

Spurgeon a New Biography #4

by C.H. Spurgeon

Spurgeon's Cole-Porter Association and other charitable works, including almshouses and orphanage, demonstrated his commitment to spreading the gospel and caring for the needy.

Duration: 1:31:17

Scripture: Psalm 84:1, Psalm 122:1

Topics: "Christian Pilgrimage", "Divine Guidance"

Description

In this sermon transcript, the preacher describes the journey of two travelers on a road. They encounter a storm and are separated, with one being caught up to glory and the other continuing alone. However, the Lord's goodness and mercy continue to guide and comfort the solitary traveler. The preacher emphasizes the importance of helping fellow pilgrims along the road and finding solace in serving others. The sermon also mentions the work of Mrs. Spurgeon, who manages a book fund and diligently keeps track of the books given to recipients.

Transcript

A particularly useful new organization was the Cole-Porter's Association. The word Cole-Porter was an old French term that meant peddler. In Reformation times it had been used of the men who went from place to place distributing tracts and selling Bibles.

And in more recent years it had been applied to men who were doing a similar work in Scotland. Spurgeon had seen this labor and its fruits during his visits to that land and despite the many activities for which he was already responsible he determined to launch into this undertaking in England too. As soon as Spurgeon mentioned the idea a man offered a substantial sum of money with which to begin it enough to purchase a stock of Bibles, books and tracts.

Spurgeon then drew up a statement of the purposes of the organization and appointed a committee to oversee it. Men arose who were willing to serve as Cole-Porters. Spurgeon agreed to raise 40 pounds per year for each man but each was expected also to earn at least another 40 pounds from the Bibles and books he sold.

The association began with only two men but their number rapidly rose and within three years 15 were employed. Each man was allotted a definite territory. Some of these were in the poor parts and even the slums of London and other cities but most were placed in villages and rural areas.

The plan was to carry the Bible's message into the parts of England that were unreached through other means. The Cole-Porter did much more than sell Bibles and books. He converses with the inmates about their souls prays with the sick and leaves a tract at each cottage.

He is frequently able to hold prayer meetings, open air services and Bible readings. He gets a room, a meeting place if possible, and preaches. He founds bands of hope and makes himself generally useful in the cause of religion and temperance.

He is in fact first of all a missionary, then a preacher and by and by in the truest sense a pastor. We have some noble men in this work. Despite the help of an excellent committee this work was not conducted without difficulty.

In time the number of Cole-Porters increased to nearly 100 and there were often occasions when the treasury was short of sufficient funds to provide the initial 40 pounds for each man. At such times and on occasions when decisions had to be made as to which man to place in a certain area or to tell a man he was not suited to the Cole-Portage work the matter was left with Spurgeon. He gave heavily out of his own pocket to this enterprise and made earnest prayer for it.

At one time in an hour of depression he declared the association is one child too many for me. I wish somebody would take it off my hands. And yet when someone offered to do so he refused and continued to bear the burden himself.

Nevertheless, like his other organizations this one also brought him much joy. He instituted a Cole-Portage association annual meeting for which all the men returned to London and after a hearty supper at the tabernacle gave reports of their work. The men usually spoke in the dialects of their districts thus adding to the color of the gathering and Spurgeon was especially cheered when they related instances of conversion through the reading of his sermons and other published works.

The following is an example of the accounts given by these men. Describing a fallen woman who had been brought to a sense of her sinfulness in the sight of God and who was afterward in a despairing condition the Cole-Portage said, I drew her attention to many of the promises and invitations of the gospel sold her Mr. Spurgeon's *The Gentleness of Jesus* and asked the Lord to bless the reading of it to her soul. If I could find language sufficiently expressive I would describe my visit to her on the following day.

Holding the sermon in her hand her voice tremulous with emotion and her face radiant with happiness she read the following words Hearts are won to Jesus by the silent conviction which irresistibly subdues the conscience to a sense of guilt and by the love which is displayed in the Redeemer's becoming the great substitutionary sacrifice for us that our sins might be removed. Then still holding the sermon in her hand she said to me Blessed be the Lord forever I have found him or rather he has found me I am saved, pardoned, forgiven accepted and blessed for Christ's sake Now I know what the poet means Nothing in my hands I bring Simply to thy cross I cling Yes, yes, Jesus died for me and I live through him.

End quote On one occasion at the annual meeting Spurgeon asked the colporter to come to the platform with his pack upon his back and demonstrate his method of selling books Reaching the platform the man immediately placed his pack on the table took out a book and began addressing Spurgeon saying I have here a work that I can highly recommend you to buy I can speak well of it for I have read it and derived great benefit from it The author is a particular friend of mine He is always glad to hear that the colporters sell his books for he knows that they are full of gospel The title of the volume is *Trumpet Calls to Christian*

Energy The author is C.H.

Spurgeon and the price is three shillings six pence Will you buy it? The audience was convulsed with laughter Spurgeon joined as hardly as any reached into his pocket and bought the book It is impossible to estimate the value of the colporter's ministry Those were days in which immoral and atheistic literature was becoming widely circulated and shops that sold nothing else were opening This material was filtering even to the backward rural districts areas in which often the Christian voice was very weak The colporter counteracted that influence He placed in home after home the word of God and books that repeated its message and in numerous instances the reader was one to Christ In 1878, one of the few years for which figures are available there were 94 colporters and they made the remarkable number of 926,290 visits and this work grew even larger during the years that followed In January 1866, Spurgeon published in the Sword and Trowel a letter to all his members announcing a special week of prayer Lord's Day The pastor will preach upon a subject having a direct tendency by God's grace to arouse the slumbering whether saints or sinners Monday The church officers will meet at five to seek a blessing upon their own souls that they may be prepared for the shower of mercy which they trust is coming At seven, we shall hold a prayer meeting It would be a hopeful beginning if the house could be filled at this meeting by ourselves As your friends may be more willing to come if assured of getting in we shall issue tickets Tuesday The deacons and elders invite the unconverted to meet them at seven Whether you are under concern of soul or not we pray you to come and let us talk to you of the things which make for your peace Wednesday The pastor and officers invite the young people of the congregation to tea at five o'clock that they may afterwards hear a loving invitation to look to the Lord Jesus that they may be saved This is a meeting not for young members but for the unsaved Lord's Day Deputations from the church officers desire to visit in the afternoon the class conducted by Mrs.

Bartlett and the classes conducted by Mr. Dransfield and Mr.

Crocker The Lord has given prosperity to these works of love Monday The church will meet for thanksgiving breaking of bread and prayer in the area or the main floor of the tabernacle at seven o'clock and the congregation who are the objects of our anxious care are invited to fill the galleries We desire as a church to let our united and importunate cry go up to heaven Tuesday The deacons and elders a second time invite the unconverted that they may again uplift the Lord Jesus Christ before them The meeting will commence at seven o'clock Wednesday The pastor and officers invite the Sunday school teachers to tea including all members of the church who are engaged in Sabbath school or ragged school work meeting afterwards for fellowship in prayer and exhortation Friday The pastor and

officers will meet the tutors and students of the college for tea Much prayer is requested that this important class of laborers may receive good from our visit Monday Prayer meeting at seven for the unconverted with brief exhortations by the pastor deacons and elders Tuesday Tea at half past five for the tract distributors evangelists, missionaries, bible women and other workers Wednesday Prayer meetings at the various houses of the members which will be open for the occasion at seven We pant for a great blessing on these household assemblies The series will close on the following Monday with a meeting for praise for mercies which faith now anticipates but which will then be actually received O Lord send now prosperity The reports of the week of prayer are a further indication of the

manner in which the work of seeking the salvation of the lost was conducted at the tabernacle These methods brought forth much fruit not only at times of particular earnestness but constantly the work of the spirit was manifest in deep conviction and life transforming conversion Every week a number of persons

came before the church to tell their experience of divine grace and to be received for baptism and church membership And while the tabernacle grew under Spurgeon's ministry so also did several other churches Mention has been made of the work of the college students in bringing new churches into being In all those efforts Spurgeon took a vital interest giving toward them himself raising money for them at the tabernacle and obtaining helpers for the students among his people In 1867 he

reported the construction of a new chapel at each of the following Ealing, Lyons Hall Red Hill Southampton, Winslow and Bermondsey and at all of those and several other places he was also asked to lay the first stone So often was he called upon to perform this duty that someone gave him a silver plated trowel and someone else donated a fine hardwood mallet So proficient did he become with these tools that people began to remark on the workmanlike manner in which he used them So while he constantly used the trowel figuratively building the work of the Lord by tongue and pen he also used it literally as he led in the construction of new churches It was not long before the fabric of the tabernacle needed attention.

The interior was lighted by gas lamps and that fuel did not burn cleanly but had a staining effect on walls and ceiling The building was also subject to a great amount of use for it was open every day of the week from seven in the morning till eleven at night and by the time it had served six years it was beginning to look faded and worn Spurgeon wanted everything in the Lord's work to be kept in first class condition and therefore in 1867 a complete redecoration was undertaken The tabernacle was under repair for nearly a month During that time the services were held in a gargantuan structure, the Agricultural Hall. The place was not planned for meetings but for the display of farm and garden produce and therefore it lacked the acoustic properties necessary for the carrying of a voice A few persons had tried to use it for meetings but found they could not make themselves heard more than a few yards from the platform But Spurgeon decided to use it and had seating installed enough to accommodate 15,000 There was standing room for 2 or 3,000 more The hall was in the north of London several miles from the tabernacle so many of Spurgeon's regular congregation could not attend. It was widely believed that this time he had attempted something that was too much for him But that anticipation proved false At each of the services some 20,000 attended Moreover there was no complaint that any could not hear and many persons who would never have gone all the way to the tabernacle came and heard the gospel In later years D.L. Moody was influenced to use this building for an evangelistic campaign because it had proved suitable for Spurgeon In addition to the duties of his ministry at the tabernacle with its more than 3,500 members and various organizations Spurgeon constantly accepted invitations to preach at other churches Almost every day except Sunday he hastened off to some other church in London Often he traveled either by carriage or train to more distant places He also journeyed to the continent In 1865 he visited Italy and established long friendships with the Baptists there In 1866 he went again to Scotland and addressed the General Assembly of the Scottish National Church In 1867 he traveled to Germany where he preached through an interpreter and raised money to pay off the debt on a church recently constructed at Hamburg He became much taken with a Pastor Onken a man who Spurgeon said knew how to pray with extraordinary fervor As the years came and went Spurgeon witnessed the steady success of all the works of his hands The Tabernacle was ever crowded and conversions and baptisms were numerous The attendance at the college was all the accommodation could handle.

The readership of the published sermons spread to several lands. The sword and the trowel subscriptions constantly increased and each year more coal porters were added. Nothing failed or even suffered a temporary decline But matters were not so promising for Spurgeon himself Up to this point he had

experienced much of youthful health and vigor and had been able to enjoy almost unrestricted activity But his physical strength began to wane In October 1867 at the age of 34 he was bedridden for a time, subject as a result of overwork to nervous exhaustion Upon recovering he thrust himself into his work again with full force, but found he was beginning to suffer pain in his feet and legs His grandfather had long been the victim of rheumatic gout and now Charles learned that he was suffering from the same ailment It was an affliction that he was to experience, sometimes amidst intense pain throughout the rest of his days on earth Chapter 12 Alm's Houses and Orphanage And we have a quote from Spurgeon's review of the Seven Curses of London by James Greenwood And the quote reads as follows In London alone one hundred thousand children wander in destitution, preparing for our jails or for early graves Children of a gutter their food is scant their lodging foul, their clothing ragged Mr. James Greenwood discovered a family of six living in one small room among them three little children varying in age from three to eight, stark naked They were so hideously dirty that every rib bone of their little bodies showed plain, and they were in color like mahogany As soon as he put his head in the door they scattered to the bed an arrangement of evil smelling flock and old potato sacks Homeless children gather around a muck heap at Covent Garden Market and gobble up discarded plums and oranges and apples, a sweltering mass of decay with the avidity of ducks or pigs And now here's chapter twelve Again, almshouses and orphanage Dr. John Rippon a former pastor of the New Park Street Chapel had commenced a work to assist several needy widows He erected a building called the almshouses in which they lived free of charge and he provided each with a weekly sum of money This work was in operation when Spurgeon came to London.

He rejoiced to continue it, but after the tabernacle was opened it became necessary to move these senior citizens to a location closer and more up to date Therefore he launched the construction of a new building for them The new structure consisted of seventeen small homes, which in the manner of the times were joined together in an unbroken row. The women who filled them, all of them elderly were provided not only with this housing, but also with food and clothing and other necessities To this structure, another was added. Ever concerned to make education available among the host of children who were growing up with little or no means of obtaining it, Spurgeon had a school constructed adjoining the almshouses It was an institution accommodating nearly four hundred students At the other end of the almshouses stood a house for the headmaster The almshouses proved a considerable expense.

Spurgeon hoped that some way might be found by which they could be endowed but such money was not forthcoming and for some years he paid for the heat, light, and other expenses from his own pocket In later years, when the tabernacle people gave him a large sum of money in commemoration of his quarter century of ministry among them urging that he use it for himself he gave it all to his charitable works and the almshouses had half of it. At the very time in which he was building the almshouses Spurgeon was building also another and much larger institution an orphanage The orphanage came about in the following manner In addressing his prayer meeting in the summer of 1866 Spurgeon said Dear friends, we are a huge church and we should be doing more for the Lord in this great city. I want us tonight to ask him to send us some new work and if we need money to carry it on let us pray that the means also may be sent A few days later Spurgeon received a letter from a Mrs. Hilliard stating that she had some twenty thousand pounds which she would like to devote to the training and education of orphan boys From a human point of view this was an unlikely offer.

Mrs. Hilliard the widow of a church of England clergyman asked a friend, the man who was not a particular admirer of Spurgeon to recommend some totally reliable public figure into whose hands she could place her money to have it used for orphan boys and he immediately replied Spurgeon She had never met the

famous preacher but upon hearing this recommendation she immediately wrote to him Upon further correspondence Spurgeon went as Mrs. Hilliard requested to visit her He took with him his deacon William Higgs and as they approached the given address they felt the very ordinary quality of the houses in the area hardly suggested an occupant possessing such a sum of money.

So as the two men met with Mrs. Hilliard Spurgeon said We have called Madam about the 200 pounds that you mentioned in your letter 200 she replied I meant to write 20,000 Oh yes you did put 20,000 said Spurgeon but I was not sure whether a knot or two may have slipped in by mistake and I thought I would be on the safe side Spurgeon tried to avoid accepting the money First he suggested there must be members of the family who ought to share in Mrs. Hilliard's charity but she assured him no one was being overlooked Spurgeon then suggested that perhaps the money ought to be given to George Mueller and he spoke of the great work Mueller was doing at Bristol on behalf of orphans but Mrs.

Hilliard was firm in her decision that she wanted Spurgeon to have it and use it for fatherless boys and she expressed the certainty that many other Christians would undoubtedly want to help too Spurgeon and William Higgs drove away from Mrs. Hilliard's home reflecting on the prayer meeting in which they had asked God to give the tabernacle some new work and the means with which to perform it He had answered their prayer and had given them both Within a month Spurgeon purchased a block of land for the project, two and a half acres situated at Stockwell a district not far from the tabernacle Immediately further money began to come in In speaking to his people later he reminded them We met together one Monday night for a prayer concerning the orphanage and it was not a little remarkable that on the Saturday of that week the Lord should have moved some friend who knew nothing of our prayers to give 500 pounds to that object It astonished some of you that on the following Monday God should have influenced another to give 600 pounds When I told you of that at the next prayer meeting you did not think perhaps that the Lord had something else in store and that the following Tuesday another friend would come with 500 pounds Spurgeon went on to contrast the method of trusting the Lord and seeing him supply in this way with a plan generally adopted in Christian circles Spurgeon went on to contrast the method of trusting the Lord and seeing him supply in this way with a plan generally adopted in Christian circles If he and his people followed Christian custom they would he said, first look out for a regular income and get our subscribers and send round collectors and pay our percentages.

That is not trust God but trust our subscribers He tells of a time when he and Dr. Brock, pastor of the Bloomsbury Baptist Church were visiting a friend Spurgeon declared his confidence that God would supply the needs of the orphanage Dr. Brock warmly agreed and as they talked a telegram arrived announcing that an unknown donor had just sent Spurgeon 1000 pounds for the project amazed but filled with rejoicing Dr. Brock began to pray and Spurgeon later remarked the prayer and the praise that he then poured out I shall never forget He seemed a psalmist while with full heart and grandeur both of words and sound he addressed the ever faithful one The orphanage was planned according to certain concepts Spurgeon had developed It was not to be like the average institution for needy children with the youngsters quartered in a barrack-like building all dressed alike and made to feel they were objects of charity.

It was to be several individual homes the buildings joined together and forming a continuous row, each home to house 14 boys and to be under the care of a matron who acted as a mother to the lads There were to be discipline, education and Christian instruction with kindness and sport and individuality These homes were all sponsored by donors One was the silver wedding house given by a woman whose husband had just given her 500 pounds on the 25th anniversary of their wedding Another given by a

businessman was the merchant's house William Higgs and his workmen donated another, the workmen's house.

Another was Unity House given by William Olney and his sons in memory of Unity Olney who had recently passed away The testimonial houses were erected by funds donated by Baptist churches throughout Britain The Tabernacle Sunday School provided the Sunday School House and the men of the Pastor's College donated the College House A headmaster's house and a dining hall were also constructed as well as a large play hall or gymnasium Before long a private hospital that they termed the infirmary was added In typical Spurgeonic fashion all were solidly constructed and one cannot but be amazed that Spurgeon saw to it that there was a swimming pool He was delighted to be able to state Every boy has learned to swim In the boardroom of the orphanage Spurgeon erected a memorial window that pictured the meeting that he and William Higgs had had with Mrs.

Hilliard It was a worthy tribute to the woman whose desire to assist the needy youngsters had led to the founding of this excellent organization A headmaster for the orphanage was also supplied in answer to prayer For some months no suitable man seemed available Finally, Spurgeon's attention was drawn to Vernon J. Charlesworth the Assistant Pastor of a Congregational Church and even though, like Rogers of the college he was not a Baptist Spurgeon engaged him for this task Charlesworth proved to be the ideal person for the undertaking Under his leadership, the orphanage was operated with kindness and efficiency and also with discipline After a few years, he came into the strong conviction that he ought to be baptized and Spurgeon was highly delighted to see him thus obey the Lord The qualities of his character influenced the lives of the boys and girls under his care and also encouraged the prayer and the giving of the numerous friends of the institution Ten years after the boys side of the orphanage was erected, a similar building was constructed for girls The two structures together with the infirmary formed a large quadrangle and the area between was a grass covered playing field adorned at its edges and around the buildings with flowers and shrubs What a difference many a child must have found in leaving some fatherless and poverty stricken hovel and coming to this place with food and warmth and loving care a Christian home in these park-like surroundings Whenever Spurgeon visited the orphanage, the children thronged around him.

He knew virtually all of them by name and he always had a penny a coin of some value in those days for each of them He made it a particular point to call on any children who might be in the infirmary to pray for them and show whatever special kindness he could The children came from all denominations There were blacks as well as whites Jews as well as Gentiles and Anglicans, Presbyterians Congregationalists, Catholics Quakers and Baptists From time to time some of the youngsters were converted and asked for baptism and there were boys who upon growing up experienced the call of God attended the pastor's college and went on into a life in the ministry The orphanage was a lasting demonstration of the fact that Spurgeon's faith was not mere theory, but that it produced good works It was the kind of project that was widely regarded with strong good will and many were moved both to pray for it and to give towards its support The almshouses and the orphanage were of course the fruit of Christianity and they stood out in sharp contrast to the lack of such institutions among the unbelievers England had then its free thinkers societies and its agnostic associations but those organizations did nothing to help the poor and the suffering They labored to denounce Christianity but they knew nothing of self-sacrifice for the sake of the needy Like the Levite in the parable they passed by on the other side but evangelical Christians had long been associated with the building of homes for the aged and for orphaned children Professor Frankie had erected and maintained a great orphanage in Germany and George Whitfield had molded his life around

such a project in the American colony of Georgia George Mueller was conducting an orphanage that was home to more than 2,000 youngsters in England Dr.

Barnardo gave up his medical practice to devote himself to aiding homeless children and other less prominent Christians were now beginning to undertake similar efforts To an agnostic who one day accosted him and challenged his Christian beliefs Spurgeon pointed out that the failure of the unbelievers organizations to take on any definite and sustained program of help to the thousands of needy around them in contrast he pointed to the works that sprang from evangelical Christianity and he closed the conversation by paraphrasing the triumphant cry of Elijah vigorously asserting as well he might but God who answereth by orphanages let him be God now chapter 13 beginning with a quote from Spurgeon's for the sick and afflicted 1876 here's the quote people said to me years ago you will break

your constitution down with preaching ten times a week and the like well if I have done so I am glad of it I would do the same again if I had fifty constitutions I would rejoice to break them down in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ you young men that are strong overcome the wicked one and fight for the Lord while you can you will never regret having done all that lies in you for our blessed Lord and master and now let's begin chapter 13 entitled sunshine and shadow from the late 1860's onward life for both Spurgeon and his wife became a mixture of the joy of the Lord and the suffering of sickness Spurgeon's ill health was very largely caused by the tremendous amount of work he tried to do and the burden of responsibility he constantly carried quote no one living knows the toil and

care I have to bear I have to look after the orphanage have charge of a church with four thousand members sometimes there are marriages and burials to be undertaken there is a weekly sermon to be revised the sword and the trowel to be edited and besides all that a weekly average of five hundred letters to be answered this however is only half of my duty for there are innumerable churches established by friends with the affairs of which I am closely connected to say nothing of the cases of difficulty which are constantly being referred to me end quote he could have listed also many other duties that formed part of his burden the alms houses the school and the college besides his literary labors and his preaching some ten times a week at home and elsewhere finally the deacons realized he

could not continue to bear this tremendous load alone they sought his wishes as to an assistant and he mentioned his brother James they quickly secured the agreement of the people and James was asked to accept this office he was well suited to the task after graduating from Regents College he had served in the pastorate for eight years he and Charles were alike in doctrinal convictions and evangelistic practices and he possessed sufficient preaching ability to supply the deacon's office and to help it very acceptably should Charles be absent above all James was a man of spiritual earnestness and soul winning activity in view of the difficulties that so often arise between an assistant pastor and the pastor himself Charles very wisely had the deacons write out the terms of James's

association with the tabernacle he was to be the co-pastor but was to be responsible to his brother and they pointed out that in event of Charles's death he would not necessarily assume the pastorate James was entirely in harmony with these terms and at the beginning of 1868 he entered upon his new duties he was an excellent businessman and became virtually controller of the entire Spurgeon enterprises the numerous details and decisions in the operating of the tabernacle and its various organizations were now left to him Charles was delighted to be freed from these matters Charles had men to assist him also in other ways for some time J.

L. Keyes had been his secretary and now he engaged a second man J. W. Harold to help in his work a little later Spurgeon found he could no longer carry the full burden of the sword and the trowel so he acquired the services of G. Holden Pike as assistant editor Spurgeon was greatly helped also by his deacons and elders the deacons alone had originally been the chief officers but as the church grew the office of elder was added and by the late 1860s there were 10 deacons and 20 elders the deacons looked after material matters the finances and the physical aspects of the tabernacle the elders responsibilities lay especially in spiritual affairs and to each there was allotted a number of members whom he was to visit and in whom he was to take a steady spiritual interest Spurgeon had visited diligently when the membership was small but after it reached two and three thousand the task was beyond him and virtually all pastoral visitation was taken over by the elders even during the periods of sickness that now began to occur much more often in Spurgeon's life the work of the tabernacle flowed smoothly the co-pastor deacons and elders worked together in happy harmony Spurgeon could always be at rest knowing their personal love for him and their unfailing zeal for the Lord by the 1860s a warm attitude towards Spurgeon had returned throughout much of America the opposition over his stand against slavery had largely died away and numerous people from various states had come to hear him while visiting Britain one of his chief American friends was H.J.

Hines, the pickle manufacturer Mr. Hines was an earnest Christian and whenever he was in England he visited the tabernacle he enjoyed personal friendship with Spurgeon and spoke of him as the most humble man I have ever known the people in America were still not satisfied merely to admire Spurgeon from a distance many wanted to hear him personally and thus in the late 1860s he was again invited to visit the states the invitation came from the Lyceum Bureau a Boston organization that arranged lecture tours it asked Spurgeon to come and lecture as often as he cared to at a fee of a thousand dollars a lecture stipulating only that he lecture at least 25 times in those days a thousand dollars equaled 200 pounds the American offer was exceedingly generous and manifests the desire there was to hear Spurgeon undoubtedly Spurgeon would have enjoyed going to America but the form of invitation he had received did not suit him for one thing the financial element in the offer was too strong it implied he was moved chiefly by a desire for money and it suggested a departure from his usual practice for it did not ask him to preach but rather to lecture and it was also the matter of his own ill health he was however intrigued by the offer and he told his congregation I could have come home with 40,000 pounds some people urged that he accept the invitation but he wrote a gracious reply and turned it down it was well he did not leave for America at this time for Mrs.

Spurgeon now became extremely ill quote dark days those were for both husband and wife for serious disease had invaded my frame and little alleviation could be found from the constant wearying pain it caused my beloved husband always so fully engaged about his master's business yet managed to secure many precious moments by my side when he would tell me how the work of the Lord was prospering in his hands and we would exchange sympathies he comforting me in my suffering and I cheering him on in his labor end quote the home in which the Spurgeons lived Hellensburg house was not beneficial to the health of either of them it was becoming antiquated so it lacked suitable conveniences this moved several of their friends to provide the money for a new one Deacon Higgs was to construct it and Mr.

Higgs' son an architect designed a fine home work was begun to remove the old Hellensburg house and where it had stood to build the new while the construction was in progress Mrs. Spurgeon lived at Brighton as often as possible Spurgeon went back and forth by train but during the weeks at Brighton Mrs.

Spurgeon's condition grew steadily worse sometime earlier Sir James Simpson an earnest Christian a celebrated physician and the discoverer of chloroform had offered his professional services without charge and Spurgeon now accepted his offer Sir James performed the necessary surgery and it was considered fully successful but due perhaps to the lack of medical knowledge in those days her recovery was very slow and she remained in a semi-invalid state after several weeks she returned to Hellensburg house to her delight and surprise not only was she in a totally new home but her husband had planned many special things for her comfort as well he mentions certain furniture he had bought for her and she remarks that alongside his study there was a small room fitted up for her use she

particularly rejoiced in its cunningly contrived corner cupboard the doors of which when opened revealed a dainty washing apparatus with hot and cold water piped in that kind of equipment was not at all common in those days and it proved a happy convenience for the sick woman the new home was a boon for Spurgeon too it gave him a study adequate for his multifaceted labor and also a sufficient size to provide room for his hundreds of books the outside of the property seems to have been all replanted and Spurgeon's man George Lovejoy was there to oversee it a smooth area had been prepared for lawn bowling a game Spurgeon greatly enjoyed especially since it had been the favorite pastime of the Puritans despite his wife's illness Spurgeon tried to maintain his own tremendous schedule but that

was impossible and he was soon forced to take to his bed a very sick man after being absent from his pulpit and being forced to leave his literary work undone he wrote of his condition saying in the Sword and the Trowel of October 1869 quote the editor's painful indisposition compels him to forego his usual monthly notes and also the exposition of the Psalms too great pressure of work has produced a disorder whose root is more mental than physical wearisome pain added to the relative affliction and ever increasing responsibility make up a burden under the weight of which unaided mortal strength must sink and all sufficient God is our joy and rejoicing end quote after several days of suffering Spurgeon recovered enough to be able to resume his work but within two or three months he came

down with smallpox and while recuperating from that disease he suffered a very severe attack of the gout of this attack he says nothing but others followed it and of one he endured in 1871 he wrote in a letter to his congregation a descriptive account this provides an insight into the kind of suffering he experienced quote dear friends the furnace still glows around me since I last preached to you I have been brought very low my flesh has been tortured with pain and my spirit has been prostrate with depression yet in all this I see and submit to my father's hand with some difficulty I write these lines in my bed mingling them with the groans of pain and the songs of hope it must under the most favorable circumstances be long before you see me again for the highest medical authorities are

agreed that only long rest can restore me I wish it were otherwise my heart is in my work and with you when I am able to move I must go away I try to cast all my cares upon God but sometimes I fear you may get scattered oh my dear brethren do not wonder for this would break my heart the orphanage funds are lower just now than they have been these two years God will provide but you know that you are his stewards you do pray for me I know I am as a potter's vessel when it is utterly broken useless and laid aside nights of watching and days of weeping have been mine but I hope the cloud is passing alas I can only say this for my own personal and light affliction there is one who lies nearest to my heart whose sorrows are not relieved by such a hope we notice his words prostrate with

depression in some persons gout causes irritability but in Spurgeon's case it was accompanied by depression of a very severe nature Spurgeon remained out of his pulpit for seven weeks after he returned

he reported something of what he had gone through in an article in his magazine he stated quote it is a mercy to be able to change sides when lying in bed did you ever lie a week on one side did you ever try to turn and find yourself quite helpless did others lift you and by their kindness only reveal to you the miserable fact that they must lift you back again to the old position for bad as it was it was preferable to any other some of us know what it is night after night to long for slumber and find it not what a mercy I have felt to have only one knee tortured at a time what a blessing

to be able to put the foot on the ground again if only for a minute end quote from his pulpit Spurgeon described how he pleaded with God when his agony was at its worst quote when I was wracked with pain to an extreme degree so that I could no longer bear it without crying out I asked all to go from the room and leave me alone and then I had nothing I could say to God but this thou art my father and I am thy child and thou as a father art tender and full of mercy I could not bear to see my child suffer as thou makest me suffer and if I saw him tormented as I am now I would do what I could to help him wilt thou hide thy face from me my father wilt thou still lay on me thy heavy hand and not give me a smile from thy countenance I pleaded his fatherhood in real earnest like as a father

pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth them that fear him if he be a father let him show himself a father so I pleaded and I ventured to say when they came back who watched me I shall never have such agony again for God has heard my prayer I bless God that ease came and the wracking pain never returned faith mastered it by laying hold upon God in his own revealed character that character in which in our darkest hour we are best able to appreciate him we can still say our father and when it is very dark and we are very weak our childlike appeal can go up father help me father rescue me end quote Spurgeon was still very weak and needed a considerable period of rest that was not possible as long as he remained in England and therefore before the coming of winter November of 1871 he left

for Italy in that land and due to the language barrier he could not often preach and the damp and cold of Britain were exchanged for the sun and warmth of the south after six weeks of vacation he could return home ready to take up his work with improved health and new vigor Mrs.

Spurgeon was too unwell to travel with him these separations she wrote were very painful to hearts so tenderly united as were ours but we each bore our share of the sorrow as heroically as we could and softened it as far as possible by constant correspondence he wrote every day and since he possessed a considerable gift in drawing he enclosed with many a letter a sketch of sights he saw of people, costumes, landscapes, trees, wells or anything which particularly struck him.

Spurgeon was accompanied by his publisher Joseph Passmore and two other friends they visited Rome Naples, Pompeii and the Isle of Capri enjoying both the scenery and the weather on the return journey they spent a few days at a place called Monton on the south coast of France and Spurgeon liked it so well he declared it is calculated to make a sick man leap with health he was so delighted with this sunny spot that he returned there almost every winter from that time on it was there in 1892 that he was to spend his last days on earth on the return journey to England he again suffered a severe attack of gout and at Cannes he lay in bed for the better part of a week he says that when he had improved sufficiently to move on a lady lent her bath chair or a hooded chair on wheels to take me to the station and porters lifted me into the carriage there I had a nice sofa bed and every convenience sleep still proved difficult but as the trip through France came to an end and as he prepared to cross the channel he said in the letter to Susanna I can now walk a little and I hope to be alright for Sunday I am indeed grateful to God for his goodness still there's no place like home this brings great loads of love all flaming God bless thee ever in

view of Spurgeon's own long sickness and that of his wife it is difficult to believe that many people thought he possessed a gift of healing the best information available on the matter is to be found in Russell Conwell's Life of Spurgeon particularly in his chapter Wonderful Healing the idea began during the cholera epidemic as we saw Spurgeon visited numerous homes where the disease raged and there he prayed that the sick one might be made well in many instances in someone who seemed near death the disease was stopped and before long health returned people were sure this was the result of prayer during further years Spurgeon prayed for persons in sicknesses of various kinds and although in many a case there was no betterment in others there was improvement that appeared miraculous Dr.

Conwell examined several of these experiences and in 1892 the year of Spurgeon's death he declared there are now living and worshipping in the metropolitan tabernacle hundreds of people who ascribe the extension of their life to the effect of Mr. Spurgeon's personal prayers they have been sick with disease and nigh unto death he has appeared kneeled by their beds and prayed for their recovery immediately the tide of health returned the fevered pulse became calm the temperature was reduced and all the activities of nature resumed their normal functions within a short and unexpected period if a meeting were called of all those who attribute their recovery to the prayer of Mr.

Spurgeon it would furnish one with the most deserved tributes to his memory that could possibly be made end quote Conwell goes on to report seven specific instances of what was considered healing in response to Spurgeon's prayers the belief in Mr.

Spurgeon's healing power became among some classes a positive superstition and he was obliged to overcome the very false and extravagant impressions by mentioning the matter from the pulpit and rebuking the theories of the extremely enthusiastic he felt it was becoming too much like the shrines of Catholic Europe Spurgeon declared that the subject of divine healing was very much a mystery to him he said he prayed about sickness just as he prayed about anything else and that in some instances God answered with healing whereas in others for reasons beyond our understanding he allowed the suffering to continue although the Spurgeons suffered many trials during the 1870's they also experienced much rejoicing one of the happiest events was the baptism of their sons the date of the conversion

of the two boys Thomas and Charles is not known but in one of his sermons their father said did not our hearts overflow as parents when we first discovered that our children had sought the Lord that was a time to be remembered when we were called up to hear their tearful story and to give them a word of comfort we were not half so glad at the birth as we were when they were born again on Sunday September 21st 1874 Thomas and Charles were baptized due to his ill health their father had not performed any baptisms in some months leaving this task to his brother it was an event of special importance when he himself walked into the baptistry and immersed his two sons they were 18 at the time and within a month or two they began to preach on Sundays at Wandsworth Baptist Chapel one taking the

morning service and the other the evening two years later since he possessed artistic talents Thomas became apprenticed to an engraver Charles was called to a church in Greenwich and in a service that recognized the beginning of his ministry there his father preached and the youth tells how leaning over the pulpit rail and looking down upon me on the lower platform he said in tender yet thrilling tones preach up Christ my boy preach him up both of the boys supplied the pulpit of the tabernacle at times they were able preachers and each had something of their father's voice but they lacked his exceptional gifts moreover they were never robust physically and although their father had provided them with gymnastic equipment when they were boys they seemed not to have made any valuable use of

it another event that brought particular joy to Spurgeon during the mid 1870's was the opening of a new home for the pastor's college it was located in the street immediately at the rear of the tabernacle and was large enough to meet the needs of at least 150 students it contained several classrooms on the opening day the president led a prayer meeting in each room solemnly dedicating it to the Lord the building did not contain any dormitories however the men still boarded among the families of the tabernacle Spurgeon believed that if they all lived together there would be too much joking and lightness as was generally the case in other colleges levity of conduct in my brethren he stated brings heaviness of heart to me oh how can ministers be talking lightness and wantedness when sinners

are perishing it must not be so among us the college building cost fifteen thousand pounds much of which was either given by Spurgeon or was brought in by him from his preaching at other churches the building became the headquarters of the Colportage Association and it was the meeting place of the annual conferences of most of Spurgeon's organizations although the construction of the college fulfilled one of the great ambitions of Spurgeon's life it also added to his burdens had he been in excellent health he could more capably have carried the load but subject as he was to the periodic attacks of gout with all their pain and depression he felt the weight of the institutions was becoming too much for him to bear I feel he wrote on one of his days of dejection as though I had created a

great machine and it is ever grinding grinding and that I may yet be its victim but most of his time he lived in the joy of the Lord and was an attractive example of Christian happiness chapter 14 now we're going to learn about Mrs.

Spurgeon chapter 14 begins with a quote from Spurgeon's writings 1882 it is one of the delights of my life that my beloved wife has made ministers libraries her great concern the dear soul gives herself wholly to it you should see her stores her book room her busy helpers on the parcel day and the wagon load of books each fortnight the book fund at certain hours is the ruling idea of our house every day it occupies the head and heart of its manager the reader has scant idea of the book keeping involved in the book giving but this may be said the loving manager has more than six hundred names on her lists and yet she knows every volume that each man has received from the first day till now the work is not muddled but done as if by clockwork yet it is performed with a hearty desire to give pleasure to all receivers and to trouble no applicant with needless inquiries beginning chapter 14 chapter 14 is entitled Mrs.

Spurgeon and her work throughout much of her married life Mrs. Spurgeon was a semi invalid for long periods of time she was confined to her home and was not well enough even to attend the tabernacle but she bore up nobly under those conditions she encouraged her husband under his frequent sufferings and did not complain about her own nevertheless she longed to be busy for the Lord every sentence from her pen that has come down to us and every mention of her that has been left by others reveals a very gracious and spiritually minded woman in 1875 a door of rich usefulness was opened before her her husband's lectures to my students had recently been published and upon reading the book she told him I wish I could send a copy to every minister in England then why not do it he responded how much will you give she began to do some mental figuring deciding what she could save from her housekeeping expenditures then she remembered that for some time she had been putting aside every five shilling coin she received she found she had just enough to purchase 100 copies of the lectures soon she sent a copy to each of 100 needy ministers she thought that was the end of the matter but although she did not allow her husband to mention what she had done news of her action spread and friends began sending her money so that she could send out more books several of the pastors who had been given the copies sent letters that expressed their thanks and made it evident that books were sorely needed moved by a strong

recognition of the need and feeling God wanted her to continue the endeavor she ordered a number of sets of the treasury of David Spurgeon had written four volumes of that work at the time those also went to needy pastors and again there came the letters of thanks and further evidence of need many men were trying to maintain homes and bring up families on meager incomes although there was still no public mention of what Mrs.

Spurgeon had done money continued to arrive and with it urgent requests that she continue the good work for instance one man sent 50 pounds asking that she send a copy of the lectures to the nearly 5000 pastors of the Calvinistic Methodist churches of North Wales then another 50 pounds came to help defray the costs of that undertaking that was followed by 100 pounds to send a book to the ministers of the same denomination in South Wales. News of the gifts spread still further and ministries of various denominations wrote stating that a copy of the lectures the treasury or Spurgeon's other writings would be of great help but that they were too poor to purchase them and as those letters reached Mrs.

Spurgeon more money arrived she could see she had a lasting work to do an undertaking given by God by the time she had been performing the task for five months she wrote quote the number of books given up to this moment is 3058 and the persons receiving them have been pastors of all denominations but ah dear friends when I look at the list of names I see the only shadow of sadness that ever rests upon my book fund it is the grief of knowing that there exists a terrible necessity for this service of love that without this help the poor pastors to whom it has been sent must have gone on famishing for mental food their incomes being so wretchedly small that they scarcely know how to provide things honest for themselves and their families while the money for the purchase of books is absolutely unobtainable it is most touching to hear some tell with eloquence the effect the gift produced upon them one is not ashamed to say he received the parcel with tears of joy wife and children standing around and rejoicing with him another as soon as the wrappings fall from the precious volumes praises God aloud and sings the doxology with all his might while a third when his eyes light on the long coveted treasury of David rushes from the room that he may go alone and pour out his full heart before his God to emphasize how thankful they were for the books many pastors or pastors wives told of the financial difficulties they constantly faced some lived on a salary of 80 pounds others on 60 pounds and some on as little as 40 pounds several had large families some spoke of sick wives and heavy doctors bills almost all faced the burden of educating their children many families were in need of better and warmer clothing or more bedding or more personal items Mrs.

Spurgeon determined to do everything in her power to meet those needs to the book fund she added another work the pastor's aid fund the sword and the trowel reported the needs that existed among numerous pastors and she appealed for gifts of money, clothing and blankets the appeal brought a tremendous response and she had the goods sent to the tabernacle from there a company of volunteers sent them along to those in need the books were packaged at the Spurgeon home every two weeks a full cartload of precious volumes left for the railroad station Mrs.

Spurgeon kept very accurate account of the money that came in and of its expenditure she spoke of herself as corresponding secretary as well as treasurer, general manager, etc. of the two funds there were times she performed her duties in weakness and pain and other times she was so ill that her labors were entirely prevented nevertheless over and above the value of the books and the goods to the precious recipients, the enterprise was especially valuable to Mrs. Spurgeon herself, it gave her reason to feel that despite her condition she was able to serve Mrs. Spurgeon kept very accurate account of the money that came in and of its expenditure she spoke of herself as corresponding secretary as well as treasurer, general manager, etc.

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Spurgeon testified quote I am personally indebted to the dear friends who have furnished me with a means of making others happy for me there has been a double blessing I have been both recipient and donor my days have been made indescribably bright and happy by the delightful duties connected with the work and its little arrangements that I seem to be living in an atmosphere of blessing and love and can truly say with the psalms my cup runneth over end quote as the months came and went Mrs.

Spurgeon increased the books she made available she frequently sent copies of her husband's sermons, sometimes six volumes at a time she added several of his other writings and frequently added works from other men solid old-fashioned scriptural puritanic theology goes forth the area of ministry soon extended far beyond the shores of Britain she spoke of sending books to missionaries in Patna, Bengal, Ceylon, Transvaal, Samoa, China, Oregon, Jamaica, Moab, India, Trinidad, Equatorial Africa, Russia, Natal, Canada, the Congo, Buenos Aires, Cayman, Damascus, Madrid, Lagos, and Timbuktu letters came in from all those places and from many more she personally replied to them all quote the book fund has been nourished and fed from the king's treasury and I must make my boast in the lord that all needful supplies for the carrying on of the work have plainly borne the stamp of heaven's own mint I say this because I have never asked help of anyone but him never solicited a donation from any creature yet money has always been forthcoming and the supplies have constantly been in proportion to the needs end quote in 1885 Mrs.

Spurgeon put the story of this ministry into print ten years of my life in the service of the book fund she reported the income year by year with the number of volumes sent forth and the denominations of the men to whom they were given interspersed were expressions of praise the book earned her a nice little sum in royalties and that provided further joy for she put it into the fund to purchase more books for others she quoted extensively letters from pastors and pastors wives without revealing their identity of course but telling of their struggles she had deep compassion for these needy ones and her heart was moved to do everything possible to help them in 1895 she wrote another book ten years after it continued the report of the book fund and the pastors aid fund although here and there between the lines we can see she was a sick woman and often did her work in pain the project increased in its scope for instance in her summary for 1889 she wrote books distributed 6,916 volumes also 13,565 single sermons the recipients comprised 148 Baptists, 81 Independents, 118 Methodists, 152 Church of England 48 Missionaries, 6 Presbyterians, 2 Waldensians, 3 Plymouth Brethren, 1 Moravian 1 Morrisonian total 560 four years before this latter book

appeared Charles Spurgeon had passed from this life Mrs.

Spurgeon's sorrow and loneliness are often evident in her words but she also wrote with the sense of triumph that only a Christian knows quote I have traveled far now on life's journey and having climbed one of the few remaining hills between earth and heaven I stand a while on this vantage ground and look back across the country through which the Lord had led me I can see two pilgrims treading the highway of life together hand in hand heart linked to heart true they have had rivers to ford mountains to cross fierce enemies to fight and many dangers to go through but their guide was watchful their deliverer unailing and of them it might truly be said in all their affliction he was afflicted and the angel of his presence saved them in his love and in his pity he redeemed them and he bare

them and carried them all the days of old mostly they went on their way singing and for one of them at least there was no greater joy than to tell others of the grace and glory of the blessed king to whose land he was hasting and while he thus spoke the power of the Lord was seen and the angels rejoiced over repenting sinners but at last they came to a place on the road where two ways meet and here amidst the terrors of a storm such as they had never before encountered they parted company one being caught up to the invisible glory and the other badgered and bruised by the awful tempest henceforth toiling alone the road alone but the goodness and mercy which for so many years had followed the two travelers did not leave the solitary one rather did the tenderness of the Lord lead on softly

and chose green pastures for the tired feet and still waters for the solace and refreshment of his trembling child he gave moreover into her hands a solemn charge to help fellow pilgrims along the road therewith filling her life with blessed interest and healing her own deep sorrow by giving her power to relive and comfort others now begins chapter 15 daily life in the great church Isaac Watts is quoted at the beginning of this chapter dated 1674 to 1748 how pleased and blessed was I to hear the people cry come let us seek our God today yes with a cheerful zeal we haste to Zion's hill and there our vows and homage pay Zion thrice happy place adorned with wondrous grace and walls of strength embrace thee round in thee our tribes appear to pray and praise and hear the sacred gospels joyful

sound there David's greater son hath fixed his royal throne he sits for grace and judgment there he bids the saints be glad and he makes the sinner sad and humble souls rejoice with fear my tongue repeats her vows peace to this sacred house for there my friends and kindred dwell and since my glorious God makes thee his blessed abode my soul shall ever love thee well that's the quote and now we begin chapter 15 daily life in the great church the metropolitan tabernacle was not as some have assumed merely a highly popular preaching center it was not a church whose people largely come in from some miles around and after listening to a marvelous exercise in Christian oratory returned to their homes and thought seldom about the place again until the following Sunday morning the tabernacle was

a great working church the vast majority of the members lived in the heavily populated area of London south of the Thames and many were so near that they could walk to the services a very large number of young men, apprentices and young business men had been converted under Spurgeon's ministry now they attended regularly and brought their wives and children with them apart from the sick and infirm there were very few who came only on Sundays there were activity and work that brought great numbers to the tabernacle on many occasions during the week besides the tabernacle itself there were a number of other organizations which, speaking in the human sense, had sprung up under Spurgeon's ministry the most important of those were of course the pastor's college, the alms houses, the orphanage

and the coal porter's association but there were also several less prominent institutions the evangelist's association the country mission the home and foreign working society the loan tract society the sermon loan society, the maternal society the police mission the coffee house mission the loan building fund the christian brothers benefit society the flower mission the gospel temperance society the female servants home society the blind society the ladies benevolent society the tabernacle evangelistic society and the Spurgeon's sermons tract society this is an amazing list but it is not complete in fact, on the occasion of Spurgeon's jubilee, the celebration of his 25 years in London his secretary, J.W.

Harold read the names of his institutions and they then amounted to the amazing number of 66 besides those organizations Spurgeon had had part in forming some 40 missions in various parts of London and his people were conducting several Sunday schools and ragged schools there was also copious use of the printed page the weekly sermon, the monthly sword and trowel, and Spurgeon's books, 44 titles had been published by 1875 which were circulating by thousands throughout much of the world the tabernacle was busy in foreign missions as well several of the men from the college had gone out to distant lands and we read especially of their working in India, China, Ceylon and various African countries the tabernacle was very largely the source of the support of those missionaries this enterprise entirely depended on Spurgeon for leadership as we noticed, he had placed its general management into the hands of his brother but the basic responsibility for its vigorous continuance and its financial sustenance remained with him the students called him the Governor and some of the people used this term in its Old Testament form, the Tirshatha the nickname well indicated his place with the exception of the almshouses each institution had originated under his influence he had planned its form of organization and had overseen its growth and his word was supreme in all its affairs nevertheless throughout the whole movement the matter of authority was not even considered there was a spontaneous recognition of Spurgeon and the relationship was one of his love for the people and the people's love for him under his example they prosecuted the work with affection and fervor

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