who remained there.

The wedding was followed by a ten-day trip to Paris. Susanna had been to France earlier, and could now point out to Charles various important sites. They visited art galleries, palaces, and museums, and even went to see the working of the stock market.

Upon returning to London, they settled into married life in a very modest home on New Kent Road. Of course, Charles was very busy. Besides the multiple labors associated with New Park Street, he was now preparing for the publication of his first book, *The Saint and His Savior*.

There were also numerous calls to preach at other churches, some in London and some in distant cities. Most evenings he was away ministering somewhere, and on occasion he was absent for a day or more at a time. He frequently returned home utterly exhausted, but invariably found loving arms awaiting him amid every possible kindness and comfort.

Susanna and Charles were very well suited. Though Spurgeon was militant and fearless in his stand for the truth of God, he was also a very tender and sensitive man, and he needed kindness and understanding in a wife. This he found in Susanna.

Russell H. Conwell, the founder of Temple University in Philadelphia, who later visited the Spurgeons and became close friends with them, commented on the loveliness of their married life. Had he married a silly

wife, who would have regarded him as the perfection of sainthood, or a devotee of fashion, who would have discouraged him with her corrections, he could never have attained the eminence he reached. Had he allied himself with a wife who was less pious and sincere, or who would have maintained her hold upon the affections and esteem of his congregation, she would have served to injure his reputation.

But she worked with him, prayed with him, believed in him, and affectionately loved him through his many years of work. The thought of her, even when he was absent from home, was to him a subtle rest of spirit. He could travel many days, and preach several times a day, finding a rest in the thought that at home she was hourly praying for him, and was awaiting him with a welcome he could anticipate with a sense of divine peace.

Spurgeon's affection for Susanna, and hers for him, never waned. Both endured much sickness as their days wore on, but they exercised toward each other a beautiful patience. Their unchanging affection is manifest in some poetic lines that he wrote while away from home, at a time when he had been married for several years.

They read, in part, Over the space that parts us, my wife, I'll cast me a bridge of song, Our hearts shall meet, O joy of my life, On its arch, unseen, but strong. The wooer his new love's name may wear, Engraved on a precious stone, But thine image within my heart I bear, The heart that has long been thine own. The glowing colors on surface laid, Wash out in a shower of rain, Thou need'st not be of rivers afraid, For my love is dyed in grain.

The glittering dew drops of dawning love Exhale as the day grows old, And fondness, taking the wings of a dove, Is gone like a tale of old. But mine for thee from the chambers of joy, With strength come forth as the sun, Nor life nor death shall its force destroy, Forever its course shall run. Though he who chose us all worlds before Must reign in our hearts alone, We fondly believe that we shall adore Together before his throne.

It is impossible to imagine anyone who would have been so suitable a wife for Charles Spurgeon as was this extraordinary woman, Susanna Thompson. They were molded for each other by the divine hand, and their union can only be considered as a fulfillment of Susanna's anticipation. It was, indeed, a marriage made in heaven.

Chapter 7 Entitled Conflict And it begins with a quote from Passmore and Alabaster, Spurgeon's publishers, printed in August of 1856. Here's the quote. The tongue of the wicked has assailed Mr. Spurgeon with the most virulent abuse and lying detraction.

His sentiments have been misrepresented, and his words perverted. His doctrines have been impugned as blasphemous, profane, and diabolical. Nevertheless the good hand of the Lord has been upon him, and he has not heeded the falsehood of the ungodly.

Here's chapter 7. Again the title is Conflict. When Spurgeon flashed upon the scene in London, he disturbed the complacency of the religious life of the day. Most Baptist and congregational churches were quiet and subdued, and even the Methodists had largely lost of their original fire.

Those bodies in general still held to the evangelical faith, but the preaching lacked fervor, the churches possessed little vitality, and most were happy merrily to keep the even tenor of their way. But this situation was challenged by the vitality and power that radiated from Spurgeon's ministry and personality. Spurgeon

had intellectual abilities of a very rare order.

The constant reading he began as a boy continued, and by the time he came to London the knowledge he had amassed could virtually be termed encyclopedic. When he stood to preach, he had a great deal of vast learning at his disposal. He could quote at will from any book of the Bible, using a most apt selection, and repeating it exactly.

He had memorized an immense number of hymns, and from those too he could, in an instant, repeat a verse or several verses. He could refer by way of illustration to incidents from the history of the ancients, the reformers, and the Puritans, and he made much use of events in the lives of Whitefield and Wesley and others of their times. He was ever reading literature about the Bible, a breadth of study that enabled him, less than twenty years later, to write his volume *Commenting and Commentaries*.

In the preparation of this book he passed under review, he said, some three or four thousand volumes. His one hobby, if it can be so termed, was that of scouting out and buying second-hand books, and his personal library grew till its volumes numbered more than ten thousand. We must recognize that Spurgeon was, above everything, a theologian.

He had given thought to the great doctrines of the Bible from the time he had begun to read, and from that point he had been steadily building in his mind and heart a knowledge of the vast system of theology that is revealed in the Scriptures. Londoners were startled as much by what he said as by how he said it, and this system of doctrine was the pervading quality of all his ministry. Nevertheless, his voice possessed not only a carrying quality, but also an indefinable character that made many a hearer feel the preacher had singled him out and was speaking only to him.

The voice was in perfect control, and though it could thunder with startling force, it could also speak in the most moving, gentle tones. The phrase often used of it was, like a chime of silver bells. Above all, in his delivery, Spurgeon was entirely natural.

There was nothing put on about him, and although a note of humor often crept into what he was saying, the whole of his preaching was overshadowed by his tremendous earnestness. Although a vast host of Londoners became Spurgeon's hearers and admirers, there were numerous others of a different mind. Many, knowing only that he was very young, was not college-trained, and not ordained, jumped to the conclusion that he could not be a qualified minister, and therefore must be a ministerial quack.

This was true of several newspaper editors. Spurgeon was so much in the public eye that they could not avoid mentioning him, and since they regarded him as a charlatan, they set out upon a campaign of bitter denunciation. Some of their statements were too crude or blasphemous to be repeated, but there were others.

An Ipswich Express correspondent reported under the title, *A Clerical Poltroon*, As his own chapel is under repair, he preaches in the Exeter Hall, and the place is crammed to suffocation. All his discourses are redolent of bad taste, are vulgar and theatrical, and yet he is so run after that, unless you go half an hour before the time, you will not be able to get in at all. One leading minister of the independent denomination, after hearing this precocious youth, said that the exhibition was an insult to God and man.

The gifted divine had the impudence, before preaching, to say, as there were many young ladies present, that he was engaged, that his heart was another's. He wished them clearly to understand that, that he

might have no presents sent to him, no attentions paid him, no worsted slippers worked for him by the young ladies present. I suppose the dear divine has been rendered uncomfortable by the fondness of his female auditors.

These remarks bring protests from numerous readers. In response, the Express rather flippantly admitted it now believed the report about the slippers to be untrue. But in the meantime, the statement had been copied by several other papers, and those allowed it to stand without correction.

In fact, the Lambeth Gazette declared, The young sisters are dancing mad after him. He has received slippers enough from these lowly-minded damsels to open a shoe-shop. Another paper that had much to say about Spurgeon was the Essex Standard.

The following passage is typical. His style is that of the vulgar colloquial, varied by rant. All the most solemn mysteries of our holy religion are by him rudely, roughly, and impiously handled.

Mystery is vulgarized, sanctity profaned, common sense outraged, and decency disgusted. His rantings are interspersed with coarse anecdotes that split the ears of groundlings, and this is popularity. This is the religious Führer of London.

The Patriot pointed out various elements in Spurgeon's ability, but then went on to criticize him. All in turn come under the lash of the precocious Tyro. He alone is a consistent Calvinist.

All besides are either rank Arminians, licentious antinomians, or unfaithful professors of the doctrines of grace. The doctrine of election is, in our age, scorned and hated. The time-serving religion of the present day is only exhibited in evangelical drawing rooms.

He never hears his brother ministers assert the positive satisfaction and substitution of our Lord Jesus Christ. Still rougher, if possible, is Mr. Spurgeon's treatment of theologians not of his own especial school. Arminian perversions, in particular, are to sink back to their birthplace in the pit.

Their notion of the possibility of a final fall from grace is the wickedest falsehood on earth." Another publication linked together the names Tom Thumb, The Living Skeleton, and C. H. Spurgeon, thus suggesting that the right place was in a circus. Still another said that his ministry was a reviving of the ancient Feast of the Ass. And the third asserted, "...we had thought that the day for dogmatic theological dramatizing was past, that we should never more see the massive congregation listening to outrageous manifestations of insanity, no more hear the fanatical effervescence of ginger pop sermonizing, or be called upon to wipe away the froth that the people might see the color of the stuff." It is not Christian-like to say, God must wash brains in the hyper-Calvinism a Spurgeon teaches before man can enter heaven.

When the Exeter Hall stripling talks of deity, let him remember that he is superior to profanity and that blasphemy from a parson is as great a crime as when the lowest grade of humanity utters the brutal oath at which the virtuous stand aghast. Several newspaper cartoonists made Spurgeon their subject. Most derided him, but two or three could not refrain from recognizing that he proclaimed a clear and positive message, and they made him look superior to various others of the nation's religious leaders.

To all the attacks, Spurgeon made no reply. In his preaching, however, he sometimes made reference by way of illustration to something the papers had said about him. When writing to his parents, he more than once assured them that several statements, for instance the one about the slippers, were untrue, and urged them not to be alarmed about the opposition he was receiving.

Nevertheless, he was wounded in seeing himself thus accused and held up to ridicule. Mrs. Spurgeon gathered all the defamatory statements and pasted them in a scrapbook till it finally became a huge volume. She also framed a text and hung it on the wall.

It read, Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. Spurgeon met opposition not only from the secular press, but also from certain religious papers because of his Calvinism.

Spurgeon wrote A Defense of Calvinism, which constitutes an entire chapter in his autobiography. He says, We only use the term Calvinism for shortness. That doctrine which we call Calvinism did not spring from Calvin.

We believe that it sprang from the great founder of all truth. He termed this theological system the doctrines of grace and he used the two terms interchangeably. He had long been familiar with these verses for they had composed the discussion he had heard in the homes of his grandfather and father.

These were the doctrines presented by Bunyan and other Puritan writers. It was these in which he was vigorously instructed by Mary King, the housekeeper of the school he attended at Newmarket. She liked something very sweet indeed, good strong Calvinistic doctrine, but she lived strongly as well as fed strongly.

Many a time we have gone over the covenant of grace together and talked of the personal election of the saints, their union to Christ, their final perseverance, and what vital godliness meant. And I do believe that I learned more from her than I should have learned from any six doctors of divinity of the sort we have nowadays." When he came to London, Spurgeon looked upon his ministry as that of a reformer. He was laboring to bring men back to the truths they had left.

The generality of the Protestant ministers were basically evangelical, but their preaching was very short on doctrine and he felt himself largely alone in the theological system he held and declared. In sermon after sermon during his first years in London, he asserted the doctrines of human depravity and divine election, and he did so with strong emphasis and much instruction. My daily labor, he stated, is to revive the old doctrines of Gil, Owen, Calvin, Augustine, and Christ.

Spurgeon spoke out against the unthinking manner in which some Calvinists talk about a limited atonement. He much preferred the term particular redemption, the belief that Christ did not merely make salvation possible and leave it to man to do the rest, but that he accomplished the redemption of each of his elect ones and thus assured their salvation. But although he declared salvation is of the Lord, Spurgeon also preached whosoever will may come.

Into the New Park Street Chapel and into Exeter Hall came hundreds of men and women who did not know the Lord. In virtually every sermon he pleaded with them to recognize their lost condition, to know that Christ could save them, and to believe on him then and there. His preaching abounded with the free offer of the gospel to all mankind and was fruitful in the conversion of a great number.

Spurgeon recognized that the two concepts seemed contradictory, but he declared the scripture taught both that God would save his elect ones, but also that man was responsible concerning his soul. Therefore he constantly urged, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. This free offer of

the gospel to all who would believe brought upon Spurgeon the attack of the Hyper-Calvinists.

The Hyper-Calvinists believed everything held by other Calvinists except that they also believed the gospel offer ought not to be extended before an audience composed of saved and unsaved. They declared the gospel was only to be presented to sensible sinners, persons conscious of their need of Christ. Spurgeon frequently spoke against this form of Calvinism because it did nothing to awaken sinners to their need of Christ.

The Hypers were not evangelistic. They did not go out to seek the lost, and they virtually rejected Christ's command, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. But although these people did not go after the lost themselves, they were not lax in going after the man who did.

Their chief spokesman was James Wells, the minister of a fairly large congregation, and in the Hyper-Calvinists' paper, *The Earthen Vessel*, he severely attacked Spurgeon. To him and his people, Spurgeon's soul-winning activity was anathema. God would save his elect without the interference of this young upstart.

Wells took the stand of a very righteous man, one who was contending for the faith, and in a lengthy assessment of Spurgeon and his ministry, he stated he could find not the least evidence of saving grace in him, and concluded that he probably had never been converted. In his preaching, Spurgeon frequently struck out at the Hyper-Calvinists, but his strongest reply to them was the glory of the gospel that he preached, and the fact that he saw it used of God in the transformation of a multitude of lives. Other religious journals also found fault with Spurgeon during his first years in London.

The Baptist Reporter, the United Presbyterian Magazine, The Critic, and the Christian News are examples of those that attacked him. The opposition from the world brought on a terrible tragedy. He was denied the continued use of Exeter Hall, and therefore he considered obtaining the Surrey Gardens Music Hall.

This was a very large auditorium that, besides its main floor area, had three galleries, and the total seating capacity was spoken of as ten thousand. It seemed an impossible scheme for him to try to use such a place, for although Whitefield had preached to twenty thousand and more, that was in the open air, and probably no one in all history had ever reached so immense a crowd indoors. Nevertheless, Spurgeon determined to attempt the gigantic task.

Knowing that as long as he was limited to his chapel, hundreds of people who wanted to hear the gospel were turned away each Sunday, he felt he had no choice but to try to use this hall. The news that Spurgeon would preach in the Surrey Gardens Music Hall spread quickly throughout much of London. It excited his own people with joyful anticipation, it aroused many outsiders with a desire to attend, but it also moved some whose motives were evil to plan to disturb so significant an event.

The opening service at the hall was planned for the evening of Sunday, October 19, 1856. The preceding days were a time of much activity in the Spurgeon household, for on September 10 they moved to a new home, Helensburg House, and just ten days later Susanna gave birth to two babies, twin sons, whom they named Charles and Thomas. The crowd that gathered exceeded all expectations.

The hall was set in a kind of park that was surrounded by a large ornamental iron railing, and people began to assemble within it not long after the noon hour. Their numbers steadily increased, and when early in the evening the building was opened, they flooded in. They filled every seat, packed the aisles,

and crowded the stairways, while thousands of others stood outside, refusing to go away, and hoping to hear something of the sermon through the windows.

When Spurgeon arrived, upon witnessing this vast concourse of humanity, he was almost overwhelmed. He was yet but twenty-two, and to stand before this audience, conduct the service, and preach, making himself heard and understood by such a multitude, seemed truly an impossible task. But in the assurance of divine strength, he went before the multitude and began the service.

For the first moments everything proceeded with the decorum of any ordinary Sunday service, and the singing seemed particularly reverent and joyous. But just after Spurgeon began to pray, the place was suddenly thrown into consternation. Someone in a gallery shouted, "Fire!" And that was followed by a cry from the ground floor, "The galleries are falling!" And then a third voice was heard, "The whole place is collapsing!" Immediately much of the hall was in a panic, and people began rushing for the stairs and pressing to get out of the doors.

Under the extreme pressure, a stair railing gave way, and several fell with it onto the crowded floor beneath. Some jumped from the gallery, and others lost their footing on the stairs. Falling to the floor, they were trodden down by the many who attempted to pass over them.

A stream of people pushed their way out of the doors, but as they did so, others thrust themselves in, intent on securing the seats they had left. From his place on the platform, Spurgeon could not see all that was going on at the far end of the hall where the stairs and doors were located. He tried to calm the audience and attempted to preach, but it soon became evident the service could not be continued, and he requested the congregation to leave in an orderly manner.

He went into a side room, so overcome that he fell to the floor, almost unconscious. Before he left, he learned that seven persons had died, and twenty-eight others had been removed to the hospital, many of them severely wounded. He was taken to his home, and had the comfort and consolation of his wife.

But the trouble had come at a time when she was not as able to help as she normally would have been, for less than a month had passed since she had given birth and she was still weak and unwell. The deacons realized that his home would not be the best place for him under the present circumstances. There would be numerous visitors, friends who wished to help, and foes who wanted to blame, and there would assuredly be reporters.

Knowing the extreme sensitivity of his nature, and the extent of his compassion for the sufferers, the deacons whisked him away to a home in the suburbs. Here he would largely escape from visitors, and they hoped that in the quietness he would recuperate. Providentially hidden away in the peaceful retreat, Spurgeon did not see the reports carried in the papers.

Some were sympathetic, but others were cruel. The following is an example of what his opposers wrote. We are neither straight-laced nor Sabbatarian in our sentiments, but we would keep apart, widely apart, the theatre and the church.

Above all, we would place in the hand of every right-thinking man a whip to scourge from society the authors of such vile blasphemies as on Sunday night, above the cries of the dead and the dying, and louder than the wails of misery from the maimed and suffering resounded from the mouth of Spurgeon. And lastly, when the mangled corpses had been carried away from the unhallowed and disgraceful scene,

when husbands were seeking their wives and children, their mothers, in extreme agony and despair, the clink of money as it fell into the collection-boxes grated harshly, miserably, on the ears of those who, we sincerely hope, have by this time conceived for Mr. Spurgeon and his rantings the profoundest contempt. It is well this report and the others like it were kept from Spurgeon.

Of course the statement about the use of the money-boxes was an entire fabrication, and to portray him as heartless amidst the tragedy was as cruel as it was false. We must assume, however, that Susanna saw the papers. Spurgeon continued in his broken condition for seven or eight days.

Then, as he walked in his friend's garden, a verse of Scripture about Christ flashed into his mind. He saw it afresh. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.

And as he fed his soul upon its truth, he began to improve. His burden was gradually lifted so he could return to his home. On the following Sunday he ministered again at New Park Street.

He had been out of his pulpit for but one Sunday. Spurgeon immediately set about helping the sufferers. A fund was raised toward meeting their needs, and Spurgeon, the deacons, and others visited hospitals and homes of the relatives of those who had died.

Yet, although he resumed his general labors, the terrible event had severely affected his nervous system. Throughout the rest of his days, the sight of an overcrowded building placed him under an immediate strain, and even years later, upon being reminded of the event at the Surrey Gardens, he easily became weak and sometimes seemed about to faint. Whatever the motive behind the tragedy, it joined with the printed opposition in furthering Spurgeon's ministry.

The news of what had happened became known throughout Britain, and despite the evil reports, many persons could not help but feel sympathetic toward him. Moreover, the New Park Street people had already appointed a committee to make plans for the construction of a new and very large church.

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