

C. H. Spurgeon

by Ian Murray

Ian Murray's sermon on C. H. Spurgeon highlights the preacher's profound impact on the church and the importance of remembering its history.

Duration: 58:49

Scripture: Micah 6:9, Matthew 6:33, 1 Peter 2:7

Topics: "Social Justice", "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher, Spurgeon, addresses the sins of society, particularly the oppression of the poor and the toleration of immorality. He emphasizes that this world is not the place of punishment for sin, but rather a place where sin is prevalent. Spurgeon calls on the church to recognize its own sins and take responsibility for its failure to fulfill its duty. He urges the congregation to humble themselves before God and seek forgiveness for their transgressions.

Transcript

Well, as we turn this morning to the life of Charles Patton Spurgeon, perhaps I should say by way of introduction that it gives me somewhat regret that we turn aside from the preaching of the Word of God to give our attention to matters which are not so directly expository and yet I have to check that thought with the belief that it is also part of our duty as Christians to know the way in which God has led and blessed his church through the ages and it was of course because the organizers of this conference also believe that, that they set aside a certain amount of time this week that we should give our attention to a subject such as the one before us today. I believe it is certainly one of the greatest causes of the present state of the church, the low state of the church, that we have forgotten the history of the people of God. That is a sin, it is disobedience to God's Word.

We are therein commanded to remember them who have spoken unto you the Word of God. The church's duty is to remember all the way that the Lord thy God hath led thee and there are so many texts in the scriptures, let me just read you one in Psalm 77 where the psalmist says, I will remember the works of the Lord, surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of thy work and talk of thy doings.

And the next Psalm says we will not hide them, God's works and sayings, from our children showing unto the generations to come the praises of the Lord. I was speaking with Mr. Oldham just at breakfast time when he gave me something that, underlying this to me, he was pointing out that these great rafters that have been put in the extension to the dining hall, that that wood is not new wood at all and if you look at it

for a moment you'll realize it's not new. It's been built in there and it's not being built in for this summer or even next, but it's being built we hope for many years of usefulness yet to come.

But perhaps it's a hundred years old, perhaps it's older, it's come he tells me from buildings in Philadelphia and other places and that wood has been brought here for this purpose and it is going to serve a purpose in the days yet ahead. And so it is with the history of the Church of God. We who are God's people gathered here this morning, we have come under the influence of God's providence in His Church.

The Word of God has come to us spoken and written and the influence of C. H. Spurgeon has surely been very powerful in this conference and in our lives, even though he died so many years ago. And I say then that we have a duty to remember God's former work, to remember it with thankfulness and to see that the memory of it is passed on to a generation that is still to come. As we begin then this morning, I want to start with an episode, a story in the life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

Something which happened on October the 7th in the year 1857. Some of you may remember that that is the year when what we call in England the Indian Mutiny was at its height. There was a mutiny of sepoy troops in India and terrible barbarities were committed, not only on other troops but on civilians, on families and children.

And the government in London appointed the seventh day of October 1857 as a day of fasting and humiliation and prayer before Almighty God. And I suppose that most if not all of the churches of England and London met that day for that purpose. But about seven miles south of the centre of London was a unique kind of building called the Crystal Palace.

It was so called because it was made almost entirely of glass. It was built in 1851 for a great exhibition. I suppose perhaps the first of such great exhibitions where business was done and produce was displayed and so on.

And then after its erection in the centre of London it was moved down seven miles to Sydenham Hill and thereafter it became a centre for recreation and musical concerts and things like that. And on this occasion in 1857 the board of directors of the Crystal Palace proposed that their building should also be opened that day for prayer and that Mr. C. H. Spurgeon be invited to preach. And that is what took place.

Well the day was a Wednesday, a midweek day. I suppose nobody went to work. It was a nationally recognised day.

And at half past seven in the morning, it was a wet cold morning we read, not always like that in London, but it was that morning. Half past seven in the morning the trains began to run and take people down to Sydenham. The service was due to begin at a twelve o'clock.

And at twelve o'clock on a specially built platform at one end of the Crystal Palace C. H. Spurgeon rose and came to the desk. He was a figure, slightly built then, five foot six tall, black hair parted in the middle, boyish sort of face, a large white collar hanging over his coat, rather country style. And when he stood on that platform I don't suppose he could possibly be seen by all the people present.

Because there were in the building some 23,600 people, probably the largest congregation that ever assembled to that date within a building for such a purpose, or indeed for any purpose. And it was a rather a rambling building. It was 1,600 feet in length and it had transepts off and it was 175 feet high.

And in this building Spurgeon proposed to speak, of course, without any microphone. And if they couldn't all see him we can be sure that they could hear him. Because everybody who spoke of Spurgeon's voice, well they used different terms to describe it, but they added up to the same thing.

Some said that his voice was like a silver bell in its clarity. And others spoke of it as an organ and others as a trumpet. And the truth is it combined these different qualities.

He began then with prayer and then the hymn was sung that morning before Jehovah's awful throne, ye nations bow with sacred joy. He read the scriptures from Daniel chapter 9. He then engaged again in prayer and then he began his sermon with these words, hoping to receive help from God's Spirit. I shall now proceed to address you from the part of the ninth verse of the sixth chapter of Micah.

Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it? Well Spurgeon did not tell them how he had come to choose that text, but we know that it was a principle with Spurgeon that he never preached from a text before, as he said, before it began to bite. And this was a text that had clearly bitten Spurgeon as he prepared his message. The first sentence of his sermon was, this world is not the place of punishment for sin, not the place, it may sometimes be a place.

And he said that his duty that day was, as they had assembled to humble themselves before God, his duty then was to speak to them of their sins and the sins of the nation. And that's what he proceeded to do. He first spoke of the sin of the open toleration of immorality in public.

He went on to speak of the oppression of the poor and he spoke with great fervor on that subject. Behold, he says, this day the sins of the rich, how are the poor oppressed? How are the needy downtrodden? In many a place the average wage of men is far below their value to their masters. In this age there is many a great man who looks upon his fellows as only stepping stones to wealth.

He builds a factory as though he would make a cauldron. And then he began a description of how a cauldron is stirred and brewed and here is this rich man and he's pitching in a clerk and a timekeeper and he gives them a price. I can't read it all to you.

But having done that he goes on to press home that sin. Ye great men of the earth, there is a God and that God has said he executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. He then turned and spoke of the sins of the poor of which of course the majority of the people present would come into that category.

There are hundreds of you that are here today who are the best hands in all the world to prop up walls when you ought to be busy at your own work. Who when your time is bought and paid for, steal it for something else. And how many there are in which are called the lower ranks and God forgive the man that invented that word for we are none of us lower than the other before the judge of all the earth.

How many are there who do not know what it is to look up to God and say, though you have made me a servant, I will discharge my duty. I will serve my master and my God with all my might. Then he proceeded to the heart of the sermon which was to speak of the sins of the church.

Oh church of God, the rod has fallen and the church ought to hear it. I am afraid that it is the church that has been the greatest sinner. Do I mean by the church that established by law? No, I mean the Christian church as a body.

We I believe have been remiss in our duty. For many and many a year pulpits never condescended to men of lower state. Our ministers were great and haughty.

They understood the polish of rhetoric. They had all the grandeur of logic. To the people they were blind guides and dumb dogs for the people knew not what they said.

Neither did they regard them. The churches themselves slumbered. They wrapped themselves in a shroud of orthodoxy and they slept right on while Satan was devouring the world.

He concluded then with a call and an appeal for humiliation, for repentance. Oh if I might but have some souls won to Christ today what would I give? What is all this great gathering to me? It is an extra labor that is all. For this I do not labor.

God is my witness. I sought you not. Never once have I said a thing to court a smile from any man.

When God sent me into the ministry he bade me fear no man and I have not yet met the man to whom I have feared to tell of God's truth. Well there are several things that may be said by way of brief comment on that seventh day of October in 1857. One was that when Spurgeon went home that afternoon to his house on the New Kent Road in London, Wednesday afternoon and went to bed that Wednesday night, he slept until Friday morning.

The only time in his life he did such a thing, but he did it, those two days. Another interesting thing that came out of that service was this. Many years later two Christian men were talking to each other.

One was ill and quite near the end of his days and his friend asked the unbelieving Christian how he had ever come to be a Christian. And the man replying to that question said, many years ago in the month of October 1857 I was a workman doing a job on one of the galleries in the Crystal Palace, London. The building was empty and I was with some friends doing this work when suddenly as though from nowhere a voice of extraordinary power and sweetness said, behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

It was just a few days before the wedding day and Spurgeon had gone down to Sydenham and stood in, as he thought, an empty part of this building to try the acoustics. He gave out this text unknown to him. Here was this little group of workmen in a far off gallery and this man dated his first conviction to that text coming to him in that way.

It began, he said, the work of God's salvation in his life. And one other thing, and the most remarkable thing of all about this service, the age of the preacher. He was 22 years of age.

And if you want to read the sermon that I've just quoted briefly from, it's in volume 3 of Spurgeon's sermons. Volume 3 of the New Park Street Pulpit. But another 60 volumes of sermons from Spurgeon's hand would have followed.

63 volumes. They went on being published until 25 years after his death, till the year 1917. And I suppose it was one of the, certainly one of the greatest marvels of the history of the church that God gave one man so much influence.

Do you know at a certain period in Spurgeon's life, his sermons that were preached in London on Sunday were in the United States papers on the Monday, the next day. They were telegraphed. They were

telegraphed in a rather peculiar way and therein lay a problem.

The consonants were telegraphed without the vowels and the printing compositors of the newspapers in New York and elsewhere, they had to put in the vowels and sometimes it proved impossible. And so this venture did not last very long, but it was done for a while. And Spurgeon's sermons literally encircled the globe.

Two years ago I had an experience which confirmed to me just how peculiarly strong the blessing of Spurgeon's ministry was. I was in a village in the north of Wales and speaking with an elderly Christian man, I suppose a man in his late 70s, perhaps 80. And we got talking about Spurgeon and he told me how Spurgeon had come to his village in north Wales and preached on the open air grounds of the mansion house and how people had come on horses and in carts from miles around.

And then he said, you know when a young man and woman began to go together when I was a child, a youth, and then were beginning to prepare for setting up a home together, they would prepare a bottom drawer. I don't know if you use that expression. The first things one begins to gather for a new home.

He said, you know the first thing they would put in their bottom drawer? So I said, no. He said, a portrait of Mr. Spurgeon. And that was just a small little village in the north of Wales and the same could have been said I'm sure of many, many other parts of not only Britain but the world.

Now those 63 volumes of sermons 20 years ago, it would have been incredible to think that they could have been reprinted. But yet today they are being reprinted. The Trust has printed about 18 volumes, a number of them are in there and the Pilgrim Publications of Texas, they are doing a splendid work in bringing out that whole set of volumes.

And the truth is that Spurgeon's influence today, I was going to say, is as powerful as in his own life. That may be possible. About five years ago I think it was, Mr. Martin was going to speak at a meeting in Glasgow in Scotland.

And some friends known to me asked a young Christian if she would come to the meeting. She had been converted, I think a matter of a year or something like that. But she didn't know very much, she was just beginning and she was very interested.

What she did know was that her friends had been so helped by Spurgeon. And on the way to that meeting in Glasgow that night, she said to her friends who were taking her, will we be hearing Mr. Spurgeon tonight? She had just assumed because Spurgeon was spoken about so much that he must be a living minister. Nobody had told her his dates, she didn't know any church history, but she had hopes that she would hear Mr. Spurgeon that night.

Well, she heard Mr. Martin and not Mr. Spurgeon. Now I want to give you just very briefly the sort of skeleton outline of Spurgeon's life. He was born on June the 19th in the year 1834 in the village of Calverdon in Essex.

If you ever go to England, the most important part of England spiritually, I think, is the area that we call East Anglia. You go east from London and you go into Essex and Suffolk, the area that Constable the Painter has made famous. But it was famous long before Constable for its spiritual history.

That's where so many of the Puritans ministered and where so many of the New England Puritans came from. And it was in the heart of that countryside at Calverdon that Spurgeon was born in 1834. And when he was still a baby, he was taken to his grandparents' home and he was brought up for his first seven years by his grandparents and his aunt who lived at Stambourne.

His grandfather was a congregational minister and Stambourne was just about perhaps 30 miles away from Calverdon. We do not know the reason for this. It may probably have been the ill health of his mother.

But Spurgeon's parents moved then to Colchester, also in Essex, and there Spurgeon returned to his home when he was about seven years of age. But those first seven years with his grandfather left a mark upon his life for which he never ceased to thank God in later years. So he went to school in Colchester until he was 14.

At 14 he went to another school in Kent at Maidstone. He didn't get on too well there because he knew more than his teacher in many respects. And then at the age of 15 he began his profession, if you can call it that.

He became a tutor in a school at Newmarket, also in East Anglia. And from Newmarket in 1850 he went to be, in 1849 I should say, he went to be a tutor at another school in Cambridge. Schools in those days were very small.

There were non-conformist schools that the dissenters belonged to. That was the descendants of the Puritans. There were also Church of England schools.

And Spurgeon then went as a tutor in one of these small dissenting schools. In the next year, 1851, at the age of 17 he became pastor of the church at Waterbeach near Cambridge, five miles from Cambridge. There he stayed until the end of 1854.

One Sunday in 1854, at the age of 19, he preached for the first time in London. He was immediately invited by the vacant congregation who heard him to come as their minister. He went to New Park Street Chapel, beginning of 1854.

He preached in the end of 1853, I should have said. I think I'm right in saying, in London. He went in 1854 and that was the congregation with which he remained all his life.

The building moved to the Metropolitan Tabernacle in 1861 and he preached there from 1861 to 1891. He preached his last sermon in the Tabernacle in June 1891, when he was overtaken finally by the illness from which he died. He went to Menton in the south of France to recover as it was hoped and prayed.

But he died on Sunday, January 31st at Menton in the south of France in 1892, aged 57 years. Now that's just the outline of his life. Now what I want to do in the time that remains is to try to group certain facets of Spurgeon's life and spirit under one or two scriptural texts.

I didn't know how to organize this material and as I thought about it, there came to my mind certain texts of scripture which it seems to me Spurgeon so much exemplified and therefore I've brought together certain things under these texts. The first text then is this, 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 7, Unto you therefore that believe he is precious. Unto you therefore that believe he is precious.

This in fact was the first text that Spurgeon preached from. The age of 16 in a little cottage, country cottage at Tabersham near Cambridge. And he said, I do not think I could have said anything upon any other text, but Christ was precious to my soul.

And that brings me to say a word about his conversion. Spurgeon was then a Christian of about a year's standing. He tells us that as a child for five years, from the age of 10 to the age of 15, he labored under conviction of sin.

For five years as a child there was nothing before my eyes but my guilt. For years I sought pardon and found it not. He said that the law came like 10 great black plowmen who plowed up his soul and then cross plowed it.

And some of the writers who've written on Spurgeon have expressed surprise that somebody could be brought up in a Christian home. His father also was a congregational minister as you may know. And yet in the midst of that Christian light, this boy could labor under this burden these many years.

Well, if we understand the theology of the Bible, we will not be surprised. God so often in preparing men for usefulness, lays the foundations deep. And that's what he was doing with Spurgeon.

And so it was at last on the 6th of January 1850, a snowy morning that prevented Spurgeon from going as he usually did with his father. Prevented him going to hear his father minister. He turned into a little primitive Methodist chapel in Colchester in Artillery Street and heard somebody whose name nobody knows.

It was never recorded. Preach a sermon on the text. Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth for I am God.

Young man said to the preacher, have you looked to Christ? Spurgeon said at that moment he was given the strength to look and to understand the simplicity of the way of salvation. I looked, he said, until I could have looked my eyes away. But in that January then, in the year of 1850, C.H. Spurgeon came to the joy of the consciousness of salvation in Christ.

And later on that month he said, I feel now as if I could do everything and give up everything for Christ. And then I know it would be nothing in comparison with his love to me. And a verse of a hymn that he so often quotes of this period and later, the words, sooner than not my Saviour love all may I cease to be.

And it's the intensity of his love and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ which not only shines in Spurgeon's life of this period, but which was so wonderfully maintained through his ministry. Unto you therefore that believe, he is precious. As a young Christian he said, I used to rise with the sun that I might get time to read gracious books and to seek the Lord.

And of his longing to be useful, I could scarcely content myself even for five minutes without trying to do something for Christ. One of the early sermons that he preached contained this statement which is so characteristic of Spurgeon himself. He said a hundred years ago or more, if we had gone through the churches, we might have readily found a number of ministers of great note.

But now we are all little men, the sons of nobodies. Our names shall never be remembered. There is scarce a man alive now upon this earth.

There are plenty to be found who call themselves men, but they are the husks of men. The has gone from them. The littleness of Christians of this age results from the littleness of their consecration to Christ.

The age of John Owen was the day of great preachers. But let me tell you that that was the age of great consecration. Those great preachers whose names we remember were men who counted nothing their own.

They were driven from their churches and their homes and they gave up all willingly for their Lord. They became great men. And if we were as they were, wholly given up to God.

If we could say of ourselves, from the crown of my head to the sole of my foot, there is not a drop of blood that is not holy God's. All my time, all my talents, everything I have is God's. If we could say that, we should be strong.

His words then as a young man and those words which, as I say, remain fresh through his ministry. The last words just about he ever spoke to his wife before his death were words which he whispered to her in a morning after a long night. He said, I have had a precious time with my Lord this night.

And the verse which Spurgeon was so fond of, if he had been in such a gathering as this and a child had asked him to write his name, he would gladly have done that. And underneath the name, he would have written the lines of William Cooper. E'er since by faith I saw the stream, by flowing wounds supply, redeeming love has been my theme and shall be till I die.

Christ then, precious, his conversion in the year 1850, his baptism in the same year near Cambridge, his joining the Baptist Church in Cambridge. A second text briefly, we've already thought about it this week. How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? When Spurgeon began preaching in England and perhaps across the English speaking world, there was a great change taking place.

The older preachers, men like William J. of Bath and John Angel James, these men had recently died in the previous ten years, many of them had gone home. And there was a new kind of preaching that was being popularised. It was fashionable, it was tasteful, it was polished, it was educated.

But it did not have the unction, it did not penetrate the conscience and the heart. And it was into that sort of situation that suddenly God sent C. H. Spurgeon. And the first thing that one observes about Spurgeon in his preaching at Waterbeach and then as he came to London, was this tremendous sense of a divine commission.

Son of man, I have set thee as a watchman unto the house of Israel. Therefore give them warning from me. And in the midst of all that polished, polite, pulpit language of the day, Spurgeon came in an altogether different mould.

And one of the things he said was that if the church despises preaching, God will despise her. The church's supreme work is to proclaim the Word of God. And he said of himself that it was his prayer that every time he went into the pulpit, it should be with the petition upon his heart, God have mercy upon me, a sinner.

He preached in the consciousness of God's presence, of God's awesome holiness, of the tremendous nature of the salvation which he preached and of the judgment which was to come. And Spurgeon as he

came to London with this sense of preaching, preached to all. And this was perhaps one of the most unique features about his ministry.

In 1854 in London, as you may imagine, there was a great deal of church going. There were areas of London which on the Lord's Day, you would have seen people flocking in hundreds and even thousands to church. But the area of London where Spurgeon began to preach was not such an area.

It was rather the opposite. It was on the south bank of the Thames in Southwark, where houses and shops were crowded together, where poor people lived, clerks, tradesmen, costumongers, people who kept their shops open on Sunday morning and then when they shut them up, went out to try and get some fresh air. It was in the midst of that sort of area that Spurgeon came preaching.

And in his years in that church, he admitted 14,691 new members. And a greater part of these, by far the greater part, were not those who had come from other churches but those who had been drawn and hewn out of the world. And one of the American writers on Spurgeon who often heard him preach says, the character of mediocrity wrote itself legibly, unmistakably over the appearance of the tabernacle congregation.

I say this to Mr. Spurgeon's praise. His church was essentially a mission church occupying mission ground. All the unequalled influence as a minister of the gospel that Spurgeon attained, he attained, let this be forever remembered to his honour, in the service of a church made up of not many wise and not many noble.

Another thing with regard to Spurgeon's preaching, the way he broke through contemporary fashions, the way in which he broke with the prevailing tradition. He didn't go to any of the usual theological colleges. There were certain well-known figures in the church in that day whose names were often quoted.

And the pupils who came out of the colleges were pretty much in the mould of these men. And suddenly this man who no one had heard of, he was but a youth, appears from the countryside of East Anglia and he begins to speak, not in the fashion of the 1850s, but the doctrine that he preaches was the doctrine of 200 years earlier and the doctrine of George Whitfield. And he seemed to be saying everything which people had begun to believe could not be said in that way in the 1850s.

I don't of course mean that he said it in an old-fashioned way. On the contrary, he was conversational, there was nothing high and mighty about his delivery, but what he said came not from his own day, but came way back from the history that he had read. And one can see in Spurgeon as a youth how he was moulded by the influence of men who had died 100 and 200 years before him.

Listen to this quotation. He's preaching on life in earnest. Again it's one of his sermons when he was a young man.

Wake up, he says, Church of God, why are you given to slumber? Oh, for a voice like thunder! What am I, more than half asleep myself, as I read the life of such a man as Joseph Alain of Taunton, or Richard Baxter of Kidderminster, or William Grimshaw of Howarth, and George Whitfield of everywhere? I blush, I blush at my cold heart, especially when perusing the life of our Apostle Paul. I blush a thousand times to think how idly I have lived. These men lived, we dare not say we live.

Oh, the long-suffering and the tender mercy of God, that he has had compassion on such a church as that of the present day, who are so dull and sluggish in the service of Christ. Well, one of the leading ministers

of London said that Spurgeon was the most impudent rascal who had ever come into a pulpit. And you can imagine that some people were offended.

This man coming and without the qualifications which others had, but steeped and molded in these old men, Grimshaw and Alain and John Owen, and preaching with this tremendous conviction that God had commissioned him and sent him. Another text then on another subject, and this is a text as far as I know that Spurgeon never preached on, but a text that he lived. Proverbs chapter 11 and verse 24.

11, 24. There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The first part of the text, there is that scattereth and yet increaseth.

You see the meaning? There is a scattering. When a man gives himself out, pours himself out, and yet the more he does it, the more he has. To him that hath shall be given.

The man who scatters, the man who doesn't withhold, but who gives, is the man who has more to give, and more to give. There is that scattereth and yet increaseth. And how true that is of Spurgeon.

How many there were in his early twenties who said, well, this great preaching can't possibly last. But it did last. And it not only lasted, but it became richer and deeper.

And the American who I mentioned a few moments ago, a man called Wilkinson, he went to hear Spurgeon preach when Spurgeon was 24. And he never got back across the Atlantic to London until Spurgeon was 53. And with great anticipation, he made his way to the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

And as he got near, he noticed he was walking behind a young lady who was obviously a servant girl with a Bible and going to the Tabernacle. So he got into conversation with her. And he asked her, how Mr. Spurgeon was preaching these days? Was his health affecting his preaching? Oh no, she said.

Our pastor, Mr. Spurgeon, preaches better and better all the time. Well, then Wilkinson went into the service. And when it was over, there were a man and wife sitting behind him.

And he got into conversation with them. They were regular members of the Tabernacle. And what they had to say was, Mr. Spurgeon, we think, is constantly improving in his preaching.

And that was Wilkinson's own judgement. He had heard him at 24. He heard him at 53.

And all that time, he was giving out and he was proving the all-sufficiency of God's grace. To me, it is a marvellous testimony, not to Spurgeon's greatness, but to what God did and could do through an earthen vessel. He scattered and yet he increased.

And that's not true simply of his preaching, but of so many other things. As most of you know, he founded a college. Nine hundred students went through his college in his lifetime.

He used to teach them once a week on a Friday, all afternoon. And forty of those students built churches in the London area. And that usefulness went on year after year.

Spurgeon gave himself to it and yet he increased. He built two orphanages for children. They were perhaps his favourite institutions.

One for boys, one for girls. He was often there. If children were ill, he visited them.

There were many who saw him visit that orphanage and they said that Spurgeon in the orphanage was even a greater man than he was in the pulpit. And then there were his books and his magazine. A monthly magazine, 20,000-25,000 readers.

150 books he wrote, translated into about 40 languages. It was said that if you put all Spurgeon's sermons side by side, they would stretch from the earth to the moon. Well, there was this tremendous outflow of material.

Then, let me mention on the same point, his use of money. The first money Spurgeon ever earned was four shillings and nine pence for preaching. Four shillings and nine pence.

Oh, that's half a dollar or something like that. Very little indeed. But you know, he came to earn each year, latterly, between 20 and 30,000 pounds.

That's about 10,000 dollars. We have a banker at our table of breakfast. He's very handy.

So, I asked not only for the proper equivalent, but I wanted it in the last century rate of exchange and he was able to give it me in the last century rate of exchange. About 10,000 dollars. That's a lot of money.

But that money, which in a sense was salary, he used to keep up the orphanage, to help students, so that when he died, he died really, comparatively, a poor man. Apart from his house and apart from his library, he left, I think perhaps 2,000 pounds at the most. Very little indeed.

And yet he had that enormous income, which he went on using. He didn't believe, with regard to financial matters, that one has to first trust in God and then secondly organize and build up resources and all the rest. He said, we only have to do the first.

We have to trust in God and as God blessed the work, Spurgeon used what God gave. Now I have another text in Proverbs. Chapter 17 verse 22.

Proverbs 17 and 22. A merry heart doeth good like a medicine. A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.

Now, I think one can hardly speak on Spurgeon, even briefly, without touching on this facet of his character. One of Spurgeon's friends, a man called William Williams, he said that he laughed more in Spurgeon's presence than he did in the whole of the rest of his life apart from Spurgeon. He said he had the most fascinating gift of laughter I ever heard in any man and it did good like a medicine.

Now you mustn't misunderstand Spurgeon at this point. If you read his autobiography, as I hope you all will, you will find in the second volume how much pain and suffering and anguish he went through personally, the sufferings of his wife, the manner in which he entered into the needs and the sufferings of the church. Spurgeon was the very opposite of a frivolous, light-hearted man.

William Williams, who I just quoted to you, said that his prevailing mood was not merriment. Oh no, far less was he a joker in the pulpit or anything of that kind as he's sometimes been represented to be. But he did have this wonderful gift of humour and he used it.

He used it in many different ways and I can't really take the time to tell you some of them but I must give you a few ideas. Sometimes he used his humour to extricate himself in an awkward situation. His alertness, his quickness, he was once preaching in a country chapel which was packed, it was only a little building, it was packed.

He had scarcely begun his sermon when there was a tremendous crack and a crash at the back of the chapel and a bunch of all the people had been sitting on had split in the middle and gone to the floor because the whole congregation was disrupted. So he said, it teaches us not to trust in forms and ceremonies. Who Spurgeon recognised but he couldn't, well he thought he had remembered his name so he greeted him, good morning, he said, good morning Mr. Partridge.

Partridge, the man said, Partridge, he was being corrected. So Spurgeon said, I will not make game of you anymore. And then, this is not as it were a humorous one but it's him using a humorous situation to bring home a spiritual point.

Spurgeon says, I was dining with Mr. So-and-so and a foreign rabbi was present, a Jewish rabbi. Hot ducks were part of the fare for dinner of which the rabbi was not allowed to partake, a duck having webbed feet. He gave two or three significant sniffs and got in as much of the ducks as he dared.

And turning to me he said, Moses very hard, Moses very hard. Yes, yes I said, yes I said, there is a yoke upon the neck which neither you nor your fathers have been able to bear. So, just a text of scripture and who knows.

And then when he met argumentative types who were kind of super saints, well then Spurgeon was inclined then to use a little humor. If he felt it was impossible to convince a man of the correctness of a position he wouldn't even attempt it but he might just end the conversation with something a little humorous. And I hope I can tell you this one straight, I don't have a note of it, but it goes like this.

Before I tell you, you have to understand, as I'm sure you do, that in Britain our political parties, we don't have Republicans and Democrats, but in Spurgeon's day the two great parties were the Tories and the Liberals. And Spurgeon was a Liberal. Most of the non-conformist Christians were Liberals at that time.

That party is completely gone in its old form. Well, Spurgeon, it was a time of a general election to Parliament and Spurgeon had been to the voting booths, the polling station as we call them. He had been to cast his vote and on the way back he met a gentleman who he recognized coming towards him who didn't believe that the Christian should have anything to do with politics or voting or that kind of thing.

So, when he met Spurgeon, there was no avoiding the fact that Spurgeon had come from the voting booth and Spurgeon said he had been casting his vote. Oh, said the man to Mr. Spurgeon, don't you know that Christians don't vote? That the new man doesn't vote? Spurgeon said it wasn't the new man that voted. It was the old man.

Oh, said the man, yes, but we are told to mortify the old man. That's just what I did, said Spurgeon. My old man is a Tory and I made him vote Liberal.

Well, that gives you perhaps just a little idea of Spurgeon's humour. He used it perhaps most with his students. If you read his lectures to his students, you'll get a great deal of humour there.

He made them remember things. He said some students think or ministers think that they possess the attributes of divinity. They are invisible all the week and incomprehensible on the Sunday.

He said some ministers have three hands, a right hand and a left hand and a little behind hand. Well, there's a great deal like that. I think he made just one mistake or at least he verged on it and I believe he did make it sometimes.

It was more in personal conversation. In fact, it was entirely in personal conversation, but the words of great men get put into books. Sometimes he used a text of scripture, not humorously, perhaps directly, but in a humorous sense that so the next time you hear that text, you think alas, not so much of the meaning of the text, but of the humorous anecdote that you were told.

I think that was a great mistake and I think that the faults of great men are taken up by others and magnified and you know what a Scourge and curse it has been that people think it can be spiritual to twist a text to give it a humorous aspect. As I say, it is only very occasionally that one finds that in Spurgeon, but when one does, I don't think it is something that we should emulate. Now, my last point of... two minutes? Well, the last text I had was really, in many ways, the most important one.

Romans 3 and verse 4. Let God be true, but every man a liar. Let God be true, but every man a liar. And Spurgeon's great overruling conviction and concern was that we are the servants of God and that his honor, his praise, and his glory are the end of all our work.

The first thing I would have you notice, he says, preaching on the song of Moses, is that the end of this song, Exodus chapter 15, is the praise of God and nobody else but God. Moses, you have said nothing of yourself. Did you not lead the thousands for battle like a mighty commander through the depths? Is there not a word for you? Not one.

The whole strain of the song is, I will sing unto the Lord from beginning to end. It is all praise of Jehovah. There is not one word about Moses, not a single word in praise of the children of Israel.

Dear friends, the last song in this world shall be full of God and of no one else. And this was Spurgeon's view. You have heard in the downgrade controversy.

In Spurgeon's later years, the majority of the church, the Protestant church, and even of the evangelical church, was broadening itself. It was doing it deliberately to try to accommodate the new learning, the new science, the new view of Scripture, to accommodate it within the church. And Spurgeon, almost alone, stood against the stream.

And he did it knowing that he was on a path which could lead to the loss of congregations, to the loss of popularity, to the loss of success. And it was the bravest thing he ever did. I suppose, without any doubt, it shortened his life.

And his conviction was that success is not what we are to aim at. God does not reward success. He rewards faithfulness.

It is a very small thing, he would say with the Apostle Paul, that I should be judge of you. That man Wilkinson contrasted Spurgeon with Henry Ward Beecher. And he said, what marvellous individuality and daring Beecher had.

But, he said, the great characteristic of Spurgeon was his docility before the Word of God. He was like a little child. He said, speak Lord, for thy servant heareth.

And it is a very fine tribute. I haven't time to read it to you. I must stop then.

Our time has gone. There is one last point that I make as I pack up my papers. And that is, you surely can see from Spurgeon's life the influence, the moulding power of good books.

Spurgeon seemed to come like Elijah from nowhere, but he didn't. He had been prepared. And he had been prepared by men who being dead were yet speaking.

And it is an encouragement then to everyone here, to parents, to realise that the books that you have in your home, the books you encourage your children to read, these can be moulding servants and it may well be ministers for a future generation. And the young people that are here, how important it is for them to know that as you take in from the riches of good literature, you are getting strength which an older generation hasn't got. Spurgeon as a young man was far ahead of middle aged and old age people and not because of what he was himself so much as because of what he had taken in and was consecrated to God.

And I don't know any stronger argument for the prayerful use of good books than the life of C. H. Spurgeon. I hope then that we'll all look at the books on Spurgeon. His autobiography in two volumes is just a marvellous piece of work, first volume, second volume, and then these volumes of his sermons, thick volumes, don't be alarmed by the size, I would recommend that every Christian has one or two of these volumes.

You can then just browse in them and pick out sermons. I wouldn't recommend that every Christian buys all of them. But every minister, I nearly said every missionary, I suppose he couldn't carry them, but every minister should have every volume, the 63, because then you have got a library.

What Mr. Easinger was saying last night, there's nothing original. Spurgeon says the only one who is original in the Bible is the devil, he speaketh of his own. Now Spurgeon wasn't original, he poured into his sermons the whole wealth of the history and the teaching of the church.

And if you have the 63 volumes of Spurgeon's sermons, and you begin to make your own index and notes, you have the most valuable collection of preaching material you could possibly have. Thank you Mr. Elwood.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/2/SID2979.mp3>
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