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PREACHING FROM THE OVERFLOW OF PERSONAL PIETY:  
THE CONTRIBUTION OF PRAYER AND BIBLE INTAKE  
TO THE PULPIT MINISTRY OF CHARLES SPURGEON

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A Thesis  
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by  
Keeney Ray Dickenson  
May 2017

**APPROVAL SHEET**

PREACHING FROM THE OVERFLOW OF PERSONAL PIETY:  
THE CONTRIBUTION OF PRAYER AND BIBLE INTAKE  
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I dedicate this work to the loving memory of my father, James Robert Dickenson. He went to be with the Lord on July 11, 1985. Prior to his death, in an intimate father and son conversation, he shared with me that he had two regrets. First, that he would not be able to help me through seminary, and second, that he would never meet his grandchildren. It is ironically providential that within weeks of each other, I have completed my doctoral work and have rejoiced at the birth of my first grandchild, Josiah Robert Dickenson. It is with a tender and grateful heart that I acknowledge my father's influence in my life. His lessons of integrity and determination have sustained and inspired me on this journey.

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## PREFACE

I will be eternally grateful for those who have accompanied me on this journey through the life and ministry of Charles Spurgeon. The encouragement and affirmation they have offered me are a priceless treasure. Some have been constant companions, while others have been providentially placed at my side for a timely season. All of them have made an indelible mark upon my heart and the work of my hands. Their investment in my life has greatly contributed to this work.

My precious bride stands at the front of the line. For thirty-three years of marriage, D'Ann has faithfully stood at my side and believed in the activity of God in my life. Although there have been times when I doubted my ability to accomplish this task, her faith has never wavered. This is definitely a dream fulfilled and a living reality that our God "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to His power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end" (Eph 3:20-21). Ours has been an amazing providential partnership.

When I was very young, my parents nurtured me in my faith. My mother has modeled for me a consistent walk with God and love for His Word. Her influence has left a permanent imprint on my heart and life. Also, the support of our children has been a ceaseless reservoir of inspiration. They have spent much time listening to stories about Spurgeon and expressing their confidence in the completion of this task. Their persistent intercession on my behalf has been priceless. Their assistance with technology has made this journey much smoother.

Donald Whitney, my doctoral supervisor, has contributed instruction, correction, insight, and affirmation throughout this process. His influence and passion for biblical spirituality have been very contagious. I am overwhelmed with gratitude for his vast knowledge and insight into Spurgeon's life, spirituality, and ministry. However, his influence extends far beyond this thesis. He has been used of God to deepen my personal understanding and practice of spiritual disciplines which has overflowed into their corporate expressions within my pastoral leadership. The Bible has become the prayerbook of my life and of our congregation.

I have also been richly blessed by the support and investment of First Baptist Church, Crockett, Texas. This has been much more than a personal journey. It has been a congregational journey as well. We have seen the Father deepen our walk with Him, and have experienced His powerful transformation within our church family. His manifest presence amidst our times of corporate prayer and our worship services has been both refreshing and humbling. The blessing of being surrounded by a people of prayer who deeply love and obey the Word of God is beyond my words to express.

I have also been blessed with access to the following libraries: James P. Boyce Centennial Library, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky; Spurgeon Center for Biblical Preaching, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri; Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Library, Kansas City, Missouri; Turpin Library, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas; A. Webb Roberts Library, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas; Lanier Theological Library, Houston, Texas; Carey S. Thomas Library, Denver Seminary, Denver, Colorado; J. Oliver Buswell, Jr. Library, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri; St. Louis Public Library. Each of these libraries have provided resources which have enhanced my understanding and furthered my work.



Christian George and his assistants at the Spurgeon Center for Biblical Preaching also provided access to the library of Charles Spurgeon. The opportunity to immerse myself in his books greatly assisted the completion of my thesis. Dr. George's affirmation, and his rich knowledge of Spurgeon's life and ministry expanded my research and enhanced the process. The providential timing of his first volume of the lost sermons of Spurgeon has also provided essential clarification in this work.

Bob L. Ross, publisher for Pilgrim Publications in Pasadena, Texas, has also had influence on this work. I am indebted for the rich contribution his publications have made in my life and ministry. The value of his diligence in making the sixty-three volumes of *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* available is beyond estimation. Access that he has provided to the eight volumes of *The Sword and the Trowel*, which he has published, as well as other copies in his personal possession, provided a unique opportunity for research. His friendship and the conversations we shared concerning Spurgeon have caused deeper thought and broader pursuit in my research.

It would be impossible to attempt an exhaustive list of everyone who has contributed to this achievement. However, I will conclude by mentioning several others who must be mentioned. My extended family has provided spiritual and financial support without which this journey would have been much more challenging. When I was seventeen, I purchased Spurgeon's *Lectures to My Students*, at Snell's Bible Bookstore in Clovis, New Mexico. Mrs. Snell had no way of knowing how that simple moment would shape my ministry for almost four decades, and open the door of interest for this doctoral thesis. Joseph Harrod has been used of God to fan the flames of my passion for the study of revival and spiritual awakening. The staff in the office of Professional Doctoral Studies have diligently assisted me throughout this process. I am also grateful for Betsy Fredrick and her patient diligence in editing. Eric James, Ray Rhodes, and Nathan Stuller have been influential in my life as fellow doctoral students.

It is my prayer that this thesis will challenge those who proclaim the Word of God to do so from the overflow of an intimate walk with Him. May this work create a fresh hunger for God, as it has in my life, in the exploration of the life and ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

Keeney Dickenson

Crockett, Texas

May 2017

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The nature of the pastorate demands constant vigilance to stay faithful to the example set by the apostles in Acts 6:4, “But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”<sup>1</sup> Jesus Himself exemplified this pattern of ministry in His instruction (John 14-16) of the apostles, followed by intercession (John 17) on their behalf. In his Epistle to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul also intersperses intercession (Eph 1:15-21; 3:14-21) with his instruction. In keeping with his example, the apostle Paul encourages the young pastor, Timothy to give prayer preeminence (1 Tim 2:1-4), and to be diligent in the ministry of the Word (1 Tim 4:13-16; 2 Tim 3:13-4:5).

These scriptural examples and exhortations require preaching that is undergirded by diligent devotional piety.<sup>2</sup> However, meeting the weekly expectation of congregations to hear a sermon that is scripturally sound, and yet personally and culturally relevant can be intimidating. This pressure intensifies with the possibility of unfair comparison with

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are from the New King James Version. Matthew Henry (1662-1714) comments, “What is the great business of gospel ministers—to give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. They must be God’s mouth to the people in the ministry of the word, and the people’s mouth to God in prayer. . . . Those ministers, without doubt, are the successors of the apostles, who give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible by Matthew Henry*, ed. Leslie F. Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961), 1657.

<sup>2</sup>In his classic text on preaching, John Broadus (1827-1895) affirmed, “Surely the preacher, the agent of this high function, must not consent to the omission of any discipline of heart and mind and conduct required for preaching effectively. Among the requisites piety must be placed first. . . . Piety is a quality of soul. It is moral earnestness rooted in a continuing experience of fellowship with God. . . . It is not too much to say that this quality of spirit is the prime requisite to effectiveness in preaching. . . . Much false theory and bad practice in preaching is connected with a failure to apprehend the fundamental importance of piety in the preacher.” John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), 6-7.

the professionally presented sermons of “superstar” megachurch pastors through a variety of media means. Disorientation to the biblical foundations for pastoral ministry can quickly drive contemporary pastors to unscriptural objectives and unhealthy attempts toward effectiveness.

A pastor’s anxiety can be increased at the thought of his sermons, almost instantly, becoming public and permanent through the placing of audio and video on the internet for ministry and outreach purposes. No longer are sermons once preached and quickly erased from memory. All the while, the potential temptation toward prophetic plagiarism is at the fingertips of the pastor, with one sermon website boasting instant access to over 150,000 free sermons.<sup>3</sup> These factors can combine to create mechanical preaching at best and hypocritical preaching at worst. Thus, the diligent practice of the spiritual disciplines of prayer and Bible intake remain crucial for maintaining biblical integrity in this cluttered and disoriented ecclesiastical landscape.

Dependent upon prayer and Bible intake, Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892), the famous nineteenth-century British pastor, provides a well-known example of preparing and delivering sermons from the overflow of his devotional piety. Spurgeon states, “Your whole life, your whole pastoral life especially, will be affected by the vigor of your piety.”<sup>4</sup> He also warns that tragic results occur when one’s personal piety and preaching ministry become separated from one another. These inescapable results cannot be concealed from discerning listeners. He concludes,

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<sup>3</sup>Sermon Central advertises, “Over 157,982 Gospel based sermons contributed by top pastors. SermonCentral is the largest sermon research site in the world with more than 300 new sermons and illustrations added every week.” Sermon Central, “Free Sermons for Preaching Inspiration,” accessed February 22, 2007, <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons-illustrations-this-weeks-top-online-sermons-preaching-topics/>. Scott Gibson, Haddon W. Robinson Professor of Preaching at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, observes, “Preachers live in a world of accumulated knowledge, whose availability increases daily. The internet and the innumerable advances in information technology, in addition to the typical tools and resources available to preachers, provide an incredible temptation for them to succumb to the siren of plagiarism.” Scott M. Gibson, *Should We Use Someone Else’s Sermon? Preaching in a Cut and Paste World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 50.

<sup>4</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (1875; repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 9.

When your soul becomes lean, your hearers, without knowing how or why, will find that your prayers in public have little savor for them. . . . Your discourses will next betray your declension. You may utter as well-chosen words, and as fitly-ordered sentences, as aforetime; but there will be a perceptible loss of spiritual force.<sup>5</sup>

However, pastors can avoid this loss of spiritual force by undergirding the preparation and delivery of their sermons with the faithful practice of fervent prayer and consistent Bible intake. Charles Spurgeon's steady practice of implementing these spiritual disciplines within the context of pastoral ministry will be the lens through which this thesis examines the subject of preaching from the overflow of personal piety. Special attention is given to the contribution of these disciplines to the consistency, effectiveness, and far-reaching impact of his pulpit ministry.

Pastors need the discipline of consistent, proactive, spiritual preparation in order to give birth to spiritually-enriching and biblically-faithful sermons. Andrew Fuller (1754-1815), a prominent eighteenth century Baptist pastor/theologian, made the following entry in his diary on September 30, 1784, concerning a minister's meeting he attended:

A question was discussed, to the following purport: *To what causes in ministers may much of their want of success be imputed?* The answer turned chiefly upon the want of personal religion; particularly the neglect of close dealing with God in *closet prayer*. . . . Another reason assigned was the want of reading and studying the Scriptures more *as Christians*, for the edification of our own souls. We are too apt to study them merely to find out something *to say to others*, without living upon the truth ourselves. If we eat not the book, before we deliver its contents to others, we may expect the Holy Spirit will not much accompany us.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, a healthy bridge built between personal spiritual disciplines and sermon preparation will lead to preaching informed by scriptural insight and enhanced by prayerful thought. Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-1843), pastor in the Church of Scotland, wrote to a fellow minister: "Take heed to thyself. Your own soul is your first and greatest care. . . . Keep up close communion with God. . . . Read the Bible for your own growth first,

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<sup>5</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 9-10.

<sup>6</sup>Andrew Fuller, *The Works of Andrew Fuller* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2007), xlvii. Spurgeon gives evidence of Fuller's influence upon him in that he references him in two of his books on pastoral ministry. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 94, 138. Charles Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries* (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian, 2006), 50, 199.

then for your people.”<sup>7</sup> A vital connection with God through the spiritual disciplines brings authenticity and anointing to one’s preaching ministry. Without an intimate acquaintance with the God of the Word through spiritual disciplines, sermons become mechanical discourses *about* the Word of God rather than “thus saith the Lord” proclamations *from* the Word of God. Through an analysis of Spurgeon’s writings and biographies, this thesis demonstrates how pastors today can follow his example by building their ministries upon the pillars of prayer and Scripture intake with an overflow of sermons marked by power and freshness.

### **Familiarity with the Literature**

No less than thirty-eight biographies have been written about Charles Spurgeon.<sup>8</sup> They provide extensive records concerning his personal life, marriage, family, and ministry endeavors. Large portions of these biographies are devoted to the historical context in which he ministered, the growth of his congregation, and the institutions which he founded. While the majority of these biographies include anecdotes and make allusions as to his practice of prayer and Scripture intake, few devote as much as an entire chapter to either of these themes.<sup>9</sup> However, there are a variety of works by Spurgeon himself

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<sup>7</sup>Andrew Bonar, *Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray M’Cheyne* (Chicago: Moody, 1947), 273-74.

<sup>8</sup>Arnold Dallimore states, “The biographies of Spurgeon are numerous. Following his death in 1892 they appeared for the next two or three years at the rate of about one a month.” Arnold Dallimore, *C. H. Spurgeon: The New Biography* (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 246. Lewis A. Drummond lists thirty-five biographies written about Charles Spurgeon published between 1867 and 1984. Lewis A. Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1992), 882-83. Peter Morden cautions, “During his lifetime a number of popular biographies were written and his death in 1892 led to a rush of such books. Few of these works rise above the level of hagiography. . . . Some of these ‘tombstone’ biographies . . . are useful because the writers knew their subject personally and insights can be gleaned from them with regards to Spurgeon’s personality and friendships.” Peter Morden, *Communion with Christ and His People: The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon* (Oxford: Regent Park College, 2010), 4. In the most recent scholarly biography of Spurgeon written by Tom Nettles, he identifies ten biographies he considers worthy of serious attention. Tom Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Spurgeon* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2013), 9-10.

<sup>9</sup>There are four exceptions. Russell Conwell’s biography of Spurgeon includes a chapter titled “God Heard Him” about the priority and power of his prayer life. Russell Conwell, *The Life of Charles*

which address the priority of prayer and Scripture intake.<sup>10</sup> This thesis draws from these works to provide a unique focus on how Spurgeon's devotion to prayer and Scripture was intertwined throughout the preparation and delivery of sermons.

My primary source of biographical material has been Spurgeon's unabridged autobiography.<sup>11</sup> This work has proven to be a bountiful source of his personal memoirs regarding various seasons throughout his life and ministry. This work has been beneficial in the avoidance of folklore and legend, which have been repeated in biographies of Spurgeon where no verifiable primary sources are cited. It has also provided the opportunity to confirm aspects of his life recorded by his biographers.

*Lectures to My Students* by Spurgeon was the foundational resource for the understanding of the precepts which he advocated for those in developmental stages of ministry.<sup>12</sup> This book contains weekly lectures that Spurgeon delivered to the student body of the Pastor's College, which he founded in 1857. It offers practical instruction for those called into pastoral ministry. Much more than a work on the mechanics of ministry, this work focuses on the man of God's personal piety and his preparation to proclaim God's Word. From the first chapter, "The Minister's Self-Watch," Spurgeon places a high priority on the pastor's personal piety. Other beneficial chapters from include "The Preacher's Private Prayer," "On the Choice of a Text," and "Earnestness: Its Marring and Making."

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*Haddon Spurgeon: The World's Greatest Preacher* (Cincinnati: E. R. Curtis and Company, 1892), 343-69. E. F. Adcock titled a chapter, "God Answered Him." E. F. Adcock, *Charles Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Anderson, IN: Warner, 1925), 93-99. Also, J. C. Carlile devotes a chapter to "Spurgeon the Mystic" in J. C. Carlile, *Spurgeon: An Interpretive Biography* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1933), 268-86. Morden, *Communion with Christ*, concentrates chapters on piety, prayer, and holiness.

<sup>10</sup>Ray Rhodes provides insight into a large number of these resources in his doctoral thesis. Elma Ray Rhodes, Jr., "The Role of Bible Intake and Prayer in the Marriage of Charles and Susannah Spurgeon" (D.Min. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016).

<sup>11</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *Autobiography: His Diary, Letters, and Records, by His Wife and Private Secretary*, 4 vols. (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1992).

<sup>12</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*.

Another work by Spurgeon similar to *Lectures to My Students* is *An All-Around Ministry*.<sup>13</sup> It is a compilation of his annual presidential addresses delivered at his Pastor's College. The twelve messages are characterized by the blending of solemnity and practicality, such as "Individuality and Its Opposite," "Light, Fire, Faith, Life, Love," and "The Preacher's Power, and the Conditions of Obtaining It." Each of these addresses were delivered to alumni of the institution and other likeminded ministers with the objective of challenging and encouraging them to continue their pursuit of a biblically sound ministry. They provide a unique view into the heart and ministry of Spurgeon and his passion for mentoring others.

Spurgeon did not write out his pastoral prayers and was reluctant to have them put in print. Thus, he guarded against their transcription by well-meaning people. Arnold Dallimore explains, "Spurgeon asked that no one take down his prayers in shorthand, declaring prayer was too solemn an activity to be subjected to reporting."<sup>14</sup> However, *The Pastor in Prayer* provides a small collection of prayers that were transcribed by unidentified listeners as Spurgeon prayed during worship services.<sup>15</sup> These prayers are undergirded with sound biblical theology and Scriptural content. They exemplify insight into the depth of his walk with God and his pastoral intercession for his congregation. This resource has been helpful in exploring the depth and breadth of Spurgeon's public prayers, as well as providing a window through which to better understand his walk with God.

Prayer and Scripture were major themes in Spurgeon's sermons.<sup>16</sup> He spoke repeatedly of these spiritual disciplines in the context of personal piety, pastoral piety,

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<sup>13</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *An All-Around Ministry: Addresses to Ministers and Students* (1900; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2003).

<sup>14</sup>Dallimore, *C. H. Spurgeon*, 77.

<sup>15</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *The Pastor in Prayer: A Collection of the Sunday Morning Prayers of C. H. Spurgeon* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2004).

<sup>16</sup>See appendix 1 for "Sermons by Charles Spurgeon That Emphasize Prayer," and appendix 2



and congregational piety. Thus, the *New Park Street Pulpit* and *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* have proven to be invaluable as primary source material.<sup>17</sup> Statements found within these volumes provide understanding of the priority Spurgeon placed on personal piety, prayer, and Scripture intake through his pulpit ministry.

Secondary sources have also been used in developing this thesis. In *C. H. Spurgeon: A New Biography*, Arnold Dallimore contributed a concise foundational work which explores the life, piety, and ministry of Spurgeon.<sup>18</sup> He furnishes helpful insight into how prayer and Scripture shaped Spurgeon and his ministry through each season of his life. These interwoven themes underscore the value and priority that Spurgeon gave to biblical spirituality and spiritual disciplines.

Tom Nettles's thorough biography, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, provided a much-needed extensive theological exploration of Spurgeon's life and pastoral ministry.<sup>19</sup> The foundational truths that Spurgeon embraced deeply shaped his personal devotion and pulpit ministry. Far more than any other biographer, Nettles quotes extensively from *The Sword and the Trowel*, a monthly magazine edited by Charles Spurgeon. This work furnished unique insights into the heart and ministry of Spurgeon as expressed in this publication. It was a valuable source for a broader understanding of the theological issues for which Spurgeon stood, and that he addressed within the church of his day.

Peter Morden, Vice Principal of Spurgeon's College in London, has drawn from resources to which he has unique access due to his position. These resources include

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for "Sermons by Charles Spurgeon on the Word of God."

<sup>17</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *New Park Street Pulpit/Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 63 vols. (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1969-1995).

<sup>18</sup>Dallimore, *C. H. Spurgeon*.

<sup>19</sup>Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*. This biography more than adequately addresses the need expressed by Peter Morden: "Over a hundred years after Spurgeon's death, both a comprehensive study of his theology and a definitive critical biography are badly needed." Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 6.

primary source material from periodicals published in Spurgeon's day, historical documents of Spurgeon's College, and unpublished personal letters and sermon notes penned by Spurgeon. His work clarifies definite aspects of the influence of Puritan piety and theology had in Spurgeon's spiritual and ministerial development. Specifically related to this thesis, Morden explores his views and practices of prayer and Scripture intake. His book includes a helpful perspective within the personal and congregational viewpoints. I have also relied upon Morden's insight into Spurgeon's pursuit of personal holiness and the impact resulting from dark bouts of depression and lengthy seasons of personal illness.

Regarding the pulpit ministry of Spurgeon, Zack Eswine, Assistant Professor of Homiletics at Covenant Seminary in St. Louis, has contributed a book entitled *Kindled Fire: How the Methods of C. H. Spurgeon Can Help Your Preaching*. This work fine-tuned my understanding of Spurgeon's methods along with practical ways by which one can follow his example. His exploration of Spurgeon's call to ministry, personal convictions, vivid imagination, and his harnessing of emotion were useful in gaining a more well-rounded view of him as a man and minister.

Lewis A. Drummond also contributed a beneficial biography of Spurgeon. In *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers*, Drummond renders a comprehensive view of Spurgeon's lifestyle, ministry, and influence.<sup>20</sup> This work offered helpful narrative about life events which surrounded the development of his personal piety, doctrinal understanding, and philosophy of ministry. It also assisted in placing many of the struggles, adversity, and conflicts that shaped Spurgeon within the larger context of his life and ministry.

Other secondary sources which focus on a specific aspect of Spurgeon's life and ministry were utilized for this thesis. For instance, the writings of the Puritans left an indelible imprint on the mind and heart of Spurgeon. His personal library contained hundreds volumes of Puritan sermons and commentaries with which he was deeply

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<sup>20</sup>Drummond, *Spurgeon*.

acquainted. Their pages were a spiritual oasis as well as a seedbed of truth that produced fruit within the fertile soil of Spurgeon's heart and mind. Biographer Ernest Bacon has contributed a source devoted exclusively to this aspect, entitled *Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans*.<sup>21</sup> Most biographies mention the extensive influence the Puritans had on Spurgeon, but Bacon's work concisely, yet thoroughly, explores their influence on his theology and pastoral ministry. It has provided specific examples of authors and works that were treasured by him.

In *The Gospel Focus of Charles Spurgeon*, Steven Lawson explores the centrality of the good news of Jesus Christ in his preaching ministry.<sup>22</sup> It highlights the passionate priority Spurgeon placed upon Christ-centered preaching and his desire to prepare others to do the same. Lawson emphasizes ways in which Spurgeon maintained a genuine dependence upon the person and work of the Holy Spirit throughout his ministry. Along with these helpful emphases, it also delivered helpful insight into the influence of the doctrines of grace upon Spurgeon's spirituality and ministry. Though it is a concise work, it is rich in quotations and permeated with vivid biographical examples of the theological foundation upon which he built his ministry.

### **Void in the Literature**

Spurgeon sought to maintain and restore biblical equilibrium in a culture similar to the present day, which had a growing disillusionment and disorientation to scriptural truth. Many helpful works have been written with a specific focus on Spurgeon's reaction to theological controversy. With great depth, Iain Murray explores this aspect of his ministry in *The Forgotten Spurgeon*.<sup>23</sup> Murray traces Spurgeon's role in three theological

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<sup>21</sup>Ernest Bacon, *Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans* (1967; repr., Arlington Heights, IL: Christian Liberty, 2001).

<sup>22</sup>Steven J. Lawson, *The Gospel Focus of Charles Spurgeon* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2012).

<sup>23</sup>Iain Murray summarizes the three controversies: "I have centred the chapters largely around the three major controversies of his ministry. The first concerns Spurgeon's early witness against a diluted

controversies that he passionately addressed from the pulpit and with the pen. Hence, he provides insight into Spurgeon's passion for Scripture and doctrinal integrity, and his willingness to stand alone regarding his deep convictions. While this brought helpful focus as to how Spurgeon's historical context affected and shaped his thought and ministry, it provided limited emphasis on the pervasive influence of spiritual disciplines on Spurgeon which strengthened and empowered him for doctrinal battle.

Tom Nettles masterfully traces in detail the unfolding progression and solidification of Spurgeon's thought concerning the vital truths of Scripture. Similarly, Steven Lawson provides helpful insight into the central theological themes that pervaded Spurgeon's preaching. Also, Ernest Bacon, compliments the contributions of Nettles and Lawson by exploring the rich influence Puritan writings had on the doctrinal focus of his preaching. The historical theological contribution of these authors is invaluable. Also, each of these volumes give considerable mention to Spurgeon's practice of prayer and Scripture intake. However, no work is exclusively devoted to this focus in his preparation and delivery of sermons.

Prayer and Scripture intake were not a casual ingredient added to Spurgeon's sermons for flavoring. They were the undeniable foundations from which his sermons were birthed and empowered. Thus, they deserve an isolated and elevated focus that has been lacking in the literature about him. Through this thesis, I sought to fill this void by bringing together the teaching and testimony of Spurgeon regarding his consistent practice of these spiritual disciplines. Also, by gleaning from other works written by and about Spurgeon, it has been my objective to provide a concentrated perspective on this vital aspect, as well as offer practical application of principles for the contemporary pastor facing similar challenges to those of Spurgeon.

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evangelicalism. . . . The second controversy arose out of a sermon on Baptismal Regeneration which he preached on June 5, 1864. . . . The last great controversy, from 1887 to his death five years later at the age of fifty-seven, centres around his protest against the Down-Grade movement in the churches. " Iain Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1998), 5-6.

## **Thesis**

Preaching is most effective and powerful when rooted in personal piety through prayer and Bible intake. However, contemporary preaching can be weakened by substituting secondary tools and resources for these primary biblical foundations. In sharp contrast, Charles Spurgeon serves as an enduring example of one who faithfully preached from the overflow of personal piety. This thesis presents Spurgeon's consistent practice of the spiritual disciplines of prayer and Scripture intake as an enduring example which will transform the modern day pastoral preaching ministry.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF PREACHING FROM THE OVERFLOW OF PERSONAL PIETY

There are a variety of views regarding the nature of sermon preparation and delivery. Some may view this process as little more than an intellectual exercise, while others might see it as the simple recitation of prewritten messages in the yearly lectionary. Both approaches manifest a disconnect between the act of preaching and the spirituality of the preacher. However, R. Albert Mohler, Jr., president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, insists, “The pastor’s confession of his faith and personal example add both authority and authenticity to the pastoral ministry. Without these, the pastor can sound more like a theological consultant than a faithful shepherd.”<sup>1</sup> Preaching involves delivering messages that result from learning and living the truth of God’s Word. It is virtually impossible to divorce preaching from piety, or the lack thereof. Spurgeon warned, “An unholy ministry would be the derision of the world, and a dishonor to God.”<sup>2</sup> He then contrasts an unholy ministry with the impact of a holy ministry:

But let a man once become really holy, even though he has but the slenderest possible ability, he will be a more fit instrument in God’s hand than the man of gigantic acquirements, who is not obedient to the divine will, nor clean and pure in the sight of the Lord God Almighty.<sup>3</sup>

Andrew Fuller addressed this issue in an ordination charge which he delivered: “One of the greatest temptations of a ministerial life is to handle Divine truth as ministers, rather

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<sup>1</sup>R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *The Pastor as Theologian* (Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006), 14.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *The Soul-Winner: How to Lead Sinners to the Savior* (1895; repr., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1963), 47.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

than as Christians—for others, rather than for ourselves. . . . Hold forth the word of life, not only by precept, but by *a holy practice*.”<sup>4</sup> The most effective illustration the preacher can give is that of truth practically and consistently applied in his personal walk with God. As the apostle Paul put truth on display in his own life, this reinforced the words which he proclaimed to others (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1). God has called the preacher to deliver His Word with authority and authenticity, not merely to present lifeless lectures to his hearers.

However, there is a subtle temptation to divorce one’s public preaching ministry from the personal piety which is mandated by God:

If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. (1 Tim 4:6-7)

The relationship between a pastor’s piety and his ministry quickly reveals whether or not he is truly concentrated on God and pursuing intimacy with Him (1 Tim 3:1-7). In the introductory lecture at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina, Basil Manly, Jr. (1825-1892) queried, “What are the qualifications requisite for a minister of the gospel? It need scarcely be said that piety is essential.”<sup>5</sup> There is an undeniable link between the preacher’s prayerful piety and powerful proclamation throughout Scripture and church history. Preaching and ministering from the overflow of personal piety enables the preacher to do so in the atmosphere of authenticity. Gardiner Spring (1785-1873), pastor of Cedar Street Church in New York City for sixty-three years, describes the importance of piety in one’s life and ministry:

There is no part of a minister’s work that is not immediately affected by his piety. . . . The object at which he aims, his own personal qualifications, his firmness and stability in the faith, his perseverance in toil, his comfort in trials, and his whole

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<sup>4</sup>Andrew Fuller, “Spiritual Knowledge and Holy Love Necessary for the Gospel Ministry,” in *The Works of Andrew Fuller* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2007), 681-82.

<sup>5</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin, Roger D. Duke, and A. James Fuller, *Soldiers of Christ: Selections from the Writings of Basil Manly, Sr., and Basil Manly, Jr.* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders, 2009), 173.

spirit, and even manner in the pulpit, are influenced by his fear of God, and his love of Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup>

How a pastor goes about the task of preaching is the direct result of his view of who he is, and why he is doing it. Without an authentic sense of divine call and commission, ministry quickly becomes nothing more than a vocational routine. Near the end of the nineteenth century, John Broadus, the first professor of homiletics and second president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, warned about the ministerial temptation to treat preaching as a profession: “And we must constantly beware lest we fall into the habit of reading the Bible only as a perfunctory matter, a professional duty.”<sup>7</sup> Although the Bible should be the source for sermons, God’s Word must never be used merely as a sermonic sourcebook (2 Tim 3:16-17). The preacher is to be primarily a man of God, and then a messenger for God. Scripture is to be a spiritual lifeline for the man of God, as well as for all believers. This chapter initially traces this struggle between piety and professionalism in Scripture and church history. It also focuses on the biblical and historical influences in Spurgeon’s life which pointed him to the scriptural mandate of ministering from the overflow of personal piety through prayer and Scripture intake.

### **The Struggle between Piety and Professionalism**

It is a strange paradox that the ministry can become detrimental to one’s piety. Spurgeon gave his students a solemn warning from his own experience: “Our office, instead of helping our piety, as some assert, is through the evil of our natures turned into one of its most serious hindrances; at least, I find it so.”<sup>8</sup> From the Old and New Testament world to the present, professionalism has been the antithesis of pastoral piety. Aaron’s sons brought divine judgment upon themselves by substituting worship methods of their own making for the clear commands of God (Lev 10:1-3). Professional false

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<sup>6</sup>Haykin, Duke, and Fuller, *Soldiers of Christ*, 173.

<sup>7</sup>John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1894, 1870), 122.

<sup>8</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (1875; repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 15.



prophets sought to flatter and appease King Ahab (1 Kgs 22:6-13), and others contradicted the message of Jeremiah and deceptively proclaimed secondhand messages (Jer 23). It was pharisaical professionalism which opposed the ministry and message of Jesus. For these men, ministry was nothing more than a prestigious position and a lucrative business opportunity (Matt 23:13-36; Luke 20:46-47). Joel Beeke contends,

Jesus condemned the Pharisees and scribes for not being and doing what they proclaimed. They were condemned for carrying on a professional ministry in which a great disparity existed between lip and life, between the doctrine professionally proclaimed and the doctrine assimilated and manifested in daily living.<sup>9</sup>

The human heart can be quickly derailed by hunger for prestige, hidden agendas, impure motives, and congregational expectations. Professionalism was manifested in Judaism which fiercely opposed the ministry of the apostle Paul. A. T. Robertson (1863-1934), professor of New Testament interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, identified what he considered the greatest threat to biblical ministry: “No greater peril confronts the minister today than the one Paul found in the Judaism of his day. . . . The scribe split hairs over what prophet and priest had meant. Traditional interpretation took the place of vital experience of God.”<sup>10</sup> Robertson went on to say: “The preacher of Christ today needs constant renewal of his spiritual life to avoid this empty professionalism into which Judaism had sunk.”<sup>11</sup> Tragically, professionalism has threatened vital ministry and piety for centuries in a variety of cultures. Professionalism can be defined as the practice of preaching as an occupational routine; depending upon human talent, research, and personality rather than the maintaining of a life-giving intimacy with God and dependence upon Him. Spurgeon cautioned his students about falling prey to the unending battle against what he called *ministerialism*:

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<sup>9</sup>Joel R. Beeke, “The Utter Necessity of a Godly Life: The Foundation of Pastoral Ministry,” in *Reforming Pastoral Ministry: Challenges for Ministry in Postmodern Times*, ed. John H. Armstrong (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 60.

<sup>10</sup>A. T. Robertson, *The Glory of the Ministry: Paul’s Exultation in Preaching* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1911), 77.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 79.

You must remember, too, that we have need of a very vigorous piety, because our danger is so much greater than that of others. Upon the whole, no place is so assailed with temptation as the ministry . . . of these the worst is the temptation to ministerialism—the tendency to read our Bibles as ministers, to pray as ministers, to get into doing the whole of our religion as not ourselves personally, but only relatively, concerned in it . . . How one kicks and struggles against officialism, and yet how easily it besets us, like along garment which twists around the racer’s feet and impedes his running! Beware dear brethren, of this and all other seductions of your calling; and if you have done so until now, continue still to watch till life’s latest hour.<sup>12</sup>

Spurgeon attempted to turn the tide of polished professionalism, which was catering to a carnal culture. This led him to consistently and passionately plead with the next generation of pastors: “I pray you, moreover, measure your work in the light of God. Are you God’s servant or not? Yours is not a trade, or a profession.”<sup>13</sup> Because he sought to preach messages that were Scripture-fed and Spirit-led, Spurgeon paid a high price to overcome temptations to do otherwise. Thus, he passionately admonished his students: “Anything is better than mechanical sermonising, in which the direction of the Spirit is practically ignored. . . . I say, therefore, watch the course of Providence; cast yourselves upon the Lord’s guidance and help.”<sup>14</sup> He clearly understood that theological education has the potential of shaping the condition of the pulpit for generations. Thus, he was relentless in faithfully mentoring young ministerial students.

The pervading epidemic of professionalism of Spurgeon’s day continued into the next century and generation of preachers. On October 4, 1911, Benjamin B. Warfield (1851-1921), Professor of Theology at Princeton University, delivered a message entitled “The Religious Life of Theological Students” during the Autumn Conference at the school. He offered a preventive challenge for the students to avoid the subtle pollutants of professionalism that threatened to contaminate their ministries:

We are frequently told, indeed, that the great danger of the theological student lies precisely in his constant contact with divine things. They may come to seem common to him, because they are customary. . . . You may come to handle even the

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<sup>12</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 15.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 319.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 92.

furniture of the sanctuary with never a thought above the gross earthly materials of which it is made. The words which tell you of God's goodness may come to be mere words to you—Hebrew and Greek words, with etymologies, and inflections, and connections in sentences. . . . It is your great danger. But it is your great danger, only because it is your great privilege. . . . It is all in danger of becoming common to you! God forgive you, you are in danger of becoming weary of God! . . . Are you, by this constant contact with divine things, growing in holiness, becoming every day more and more men of God?<sup>15</sup>

This professionalism of the pulpit can be traced throughout the twentieth century and into the present. Is it possible that professionalism became more common and acceptable due to pastors and churches valuing societal acceptability more than scriptural authority? George W. Truett (1867-1944), pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, cautioned, "The preacher is to guard against professionalism. Just here, is a very serious snare for the preacher. . . . Professional preaching is abominable both in the sight of God and of serious men."<sup>16</sup> Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981), gifted expositor and pastor of London's Westminster Chapel for twenty-five years, identified the relentless struggle between professionalism and piety. In lectures he delivered to students at Westminster Theological Seminary, which were later published as *Preaching and Preachers*, he stated, "Starting with the preacher himself, what has he to avoid? First and foremost professionalism. That is the greatest of the dangers in the ministry. It is something preachers have to fight as long as they live."<sup>17</sup> The rapid rise of technology, and the accessibility of shortcuts, exacerbated the plague of professionalism at the end of the twentieth century and into the beginning of the twenty-first century. Derek Prime and Alistair Begg expound on the nature of the pastor's struggle with professionalism:

Taking care of our secret life with God is the clue to avoiding the snare of professionalism, especially if we have been set apart to give the whole of our time to the work of an undershepherd. By professionalism we have in mind the snare of reading the Scriptures principally with a view to their application to others, rather

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<sup>15</sup>Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Religious Life of Theological Students* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1992), 6-7.

<sup>16</sup>George W. Truett, *Follow Thou Me* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1932), 235.

<sup>17</sup>D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 252.

than first and foremost to applying them to our own lives. . . . A danger inherent in being paid for a task is that we may end up doing it only as a job.”<sup>18</sup>

The subtle nature of professionalism can cause a pastor to unknowing drift in that direction. Worldliness, laziness, people-pleasing, arrogance, and self-doubt are just a few of the contributing factors that can shift a pastor’s heart and focus toward professionalism.

In 2002, pastor and theologian John Piper published *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea for Radical Ministry*. In this work, he claims, “We pastors are being killed by the professionalizing of the pastoral ministry. . . . Professionalism has nothing to do with the essence and the heart of the Christian ministry.”<sup>19</sup> Piper makes a very clear distinction between a professional pastor and a spiritual pastor. There is no comparison between a pastor who sees himself as a servant of Christ and a pastor who sees himself as the CEO of a religious organization. One is driven by piety and humility, while the other is motivated by prestige and performance. Piper highlights this distinction: “The world sets the agenda of the professional man; God sets the agenda of the spiritual man. The strong wine of Jesus Christ explodes the wineskins of professionalism.”<sup>20</sup> Without persistently fostering a godly, prayerful, Christ-centered, Scripture-saturated lifestyle, personal piety can be subtly poisoned by professionalism.

Timothy Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, New York, also addresses this poisoning that occurs among pastors in the twenty-first century: “Gifts and talents can operate when the speaker is spiritually immature or even when the preacher’s heart is far from God. . . . Gifts will usually be mistaken for spiritual maturity, not just by the audience but even by the speaker”<sup>21</sup> Ministry can mistakenly be little more

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<sup>18</sup>Derek Prime and Alistair Begg, *On Being a Pastor: Understanding Our Calling and Work* (Chicago: Moody, 2004), 88-89. This book is a revised and expanded edition of Derek Prime, *Pastors and Teachers: The Calling and Work of Christ’s Ministers* (Godalming, UK: Highland, 1989).

<sup>19</sup>John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea for Radical Ministry* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2002), 1.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>21</sup>Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York:

than self-driven success in which an intimate walk with God is virtually non-existent. Keller continues, “If you find people attending eagerly to your addresses, you will take this as evidence that God is pleased with your heart and your level of intimacy with him--when he may not be at all.”<sup>22</sup> Although this behavior is accepted and applauded by the audience, it is ultimately a death trap for one’s fellowship with God and spiritual usefulness in ministry. Technique has usurped biblical integrity.<sup>23</sup>

It is tragic that professionalism has seemingly become even more permissible and acceptable in the technological age in which the church exists today. Week after week, a pastor can merely enter the pulpit because he has to preach a sermon rather than because he has a message to deliver. When this occurs, intimacy with God has become a distant reality or nothing more than an unexperienced theological concept. Professionalism has caused many preachers to prize delivery over doctrine, innovation over integrity, and entertainment over exposition. Paul David Tripp asserts,

Many pastors out there are seeking to lead and teach well, but it is simply not fueled or directed by the devotion of their hearts to their Savior. Their Christianity is more an institutional discipline than a personal relationship. . . . They have lost the center of it all, and their hearts have been kidnapped, and many of them don’t know it.<sup>24</sup>

The minimizing of sound doctrine, theological integrity, and consistent biblical exposition has also deadened the exercise of godly scriptural discernment among parishioners in many ways. This battle to sustain personal piety and scriptural ministry has been a relentless battle in every generation of those who have sought to be a true

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Viking, 2015), 194-95.

<sup>22</sup>Keller, *Preaching*, 195.

<sup>23</sup>Keller concludes that the culture is impacting the ministry much more than the ministry is impacting the culture: “If anything, we Christians living today are in greater danger of this misperception than at any other time in history, for our era has been called the ‘age of technique.’ No civilized society has put more emphasis on results, skills, and charisma--or less emphasis on character, reflection, and depth. This is a major reason why so many of the most successful ministers have a moral failure or lapse.” *Ibid.*, 195-97.

<sup>24</sup>Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 185.

messenger for God. Personal piety, which Spurgeon refers to as godliness, is the only antidote for the poisonous passivity of professionalism: “Godliness is something more than religion. Make God’s glory your object in life; live in His sight; dwell close to Him; seek fellowship with Him; and you have godliness.”<sup>25</sup> In essence, godliness is the living of a life that is centered upon God. For the minister, this means a ministry that begins and ends with God’s Word and His ways. A godly minister in the truest sense is one who has a single eye to the glory of God Himself, and Him alone. This focus makes the character and person of Jesus Christ the foundation and sustenance of ministry. Spurgeon further describes godliness in a sermon entitled, “The Form of Godliness without the Power,” based on 2 Timothy 3:5. He expounds,

God Himself is the power of godliness. The Holy Spirit is the life and force of it. Godliness is the power which brings a man to God and binds him to Him. Godliness is that which creates repentance towards God and faith in Him. Godliness is the result of a great change of heart in reference to God and His character. Godliness looks towards God, and mourns its distance from Him; godliness hastens to draw nigh, and rests not till it is at home with God. Godliness makes a man like God. Godliness leads a man to love God, and to serve God; it brings the fear of God before his eyes, and the love of God into his heart. Godliness leads to consecration, to sanctification, to concentration. . . . Godliness makes a man commune with God and gives him a partnership with God in His glorious designs. . . . Many who have the form of godliness are strangers to this power, and so are in religion worldly, in prayer mechanical, in public one thing, and in private another. True godliness lies in spiritual power.<sup>26</sup>

The sustaining of godliness in the life of a minister is not an option. It is a nonnegotiable necessity. There is a prominent biblical precedent for receiving and relaying a message from God as the overflow of personal piety and godliness.

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<sup>25</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 416.

<sup>26</sup>Charles Spurgeon, “Sermon 2,088: The Form of Godliness without the Power,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit: Sermons Preached by C. H. Spurgeon and Revised During the Year 1895* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1975), 35:307.

## Scriptural Precedent of Preaching from the Overflow of Personal Piety

### Moses

The leadership and ministry of Moses provide a foundational view of scriptural proclamation anchored in prayer. Moses was exemplary in his practice of personal intimacy with God and what would come to be known as pastoral intercession for those to whom he proclaimed God's truth. This personal intimacy with God is described in Exodus: "So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (Exod 33:11). His passionate pastoral intercession is also graphically pictured: "Then Moses pleaded with the Lord his God, and said: 'LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?'" (Exod 32:11). Spurgeon reflects on this scene:

He was undoubtedly a man of prayer, but he must have been continually in the spirit of prayer, or else I could conceive of him, at that moment, falling on his face and lying there in silent horror! . . . You cannot go into your chamber, shut the door and begin a mighty intercessory prayer if you have never been to the Mercy Seat before! No, Moses is "the man of God." . . . There is no man of God if there is no prayer, for prayer makes the man into "the man of God." So, instinctively, though startled and saddened to the last degree, Moses is on his knees, beseeching the Lord, his God.<sup>27</sup>

It is apparent that Moses' pastoral intercession grew out of piety and intimacy with God.

This "face-to-face" communication is seen repeatedly in Exodus: "Moses spoke to the LORD," and "The LORD spoke to Moses" (i.e., Exod 32:7, 11). As a result, Moses was able to say, "Thus says the LORD" with authority because he was directly commanded by God to speak (i.e., Exod 9:13; 10:3). He consistently positioned himself to receive God's message which he then relayed to the people.

### Elijah

Elijah is an Old Testament prophet who is known for both his praying and preaching. He was called by God to confront the wicked king, Ahab, and the rebellious nation of Israel. Elijah proclaimed, "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I

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<sup>27</sup>C. H. Spurgeon, "Sermon 2,398: The Mediation of Moses," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 41:50-51.

stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word” (1 Kgs 17:1). The ensuing three-year drought validated the divine nature of his message. At the climax of the drought, Elijah contended with the false prophets atop Mount Carmel. In response to the confident proclamation and prayers of Elijah, God answered by fire in a display of His majestic power before the multitude. Soon thereafter, the heavens poured forth rain on the repenting nation. The apostle James, divinely inspired, upholds Elijah as a vivid illustration of the power of prayer and proclamation from a life of personal piety.<sup>28</sup>

Clearly, Elijah not only knew the Word of God, but he also knew the God of the Word. Spurgeon declared,

Omnipotent grace can do that which we cannot hope to accomplish of ourselves . . . Secret prayer should support public action as far as the praying man feels that he can do so; and where the open revelation is objected to there should be all the more of the private pleading. Elijah must now get him to the top of Carmel, and bow his head between his knees; the land is parched with the raging heat of lust, and needs a deluge of grace from heaven to save it from destruction. The effectual inwrought prayer of a righteous man will still avail with God.<sup>29</sup>

Elijah is an enduring example of a man whose personal piety overflowed from intimacy with God. It was expressed through intercession for and proclamation to the people.

## **Ezra**

Ezra is a prime example of a man who devoted himself to studying, meditating upon, and applying Scripture (Ezra 7:10). Ezra’s faithful intake of Scripture prepared and positioned him to be used of God in a significant position of leadership among God’s people. Steven Lawson, Ligonier teaching fellow, writes, “Ezra mastered the Word, and the Word mastered him. His careful study led to a holy life.”<sup>30</sup> He ministered to the people

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<sup>28</sup>James 5:16b-18 reads, “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.”

<sup>29</sup>Charles Spurgeon, “Another Note of Warning,” in *The Sword and the Trowel*, 8 vols. (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 2006, 1885), 8:148.

<sup>30</sup>Steven J. Lawson, *Famine in the Land: A Passionate Call for Expository Preaching*



of God from the overflow of his personal piety. Professor of biblical theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, James M. Hamilton, adds, “Ezra evidently thought that what he needed most was to know the Bible, do the Bible, and teach the Bible . . . Ezra evidently thought the best way to pursue the kingdom was to set his heart to know, do, and teach the Torah.”<sup>31</sup> Scripture became the all-consuming passion of his life and leadership. He led as he lived. According to British Old Testament scholar, Derek Kidner (1913-2008), “He is a model reformer in that what he taught he had first lived, and what he lived he had first made sure of in the Scriptures . . . Study was saved from unreality, conduct from uncertainty, and teaching from insincerity and shallowness.”<sup>32</sup> Ezra did not proclaim God’s truth as an untested theory. It is apparent that Ezra lived what he taught and taught what he lived. His life was a living lesson for those whom he instructed.<sup>33</sup> He built his life and ministry on the solid foundation of Scripture intake and personal piety.

Andrew Fuller delivered an ordination charge for a young minister based on Ezra 7:10. In this message, entitled “On an Intimate and Practical Acquaintance with the Word of God,” Fuller challenged the young pastor:

Prepare your heart to seek the law of the Lord. . . . Such preparation of heart is not only necessary for your *entrance* into the pastoral office, but also for your *continuance* in it. You will find that every exercise requires it. . . . Let all your private meditations be mingled with prayer. You will study your Bible to wonderful advantage, if you go to it *spiritually-minded*. . . . My brother, study Divine truth as *Christian*, and not merely as a *minister*.<sup>34</sup>

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(Chicago: Moody, 2003), 89.

<sup>31</sup>James M. Hamilton, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Ezra and Nehemiah* (Nashville: Holman, 2014), 63.

<sup>32</sup>Derek Kidner, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1979), 71.

<sup>33</sup>F. Charles Fensham further articulates, “Ezra thus concentrated his whole life on the study of the law. But it is not only a question of study—he also practiced the law. It was not a dead letter, but a living reality to him.” F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), 101.

<sup>34</sup>Andrew Fuller, “On an Intimate and Practical Acquaintance with the Word of God,” in *The Works of Andrew Fuller*, 682-83.

This advice stemming from Ezra's example points to the timeless nature of his practice of preaching from the overflow of personal devotion.

## **Jeremiah**

As a youth, Jeremiah was called by God to be a prophet to the nations (Jer 1:4-10). God assured him that this had been ordained before he ever took his first breath. Jeremiah conveys, "Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Jeremiah, what do you see?' And I said, 'I see a branch of an almond tree.' Then the Lord said to me, 'You have seen well, for I am ready to perform My word'" (Jer 1:11-12). In preaching on this passage, Spurgeon made the following application and challenge to young preachers: "Observe first . . . that before Jeremiah becomes a speaker for God, he must be a seer . . . O you who try to speak for God! You must be seers before you can be speakers."<sup>35</sup> He then made specific application to ministerial students: "Seek to be able to see all that you can see! And take care that you do not miss anything through inadvertence or neglect. 'Search the Scriptures.' . . . You shall speak well if you have seen well."<sup>36</sup> In statements such as this, Spurgeon sought to encourage young ministers to emulate the personal piety that characterized messengers within the pages of Scripture.

## **Jesus Christ**

The ultimate example of a ministry that was undergirded by personal piety is that of Jesus Christ. He passionately and prayerfully pursued the Father's will: "I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me" (John 5:33). One persistent expression of this daily pursuit was that of prayer: "So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed" (Luke 5:16; see also Mark 1:35). Spurgeon declares, "There

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<sup>35</sup>C. H. Spurgeon, "Sermon 2,678: The Lesson of the Almond Tree," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 46:265.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

is one peculiarity about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ which everybody must have noticed who has carefully read the four Gospels, namely, that He was a man of much prayer.”<sup>37</sup> He then contrasts two paramount characteristics of Jesus—his devotion to prayer and to preaching: “He was mighty as a Preacher. . . . The whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ was one of prayer. . . . His words speak to us like the words of One whose heart was constantly lifted up in prayer to His Father.”<sup>38</sup> Jesus did not merely have a prayer life. He lived a life of prayer. Others may pray in the context of ministry, but Jesus ministered in the context of prayer. Spurgeon also admonished all preachers to aspire to emulate this Christlike consecration: “You cannot have power with man for God until you first have power with God for man. Solitary prayer was the equipment for the Prince of preachers when He came forth among the crowds. It is the best equipment for you, also.”<sup>39</sup> If Jesus Christ modeled this pattern in His earthly ministry, it cannot be ignored. Rather, His lifestyle of prayerfulness should be implemented by all who are called by Him to preach His gospel. Therefore, Jonathan Edwards urges, “Ministers should imitate their great Master in his fervent prayers for the good of the souls of men.”<sup>40</sup> Jesus’ earthly ministry rested securely on the foundation of intimacy with the Father and intercession for those to whom He ministered (Luke 3:21-22; 5:16; 6:12; 9:28-29; 11:1-4; 22:31-32, 39-46). Consequently, His ministers should diligently pursue this practice.

The priorities of devotional piety embraced by the apostles clearly resulted from observing the priorities exemplified in the life and ministry of Christ. Spurgeon explains, “He was the greatest of preachers, but His prayers made even a deeper impression than

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<sup>37</sup>Charles H. Spurgeon, “The Preparatory Prayers of Christ,” in *Spurgeon’s Sermons on Prayer* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 296.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Charles Spurgeon, “Before Daybreak with Christ,” in *The Power of Christ’s Prayer Life*, comp. Lance Wubbels (Lynwood, WA: Emerald, 1995), 40-41.

<sup>40</sup>Jonathan Edwards, “Christ, the Example of Ministers,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1995), 2:962.

His sermons on His disciples, for they did not say, ‘Lord, teach us to preach,’ but they did exclaim, ‘Lord, teach us to pray’ (Luke 11:1).”<sup>41</sup> John Piper writes, “For Jesus and the apostles the work of prayer demanded significant amounts of solitude: ‘In the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed’ (Mark 1:35).”<sup>42</sup> The earthly life and ministry of Jesus Christ were permeated with prayer. Behind every display of supernatural power and every sermon that Jesus preached were innumerable hours spent alone with the Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:18; 11:1). Spurgeon insightfully concludes, “Though we are often told about His praying, we feel that we scarcely need to be informed of it, for we know that He must have been a Man of prayer. Prayer seems to be like a silver thread running through the whole of our Savior’s life.”<sup>43</sup> Christ exemplified that prayer and the ministry of the Word were inseparable.

### **The Apostles**

Prior to His ascension, Jesus commanded the apostles to stay in Jerusalem until they received power from God (Luke 24:49). In obedience to this command, the apostles gathered together, prayerfully anticipating the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise of power (Acts 1:14). Spurgeon describes the setting of this prayer meeting: “Exposed to innumerable trials, the strong, brazen wall of His presence, which had been round about them, was now withdrawn. In the deep desolation of their spirits they resorted to prayer.”<sup>44</sup> As Darrell Bock, New Testament scholar and research professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, surmises, “The mood of piety is a positive note in the narrative, as is the discussion of their unity. . . . The group has both piety and unity.”<sup>45</sup> An atmosphere of expectancy

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<sup>41</sup>Charles Spurgeon, “All Night in Prayer,” in *The Power of Christ’s Prayer Life*, 60.

<sup>42</sup>Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals*, 61.

<sup>43</sup>Spurgeon, *Spurgeon’s Sermons on Prayer*, 296.

<sup>44</sup>C. H. Spurgeon, “Sermon 3421: Prayer-Meetings,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 60:409.

<sup>45</sup>Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids:

thence fueled by the apostles' oneness in prayer and piety. Then, following ten days of prayer, on the Day of Pentecost, Christ's promise of power for proclamation was fulfilled (Acts 2:1 ff). From the overflow of a life filled with the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and ten days of corporate prayer, Peter powerfully proclaimed the gospel (Acts 2:14-41). This pattern of prayerfulness was the mode of operation within the early church (Acts 2:42; 3:1; 4:23-31; 6:4). Corporate prayer was the battering ram with which the apostles led the early church to storm the gates of hell.

In Acts 6, the apostles reaffirmed their priorities for ministry (Acts 6:1-7). Amidst conflict concerning the distribution of food to meet the daily needs of widows in the church family, the apostles firmly stated, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables" (Acts 6:2). T. W. Hunt (1929-2014), esteemed professor and man of prayer, points out, "They knew that their preaching depended on the great commandment of Jesus to pray."<sup>46</sup> Thus, having been mentored and mandated by Christ, the apostles embraced His priorities: "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4).<sup>47</sup> They became undyingly devoted to intercession for the people and the instruction of the people. Following Christ's example, the apostles undergirded their preaching with prayerfulness.

Although it had been repeatedly recorded in the initial verses of Acts that the apostles had actively prayed (Acts 1:14, 24; 2:42; 3:1; 4:24-30) and preached (Acts 2:14-

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Baker, 2007), 76-77.

<sup>46</sup>T. W. Hunt, *When Man Began to Call on God: A Brief History of Prayer in the Bible* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2013), 166.

<sup>47</sup>Craig Keener comments, "The ministry of the "word" includes proclamation and probably sometimes teaching (e.g., Acts 2:41; 4:29, 31; 6:2, 4, 7; 8:4, 14, 25; 10:36; 11:1); the ministry of prayer was likewise integral to the apostles' (and the early Christian community's) activity, both corporately (2:42, 46-47), whether during regular hours of prayer (3:1) or perhaps on other spontaneous occasions (4:24-30), presumably sometimes privately (10:9; cf. 10:2), and also during ministry directly to others (6:6; 8:15). The expression in 6:4, *τη προσευχη . . . προσκαρτερησομεν* (cf. also 1:14; 2:42), need not mean prayer without interruption but a continuing practice of prayer." Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 2:1270.

40; 3:12-26; 5:29-32), these two actions powerfully unite as the book progresses. Professor of systematic and pastoral theology at Reformed Theological Seminary, Derek W. H. Thomas, reasons, “Interesting, too, is the order: ‘prayer and . . . the ministry of the word.’ This is the way it should be, since all preaching without prayer is vain.”<sup>48</sup> Hence, these two priorities, prayer and proclamation, were the driving force of the apostles’ ministry and leadership within the early church. They would steadfastly maintain these Christlike objectives. Those divinely placed under their pastoral authority then expressed their support in their eagerness to assist them.<sup>49</sup> This demanded a willingness by the apostles to delegate to others in order to fully concentrate on that which Christ specifically commissioned them to do. The apostles believed and knew that they were divinely created and called collectively and individually, to immerse themselves in prayer and the ministry of the Word.

### **The Apostle Paul**

The apostle Paul also placed a high priority on personal piety in his life as a preacher, both in practice and precept. In a sermon based on 2 Timothy 1:12, “Held and Kept,” Spurgeon notes, “Paul knew the Lord . . . by personal communion with Him. Many and many a time had the Lord spoken with Paul. In his secret chamber, in prayer, Paul had risen up to the heights of communion with Jesus.”<sup>50</sup> Paul’s prayerfulness fostered deepening piety in his life and ministry. This emphasis in a minister’s life can lie

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<sup>48</sup>Derek W. H. Thomas, *Acts*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2011), 159.

<sup>49</sup>Acts 6:5 reads, “And the saying pleased the whole multitude.” John Gill elaborates on the congregational response: “The speech the apostles made took with them; all things they proposed were universally approved of; the whole body of the church came into it at once unanimously; they all judged it highly reasonable, that the apostles should be eased of the burden in taking care of the poor, and that it should be transferred to some other persons.” John Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, (London: Mathews and Leigh, 1809; repr., Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 2005), 8:190.

<sup>50</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *Able to the Uttermost: Forgotten Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1985), 162.

dormant through a failure to immerse in the Pastoral Epistles with study, meditation, and application. In doing so, one would quickly recognize the importance these letters place on piety. The Greek term for godliness and piety, *eusébeia*, is found ten times in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim 2:2; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11; 2 Tim 3:5; Titus 1:1). Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich offer this definition:

In the Pastorals the group denotes a manner of life . . . Over against the way of life associated with false teaching, *eusébeia* is the godliness that accords with sound teaching (1 Tim 6:3; Titus 1:1) . . . True *eusébeia*, born of faith, covers everyday conduct in honoring God as Creator and Redeemer.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, from the overflow of his personal lifestyle, Paul instructed his young, pastoral protégés, Timothy and Titus, to pay close attention to personal piety, lest they prove to be ineffective. He commanded Timothy, “But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness” (1 Tim 4:7). Thus, the apostle Paul reminded Timothy that godliness is an unending pursuit which requires great diligence and discipline.

Alongside the emphasis of personal godliness, the apostle also emphasized the necessity of faithfully meditating upon the Word of God, and making personal application in one’s life. On the occasion of a young man’s ordination, John Newton (1725-1807), Anglican clergyman, wrote a letter based on 1 Timothy 4:15-16: “On the Snares and Difficulties Attending the Ministry of the Gospel.”<sup>52</sup> It is a sober preview of the overwhelming challenges which the young ordinee will face. In this letter, Newton, the seasoned pastor, compares the initial days of one’s first pastorate to a soldier’s initiation into hand-to-hand combat:

A distant view of the ministry is generally very different from what it is found to be when we are actually engaged in it. The young soldier, who has never seen an enemy, may form some general notions of what is before him: but his ideas will be much more lively and diversified when he comes upon the field of battle. . . . The work of the ministry is truly honourable; but, like the post of honour in a battle, it is

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<sup>51</sup>Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1985), 1012.

<sup>52</sup>John Newton, *The Works of John Newton* (1820; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1988), 1:159-66.

attended with peculiar dangers: therefore, the Apostle cautions Timothy, “Take heed to thyself, and to thy doctrine.” To thyself in the first place, and then to thy doctrine; the latter without the former would be impracticable and vain.<sup>53</sup>

A variety of pastors and preachers have been challenged by their mentors with these words of the apostle Paul. The Puritan preacher, Robert Traill (1642-1716), expounds, “Take heed unto thyself.—Thou art set in a high office, in a dangerous place; take good and narrow heed, look well to thyself, thy heart and way.”<sup>54</sup> The preaching ministry is a place of rich blessings equally marked by dangerous pitfalls. Thus, John A. Broadus also refers to this text in emphasizing the necessity of faithfulness to Scripture intake: “In the spirit of personal devoutness, with a desire for personal benefit, and with the constant prayer that God would bless us in learning and in teaching, let us study the Bible, that we may ‘both save ourselves, and them that hear us.’”<sup>55</sup> The preacher must first and foremost feed himself on the Word of God in order to faithfully feed others with the Word of God. Feeding others without feasting on the Word of God quickly produces spiritual famine in the life of a preacher. Therefore, the pastor should exemplify a passion for Scripture and set the pace for spirituality within the congregation. According to Paul, failure to preach from the overflow of personal devotion quickly results in a detrimental undertow, causing destruction and devastation.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Newton, *The Works of John Newton*, 1:159-60.

<sup>54</sup>Robert Trail, “How May Ministers Best Win Souls?” in *Puritan Sermons 1659-1689: A Continuation of Morning Exercise Questions, and Cases of Conscience Practically Resolved*, trans. James Nichols (Wheaton, IL: Richard Owen Roberts, 1981), 3:199.

<sup>55</sup>Broadus, *A Treatise*, 122.

<sup>56</sup>Andrew Fuller delivered caution concerning this to students in his day: “‘Take heed to *thyself* and to thy doctrine.’ . . . Tremble at the idea of being a graceless minister. . . . To make full proof of your ministry, you must give yourselves continually to prayer, and the ministry of the word. ‘Meditate on these things and give yourselves wholly to them;’ and this to the end of your lives. Let no one imagine that he will leave his present situation fully qualified for the work. If, by prayer and a diligent application to study, you acquire such a habit of close thinking as that on entering the work it shall be to your delight to prosecute it, this is all that will be expected of you. It is for want of this habit of study that there are so many saunterers, and have been so many scandals amongst ministers.” Andrew Fuller, “The Young Minister Exhorted to Make Full Proof of His Ministry,” in *The Works of Andrew Fuller*, 698.



## Historical Influences on Spurgeon

Spurgeon's public life was an outward manifestation of the person he was before God in private as he prayed and meditated on Scripture. He was convinced, "The best and holiest men have ever made prayer the most important part of pulpit preparation."<sup>57</sup> He echoed the voices of Reformers and Puritans in his emphasis on personal piety, prayerfulness, and Scripture intake in the life of the minister. A strong legacy of pastoral piety from the Reformation into the present was embraced by Spurgeon and extended through him.

### Reformers

The impact of combining prayer and ministry of the Word gained momentum as the Reformation unfolded. Stephen J. Nichols, president of Reformation Bible College, concludes, "All of the Reformers agreed that the marks of the true church could be boiled down to one: the preaching of the Word."<sup>58</sup> Scripture was prayerfully studied and powerfully proclaimed in the ministries of all the Protestant reformers. Two reformers that dramatically influenced Spurgeon's view of Scripture and ministry were Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-1564). For example, according to Steven Lawson, Martin Luther "understood that in studying the Bible, no matter how smart he might be, he must begin with prayerful submission to God if he was to grasp the true interpretation."<sup>59</sup> He held strongly to the priorities of the apostles stated in Acts 6:4: "prayer and the ministry of the word." Spurgeon quotes Luther regarding prayer and study: "Praying is the best studying. Luther said so of old—' *Bene orasse est bene*

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<sup>57</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 44.

<sup>58</sup>Stephen J. Nichols, *The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 105.

<sup>59</sup>Steven Lawson, *The Heroic Boldness of Martin Luther* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2013), 47.

*studuisse,*’ and the well-worn proverb will bear repeating.”<sup>60</sup> In condemning the apostasy of the Catholic Church, Luther proclaimed,

This is what the apostles did. They said in Acts 6 [:2-4], “It is not right that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables, but we will hold to preaching and prayer, and set others over that work.” But now Rome stands for nothing else than the despising of the gospel and prayer, and for the serving of tables, that is, temporal things. The rule of the apostles and of the pope have as much in common as Christ has with Lucifer, heaven and hell, night with day.<sup>61</sup>

Here, Luther speaks of the ongoing paramount importance found in the stated priorities of the apostles, prayer and the ministry of the Word, which he refers to as “the gospel.”

Joel R. Beeke identifies a similar emphasis on prayer in the life and ministry of John Calvin: “Prayer is the principal and perpetual exercise of faith and the chief element of piety, Calvin says.”<sup>62</sup> According to Calvin, prayer and piety are mutually dependent and inseparable. Regarding Acts 6:4, Calvin states,

Pastors must not think that they have so done their duty that they need to do no more when they have daily spent some time teaching. There is another manner of study, another manner of zeal, another manner of continuance required, that they may indeed boast that they are wholly given to that thing. They adjoin there unto prayer, not that they alone ought to pray, (for that is an exercise common to all the godly,) but because they have peculiar causes to pray above all others. . . . Therefore, it shall not suffice to take great pains in teaching, unless we require blessing at the hands of the Lord, that our labour may not be vain and unfruitful. Hereby it appeareth that the exercise of prayer is not in vain commended to the ministers of the word.<sup>63</sup>

Also, concerning personal piety in the life of the pastor, Calvin amplifies the instruction of 1 Timothy 4:16.<sup>64</sup> He states, “This is a general rule which St. Paul gives to all shepherds, to wit, that first of all they take heed to themselves, to walk holily as touching their own

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<sup>60</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 86.

<sup>61</sup>Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works: The Christian in Society* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 44:159-60.

<sup>62</sup>Joel Beeke, *Puritan Reformed Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2006), 20.

<sup>63</sup>John Calvin, *Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 1:236-37.

<sup>64</sup>First Tim 4:16 reads, “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”

persons, and then to take heed also to their flock which is committed unto them, that they give them fodder.”<sup>65</sup> According to reformers such as Calvin, personal piety must not be falsely assumed as a natural byproduct of ministry.

With this emphasis among the reformers, personal piety, prayer, and the ministry of the Word rose to a renewed level during this period of church history. The Reformation did much to raise expectation for personal piety, beginning with those who proclaimed the Word of God. Hence, reformers such as Luther and Calvin mentored a new emphasis on prayer and personal piety by adhering to the apostles’ instruction.

### **Puritans**

Building on the examples of the Reformers, the Puritans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were tenaciously devoted to personal and pastoral piety. They too had great influence on the thinking of Spurgeon. In an article entitled, “Hard Books,” he expressed his high esteem for them:

This is our reason for preferring the Puritan divines to those of modern date. When you read them, you have found something solid, substantial, and real. Most of the theological books of these degenerate times are like the whipped creams and soufflés of the confectioner—very pretty, but very much like nothing at all.<sup>66</sup>

Also, in a book review, Spurgeon asserts, “In reading certain of the Puritan authors, one feels that he has come into a land wherein a man may eat bread without scarceness—a land whose very dust is gold.”<sup>67</sup> The following examples provide insight into the kindred spirit shared by Spurgeon with the Puritans. George Swinnock (1627–1673), nonconformist Puritan preacher and author, describes piety or godliness in typical Puritan fashion:

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<sup>65</sup>This quote has been updated from the following statement: “This is a general rule which S. Paul giueth to all fhepherds, to wit, that firft of al they take heede to themfelues, to walke holily as touching their owne perfons, and then to take heede alfo to their flocke which is comitted vnto them, that they giue them foder.” John Calvin, *Sermons on the Epistles to Timothy & Titus: 16th-17th Century Facsimile Editions* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1983, 1579), 433.

<sup>66</sup>Spurgeon, “Hard Books,” in *The Sword and the Trowel*, 8:82.

<sup>67</sup>Charles Spurgeon, “Rara Avis—A Book,” in *The Sword and the Trowel*, 3:245.

“Heart godliness pleaseth God best, but life-godliness honours him most; the conjunction of both make a complete Christian.<sup>68</sup> According to J. I. Packer, highly esteemed theologian and Puritan historian: “The Puritan goal was to complete what England’s Reformation began.”<sup>69</sup> This desire for completion of the Reformation had a primary focus on reforming those involved in pastoral ministry.<sup>70</sup>

Reformation within the pulpit is the seedbed for the reformation of the church. This desire for further reformation was expressed by Richard Baxter (1615-1691). He was curate at Kidderminster and the author of the *The Reformed Pastor*. In a distinct call for pastors to preach from the overflow of personal application and piety, he pleaded, “Be also careful that your graces are kept in vigorous and lively exercise, and that you preach to yourselves the sermons which you study, before you preach them to others.”<sup>71</sup> This entailed more than simply rehearsing their sermonic presentation. It further implied the practical application of the message in one’s life. Packer uses Baxter to qualify the doctrine and piety of the Puritans:

Puritanism, as Baxter understood it . . . was a total view of Christianity, Bible-based, church-centered, God-honouring, literate, orthodox, pastoral, and Reformational, that saw personal, domestic, professional, political, churchly, and economic existence as aspects of a single whole, and that called on everybody to order every department and every relationship of their life according to the Word of God, so that all would be sanctified and become “holiness to the Lord.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>George Swinnoek, “What Godliness Is,” in *The Works of George Swinnoek*, 5 vols. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1992), 1:33.

<sup>69</sup>J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 28.

<sup>70</sup>Paul Cook further clarifies, “Historically, Puritanism began as a clerical movement of religious reform, reacting against, among other things, a corrupt ministry. . . . Their faith was a dynamic Calvinism; they shared Paul’s passion for personal holiness and for the glory of Christ within His church; and their constant and uniting purpose was to promote spiritual preaching and seek the reviving of the ministry. Paul Cook, “The Life and Work of a Minister According to the Puritans,” in *Puritan Papers*, ed. J. I. Packer (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2000), 1:177.

<sup>71</sup>Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1981), 61.

<sup>72</sup>J. I. Packer, *Puritan Portraits: J. I. Packer on Selected Classic Pastors and Pastoral Classics* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2012), 159.

These qualities were imbedded in the lives of both pastor and people as they sought to grow in sanctification.

William Gurnall (1616-1679) also profoundly influenced Spurgeon. Gurnall pastored Lavenham Church in Suffolk county for thirty-five years, from 1644-1679. Although he did not withdraw from the Church of England, he maintained a solid expository ministry with Puritan doctrine and lifestyle.<sup>73</sup> Spurgeon extolled Gurnall's classic exposition of Ephesians 6:10-20 on spiritual warfare by declaring it to be "beyond all others a preacher's book. . . . I have often resorted to it when my own fire has been burning low, and I have seldom failed to find a glowing coal upon Gurnall's hearth."<sup>74</sup> Terminology today would distinguish Gurnall as "a preacher's preacher"; one who floods ministerial listeners and readers with personal example and homiletical insight. He was marked by keen insight into human struggle and spiritual conflict. Utilizing his gift for analogy, he assisted his readers in grasping profound biblical truth.

Concerning the pastor's relationship to Scripture, Gurnall provides exemplary Puritan advice: "In your study acquaint yourselves with the word of God. . . . The minister is to go and dig in the mine of the Scripture. . . . I would exhort them to prefer it above all other books, and to direct all their other studies to furnish them with Scripture knowledge"<sup>75</sup> This practice was definitely embraced by Spurgeon. Although he read as many as six books per week, these books remained subservient to Scripture intake and biblical exposition. Personal immersion into the Word of God was not only essential but non-negotiable in Spurgeon's life and ministry. No amount or quality of study outside of Scripture can compensate for a neglect of consistent personal Scripture intake. Without this daily practice, one's preaching loses a great deal of its truest and most genuine

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<sup>73</sup>J. C. Ryle, "A Biographical Account of the Author," in *The Christian in Complete Armour*, ed. William Gurnall (repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), xv-xvi.

<sup>74</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 369-70.

<sup>75</sup>Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour*, 282-83.

biblical expression. Thus, Gurnall admonished the minister to place highest priority on his own personal growth above all other labors:

O, let us as that are ministers of the gospel give up ourselves to the study of the word. . . . O how shall the people grow, if the minister doth not? And how shall he grow, if he doth not daily drink in more than he pours out? . . . Study and pray; pray and study again. Think not that your work is done for all the week when the Sabbath is past. Take a little breath, and return to thy labor.<sup>76</sup>

Hence, he argues that the Puritans believed that the godliness of a congregation was a reflection of the godliness, or lack thereof, within their pastor.

This emphasis on pastoral piety also translated into an imitation of the apostolic priorities of prayer and the ministry of the Word. The Puritans were marked by doctrinally-sound, biblically-based sermons that emphasized practical application. In 1592, William Perkins (1558-1602), lecturer and preacher at St. Andrew's Church in Cambridge, wrote *The Art of Prophesying*. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones identifies this book as "one of the first books written on this whole business of preaching."<sup>77</sup> In this work, Perkins proposes,

There are two parts to prophecy: preaching the Word and public prayer. For the prophet (that is, the minister of the Word) has only two duties. One is preaching the Word, and the other is praying to God in the name of the people. . . . Every prophet's task is to speak partly as the voice of God (preaching), and partly as the voice of the people (praying).<sup>78</sup>

Large portions of Puritan writings not only emphasize personal piety, but also the maintaining of the apostolic objectives of Acts 6:4 in pastoral ministry. Puritan theologian John Owen (1616-1683) writes,

Another thing required hereunto is, experience of the power of the things we preach to others. I think, truly, that no man preaches that sermon well to others that doth

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<sup>76</sup>Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour*, 284

<sup>77</sup>D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2012), 382.

<sup>78</sup>William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2002), 7. Packer stresses, "No Puritan author save Richard Baxter ever sold better than Perkins, and no Puritan thinker ever did more to shape and solidify historic Puritanism itself." Packer, *Puritan Portraits*, 129. Packer further states, "We should call William Perkins the Father of Puritanism, for it was he more than anyone else who crystallized and delimited the essence of mainstream Puritan Christianity for the next hundred years." Packer, *Puritan Portraits*, 132.

not first preach it to his own heart. He who doth not feed on, and digest, and thrive by, what he prepares for his people, he may give them poison, as far as he knows; for, unless he finds the power of it in his own heart, he cannot have any ground of confidence that it will have power in the hearts of others. . . . It is an easier thing to bring our heads to preach than our hearts to preach. . . . But to bring our hearts to preach, is to be transformed into the power of these truths.<sup>79</sup>

Genuine biblical preaching is much more than delivering an exposition; it is also living a lifestyle of obedience to the truths proclaimed. In keeping with this, Richard Baxter also emphasized the avoidance of that which is detrimental to pastoral ministry: “Above all, be much in secret prayer and meditation. Thence you must fetch the heavenly fire that must kindle your sacrifices: remember, you cannot decline and neglect your duty, to your own hurt alone; many will be losers by it as well as you.”<sup>80</sup> According to the Puritans, prayerful Scripture intake in solitude gives birth to spirituality and sincerity in preaching.

As seen by these examples, the Puritans were unified in the belief that a life of genuine ministry must flow from a sincere heart of godliness. The writings of Puritan pastors such as these made an indelible mark on the way in which Spurgeon lived and approached pastoral ministry. Chapter 3 focuses on how he strived to maintain a high level of piety amidst personal challenges, opposition, and a surrounding church culture of compromise similar to today. It also explores the Puritan influence upon him more specifically and in greater detail.

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<sup>79</sup>John Owen, “The Duty of a Pastor,” in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2009), 9:455.

<sup>80</sup>Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, 62.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHARLES SPURGEON'S PERSONAL AND PASTORAL PIETY

Reviewing the spiritual terrain of both mountains and valleys of those from the past can be a source of strategic exhortation in various stages and seasons of life and ministry. This proves true when retracing the spiritual legacy of Charles Spurgeon. It is an impressive journey down the pathway of providence. At various stages in his life, specific people were divinely used to plant the seed of the gospel, fan the flames of his piety, and deepen his theological convictions. Zack Eswine emphasizes, “The first thing a preacher can learn from Charles Spurgeon is this: A preacher’s calling begins with God and is formed in the story of God’s providence.”<sup>1</sup> This chapter traces a variety of these providential influences in Spurgeon’s life. The means of their influence range from personal interaction with Spurgeon to timely messages found within published works. It would be impossible to provide an exhaustive list of these factors. Therefore, the focus here is limited to a few examples from Spurgeon’s family heritage, spiritual pilgrimage, theological development, and the nurturing of his personal piety that undergirded his ministry.

#### **Early Influences on Spurgeon’s View of Personal and Pastoral Piety**

Charles Spurgeon was providentially blessed with a solid spiritual foundation through the godly influence of his family. The spiritual infrastructure of his walk with God was greatly nurtured and furthered through a variety of divinely orchestrated influences in a timely fashion throughout his formative years and beyond.

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<sup>1</sup>Zack Eswine, *Kindled Fire: How the Methods of C. H. Spurgeon Can Help Your Preaching* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2006), 35.



## The Influence of Spurgeon's Grandfather

Spurgeon was richly blessed with a godly heritage within his family. He was surrounded by people who were passionate about their faith and eager to disciple those under their influence. This resulted in consistent intercession for Spurgeon, guidance in the Scriptures, and encouragement to immerse himself in rich theological classics. Thus, a love for learning was fostered in his life from an early age. Spurgeon's biographer, R. Shindler, stresses,

No life of Mr. Spurgeon would be complete if it did not contain some account of his godly ancestors. . . . There was much in the piety and conscientiousness of those who came before him which will help to account for his sturdy Christian character and unparalleled success.<sup>2</sup>

This heritage of holiness produced an abundant harvest in the life of Spurgeon and those to whom he ministered.

Charles Spurgeon was born to John Spurgeon (1811-1902) and Eliza Spurgeon (1813-1888) on June 19, 1834. At eighteen months of age, he went to live within the home and under the spiritual mentorship of his grandfather, James Spurgeon (1776-1864). Biographer Richard Ellsworth Day documents, "Rev. James Spurgeon, born in 1776, became pastor at Stambourne in 1810, and retained his post in high honor for fifty-four years, or until his death at eighty-eight in 1864."<sup>3</sup> Young Spurgeon was in awe of the presence of his grandfather in the pulpit:

The pulpit was glorious as "the tower of the flock." Over it hung a huge sounding-board: I used to speculate as to what would become of grandfather if it ever dropped down upon him. I thought of my Jack-in-the-box, and hoped that my dear grandpa would never be shut down and shut up in such a fashion.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>R. Schindler, *From the Usher's Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit: The Life and Labours of Pastor C. H. Spurgeon* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1892), 1.

<sup>3</sup>Richard Ellsworth Day, *The Shadow of the Broad Brim* (1934; repr., Philadelphia: Judson, 1934), 28. Concerning James Spurgeon, Eric Hayden adds, "He was also a saintly, devout and worthy Independent pastor, preaching on Sundays but farming during the week." Eric W. Hayden, *Highlights in the Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1990), 2.

<sup>4</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *Autobiography: His Diary, Letters, and Records, by His Wife and Private Secretary* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1992), 1:25.

Spurgeon was deeply impacted by observing his grandfather's life, as well as listening to him preach. Their relationship created an insatiable hunger for learning about the things of God within his young heart and mind. It was in the hallowed halls of the parsonage at Stambourne that Spurgeon says he was introduced to timeless truths from authors who would become his lifelong counselors, mentors, and educators: "My venerable grandfather's manse had in it a collection of very valuable ancient Puritanic volumes, which had descended from minister to minister."<sup>5</sup> Although he would later have access to his father's theological library, each summer he would return to Stambourne in the summertime to explore the larger library of his grandfather.<sup>6</sup>

In regard to James as a pastor-theologian, Peter Morden, Vice Principal of Church History and Spirituality at Spurgeon's College, asserts, "The legacy of a spirituality shaped, in a number of important ways, by the Puritans, had been passed down from grandfather to grandson."<sup>7</sup> From this obscure beginning, Spurgeon entered on a lifelong journey of biblical theology and genuine piety. Those from whom James had received these priceless volumes were unaware of the eternal impact and lasting influence that would be gained by them through the voice and pen of Charles Spurgeon.

### **The Influence of Spurgeon's Parents**

Spurgeon was also richly blessed through his relationship with his parents. In 1840, he moved back to their home in Colchester.<sup>8</sup> It was through them that Spurgeon's

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<sup>5</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (1875; repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 175.

<sup>6</sup>Lewis A. Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1992), 96. Also, Arnold Dalimore, *C. H. Spurgeon: A New Biography* (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 9.

<sup>7</sup>Peter Morden, *Communion with Christ and His People: The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon* (Oxford: Regent Park College, 2010), 23. Eswine also identifies James Spurgeon's influence: "But of the men in Spurgeon's life, it is James Spurgeon (1776-1864), Charles' grandfather, who was especially important concerning the preparation of Charles Spurgeon the preacher." Eswine, *Kindled Fire*, 29-31.

<sup>8</sup>Tom Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Spurgeon* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2013), 31.

heart would continue to be prepared for his approaching salvation. Alongside his ministerial responsibilities, John was also employed as a clerk in the coal industry. The excessive demands on his time placed Eliza in the position of being the primary day-to-day spiritual influence in Spurgeon's life. Spurgeon's father spoke of a time when he was eavesdropping on his wife's instruction and intercession for their children: "Quietly listening outside the door, he discovered that his wife was pleading for her children, and specially interceding for Charles, her firstborn and strong-willed son."<sup>9</sup> The consistent biblical preaching of his father, and under the daily spiritual tutelage of his mother, Spurgeon expanded his understanding of the things of God. Together they planted seeds that would soon contribute to Charles' conversion.

Thus, Spurgeon's primary ministerial mentors were his grandfather and father. Both of these men, serving as bi-vocational ministers, modeled for him a life of genuine piety, theological depth, and perseverance in ministry. Regardless of how large Spurgeon's church grew and his ministry expanded, he never forgot their example and influence. Hence, due to his spiritual heritage, pastors of smaller churches and seemingly obscure ministries were not overlooked by him. This is evidenced in the establishment of the Book Fund, the founding of the Pastors' College, and the publishing of *Lectures to My Students* and *An All-Round Ministry*. As a result of his sensitive compassion, he delivered these encouraging words to pastors who felt unnoticed and forgotten:

Remember, dear brother, if you give your whole soul to the charge committed to you, it does not matter much about its appearing to be a somewhat small and insignificant affair, for as much skill may be displayed in the manufacture of a very tiny watch as in the construction of the town clock; in fact, a minute article may become the object of greater wonder than another of larger dimensions.<sup>10</sup>

These very words point to his gratitude and affection for the indelible influence of his pastoral forefathers. Each time Spurgeon entered his voluminous library, surrounded by

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<sup>9</sup>Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 31.

<sup>10</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry: Addresses to Ministers and Students* (1900; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2003), 70.

priceless resources, he was also enveloped by the influence of his father and grandfather through whom he had been introduced to these godly authors. God used the pens of these literary acquaintances, to whom Spurgeon was so indebted, to deepen and lengthen the legacy of James and John Spurgeon throughout Charles' life. In their absence, their mutual literary friends came to his aid with insight and encouragement to the final days of his ministry.

### **The Influence of Richard Knill**

It is a blessing when God providentially places people within one's life in order to reinforce early godly influences of family. For Spurgeon, one of these secondary influences was a missionary and pastor named Richard Knill who "on deputation from the London Missionary Society, came into Essex in 1844."<sup>11</sup> He was a gifted soul winner in the pulpit and in one-on-one conversations.<sup>12</sup> It was through the latter that Knill most effectively communicated the gospel to young Charles, vividly illustrating biblical truth to the boy's impressionable mind.

However, Knill is best known for the prophecy he spoke to Charles and the Spurgeon family. After three mornings of prayerful interaction with the young boy, Knill called the family together and delivered the prophecy. Nettles describes those holy moments: "Before he left he predicted that Spurgeon would preach one day in Rowland Hill's chapel as well as to great multitudes."<sup>13</sup> Spurgeon describes the impact and inspiration of this prediction in detail:

Did the words of Mr. Knill help to bring about their own fulfillment? I think so. I believed them, and looked forward to the time that I should preach the Word: I felt very powerfully that no unconverted person might dare to enter the ministry; this made me, I doubt not, all the more intent upon seeking salvation, and more hopeful

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<sup>11</sup>Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 27.

<sup>12</sup>Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 90.

<sup>13</sup>Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 27.

of it, and when by grace enabled to cast myself upon the Saviour's love, it was not long before my mouth began to speak of His redemption.<sup>14</sup>

It was with great interest and much joy that Knill listened to reports about Spurgeon as he interceded for the young pastor.<sup>15</sup> The prophecy, coupled with Knill's prayers, were a source of affirmation and encouragement as Spurgeon grew and faced challenges in his life and ministry.

### **The Influence of Mary King**

Another influential person in young Spurgeon's life was a very unlikely person in what seemed to be an insignificant place. Mary King, a simple cook at Newmarket, came into Spurgeon's life during the growing conviction of his lost condition. In this season of Spurgeon's young life, she was used by God to reinforce the scriptural truths that had been shared with him by his grandfather and parents. He had given mental assent to these truths, but they were soon to become a possession of his heart through his conversion. Mary King would also be strategically used by God to help Spurgeon navigate through the overwhelming conviction that would guide him to the Savior.<sup>16</sup> It was during this season in Spurgeon's life that he finally found peace from the intense, lengthy conviction that had weighed upon his heart and mind. Spurgeon recollects, "When I was in the hand of the Holy Spirit, under conviction of sin, I had a clear and sharp sense of the justice of God. Sin, whatever it might be to other people, became to me an intolerable burden."<sup>17</sup> This intolerable burden was soon to be exceeded by the height of the joy of salvation.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:35.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup>Ernest Bacon, *Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans* (1996; repr., Arlington Heights, IL: Christian Liberty, 2001), 12.

<sup>17</sup>Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography*, 1:98.

<sup>18</sup>Reflecting on his conversion, Spurgeon states, "Oh, what a season it is when Jesus takes away the pain of sin. When the Lord first pardoned my sin, I was so joyful that I could barely refrain from dancing. I thought on my road home from the house where I had been set at liberty that I must tell the

Innumerable people would be used of God to bring about Spurgeon's salvation as he embraced biblical truths as his own. However, because of the timely spiritual guidance of Mary King surrounding Spurgeon's salvation, he held her in highest regard and gratitude throughout his life:

The first lessons I ever had in theology were from an old cook in the school at Newmarket where I was an usher. . . . Many a time we have gone over the covenant of grace together, and talked of the personal election of the saints, their union with Christ, their final perseverance, and what vital godliness meant; and I do believe that I learnt more from her than I should have learned from any six doctors of divinity of the sort we have nowadays.<sup>19</sup>

The impact of this common instrument used by God magnifies His divine providence in which He strategically causes intersections of affirmation and confirmation in the lives of His servants. In reflecting upon this providential relationship Spurgeon had with Mary King, Zack Eswine concludes, "Sometimes providence strongly prepares us by the most ordinary relationships. Sometimes amid our ordinary life, God is using us to strongly prepare another for extraordinary ministry."<sup>20</sup> Spurgeon expressed his indebtedness to Mary by meeting her financial needs at the end of her life.<sup>21</sup>

### **An Anonymous Influence**

Through the sowing and watering of the seed of the gospel by family and other formative influences, the reaping of the harvest of salvation was drawing near. Spurgeon recalls, "In my conversion, the very point lay in making the discovery that I had nothing

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stones in the street the story of my deliverance. So full was my should of joy that I wanted to tell every snowflake that was falling from heaven the wondrous love of Jesus, who had blotted out the sins of one of the chief of rebels." Charles Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning: A New Edition of the Classic Devotional Based on the Holy Bible, English Standard Version*, ed. Alistair Begg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 41.

<sup>19</sup>Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography*, 1:53. Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 611-12, challenges Spurgeon's recollection of the extent of Mary King's impact upon him: Spurgeon, in his zeal, probably exaggerated his dependence upon the simple woman for his Calvinistic grasp. He surely gleaned a large portion of his theology from his grandfather and father and from the Puritan works he constantly read."

<sup>20</sup>Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 611-12.

<sup>21</sup>Day, *Shadow of the Broad Brim*, 49-50.

to do but to look to Christ, and I should be saved.”<sup>22</sup> It was to this challenge that he wonderfully responded. Who would have dreamed that God would use a snowstorm to redirect Spurgeon’s steps to a Primitive Methodist Chapel where an anonymous layman would ascend the pulpit on behalf of the snowbound pastor, to preach on what would appear to be a strange sermon text that would lead to the salvation of a seemingly ordinary young man who would become one of the greatest preachers of the gospel in history? The text for the sermon was Isaiah 45:22, “Look unto Me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth.” Spurgeon vividly describes that improbable messenger’s providential message:

There was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in that text. The preacher began thus:—It say, “Look.” Now lookin’ don’t take a deal of pain. It ain’t liftin’ your foot or your finger; it is just, “Look.” . . . But then the text says, “Look unto *Me*.” . . . Many o ye are lookin’ to yourselves, but it’s no use lookin’ there. You’ll never find any comfort in yourselves. . . . Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay, with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger. Just fixing his eyes on me, as if he knew all my heart, he said, “Young man, you look very miserable.” . . . He continued, “And you will always be miserable—miserable in life and miserable in death—if you don’t obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.” Then lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do, “Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin’ to do but to look and live.” I saw at once the way of salvation. . . . Oh! I looked until I could have almost looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant, and sung with the most enthusiastic of them, of the precious blood of Christ, and simple faith which looks alone to Him. . . . Since that dear hour when my soul cast itself on Jesus, I have found solid joy and peace.<sup>23</sup>

Little did that messenger with no theological education know that he had been used by God to reach a young man who would powerfully call thousands to join him in looking to Jesus. In the providence of God, this preacher remains anonymous in the annals of history.

## Summary

Although brief, this overview of early influences in Spurgeon’s life provides

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<sup>22</sup>Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:102.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:106-8.

insight into his later spiritual maturity and development as a man of God. Another chronicler of Spurgeon's life, W. Y. Fullerton, points out, "From the earliest days of his Christian life he dwelt in the spiritual tropics. There were no half shades with him. . . . He was on God's side with all the power of his being all the time."<sup>24</sup> As he matured in his faith, God began to unfold His call of Spurgeon to preach the gospel. Later, other experiences and influences in his life would combine to deepen his faith, intensify his sense of calling, and further his preparation.

### **Influences on Spurgeon's Education of Himself and Others in Personal and Pastoral Piety**

It is often stated that Spurgeon had no formal education. However, it is more accurate to state that he had no formal theological education. In spite of this, he immersed himself in educating himself through his God-given ability to read rapidly combined with his retention of vast amounts of instruction and information. Although his motivation for self-education was ceaseless, he invested his life in providing opportunity for others who had a desire to learn and grow, but perhaps were limited by a lack of direction or resources with which to do so on their own.

### **Spurgeon's Detour Away from Formal Theological Education**

The principal of Stepney College, Joseph Angus, became aware of seventeen-year-old Spurgeon and was interested in assisting him in pursuing a Baptist theological education. Although Angus was yet to meet Charles, he shared John Spurgeon's educational objectives for his son. Thus, to Spurgeon's surprise, he was invited to an unsolicited interview with Angus on February 2, 1854.<sup>25</sup> Due to a miscommunication regarding the location of the interview, Spurgeon and Angus waited for each other in two

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<sup>24</sup>W. Y. Fullerton, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon: A Biography* (Chicago: Moody, 1966), 39.

<sup>25</sup>Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 63.



different places and the appointment failed to happen. Spurgeon recalls, “I was not a little disappointed at the moment, but have a thousand times since thanked the Lord very heartily for the strange Providence which forced my steps into another path.”<sup>26</sup> This experience resulted in providentially rerouting Spurgeon’s life away from formal theological education and toward his divine destiny to the most prominent pulpit in the world. Patricia Kruppa, Distinguished Professor of History at the University of Texas, clarifies, “Spurgeon’s formal education ended at the secondary level, and he had no advanced training in theology. He was certainly not ignorant of theology, but his knowledge consisted almost entirely of the theology of another age.”<sup>27</sup> This foundation of theology from the past proved to guard his mind against the shifting theological landscape filled with erroneous doctrinal trends.

Spurgeon spent the remainder of his life and ministry voraciously educating himself through expansive reading, deep meditation, and retention of what he read. British historian, David Bebbington, describes Spurgeon as “a very bookish man.”<sup>28</sup> Even though Spurgeon loved people and was a great conversationalist, he was just as comfortable with a well-worn book from his library as he was with conversing with church members and fellow pastors. His personal library would become for him theological educators, spiritual counselors, and ministerial mentors. Steven Lawson observes,

His personal library in his Westwood home boasted an estimated twelve thousand volumes of Bible commentaries, systematic theologies, linguistic aids, church histories, and Christian biographies. So familiar was Spurgeon with his books that it was said he could walk into his study in the dark and put his hand on any desired work.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:242.

<sup>27</sup>Patricia Stallings Kruppa, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon: A Preacher’s Progress* (New York: Garland, 1982), 63.

<sup>28</sup>David W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 41.

<sup>29</sup>Steve J. Lawson, *The Gospel Focus of Charles Spurgeon* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2012), 32.

However, his rapid reading and amazing retention only promoted further humility. It was his humble dependence upon the Holy Spirit, expressed through the inseparable conjoining of consistent study with the prayerful Scripture intake, that became the unshakable pillars upon which his ministry was providentially developed and sustained.

### **Spurgeon's Passion for Providing Theological Education for Pastors**

Although Spurgeon was not the recipient of a theological degree, that solitary fact did not define his view of theological education. He did return to the classroom, but only as a guest lecturer (albeit a regular one) and president of the Pastors' College he founded in London and which would later bear his name. However, by taking the absence of formal theological education out of the context of the full terrain of Spurgeon's life, many have falsely assumed that Spurgeon held a personal disdain toward it. Nettles argues, "Obviously Spurgeon was not opposed to training, for he would never have founded the Pastors' College had his own resistance to it been based on principled opposition."<sup>30</sup> Thus, the point is easily argued that he was not opposed to formal theological education in the least.

It is paradoxical that Spurgeon would become a leading theological educator through his Pastors' College. However, he sought to establish an institution of theological education that maintained a balanced emphasis on both academics and piety. The goal was to provide streamlined education saturated with spiritual vitality. He longed for the student's head and heart to grow in tandem. Mike Nicholls, former Vice Principal at Spurgeon's College, further describes the context within which the school was established: "Emerging in a period of great educational and religious revival, the College needed to train ministers for a revived Church and a more highly educated public."<sup>31</sup> Spurgeon did

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<sup>30</sup>Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 63.

<sup>31</sup>Mike Nicholls, *The Lights of the World: A History of Spurgeon's College 1856-1992* (Harpden, England: Nuprint, 1993), 31-32.

not view education as an end in itself. For him, it was much more than obtaining a degree and diploma. It had great practical spiritual value for young proclaimers of a Christ-centered gospel. Spurgeon not only became an advocate for Scripture-based, ministry-minded theological education, but the lectures he later delivered to his students and published shaped the mindset of ministers for generations.

Spurgeon took a very active role in maintaining the institution's integrity and vision. He battled ungodly ideologies and false teaching that misguided many other "Christian" institutions. It was his desire to maintain an unyielding focus on training preachers of the unadulterated gospel from the inerrant Word of God with the passionate pursuit of the souls of people and their salvation. Because of this, he was deeply involved in the process of determining those who would both enter and graduate from the Pastors' College. He unashamedly sought to welcome only young men who had responded to God's call to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and had already exemplified giftedness in proclaiming it. The unique objective of this institution was to help shape those whom God had selected. Nicholls relates that entrance was based on "evidence of spirituality, a teachable spirit, great zeal for the salvation of souls and some evidence of effectiveness in Christian work."<sup>32</sup> Spurgeon's interest in the students went well beyond their entrance. He was deeply concerned about all aspects of their education and future ministry. Thus, he was committed to a long-term active involvement in providing encouragement and guidance which transcended their time on campus. Nicholls explains,

Whilst Spurgeon did little formal lecturing, his role as President meant that he was the spiritual mentor and model for the students. He interviewed them before they were accepted for training at the College, superintended their settlement procedure, often acted as financial adviser and support for their young growing churches, and continued voluminous correspondence with many of the students once they were out in the pastorate.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Nicholls, *The Lights of the World*, 62.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 42.

Although Spurgeon took all of these responsibilities very seriously, it was the lectures which he delivered to the student body that became pivotal moments in their education.

Friday afternoon became a hallowed time for the students to experience Spurgeon's personality, get a deeper glimpse of his heart, and better understand his mindset for ministry and pulpit preparation. The student body remained small compared to similar institutions due to the exclusive demands for entrance which screened many from the process. However, the smaller size provided students with a more intimate experience with their venerable role model. Lewis A. Drummond describes the setting of this coveted interaction with Spurgeon: "In the early days, he would have the students in his home for the lectures. Later, as the student body grew, he lectured in the College hall."<sup>34</sup> With current technology, the lectures could have easily been recorded in both audio and video format, and virtually instantaneously made accessible worldwide. However, that was not the case in the nineteenth century. Pastors throughout the years are indebted to those who rapidly recorded and preserved these lectures in written form to the best of their abilities. There is truly a transcendent value to these lectures regardless of the fact that some of it strictly applied to Spurgeon's day. Nicholls once again provides insight into their nature: "His lectures to his students were full of practicalities. . . . But his chief concern was not with the mechanics of sermon production and presentation, but with the preacher's spirituality."<sup>35</sup> It is this chief concern regarding spirituality that continues to provide a spiritual oasis and lifeline to pastors in a culture consumed with principles, techniques, and innovation. Spurgeon's legacy is one of expositor, educator, and encourager. He desired for preachers to follow his example of keeping life and ministry anchored to a life of prayer, Scripture intake, and personal piety.

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<sup>34</sup>Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 412.

<sup>35</sup>Nicholls, *The Lights of the World*, 74.

## **Further Influences on Spurgeon's Personal and Pastoral Piety**

Spurgeon was consumed with a passion for life-long learning. He refused to become content or complacent regarding his understanding or his ability to communicate truth. Thus, he ceaselessly expanded his understanding of one's personal walk with God and its relationship to one's public proclamation of the Word of God. Much of his perspective was shaped by his heroes from history rather than contemporary trends.

### **The Influence of the Puritans**

The Puritans had a deep impact upon the development of Spurgeon's theology, mindset, lifestyle, and ministry from an early age. As previously stated, this Puritan influence was nurtured in the hallowed walls of his grandfather's study and library and rapidly progressed beyond fascination with the pictorial illustrations to those brought into his young mind with words. His intellectual infatuation with the Puritans was lastingly birthed in the pages of *Pilgrim's Progress* as his young eyes envisioned its descriptive imagery. Spurgeon remarks,

Next to the Bible, the book that I value most is John Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress.' I believe I have read it through at least a hundred times. It is a volume of which I never seem to tire; and the secret of its freshness is that it is so largely compiled from the Scriptures. It is really Biblical teaching put in the form of a simple yet very striking allegory.<sup>36</sup>

The saturation of Spurgeon's vocabulary and conversation with biblical words and phrases would often be attributed to his consistent immersion in *Pilgrim's Progress*. Biographer Peter Morden views Bunyan's influence on Spurgeon as touching virtually all areas of his mind and life: "Bunyan's language, metaphors and imagery became crucial to the way Spurgeon described his spiritual experience, crucial, indeed, to his conception of the Christian life."<sup>37</sup> When people refer to Spurgeon's imagery, which turned the ears of his audience into eyes, they are also giving credence to Bunyan's influence. Morden

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<sup>36</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *Pictures from Pilgrim's Progress: A Commentary on Portions of John Bunyan's Immortal Allegory* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1992), 11.

<sup>37</sup>Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 26.

contends that Bunyan became somewhat of a biblical counselor for Spurgeon amidst tumultuous seasons:

Bunyan helped Spurgeon understand his own times of struggle and depression, which he came to view as part of normal Christian experience. The Christian life was not a serene progress to journey's end; it was characterized by great joy, it was true, but it was also a life in which struggle and battle were important motifs.<sup>38</sup>

Even prior to Spurgeon's conversion, God was sovereignly shaping his understanding of the nature of the Christian life. This profound impression of images upon his young mind would not only enable him to better understanding, but would assist virtually millions through Spurgeon's spoken and written words. Once again, Morden also provides helpful insight into Bunyan's influence on Spurgeon's walk with God: "Bunyan's Puritan vision of true, rugged godliness was one Spurgeon was determined to keep alive in respect to his own spirituality, and he was also determined to commend this vision to others."<sup>39</sup> Hence, he relentlessly and perpetually promoted this vision from the pulpit and with his pen.

The Puritan influence seemed to grow with each introduction to yet another Puritan volume of which Spurgeon amassed no less than seven thousand in his library.<sup>40</sup> It also became progressively more deeply embedded with each passing year of ministry and various battles for scriptural truth and piety. Iain Murray observes, "From this source his mind was stocked with the truths for a lifetime of ministry."<sup>41</sup> As others were drifting further and further away from the moorings of Scripture and biblical theology, Spurgeon was more passionately driven toward the solid foundation of scriptural truth and the pens of those who had faithfully and tenaciously proclaimed it in the past. Every area of Spurgeon's life seemed to have Puritan fingerprints divinely and indelibly placed there. His high view of Scripture was reinforced by the way in which the Puritans upheld the non-

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<sup>38</sup>Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 30.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Bacon, *Spurgeon*, 107.

<sup>41</sup>Iain H. Murray, *Heroes* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2009), 271.

negotiable sufficiency of Scripture. His theological mindset shared much of the Puritan perspective, and his view of pastoral ministry was shaped in the Puritan pattern, which was most obvious in his theology and practice of personal and pastoral piety. Day insists, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon received his baptism of fire from hours without end of communing with the Bible at his right hand and the books of the Puritans at his left.”<sup>42</sup> Spurgeon had so immersed himself in the writings of the Puritans that he seemed to view them as dear friends. This sense of endearing friendship was the result of his gratitude for the immense way in which God had used them to impact his life and ministry.

Spurgeon was used of God to reintroduce Puritan exposition, theology, and pastoral perspective to his generation and those which followed. By immersing himself in these treasured volumes, he discovered an ever-deepening kindred spirit with the Puritans. Wayland Hoyt, a personal acquaintance of Spurgeon, provides an account of Spurgeon’s familiarity with their writings: “He could repeat pages of them at will. He knew precisely how this man and that man of them analyzed his text and wrought his periods.”<sup>43</sup> Spurgeon was so identified with the Puritans that many would consider him a Puritan out of season. As with the Puritans themselves, some would make this distinction as a means of belittling criticism while others would do so in endearing terms of favorable admiration. Regardless of the motivation of those who referred to Spurgeon as a “Puritan,” he welcomed his association with such an esteemed group. Spurgeon himself acknowledged, “I have been charged with being a mere echo of the Puritans, but I had rather be the echo of truth, than the voice of falsehood.”<sup>44</sup> Hence, he continued to traverse in the truth which was powerfully declared from the Puritan pulpits of the past.

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<sup>42</sup>Day, *Shadow of the Broad Brim*, 120.

<sup>43</sup>Wayland Hoyt, *Walks and Talks with Charles H. Spurgeon* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1892), 21.

<sup>44</sup>Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry*, 10.

Spurgeon's rich familiarity with the Puritan authors should not be perceived as equal to a blind unawareness of the contemporary authors who called upon readers to consider a new perspective. He was very aware of current theological trends, and was deeply grieved by the gradual drift it was bringing to the church of his day. From his perspective, there was no need to adjust and adapt one's theology. Popularity is rarely an accurate measure of the substance of new theological jargon. Spurgeon contended, "It may be want of intellect which prevents our departing from the good old way; but even this is better than want of grace, which lies at the bottom of men's perpetual chopping and changing of their beliefs."<sup>45</sup> Thus, these new religious recipes offered much, but delivered little. By stroking the ego of man, and minimizing the sovereignty of God, they stood in blatant opposition of the rich truths of Scripture that saturated the works of men such as Bunyan, Owen, and Perkins. Spurgeon explains,

This is our reason for preferring the Puritan divines to those of modern date. When you read them, you have found something solid, substantial, and real. Most of the theological books of these degenerate times are like the whipped creams and soufflés of the confectioner,—very pretty, but very much like nothing at all. . . . Many of our new divines, when they write their lucubrations, evidently think they are thinking, but nobody else thinks so when they see what comes of it. "Much-ado about nothing" has got out of the theatres, and come to the studies, the pulpits, and the book-shops.<sup>46</sup>

Spurgeon's observation could have been uttered today. Thus, it provides a timely and timeless warning for pastors perusing the shelves of Christian bookstores. Not only should books not be judged by their cover, but they also must not be judged by their copyright. Appearance and age can be a false measure of the content of a book, new or old. However, one must be cautious about giving greater weight to the "New Arrivals" section more often than the section marked "Classics" in the local Christian bookstore. Whether he was searching for sermonic substance or personal edification and encouragement, Spurgeon found the Puritans to be a rich clear fountain from which to drink. Spurgeon's practice of

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<sup>45</sup>Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry*, 10.

<sup>46</sup>Charles Spurgeon, "Hard Books," in *The Sword and the Trowel* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 2006, 1885), 8:82.



faithful exposition of Scripture and fruitful edification of godly instruction was much more than a mimicking of the Puritans; it was used of God to lengthen their legacy and to take it to a new level through a fresh voice and personality.

### **The Influence of George Whitefield**

To a lesser degree, than that of the Puritans, the personal piety and ministry practices of George Whitefield (1714-1770), the great evangelist in the First Great Awakening, made a deep impact upon Spurgeon's life and ministry.<sup>47</sup> Spurgeon's sense of a kindred spirit with Whitefield is seen in his prayerfulness, evangelistic zeal, and his ability to engage the masses with the gospel. Such was the similarity that a compilation of Spurgeon's sermons was titled, *The Modern Whitfield: The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon of London, His Sermons, with an Introduction and Sketch of His Life by E. L. Magoon*.<sup>48</sup> This designation spoke of both their common power and popularity. Neither Whitefield as an itinerant preacher, nor Spurgeon as a local church pastor, ever lacked for a crowd to hear their proclamation of God's Word.

In regard to Spurgeon, Dallimore (who wrote well-received biographies of both preachers) points out, "The crowd came every time he preached, and for this reason he was constantly spoken of as 'a second Whitefield.'"<sup>49</sup> Although separated by decades, Spurgeon and Whitefield were united in the heart and heat with which they declared the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. Spurgeon, often regarded as the "prince of preachers," esteemed Whitefield as king.<sup>50</sup> He proclaimed,

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<sup>47</sup>Spurgeon refers to George Whitefield more than any other individual in *Lectures to My Students*. This includes no less than thirteen references to Whitefield. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 61, 79, 110, 197, 211, 245-47, 307, 375, 383, 397.

<sup>48</sup>E. L. Magoon, comp., *The Modern Whitfield: The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon of London, His Sermons, with an Introduction and Sketch of His Life by E. L. Magoon* (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman and Co., 1856).

<sup>49</sup>Dallimore, *C. H. Spurgeon*, 48.

<sup>50</sup>In *Whitefield's Sermons* is the autograph, with the inscription following:—'C. H. Spurgeon,

Often as I have read his life, I am conscious of distinct quickening whenever I turn to it. He *lived*. Other men seem to be only half-alive, but Whitefield was all life, fire, wing, force. My own model, if I may have such a thing in due subordination to my Lord, is George Whitefield. With unequal footsteps must I follow his glorious track.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, humility was the resulting experience for Spurgeon when compared with this great pulpiteer of the past. In *The Two Wesleys*, Spurgeon makes the following observations about his ministerial model: “Whitefield, in his preaching, was an orator . . . Whitefield carried men’s hearts by storm with burning eloquence . . . In fact, I think I might say George Whitefield had his eye fixed on heaven, and he read all truth in light of God.”<sup>52</sup> Fittingly, many would make the same observations about Spurgeon. He too was one who would reflect these qualities and become for others a model to be followed.

### **The Influence of Charles Simeon**

One other preacher referred to by Spurgeon as a model was Charles Simeon (1759-1836).<sup>53</sup> Simeon is viewed by many as somewhat of a forerunner of evangelical Christianity in England. He served as pastor of Holy Trinity Church, Cambridge, for fifty-four years. For the first twelve years he was bitterly opposed by people within his congregation. He also became one of the initial and greatest proponents of expository/textual preaching. In reality, Spurgeon’s inheritance from the Puritans was enhanced by the Puritan preaching principles and practices as expressed within the life and ministry of Simeon. Regarding Simeon’s book of sermon skeletons, *Horae Homileticae*, Spurgeon comments, “They have been called ‘a valley of dry bones’: be a prophet and they will  

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who admires Whitefield as chief of preachers.” Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 4:304.

<sup>51</sup>Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:66.

<sup>52</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *The Two Wesleys: A Lecture Delivered in the Metropolitan Tabernacle Lecture Hall on December 6th 1861* (Eugene, OR: Wipe and Stock, 2014, 1861), 7-8.

<sup>53</sup> Drummond relates, “He preached experientially, practically, personally, and persuasively. In developing his preaching style he received much from Charles Simeon. . . . Spurgeon said, ‘I have no desire to become the rival of Mr. Charles Simeon; and yet if I should copy any man’s outlines, I should prefer him for a model.’” Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 295.

live.”<sup>54</sup> Like Simeon, Spurgeon was no stranger to opposition when it came to biblical preaching and theology. Alongside this reality, the parallels between these two men are worthy of consideration. Both of them highly valued and practiced a life of prayer,<sup>55</sup> were self-taught in their practice of homiletics, stood against the tide of popular theology, were blessed with a lengthy pastorate, and had a desire to provide instruction in preaching and ministry for the next generation.<sup>56</sup> From his grandfather to Charles Simeon, Spurgeon’s mindset and ministry were greatly enhanced, his piety and passion were deepened.<sup>57</sup> Through these combined influences, Spurgeon became a shaper of hearts, minds, and ministries himself through successive generations and into the present.

### **Spurgeon’s Example of Uniting Personal Piety and Scholarship**

The culmination of these influences in Spurgeon’s life converge in pointing him toward the necessity of maintaining a biblical theology and lifestyle of godliness.

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<sup>54</sup>Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries* (Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian, 2006), 42.

<sup>55</sup>Handley Moule, *Charles Simeon: Pastor of a Generation* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 1997), 66.

<sup>56</sup>J. I. Packer further highlights the correlation between Spurgeon and Simeon: “C. H. Spurgeon mistrusted continuous exposition of whole books of Scripture because it increased the risk of boring the congregation, and Simeon, like Spurgeon, like Claude, and like most revival preachers, past and present, looked instead for single verses carrying specific messages about God and ourselves that, as it were, said to the preacher as he read, thought, and prayed, ‘Preach me.’” J. I. Packer, “Expository Preaching: Charles Simeon and Ourselves,” in *Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching in Honor of R. Kent Hughes*, ed. Leland Ryken and Todd A. Wilson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 148.

<sup>57</sup>To further clarify Simeon’s journey and his similarities with Spurgeon, I have included comments by James M. Houston: “Charles Simeon was the first preacher of the Church of England to appreciate that it is necessary to teach other pastors how to preach well. He himself had no instruction in homiletics, for it was not taught in the theological schools. . . . What saved his ministry was the discovery of Jean Claude’s *Essays in the Composition of a Sermon*, which his Baptist neighbor Robert Robinson, translated in 1788 from the French. It was like a gift from heaven. . . . He was encouraged to see that he had discovered many of Claude’s principles of preaching for himself. . . . He began weekly to teach a group of young ordinands the principles of homiletics. Eventually some eleven hundred Anglican clergy had come under his teaching, filling pulpits of parish churches throughout the length and breadth of England.” James M. Houston, “Editor’s Note about Charles Simeon (1758-1836) and the Principles of Homiletics Exemplified in This Anthology of His Sermons,” in *Evangelical Preaching: An Anthology of Sermons by Charles Simeon*, ed. James M. Houston (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 1986), xv-xvi.

Thus, personal sanctification was the primary objective of his Christian life. He loved God and sought to consistently walk with Him in the pursuit of Christlikeness in mindset, character, conversation, lifestyle, and ministry. Spurgeon was convinced “Holiness in a minister is at once his chief necessity and his godliest ornament.”<sup>58</sup> He was determined to settle for nothing less than the genuine godliness that only the Holy Spirit could produce in his life. This determination to be brought under the influence and control of the Holy Spirit overflowed into his pastoral ministry: “It is important that we be under the influence of the Holy Ghost, as He is the *Spirit of Holiness*; for a very considerable and essential part of Christian ministry lies in example. . . . Purity cannot be carried too far in a minister.”<sup>59</sup> Only Holy Spirit-birthing holiness can bring about purity and power in the pulpit. Spurgeon’s battle for holiness was fought on at least three fronts: (1) personal, (2) pastoral, and (3) congregational. He had an insatiable desire for a reformation on each of these fronts to result in a powerful revival of biblical holiness and piety. The inward transformation by the activity of the Holy Spirit alone produces the outflow of holiness and godly ministry. Spurgeon passionately asserts, “If we desire to glorify our Lord by fruitfulness we must have certain things within us. . . . Fruit is the overflow of life, and we must be full before we can flow over.”<sup>60</sup> The nurturing of genuine godliness alone results in genuine spiritual fruitfulness.

Spurgeon’s pursuit of piety took him to a deep commitment and practice of the spiritual disciplines of prayer and Scripture intake. This is not surprising when one considers his devotion to the Word of God and his priority of prayer. He took very seriously the words of the apostles recorded in Acts 6:4: “We will continually give

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<sup>58</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 18.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>60</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *Cheque Book of Faith: Daily Readings by C. H. Spurgeon* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 1996), 148.

ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.” In a sermon entitled, “Pleading for Prayer,” Spurgeon pleaded,

There was a difference about the distribution of the alms among the widows, and the twelve declared that they could not attend to such a matter, for, they said, “We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” This would be heaven to me. But notice that at least half, and the first half of their work lay in prayer. Oh, if that could be our portion! If we could but have full space for prayer and meditation, and were set free from the petty secularities and differences incident to church life. Oh that we could have more to do with Him from whose right hand the supreme blessing comes—that were a joy indeed!<sup>61</sup>

These two realities, prayer and the ministry of the Word, became pillars in his ministry, which were more important and impressive than those that welcomed worshippers at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. These pillars were apparent in his personal practice of prayerful meditation upon the Word of God. Without these pillars of piety, both Spurgeon’s life and ministry would have quickly crumbled under the weight of fame and opposition. However, through the secure practice of these spiritual disciplines, Spurgeon’s ministry thrived in a setting of overwhelming popularity, vicious opposition, debilitating depression, and illness. Spurgeon provided a living example that made his exhortations resonate more clearly in the hearts of students and pastors. His exhortations to this end were delivered in sermons, lectures, articles, and letters.

Just as the battle to maintain these priorities never ceased, neither did the necessity of calling others to join him in pursuing courageous consistency for the sake of Christ, His gospel, and His church. In another discourse, “A Plea for the Pastors’ College,” he spoke about the indispensable tandem of self-education and spiritual development. He cautioned against pushing the Bible and prayer aside in exchange for other books and theological discussions:

The Scriptures must be their chief class-book, theology their main science, the art of teaching their practical study, and the proclamation and exposition of the gospel their first business. . . . Books and parchments should be prized, but prayer and

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<sup>61</sup>Charles Spurgeon, “Sermon 1887: “Pleading for Prayer,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit: Sermons Preached by C. H. Spurgeon and Revised During the Year 1886* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1976), 32:111.

meditation should be supreme. The head should be stored, but the heart also should be fed with heavenly food.<sup>62</sup>

Within the church culture that surrounded him, Spurgeon became painfully aware of the tragedy of a preacher's head outgrowing his heart, with novel theological ideas replacing legitimate scriptural truth. This awareness fortified his convictions and intensified his admonitions toward the biblical objective of personal and pastoral piety within himself and in the lives of other pastors.

Spurgeon is rightfully referred to as a deep thinker, voracious reader, unrivaled orator, gifted author, and impressive visionary. However, to separate Spurgeon's impressive talents, achievements, and worldwide influence from his walk with God and the overflow of his personal piety is a tragic misrepresentation of him as a man and as a preacher. Dallimore states, "The chief element of Spurgeon's entire career was his walk with God."<sup>63</sup> Spurgeon's personal piety, which ceaselessly undergirded his pastoral piety, became highly esteemed and contagious to his congregants, students, and other pastors. This rich spiritual influence was not limited simply to his community or nation. It was his personal piety that also impressed and endeared him to American theologians.

One example of this influence is found in relation to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, whose objectives were in keeping with those of the Pastors' College founded by Spurgeon.<sup>64</sup> James Pettigrew Boyce (1827-1888), the first president of the seminary, was deeply inspired by Spurgeon. Boyce's trip to London was occasioned by serious illness, and his need to visit a Dr. Garrett concerning his struggle with gout. Boyce and Spurgeon shared the struggle with chronic seasons of gout, as

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<sup>62</sup>Charles Spurgeon, "A Plea for the Pastors' College," in *The Sword and the Trowel*, 4:267.

<sup>63</sup>Dallimore, *C. H. Spurgeon*, 177.

<sup>64</sup>In regard to the early days of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Gregory Wills, Professor of Church History, recounts, "The committee agreed that 'the chief objective of this seminary is to prepare its students for the most effective service as preachers of the gospel and pastors of the churches.'" Gregory A. Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary 1859-2009* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 27.

evidenced by his recollections. His daughter, Lizzie Boyce, recorded events of their trip to London in Boyce's notebook of reminiscences:

Sunday we went to Spurgeon's church. . . . After church went back to see Mr. Spurgeon. Received a warm welcome from Mr. S. . . . Asked father to speak at the college. . . . Father was so much excited by the interview with the great preacher that he became pale and exhausted. . . . Father was much moved by this meeting with Spurgeon. His eyes were full of tears and he said to me, "How little I have accomplished compared with that man. If I can only get well and live a few years longer, I'll make greater efforts."<sup>65</sup>

He was not alone in his amazement at Spurgeon's untiring ability to be productive and effective. John A. Broadus (1827–1895), the second president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and author of the classic preaching textbook, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, wrote a letter about Spurgeon on September 26, 1870:

I was greatly delighted with Spurgeon, especially his conduct of public worship. . . . Spurgeon is an excellent reader of Scripture, and remarkable impressive in reading hymns, and the prayers were quite what they ought to have been. . . . Then he preaches the real gospel, and God blesses him.<sup>66</sup>

Broadus and Spurgeon would come to view each other as good friends and comrades in the pursuit of biblical theological education and the training of godly preachers of the gospel. Broadus wrote a letter of introduction to Spurgeon on behalf of Leland Jordan. Included in a note of thanks to Broadus, dated June 2, 1872, Jordan reflected on his visit with Spurgeon: "I had a short and pleasant conversation with him, during which he spoke of you kindly and complimentary."<sup>67</sup> Also, Broadus' knowledge of Spurgeon came to be deeply respected.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Thomas J. Nettles, *Stray Recollections, Short Articles and Public Orations of James P. Boyce* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders, 2009), 21.

<sup>66</sup>Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Life and Letters of John Albert Broadus* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1901), 243.

<sup>67</sup>Leland Jordan to John A. Broadus, June 2, 1872, Box 4, Folder 5, John Albert Broadus Papers, Archives and Special Collections, James P. Boyce Centennial Library, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

<sup>68</sup>In a letter to John Broadus, dated August 24, 1892, J. D. Durham inquired as to which Spurgeon biography Broadus considered to be the best. A note written at the bottom of the letter by Broadus' daughter, Eliza Sommerville Broadus, states that her father recommended, *From the Usher's Desk* because it had been revised by Spurgeon himself. J. D. Durham to John A. Broadus, August 24, 1892, Box 14, Folder

A. T. Robertson (1863-1934), the son-in-law of Broadus, who served as professor of New Testament at Southern Seminary from 1895-1934, also traveled to London in 1890. He was privileged to hear Spurgeon preach and to have a personal conversation with him in which he “inquired about his good friend, Dr. Broadus.”<sup>69</sup> Upon his return from London, Robertson delivered the Inaugural Address, “Preaching and Scholarship,” at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary on October 3, 1890. In his message, he used Spurgeon as an illustration of one who became an effective minister apart from theological education:

Not all scholars can preach, and not all preachers can become scholars. There are varying degrees of both, but the best preachers have generally been men of the best training in the schools. . . . The exceptions usually prove the rule, for even Spurgeon has made a respectable scholar of himself in spite of the lack of early training. Incidental cases here and there do not alter the general fact that the best and foremost preachers of Christendom have been not simply men of the largest gifts of mind and heart, but likewise of the most thorough training their times could give for their work. Given the grace of God in a man’s heart and natural parts, and he will be a better preacher if he pursues the study of God’s Word with a sound and reverent scholarship.<sup>70</sup>

This statement by Robertson points to the fact that a preacher and theologian of Spurgeon’s stature without formal theological training was possible, but not always probable.

However, Spurgeon was a unique preacher/scholar marked by this “sound and reverent scholarship.”

Another Baptist theologian and seminary president in America, Augustus Hopkins Strong (1836-1921), also had multiple encounters with Spurgeon and his ministry. Strong served as president of the Rochester Theological Seminary in Rochester, New York,

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66, John Albert Broadus Papers, Archives and Special Collections, James P. Boyce Centennial Library, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Also in a letter dated March 2, 1892, Broadus was invited to contribute a chapter on Spurgeon for the National Baptist by Editor-in-Chief H. L. Wayland. It was to be upon the topic of his choice, 3,000 to 5,000 words, and would he would be paid twenty dollars. H. L. Wayland to John A. Broadus, March 2, 1892, Box 16, Folder 35, John Albert Broadus Papers, Archives and Special Collections, James P. Boyce Centennial Library, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

<sup>69</sup>Everett Gill, *A. T. Robertson: A Biography* (New York: Macmillan, 1943), 70.

<sup>70</sup>Archibald Thomas Robertson, “Preaching and Scholarship” (Inaugural Address, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, October 3, 1890).



from 1872-1913. Though differing in many ways with Spurgeon, he had the highest respect for him. Strong became progressively impressed with the personal and pastoral piety of Spurgeon: “At each succeeding visit, I could see that he was growing mellow and more spiritual. His prayers especially came to be more noticeable for lofty and self-forgetful eloquence than were his sermons.”<sup>71</sup> In 1887, Strong, a frequent visitor to the home of John D. Rockefeller, accompanied him on a trip to London.<sup>72</sup> The occasion of the trip was the fiftieth anniversary of the reign of Queen Victoria.<sup>73</sup> This was a most impressive and rare experience for Strong; however, it was his interaction with Spurgeon that left a most lasting impression. Strong reminisces,

I had written the great preacher a note saying that I wished to bring Mr. Rockefeller to see him. . . . He devoted the two hours’ interval to Mr. Rockefeller and me. He took us through his house and library. . . . We plied him with questions. He responded very freely and simply; warmed with the recital of his experiences in receiving answers to prayer, he showed us how childlike was his faith. . . . Little things as well as great he carried to God in prayer. . . . We concluded that the secret of Mr. Spurgeon’s success was his piety and his faith. Above all things else he seemed to be a man of prayer.<sup>74</sup>

The memorable nature of this event, and the depth of its impact, are reflected in a later experience in which Strong applied the principles of prayer he saw modeled in Spurgeon. Facing the challenge of financial need for the seminary, Strong testifies, “I followed the method of Mr. Spurgeon and committed the case to God in prayer. I told him that it was his matter as much as mine; that my usefulness required a change; that he must show the way.”<sup>75</sup> Others who journeyed to the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London shared similar testimonies of life-change resulting from the influence of Spurgeon’s impressive ministry

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<sup>71</sup>A. H. Strong, *Autobiography of Augustus Hopkins Strong* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1981), 128-29.

<sup>72</sup>Raymond B. Fosdick, *John D. Rockefeller, Jr.: A Portrait* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), 27-37.

<sup>73</sup>Strong, *Autobiography of Augustus Hopkins Strong*, 297-98.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, 299-300.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 324.

and contagious lifestyle of personal and pastoral piety which empowered and enhanced his scholarship and pulpit ministry.

It is a providential irony that God would use Spurgeon, whom many consider an uneducated educator, to have such a profound impact upon some of the most educated and effective theological educators of his day. Perhaps no theological educator esteemed him more than B. H. Carroll, the first president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. In his memorial address, “The Death of Spurgeon,” which he delivered in February 1892, he extolled, “He combined the preaching power of Jonathan Edwards and Whitfield with the organizing power of Wesley, and the energy, fire, and courage of Luther. In many respects he was most like Luther. In many most like Paul.”<sup>76</sup> This statement has become exemplary of commendations about Spurgeon by many others through the years. Much of this admiration is anchored to Spurgeon’s devotion to prayer and Scripture within his private life and pulpit ministry. In the next chapter, I further explore how Spurgeon intermingled prayer and Scripture meditation with scholarship throughout his sermon preparation process.

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<sup>76</sup>B. H. Carroll, “The Death of Spurgeon,” in *Sermons and Life Sketches of B. H. Carroll*, comp. J. B. Cranfill (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1893), 29.

CHAPTER 4  
SPURGEON'S PREPARATION AND  
DELIVERY OF SERMONS

It is common for spokesmen representing the President of the United States to conduct press conferences on his behalf while standing behind a podium that bears the seal of the White House. Their words are perceived to represent the thoughts of the President himself concerning perspectives, issues, and events. Those viewing the press conference make the assumption that those representing the president have spent hours briefing with him concerning his views on the subjects being discussed. For, when standing behind the podium, they are to speak publicly only concerning that which they have personally and specifically discussed with the president. In a similar way, preachers stand behind pulpits to speak on behalf of God. Many of those pulpits are adorned with a cross that represents Christ's power and authority to the people in the pews. Thus, they assume that the man in the pulpit has spent hours with God and His Word in order to become well-acquainted with His mind regarding the text of the sermon. Tragically, in many cases, this assumption is false.

Spurgeon took the preparation of sermons very seriously in order to avoid giving false perceptions such as these. Hence, he sought to approach sermon preparation with great personal humility and integrity, through the diligent discipline of personal study. As a result, his sermons were marked with freshness and unction. Spurgeon went so far as to condemn the practice of lazily preaching the sermons of others. With his characteristic humor, he stated,

Are we all to purchase spiritual food for our flocks, at the liberal rate of half a guinea a quarter for thirteen sermons? . . . If these things be so, and this trade is to be continued and increased, I suppose that we who think out our own sermons, and deliver them fresh from our hearts, will be regarded as odd fellows, just as Mr.

Wesley was stigmatized as eccentric because he wore his own hair when all the fashionable world rejoiced in wigs.<sup>1</sup>

It was not that he stood in opposition to gathering thoughts and ideas from others, but rather what he condemned was the wholesale preaching of another man's sermon as if it were his own.<sup>2</sup> For Spurgeon, to simply echo, verbatim, the words of another would be to sacrifice one's personal integrity and the intimacy with God experienced in the preparation of messages.

Tragically, when sermon preparation is viewed as a common means to an end, many of the non-negotiable spiritual aspects of the process can subtly be treated as if they are peripheral or even nonessential. The strength of studying Spurgeon's preparation process is the fact that prayer and Scripture intake are thrust to the forefront in spite of the peculiarities of his practice. However, many preachers have mistakenly attempted to emulate his practice of preparation without the infrastructure of his mental capacity, personal piety, and spiritual discipline. Therefore, when studying the pulpit ministry of Spurgeon, one must focus on his manner and mindset rather than exclusively upon the mechanics with which he accomplished the task.

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Eccentric Preachers* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1978), 19. Recent scholarship by Christian T. George has revealed that early in Spurgeon's ministry he preached the sermons of men such as Doddridge, Baxter, Bunyan, Simeon, and Whitefield. However, he abandoned this practice early in his pastoral ministry. Charles Spurgeon, *The Lost Sermons of C. H. Spurgeon: His Earliest Outlines and Sermons Between 1851 and 1854*, ed. Christian T. George (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 1:26-28.

<sup>2</sup>Spurgeon was also sensitive to preachers who were limited on resources and preparation time. In the preface to *My Sermon Notes*, Spurgeon explains, "I have prepared these frameworks, not to encourage indolence, but to help bewildered industry; and I hope that I have not written so much as to enable any man to preach without thought, nor so little as to leave a weary mind without help. . . . As we pour a little water down a pump to help it draw up a stream from below, so may 'My Sermon-notes' refresh many a jaded mind, and then set it working so as to develop its own resources. May the Holy Spirit use these outlines for the help of his busy servants." Charles Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: A Selection from Outlines of Discourses Delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle with Anecdotes and Illustrations* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1884), 1:6-7. Spurgeon makes a similar statement in the preface to his in-depth exposition of Psalms. In reference to his "Hints for Preachers," which he includes at the end of each Psalm, Spurgeon states, "The Hints to Preachers are very simple, and an apology is due to any ministerial readers for inserting them, but I humbly hope they may render assistance to those for whom they alone are designed, viz., lay preachers whose time is much occupied, and whose attainments are slender." Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* (McLean, VA: MacDonald, 1988), 1:ii.

Biographer Ernest Bacon warned against the careless replication of Spurgeon's practice: "His methods of sermon preparation were peculiarly his own, and none but a spiritual genius and an alert, Bible-steeped mind could have continued to use it year after year."<sup>3</sup> Spurgeon himself warned his students against losing individuality by excessive imitation of someone else:

Be yourself, dear brother, for, if you are not yourself, you cannot be anybody else; and so, you see, you must be nobody. . . . Do not be a mere copyist, a borrower and spoiler of other men's notes. Say what God has said to you, and say it in your own way; and when it is so said, plead personally for the Lord's blessing upon it.<sup>4</sup>

Although it would be virtually impossible and extremely detrimental for anyone to attempt to duplicate the unique method by which he prepared his sermons, a brief overview of Spurgeon's sermon preparation process is helpful in understanding the underlying principles that guided him. This chapter explores his preparation process with appropriate emphasis upon its spiritual foundation and infrastructure.

### **Spurgeon's Sermon Preparation and Delivery Process**

Much has been written anecdotally about Spurgeon's practice of sermon preparation, which gives the impression that it only occurred on Saturday evening. However, daily he was mentally preparing for the pulpit with focused meditation upon Scripture and sermonic themes.<sup>5</sup> The intensity of Spurgeon's preparation was an all-consuming, weeklong pursuit to discover the direction of God in selecting and arranging

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<sup>3</sup>Ernest Bacon, *Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans* (1967; repr., Arlington Heights, IL: Christian Liberty, 2001), 74.

<sup>4</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *An All-Around Ministry* (1900; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2003), 72-74.

<sup>5</sup>Clyde Fant and William Pinson state, "Spurgeon spent all week 'foraging for the pulpit,' but often he did not arrive at an outline for his Sunday morning message until late Saturday evening, and his message for Sunday evening usually was formless until Sunday afternoon. He was not as careless in his preparation as these facts might indicate; he read incessantly and had an incredible memory. He put long hours into thinking and rethinking his sermons and composing them mentally, imagining the very words and phrases he would speak on Sunday." Clyde E. Fant and William M. Pinson, eds., *20 Centuries of Great Preaching: An Encyclopedia of Preaching* (Waco, TX: Word, 1971), 6:13.

the material that would become his sermon.<sup>6</sup> It was a routine characterized by spiritual intensity and the assistance of others.<sup>7</sup>

Then, in the Spurgeon home on Saturday evening, he would excuse himself, and enter the hallowed doors of his study “and shut himself in to companionship with God.”<sup>8</sup> Upon entering the silent solitude of his study, he would proceed to search the Bible for a text. The selection of his text was the most crucial, and at times, the most excruciating part of this process.<sup>9</sup> His wife provides a rare picture of the desperation which would overcome Spurgeon in this process:

Sometimes, but not often, he would leave the study for a few moments, to seek me, and say, with a troubled tone in his dear voice, "Wifey, what shall I do? God has not given me my text yet." I would comfort him as well as I could; and, after a little talk, he would return to his work, and wait and watch for the Word to be given. It was, to me, a cause for peculiar thankfulness when I was able to suggest to him a passage from which he could preach; and, afterwards, in referring to the sermon, he seemed so pleased to say, "You gave me that text."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Bacon, *Spurgeon*, 74-75, clarifies, “At times, of course, the theme of his sermon had been pondered all the week.”

<sup>7</sup>Peter Morden writes, “The point to note is that Spurgeon did not spend many hours on his own in sermon preparation. During the week he habitually worked with different secretaries, for example with Joseph W. Harrald, his private secretary, and John L. Keys, his literary secretary, at his side. Spurgeon’s method allowed him to keep the time he spent alone composing the actual outline to a minimum.” Peter J. Morden, *Communion with Christ and His Church: The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 127-28.

<sup>8</sup>C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon’s Autobiography: Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, by His Wife, and His Private Secretary* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897-99; repr., Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1992), 4:65. Hereafter, this work will be referenced as *Autobiography*.

<sup>9</sup>Biographer Richard Ellsworth Day quotes Spurgeon regarding his struggle: “I confess that I frequently sit hour after hour praying and waiting for a subject, and that is the main part of my study; much hard labor have I spent in manipulating topics, making skeletons out of verses . . . almost every Saturday of my life I prepare enough outlines of sermons to last me for a month, but I no more dare use them than an honest mariner would run ashore a cargo of contraband goods. Let those preach lightly who will; to me it is “the Burden of the Lord” which at times crushes my whole manhood into the dust of humiliation. I drift on and on over leagues of broken water, till I see the red lights and make sail direct to the desired haven!” Richard Ellsworth Day, *The Shadow of the Broad Brim* (1934; repr., Philadelphia: Judson, 1944), 135-36.

<sup>10</sup>Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 4:65.

No one knows a man's heart as intimately as his wife. It is possible that the texts she selected were the very texts they had discussed together, and from which they had received blessing from the Lord. Perhaps she was used of God to bring a text to his memory to which he had become blinded as to its relevance for the following day.

Once he settled on the appropriate text, it was common for him to enlist others to join him in the study in order to read aloud from commentaries, as he listened for insight. Hence, Spurgeon did not always prepare messages in complete isolation. Unlike many other preachers, he did not spend extended hours of uninterrupted time alone in his study preparing his messages. According to Spurgeon, it was not only his wife who provided constructive companionship in his study:

I have laid open on the table all the commentaries of every sort pertaining to the passage. If Mrs. Spurgeon is well enough, she reads the commentaries to me as I sit in my chair. If she cannot, my young men do it for me. I sit and listen, and think, and elaborate, and arrange.<sup>11</sup>

Susannah shares her perspective on those evenings of partnering in preparation for the Sabbath:

With those old volumes around him, he was like a honey-bee amid the flowers; he seemed to know how to extract and carry off the sweet spoils. . . . He could at once place his hand on any author who had written upon the portion of Scripture which was engaging his attention.<sup>12</sup>

It was in the context of this companionship and his commentaries that the message would begin to fill his mind and burn in his heart. His preparation would ultimately be condensed to a simple half-page that would accompany him to the pulpit the next day. On Sunday morning, he would enter the pulpit desperately dependent upon the Holy Spirit to breathe life into the message as He illumined his mind to extemporaneously fill the white

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<sup>11</sup>Wayland Hoyt, *Walks and Talks with Charles H. Spurgeon* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1892), 20.

<sup>12</sup>Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 4:68.

spaces of his sparse notes.<sup>13</sup> He found God to be abundantly faithful to fill his mind with thoughts and his mouth with words.<sup>14</sup>

This mode of sermon preparation and delivery would be intimidating to the most brilliant and gifted of preachers. Even for Spurgeon, this method of preparation was a looming challenge, mingled with rich blessing.<sup>15</sup> His personality and practice created a uniqueness in the preparation of each sermon. It was not a rigid regimental approach, but it did contain common elements each week. Therefore, stereotypical references to Spurgeon's Saturday evening practice should be viewed as a mere skeletal overview of what actually transpired in his composition of a sermon. Much more was involved in reaching his goal of entering the pulpit with a scriptural message from God. At times, he would move from a topic toward a text, but more often he would begin with his text and develop the topic, theme, or doctrine it contained by drawing from other biblical texts.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Curator of the Spurgeon Library, Christian T. George, observes, "His dependency on the Holy Spirit is evident throughout his sermons and reveals the force of his spirituality. On the title page of Notebook I, beneath the words, 'Skeletons I to LXXVII,' he wrote, 'And only skeletons without the Holy Ghost.'" Spurgeon, *The Lost Sermons*, 1:25-26.

<sup>14</sup>George elaborates, "He offered not only a theology for the head but also a spirituality for the heart. . . . Spurgeon clothed the gospel in earthy, ordinary attire so that even children could wrap their fingers around the deep things of God." Christian T. George, "Downgrade: Twenty-First Century Lessons from Nineteenth Century Baptists," in *The SBC and the 21st Century: Reflection, Renewal, and Recommitments*, ed. Jason K. Allen (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 132.

<sup>15</sup>Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 127, states, "Although he could find his mode of preparation challenging . . . he clearly derived much joy from this work as well."

<sup>16</sup>In this respect, Spurgeon would be classified as a textual preacher rather than an expository preacher. Warren W. Wiersbe and Lloyd M. Perry, eds., *The Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching and Preachers* (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 311-12. However, Tom Nettles argues, "Spurgeon would be surprised for anyone to accuse him of anything less than exposition. . . . For Spurgeon, true exposition meant, in Puritan fashion, using the whole Bible and all its doctrines in the unfolding of any one portion of Scripture. . . . He did not avoid verse-by-verse exposition, but included it in every worship service as he did a running homily on a larger portion of Scripture from which was taken the verse that provided his text for the day. He disliked the plan of using short texts to the neglect of commenting publicly on larger passages. Preaching plus commenting required twice as much work for the minister but yet Spurgeon insisted, 'Earnestly do I advocate commenting.' The extra study will provide expanding and long-term benefits. 'As a rule,' he claimed, 'I spend much more time over the exposition than over the discourse.' . . . One can be sure that the expository element of Spurgeon's preparation constantly fueled his discourses." Tom Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Spurgeon* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2013), 158. In contrast, Jim Shaddix contends, "Although Charles is considered one of history's greatest



Much of his preparation might appear to be unrelated to the actual content of his message; however, upon closer examination, it becomes apparent that his messages resulted from the convergence of the various avenues of his reading at an intersection of spiritual insight. The collision at these intersections resulted in fresh insight and illustrations from life, Scripture, and Christian classics.

### **Comparison of Spurgeon with His Contemporaries**

It is helpful to consider the homiletical methods of Spurgeon in his contemporary context rather than in isolation. Contemporaries of Spurgeon included in this thesis are:

1. John A. Broadus (1827-1895), President, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1888-1895; Delivered the Lyman Beecher Lectures, "Preaching and the Ministerial Life," Yale Divinity School, 1888-1889.<sup>17</sup>
2. Phillips Brooks (1835-1893), Pastor, Church of the Advent, Philadelphia, 1859-1862; Church of the Holy Trinity, Philadelphia, 1862-1869; Trinity Church, Boston, 1869-1891; Delivered Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching, "Lectures on Preaching," Yale Divinity School, 1876-1877.<sup>18</sup>
3. R. W. Dale (1829-1895), Pastor, Carrs Lane Congregational Chapel, Birmingham, 1859-1895; Delivered Lyman Beecher Lectures, "Nine Lectures on Preaching," Yale Divinity School, 1877-1878.<sup>19</sup>

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preachers, whether he should be categorized as a pure text-driven preacher is debatable. . . . In his overall preaching ministry his practice of exegesis is at times difficult to reconcile with his interpretation. As opposed to studying the text, probing it, and drawing out of it the truths that were in it, Spurgeon seemed to reverse the process by selecting a text and then grouping around it closely related Bible truths. At times he would stress meanings that were somewhat foreign to the text under consideration." Jim Shaddix, "A History of Text-Driven Preaching," in *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Mathews (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 46-47.

<sup>17</sup>Norman Wade Cox, ed., *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists: Presenting Their History, Doctrine, Polity, Life, Leadership, Organization, and Work* (Nashville: Broadman, 1958), 1:195.

<sup>18</sup>Harry C. Howard, *Princes of the Christian Pulpit and Pastorate* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1927), 246-68.

<sup>19</sup>F. R. Webber, *A History of Preaching in Britain and America: Including the Biographies of Many Princes of the Pulpit and the Men Who Influenced Them*, pt. 1 (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1952), 584-88.

4. Alexander Maclaren (1826-1910), Pastor, Portland Chapel, Southampton, 1846-1858; Union Chapel, Manchester, 1858-1903.<sup>20</sup>
5. Joseph Parker (1830-1902), Pastor, Cavendish Street Congregational Church, Manchester, 1858-1869; City Temple, London, 1869-1902.<sup>21</sup>
6. Alexander Whyte (1836-1921), Assistant, Free St. John's, Glasgow, 1866-1870; Assistant, Free St. George's, Edinburgh, 1870-1873; Pastor, Free St. George's, 1873-1909.<sup>22</sup>

On the surface, Spurgeon's approach to sermon preparation and delivery seems to be unique in contrast to commonly accepted disciplines of his contemporaries. His Saturday evening ritual is an extreme approach when compared to the highly disciplined weeklong approach of Alexander Maclaren and Phillips Brooks.<sup>23</sup> Spurgeon's half-page of limited sermon notes also stands in stark contrast to the meticulous manuscripts used by R. W. Dale.<sup>24</sup> Unique components of Spurgeon's approach to preparing and delivering sermons are also championed in lectures by his peers. At times, these components are presented as the desired approach, but do not characterize the practice of the lecturer.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps these components of his pulpit ministry would also come under close scrutiny and be discouraged within the evangelical academic community of today. It must be kept in perspective that the divergence of Spurgeon's approach was more a matter of personality

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<sup>20</sup>Webber, *A History of Preaching*, 571-79.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 589-94.

<sup>22</sup>Warren Wiersbe, *Walking with the Giants* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 89-100.

<sup>23</sup>Concerning Maclaren's preparation, Webber discloses, "He was a skilled craftsman himself, and he knew from experience that a good sermon cannot be produced in ten or twelve hours . . . A sermon worth hearing meant at least 60 hours of laborious work." F. R. Webber, *A History of Preaching in Britain and America*, 576-77. Fant and Pinson, *20 Centuries of Great Preaching*, 6:123, provide a description of Brooks' detailed weekly sermon preparation schedule.

<sup>24</sup>R. W. Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching* (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1878), 151.

<sup>25</sup>Dale states, "About the comparative advantages of preaching from a manuscript and preaching extemporaneously, I have some difficulty in speaking. It seems to me that the overwhelming weight of the argument is on the side of extemporaneously preaching." Ibid.

and preference than of personal ambition and diligence.<sup>26</sup> It is also important to recognize that although these differences in approach did exist, a more detailed inspection reveals numerous similarities with some of the practices of his pastoral contemporaries.

John A. Broadus highlights the distinction of personality and preference in the selection of a sermon text. Broadus writes, “There are few points as to which preachers differ more widely in talent and skill than the selection of texts.”<sup>27</sup> The selection of the text for a sermon was of primary importance to Spurgeon.<sup>28</sup> The text was not an afterthought or a hurried exercise to be accomplished as he moved to a preselected topic. He identified topics within the text rather than imposing topics on a text randomly selected. Hence, in a lecture, he strongly exhorted his students:

With regard to the sermon, we shall be most anxious, first of all, respecting the selection of the text. No one amongst us looks upon the sermon in so careless a light as to conceive that a text picked up at random will be suitable for every, or indeed any occasion.<sup>29</sup>

Although Dale lectured on topic selection, he cautioned his hearers about the proper relationship between text and topic:

I have spoken of the choice of “subjects,” not of the choice of “texts;” but a text, if honestly selected, contains the subject on which you intend to preach, or, at least, fairly and naturally suggests the subject. To treat a text as a mere motto for a sermon is a practice which can very rarely be justified.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Spurgeon revealed the reason for his preference of sermon preparation and presentation: “If we would have the Lord with us in the delivery of our message, we must be in dead earnest, and full of living zeal. Do you not think that many sermons are ‘prepared’ until the juice is crushed out of them, and zeal could not remain in such dry husks? Sermons which are studied for days, written down, read, re-read, corrected, and further corrected and emended, are in great danger of being too much cut and dried. You will never get a crop if you plant *boiled* potatoes. You can boil a sermon to a turn, so that no life remaineth in it.” Spurgeon, *An All-Around Ministry*, 346.

<sup>27</sup>John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (1870; repr., New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), 18.

<sup>28</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1875; repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 81-96.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>30</sup>Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching*, 124.

Because Dale, unlike Spurgeon, distinctly proceeded from subject to text, this comparison of Spurgeon and Dale provides insight into the coexistence of similarities and differences of viewpoint and practice.

Ultimately, Spurgeon's unique God-given ability of extemporaneous speaking enabled him to preach from the overflow of his personal piety, Scripture intake, and extensive reading throughout the week. Extempore preaching provides an example of the differences intermingled with similarities between Spurgeon and others. A variety of forms of extemporaneous preaching were embraced by other prominent preachers of Spurgeon's day. For instance, although the extent of time spent by renowned expositor Alexander Maclaren differed from that of Spurgeon, he also preached extemporaneously from a brief detailed outline as did Spurgeon.<sup>31</sup> In contrast, the sermons of John A. Broadus were completely extemporaneous.<sup>32</sup> Also, Joseph Parker initially preached from a manuscript, but his method later evolved into an extemporaneous approach to preaching with no written notes.<sup>33</sup> Hence, although the manner of Spurgeon's preparation and the

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<sup>31</sup>Concerning Maclaren's approach, Howard, *Princes of the Christian Pulpit*, 322, states, "In the beginning of his ministry he formed a resolution that he would not write his sermons, but would think and feel them. What he did write consisted of a few compressed notes. He liked to write a few lines of introduction. If he had heads, he worded them carefully. The closing sentences he preferred to write."

<sup>32</sup>Fant and Pinson, *20 Centuries of Great Preaching*, 5:56-57, write, "He spoke extemporaneously, and many critics reported that the printed page was a poor substitute for the experience of actually hearing Broadus himself. . . . It is unfortunate, however, that the extemporaneous style of Broadus did not leave us with more manuscripts." Concerning the value of extemporaneous preaching, Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 327, contends, "This method accustoms one to think more rapidly, and with less dependence on external helps, than if he habitually depended on a manuscript. . . . This method saves time for general improvement and for other pastoral work. . . . In the act of delivery, the extemporaneous speaker has immense advantages. With far greater ease and effectiveness than if reading or reciting, he can turn to account ideas which occur at the time. . . . Any man who possesses, even in an humble degree, the fervid oratorical nature, will find that after careful preparation, some of the noblest and most inspiring thoughts he ever gains will come while he is engaged in speaking."

<sup>33</sup>Webber, *A History of Preaching*, 592-93, reveals, "During his early ministry he wrote his sermons, but in later life he learned to speak extemporaneously, with marvelous precision and force. He selected a text early in the week, then walked through Hampstead Heath, concentrating his thoughts upon his text. His chief purpose was to get his thoughts arranged in an orderly manner. He paid little attention to actual words. He carried with him to the pulpit his text, written with a lead pencil on a small piece of paper, and a few lines suggesting the main thoughts in their orderly sequence."

written form of the sermon were unique, his extemporaneous delivery appears to have been commonly practiced.

In order to more fully understand the sermon preparation and delivery of Spurgeon and his contemporaries, it is important to distinguish between extemporaneous and impromptu preaching. Impromptu speaking implies preparation that is extremely limited or even nonexistent. One practicing impromptu speaking trusts in the ability to spontaneously follow streams of thought within the pulpit. Spurgeon practiced impromptu speaking at some of the weekly prayer meetings.<sup>34</sup> However, he warned his students against its abuse, by emphasizing the solemn necessity to be adequately prepared to address one's congregation. Thus, it should not be assumed that his practices of preparation were haphazard or lackadaisical. Preaching was not an afterthought at the end of a hectic week filled with ministerial duties and administrative responsibility. Hence, he condemned the irresponsibility of a lazy pulpit ministry and commended diligent study.<sup>35</sup> His instructions about impromptu speech also apply to extempore.

In contrast to impromptu speaking, effective extemporaneous speaking involves the investment of time in extensive preparation. This alone culminates in the practice of delivering the message from limited notes or from a manuscript with which the speaker has become very familiar without being mechanically restricted to its content.<sup>36</sup> Spurgeon defined extempore preaching as “the preparation of the sermon so far as thoughts

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<sup>34</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 146.

<sup>35</sup>Spurgeon warned, “Habitually to come into the pulpit unprepared is unpardonable presumption; nothing can more effectively lower ourselves and our office.” *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>36</sup>Spurgeon's instructions about effective impromptu speech also apply to extemporizing on any level. He challenged his students: “Our sermons should be our mental life-blood—the out-flow of our intellectual and spiritual vigour.” *Ibid.*, 141. He stated further, “You will not be able to extemporize good thinking unless you have been in the habit of thinking and feeding you mind with abundant and nourishing food. . . . Take it as a rule without exception, that to be able to overflow spontaneously you must be full.” *Ibid.*, 145.

go, and leaving the words to be found during delivery.”<sup>37</sup> Hence, he exercised a confident trust in the Lord to supply words, phrases, and insights to fill the gaps surrounding the limited text of his notes. Notable contemporaries of Spurgeon, such as John A. Broadus, Alexander Maclaren, and Joseph Parker, also preached extemporaneously.<sup>38</sup> Whether one prepares limited notes as did Spurgeon, Broadus, and Maclaren, or writes out a manuscript like Brooks, extemporaneous speaking is to be undergirded and empowered by intense prayer, focused study, and spiritual preparation. These three qualities saturated Spurgeon’s approach to his pulpit ministry. Thus, the nature and process of his sermon preparation was similar in content and sequence to that which was practiced by his contemporaries: the selection of a text/topic, personal meditation, interpretation, commentary exploration, etc.

Yet, another aspect of the nature of Spurgeon’s preaching must be considered. His preaching was a unique blending of doctrinal and devotional preaching. Others in his day emphasized one of these aspects over the other. For instance, R. W. Dale would be classified as a doctrinal preacher, whereas Alexander Whyte would be placed in the devotional category.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, many have championed Spurgeon’s sermons for their doctrinal depth, while many others cherished his sermons for their rich devotional

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<sup>37</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 153.

<sup>38</sup>Fant and Pinson, *20 Centuries of Great Preaching*, 5:56-57; Albert H. Currier, *Nine Great Preachers* (Boston: Pilgrim, 1912), 289-90; Howard, *Princes of the Christian Pulpit*, 293.

<sup>39</sup>R. W. Dale was much more of a doctrinal preacher. John Brown observes, “Dr. Dale made it a habit to preach doctrinal sermons, in turns with sermons of other sort, because he held it to be his first and foremost duty to instruct his people as to those great divine facts of the spiritual universe which have been revealed to us. . . . He realized that eternity was the solemn background of time, and that no life is truly noble till it is rooted in divine relationships.” John Brown, *Puritan Preaching in England: A Study of Past and Present* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1900), 15-16. Whyte’s biographer, G. F. Barbour, writes, “Others might defend Christianity by the weapons of the intellect: he did so by the evidence of an inspired personality—by vision, not by argument. If theology is something separable from life, then he was no theologian. His strength lay in his union of a lofty spiritual imagination with a deep and searching knowledge of the human character.” G. F. Barbour, *The Life of Alexander Whyte* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1924), 304.

value.<sup>40</sup> Zack Eswine writes, “Spurgeon’s preaching practice was thoroughly informed by his theology. In fact, on this point, as on so many others, it seems that Spurgeon’s sermons are simply applied theology.”<sup>41</sup> Ultimately, the aspect that distanced him from his peers was the time-frame in which he accomplished the steps of preparation. In order to gain a broader understanding of his sermon preparation process, it is beneficial to explore the individual elements that formed its infrastructure.

### **Spiritual Preparation**

Although Spurgeon, the prince of preachers, is widely known for his vast influence through his sermons, the writing and organizing of sermons was a secondary concern for him. His primary concern was the preparation of the messenger for receiving and delivering the message which God would have him preach. Biographer Ernest Bacon observes, “He strongly believed in preparing *himself* rather than the sermon.”<sup>42</sup> Spurgeon placed more priority on his daily obedience to God than upon his weekly performance in the pulpit. This does not imply a lack of seriousness regarding the preaching of God’s Word, but of the importance he placed on a prayerful godly lifestyle. Spurgeon states, “The greatest force of the sermon lies in what has gone before the sermon. You must get ready for the whole service by private fellowship with God, and real holiness of character.”<sup>43</sup> Although the weekly worship service and sermon were an ever-present weight upon Spurgeon’s mind, he sought to prevent this from overshadowing his daily walk with God

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<sup>40</sup>Sermons by Spurgeon, such as “How to Read the Bible,” “How to Converse with God,” and “Feeding on the Word” are devotional in nature, while sermons such as “Total Inability,” “Effectual Calling,” and “Fencing the Table” are strongly doctrinal in nature. However, in all of his preaching was a unique blending of doctrinal and devotional content.

<sup>41</sup>Zack Eswine, *Kindled Fire: How the Methods of C. H. Spurgeon Can Help Your Preaching* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2013), 129. Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 164, surmises, “Spurgeon looked to doctrinal content as primary and the *raison d’être* of preaching.”

<sup>42</sup>Bacon, *Spurgeon*, 74-75.

<sup>43</sup>Spurgeon, *The Soul-Winner*, 49.

in His Word. The Word to be preached must first be viewed as the Word to be practiced.<sup>44</sup> Sermon preparation is to be done in the context of personal piety, rather than personal piety being viewed as resulting from the preparation and delivery of sermons. A well-prepared sermon can never fully compensate for a spiritually unprepared messenger. Neither does spiritual preparation compensate for the shoddy preparation of a sermon.<sup>45</sup> The spiritual work of the heart should naturally overflow in the mental preparation of the preacher. Both areas of preparation were simultaneous and synchronized by Spurgeon.

It is imperative that the preacher be diligent in both spiritual and mental preparation. Tom Nettles remarks, “Spurgeon had a personal appreciation for careful scholarship and its usefulness to the church. He always longed, however, that scholarship and orthodoxy be suffused with the pulsation of spiritual life.”<sup>46</sup> This factor alone results in divinely orchestrated messages. Spurgeon cautioned those preparing for ministry to avoid detrimental short-cuts:

To become apparently warm in the pulpit, is not of much account unless we are much more intense when we are alone with God. Heart-fire is true fire. . . . Sermons are never baked by the fire and flash at the mouth; they must be prepared through the heating of the inmost soul. That precious Word, that Divine shewbread, must be baked in the centre of our nature by the heat that is put there by the indwelling Spirit.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Spurgeon warned his students: “Others have a stock of sermons, and I have heard that, just before the time for entering the pulpit, they turn over their precious manuscripts, pick out a likely one, and without further preparation read it as God’s message to the people. The Lord deliver us from a state of mind in which we dare to put on the table of shewbread the first loaf which comes to hand! No; let us serve the Lord with growing carefulness and reverence.” Spurgeon, *An All-Around Ministry*, 156.

<sup>45</sup>Spurgeon wrote, “Let the young preacher believe that study and thought are essential to his success. Let him depend upon the Holy Spirit for help; but let him not dream that the Spirit of God will minister to his idleness. The divine Spirit helps us to will and to do, not to wish and to do nothing. If the preacher shall go up and down all week, wasting his time, and neglecting his books, and then go into his study on Saturday evening expecting to be suddenly filled with holy matter, he will be mistaken. The trifler will find that he has grieved the Spirit by his indolence, and that he is left on the Sabbath to vent his nimble nonsense, or to wander through a wilderness, seeking rest and finding none.” Charles Spurgeon, “Preparing the Sermon,” in *The Sword and the Trowel* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1998), 7:149.

<sup>46</sup>Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 451

<sup>47</sup>Spurgeon, *An All-Around Ministry*, 338.



For Spurgeon, the initial audience of every sermon was himself. A sermon that had not been preached to himself, and personally applied to his life, was not worthy to be preached to others. This failure in personal application would be the height of hypocrisy and the depth of deception in the life of the preacher.

### **Intimacy with God**

Preaching affords the preacher with opportunity loaded with the heavy weight of responsibility and accountability. The preparation and delivery of sermons offers the preacher a unique opportunity to experience intimacy with God while prayerfully seeking divine guidance, insight, and empowerment. Ironically, the preparation and delivery of sermons also presents treacherous impediments to one's spiritual well-being, which can create a false sense of personal piety and spirituality. Charles Bridges (1794-1869), a preacher in the Evangelical party of the Church of England, warns, "Great indeed is the danger of resting in a professional piety—in public religion. Awful indeed is the reflection—how much of the fervid animation of the pulpit is purely mechanical!—impulse rather than spirituality."<sup>48</sup> He further cautions, "It is indeed difficult to determine, whether our familiar intercourse with the things of God is more our temptation or our advantage."<sup>49</sup> Spurgeon was well acquainted with the temptation posed by this advantage. Thus, he tenaciously disciplined himself to guard against this tragic temptation with great awe and trepidation.

Spurgeon viewed the preparation and delivery of sermons as a responsibility entrusted to him by God for the glory of God and the good of His people. Because of this responsibility, he approached the entire process humbly and prayerfully. Others might view the process of sermon-making simply as a necessary pastoral function to be

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<sup>48</sup>Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry: With an Inquiry into the Causes of Its Inefficiency* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 162.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 163.

completed and a display of intellectual and oratorical gifts. Spurgeon, however, viewed the process as an expression of devotion to God and His Word accomplished through the discipline of piety. One way in which he remained faithful to these objectives was by refusing to allow prayer and the ministry of the Word to become divorced from one another. They were practiced as means to the end of intimacy with God and personal piety, which alone could overflow in powerful, Spirit-empowered pulpit ministry. In an article entitled, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon and the Holy of Holies,” Arthur T. Pierson describes how Spurgeon maintained constant fellowship with the Father:

As a believer, he lived so near to God, that it was easy for him to go into His immediate presence and have access to God at any moment. There was, in other words, spiritual proximity, which left its fruit and seal in all his public as well as his private life. He undergirded his public ministry in the pulpit with his lifestyle of prayerfulness in private.<sup>50</sup>

His mindset and ministry were shaped by his practice of brief prayers of open-ended conversation with the Lord and his intense focus on Scripture.

### **Scripture Meditation**

Simply reading Scripture as a vocational necessity is a subtle temptation for those who preach. However, when Scripture is personalized through meditation, it remains a life-giving source for the man of God. In addressing the students of the college, Spurgeon picturesquely described this nourishing relationship between reading Scripture and meditating upon it:

The cattle crop the grass, but the nutrition comes from the chewing of the cud! Reading is the gathering together of our food, but meditation is the chewing of the cud, the digesting, the assimilating of the truth of God! I quarry out the truth when I read, but I smelt the ore and get the pure gold out of it when I meditate! . . . I often find it very profitable to get a text as a sweet morsel under my tongue in the morning and to keep the flavor of it, if I can, in my mouth all day!<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Arthur T. Pierson, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon and the Holy of Holies,” in *The Sword and the Trowel*, 28:16.

<sup>51</sup>Charles Spurgeon, Sermon 3318, “How to Read the Bible,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit: Sermons Preached by C. H. Spurgeon and Revised During the Year 1857* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1979), 58:424.

The apostle Paul challenged Timothy: “Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all” (1 Tim 4:15). Through a lifestyle of mediation and application of Scripture to one’s life, the preacher becomes the living embodiment of the message he delivers. Commenting on this verse, Spurgeon stated, “Not by hasty reading, but by deep meditation, we profit by the Word of God.”<sup>52</sup> The bridge that connected Spurgeon’s preparation with his proclamation was his prayerful meditation upon Scripture.

Thus, Spurgeon strengthened his ministry by permeating his daily life with prayer and Scripture meditation, which brought both balance and blessing into his life and ministry. English bishop and devotional author Joseph Hall (1574-1656) articulates the vital relationship between prayer and meditation: “Prayer and meditation, then, are two loving twins—if you separate the one, the other languishes. Prayer makes way for meditation. Meditation gives matter, strength and life to your prayers.”<sup>53</sup> It is important for God’s messenger to meditate and pray through a passage of Scripture prior to preaching on it. In doing so, he is able to preach from the overflow of personal application.

Spurgeon lived in the atmosphere of meditating upon scriptural truth. It was through this consistent intake of Scripture that he filled his heart and mind with the Word and ways of God. Thus, many of his thoughts were couched in biblical phrases.<sup>54</sup> He viewed extensive meditation upon the text as the ideal of preaching from the overflow of

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<sup>52</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *Cheque Book of the Bank of Faith: Daily Readings by C. H. Spurgeon* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 1996), 93.

<sup>53</sup>Joseph Hall, *The Art of Divine Meditation* (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace, 2007), 11. Spurgeon shared this sentiment: “Meditation is of all things the most soul-fattening when combined with prayer. Charles Spurgeon, “Altogether Lovely,” in *Spurgeon’s Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 9:328.

<sup>54</sup>Day, *The Shadow of the Broad Brim*, 129, contends, “The mind of the Puritan [Spurgeon] was thoroughly ‘Bibline.’”

spirituality.<sup>55</sup> Thus, he commended meditation to his students as a means of remaining fruitful in ministry by warning them about the tragedy of its absence: “The leaf of your ministry will soon wither unless, like the blessed man in the first Psalm, you meditate in the law of the Lord both day and night.”<sup>56</sup> It was the consistent practice of meditation that produced faithfulness and fruitfulness in his life and ministry.

### **Intercession for Others**

In keeping with the example of the apostles, Spurgeon maintained the priorities of intercession (prayer), and instruction (the ministry of the Word), as recorded in Acts 6:4. Overwhelmed by his frailty and the needs of his congregation, he saturated his sermon preparation with desperate cries to God. His wife describes his pleas of intercession: “No human ear ever heard the mighty pleadings with God, for himself, and his people, which rose from his study on those solemn evenings. . . . His grandest and most fruitful sermons were those which cost him most soul-travail and spiritual anguish.”<sup>57</sup> Hence, his meditation on his text led him to vulnerably stand between the truth to be delivered and those to whom he would preach. The nature and intensity of his search for a text was much more than a rigid routine. He was in wholehearted pursuit of a message from God for the people. Thus, the necessity of divine intervention erupted in desperate intercession. Even his reading of commentaries was saturated with intense prayer.

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<sup>55</sup>Spurgeon maintained, “I always find that I can preach best when I can manage to lie a-soak in my text. I like to get a text, and find out its meaning and bearings, and so on; and then, after I have bathed in it, I delight to lie down in it, and let it soak into me. It softens me, or hardens me, or does whatever it ought to do to me, and then I can talk about it. You need not be very particular about the words and phrases if the spirit of the text has filled you; thoughts will leap out, and find raiment for themselves. Become saturated with the spices, and you will smell of them; a sweet perfume will distill from you, and spread itself in every direction—we call it unction. . . . Dwell in the truth, and let the truth dwell in you. Be baptized into its spirit and influence, that you may impart thereof to others.” Spurgeon, *An All-Around Ministry*, 89.

<sup>56</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 93.

<sup>57</sup>Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 4:65.

Spurgeon so valued intercession that he instructed his students to prioritize prayer in their preparation. He repeatedly reminded them that natural ability and talents were no substitute for prayerfulness, and that a life of prayer could more than compensate for a lack of giftedness: “My brethren, let me beseech you to be men of prayer. Great talents you may never have, but you will do well enough without them if you abound in intercession.”<sup>58</sup> Not all preachers can speak eloquently to their people, but all can intercede passionately for them. In practice and precept, Spurgeon emphasized the reality of Jesus’ words: “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). His desire also mirrored that of the Apostle Paul.<sup>59</sup> His belief in the sufficiency of Scripture and the depravity of humanity enabled him to humbly view his role as a vital bridge between the two. He emphasized this perspective to his students:

Be in preaching like a conduit pipe between the everlasting and infinite supplies of heaven and the all but boundless needs of men, and to do this you must reach heaven, and keep up the communion without a break. Pray *for* the people while you preach *to* them; speak with God for them while you are speaking with them for God.<sup>60</sup>

Apart from the Word of God, human eloquence has nothing of eternal significance to offer hearers. However, the proclamation of the Word of God within the atmosphere and spirit of prayer has a powerful potential. Prayerfulness heightens sensitivity to the illumination and application of Scripture by the Holy Spirit.<sup>61</sup> Hence, he admonished his students: “To fan your earnestness to a vehement flame you should seek the spirit of continual prayer, so as to pray in the Holy Ghost, everywhere and always; in the study, in

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<sup>58</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 46-47.

<sup>59</sup>First Cor 2:4-5 reads, “And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

<sup>60</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 316.

<sup>61</sup>Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*, 148, comments that according to Acts 6:4, “Prayer therefore is one half of our Ministry; and it gives to the other half all its power and success. It is the appointed medium of receiving spiritual communications for the instruction of our people.”

the vestry, and in the pulpit.”<sup>62</sup> To access the power of God in public proclamation, one must not live in private communion with God.

### **Intercession of Others**

Spurgeon did not consider it sufficient to simply devote himself to prayer as an individual. He also saw great value in nurturing an atmosphere of prayerfulness within his congregation. Daniel Henderson, founder and director of the 6:4 Fellowship, refers to this as developing a “culture of prayer” within the local church.<sup>63</sup> For Spurgeon, this required maintaining prayer as a valuable and visible priority in his own life. Prayerfulness in the life of the man in the pulpit nurtures prayerfulness among those in the pews. He both mentored and modeled this for his students, and he challenged them to do the same for their congregations: “I am sure you feel the necessity of having a truly praying people. Be much in prayer yourself, and this will be more effectual than scolding your people for not praying. Set the example.”<sup>64</sup> A congregation tends to pray with a mirrored depth and focus of that which is found within the life of their pastor. Both the spiritual health of pastoral prayerfulness, and the disease of pastoral prayerlessness, are highly contagious within a congregation.

Spurgeon also sought to saturate the congregational life of the church with opportunities for personal and corporate prayer. This included special days and seasons set aside for prayer, sermons upon the necessity of prayer, and multiple weekly prayer meetings. The Monday evening prayer meeting was the centerpiece of such gatherings.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 316.

<sup>63</sup>Daniel Henderson, *Old Paths New Power: Awakening Your Church through Prayer and the Ministry of the Word* (Chicago: Moody, 2016), 107-19.

<sup>64</sup>Spurgeon, *An All-Around Ministry*, 358.

<sup>65</sup>Spurgeon contended, “There can be no real blessing, depend upon it, where the prayer-meeting is put into a secondary position.” Charles Spurgeon, “The Church’s Work,” in *Speeches at Home and Abroad* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1974), 108.

It appears that all of these gatherings devoted time to intercession for the public proclamation of the Word of God. Repeatedly, he spoke of his dependence upon the intercession of his people for effectiveness in the pulpit. He proclaimed, “Oh! may God help me, if you cease to pray for me! Let me know the day, and I must cease to preach. Let me know when you intend to cease your prayers, and I shall cry, ‘O my God, give me this day my tomb, and let me slumber in the dust.’”<sup>66</sup> Statements like this are also exemplary of the humility with which Spurgeon proclaimed the gospel to thousands.

A. T. Pierson, who was enlisted to fill the pulpit of the Metropolitan Tabernacle due to Spurgeon’s illness, and then his death, commended the church’s prayerfulness:

This Metropolitan Tabernacle is a house of prayer most emphatically. Here are numerous rooms, under and around the great audience-room, where for almost forty years, this one servant of God has held forth the Word of Life; and in these rooms prayer is almost ceaselessly going up. When one meeting is not in progress, another is. . . . There are prayer-meetings before preaching, and others after preaching . . . all sorts of work for God find here a centre, and all are consecrated by prayer. Before I go upon the platform to address these thousands, the officers of this great church meet me and each other for prayer as to the service.<sup>67</sup>

These statements provide insight into the depth and breadth of the corporate prayerfulness nurtured by Spurgeon’s ministry. The intercession of others on his behalf not only preceded the preaching of the Word, but it also occurred during the very act of preaching.

### **Desperate Dependence upon the Holy Spirit**

For Spurgeon, the burden of preaching the Word of God was beyond the ability of the preacher to bear on his own. There was a sense of certain failure without the

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<sup>66</sup>Charles Spurgeon, Sermon 138, “Prayer: The Forerunner of Mercy,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 3:255-56. Spurgeon made a similar emphasis in a sermon entitled, “Pleading for Prayer,” in which he proclaimed, “If I have been a spiritual father to any of you, you will not fail to pray for me. Will you? As you love that Savior whom I preach, I beseech you, for the sake of Jesus Christ that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me. . . . If there is in you a love which may exist, no, will exist, in heaven itself, if there is such a love in you, then says the apostle, I beseech you, pray for me. Brethren, I say the same.” Charles Spurgeon, Sermon 1887: “Pleading for Prayer,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 32:114.

<sup>67</sup>A. T. Pierson, “Dr. Pierson,” in *The Sword and the Trowel*, 28:81.

involvement of the Holy Spirit within the entire process. According to Spurgeon's biographer, William Hoyt, the stress was almost unbearable:

And yet, especially in his earlier years, after his preparation had been made, and just as he was about to confront the throngs he knew were gathering to listen to him, he used to have the most fearful nervous anxiety, almost convulsions. He told me once that for years and years in his earlier ministry he never preached but that beforehand a most straining time of vomiting. . . . In later years he vanquished this nervous tendency.<sup>68</sup>

Therefore, he refused to view the preaching ministry with arrogance or levity. Rather, he viewed the gravity of preaching with seriousness and surrender: "Chief of all is the responsibility which the preaching of the Word involves; I do not wish to feel this less heavily, rather would I fain feel it more."<sup>69</sup> This heavy weight required the proper tension between mental and spiritual preparation. This tension was maintained through a lifestyle of humble dependence upon the Holy Spirit, which indelibly marked the life of Spurgeon. Hoyt remarks, "Preparation for sermons in Spurgeon's experience involved much more than the achievement of biblical force and appropriate brevity; it involved a wrenching of the whole soul."<sup>70</sup> The agonizing sense of this process proved to be most rewarding for Spurgeon.

Spurgeon never hesitated to be transparent concerning his dependence upon God. He humbly confessed, "It might be better if we did not feel quite so well equipped. I find it better to go to the pulpit in prayerful weakness than in self-reliant strength."<sup>71</sup> The reasons for this are that first, self-reliance is manifested in the absence of prayerfulness. Prayerlessness in the life of a preacher quickly creates a spiritually disoriented approach to his preaching. Healthy biblical objectives become blurred, motivation becomes impure,

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<sup>68</sup>Hoyt, *Walks and Talks*, 19-20.

<sup>69</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *Autobiography: The Full Harvest* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2014), 354.

<sup>70</sup>Hoyt, *Walks and Talks*, 18-20.

<sup>71</sup>Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry*, 110.



and the pulpit becomes nothing more than a showcase of carnal display. Spurgeon emphasized that preaching demands prayerfulness:

I take it that as a minister *he is always praying*. Whenever his mind turns to his work, whether he is in it or out of it. . . . Sending up his holy desires as well-directed arrows to the skies. He is not always in the act of prayer, but he lives in the spirit of it. If his heart be in his work, he cannot eat or drink, or take recreation, or go to his bed, or rise in the morning, without evermore feeling a fervency of desire, a weight of anxiety, and a simplicity of dependence upon God; thus, in one form or other he continues in prayer.<sup>72</sup>

Prayerless preaching has consequences that far exceed that of presenting lifeless messages. It cuts to the heart of the preacher's spiritual well-being and standing with God. Second, self-reliance is revealed in the absence of diligent daily application of scriptural truths. One's walk with God is of primary importance in one's work for God. Just as God demands that hearers of the Word be doers of the Word, so also, He demands that those who proclaim the Word also practice the Word. Spurgeon was consumed with the holy desire to live a Spirit-led life, which would give birth to Spirit-empowered ministry. Although it would be impractical, and ultimately impossible for another preacher to duplicate Spurgeon's practice, his principles can be enduringly adapted to every ministry. However, these principles must be accompanied by unquestioning confidence in the Word of God and the God of the Word, passion for Christ, and dependence upon the person and work of the Holy Spirit. One must also give serious attention to the heart of the biblical message, which Spurgeon preached as a result of living these principles.

### **Christ-Centered Preaching**

The preaching of Spurgeon was Christ-centered and gospel-driven.<sup>73</sup> In precept and practice, the substitutionary death of Jesus was emphasized in his teaching and

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<sup>72</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 42.

<sup>73</sup>Christian T. George has contributed a priceless exploration of Spurgeon's Christology. Christian T. George, "Jesus Christ, the 'Prince of Pilgrims': A Critical Analysis of the Ontological, Functional, and Exegetical Christologies in the Sermons, Writings, and Lectures of Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892)" (Ph.D. thesis, University of St. Andrews, 2011).

preaching. He rarely preached without placing the crucified Christ and His atoning sacrifice at the heart of his message. Hence, his practice reflected the relentless focus of the apostle Paul:

And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (1 Cor 2:1-5)

Spurgeon's Christocentric theology gave birth to his preaching of Christ out of every sermon text. He did this even to a fault, for, at times, he fell prey to spiritualizing and allegorizing a text in order to discover its relevance in regard to Christ. Regardless, the fact that his preaching rested securely on the vicarious death of Jesus Christ for a depraved humanity was greatly blessed by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 15:26; 16:14).

His Christ-centered preaching of the cross stood in stark contrast to that of his contemporary, Phillips Brooks. Brooks, like Spurgeon, had been greatly influenced spiritually by his mother. Harry Howard asserts, "In the shadows, stood the figure of his beloved mother. . . . In this mother's character the character of Phillips Brooks was molded."<sup>74</sup> In a letter, his mother gave him a sober warning against a certain book due to its abandonment of the cross:

They tear the view of Christ's vicarious sacrifice all to pieces. . . . It is shameful to put forth such a book under the guise of an orthodox preacher, when it is nothing better than Unitarianism. I am afraid he will beguile many a one who is not on his guard, and so I cannot help warning you. No, my dear child; remember you have promised to preach Christ and Him crucified in the true meaning of the words, and I charge you to stand firm. Excuse the plainness of my writing, and impute it all to my love of the Truth and my earnest desire that you may continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto your life's end.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Howard, *Princes of the Christian Pulpit*, 242-43.

<sup>75</sup>Alexander V. G. Allen, *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks* (London: MacMillan and Company, 1900), 2:263.

Tragically, Brooks did not adhere to the warning of his mother, or the mandate of Scripture. There is a haunting absence of the message of the cross in Brooks's sermons. Just as Spurgeon embraced his rich heritage of theology and ministry, Brooks had abandoned his. Warren Wiersbe laments, "Basically, Brooks was a Christian humanist. He emphasized Christ's incarnation, not his death and atonement for sin. He felt that all men are children of God and that, once told this good news, their lives will change."<sup>76</sup> Though his words appealed to the masses, and his lectures on preaching are held in high esteem, the absence of the cross taints his example, and greatly weakens his legacy.

It was this type of cross-less preaching that gave Spurgeon an even greater resolve to preach a Christ-centered, gospel-driven message. On July 4, 1888, Spurgeon wrote to a friend: "Our experience has taught us that, both for conversion and edification, the doctrine of Christ crucified is all-sufficient. . . . As the hammer comes down on the anvil ever with the same ring, so will we preach Christ, Christ, Christ, and nothing else but Christ."<sup>77</sup> He encouraged his students to follow his example: "Brethren, first and above all things, keep to the plain evangelical doctrines; whatever else you do or do not preach, be sure incessantly to bring forth the soul-saving truth of Christ and him crucified."<sup>78</sup> Spurgeon invested his life and ministry in combatting the subtle implications of a gospel that had become void of the cross.<sup>79</sup> In doing so, he willingly made great

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<sup>76</sup>Wiersbe, *Walking with the Giants*, 83.

<sup>77</sup>Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 4:103.

<sup>78</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 76.

<sup>79</sup>Spurgeon entered into the fray of what is called, "The Down-Grade Controversy." He bemoaned the slippery slope upon which he saw the church of his day. He became intent on exposing and expelling this deadly downward spiral of doctrine. It remains a sober warning for the church today: "No lover of the gospel can conceal from himself the fact that the days are evil. . . . A new religion has been initiated, which is no more than Christianity than chalk is cheese; and this religion, being destitute of moral honesty, palms itself off as the old faith with slight improvements, and on this plea usurps pulpits which were erected for gospel preaching. The atonement is scouted, the inspiration of Scripture is derided, the Holy Spirit is degraded into an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into fiction, and the resurrection into a myth, and yet these enemies of our faith expect us to call them brethren, and maintain a confederacy with them!" Charles Spurgeon, "Another Word Concerning the Down-Grade," in *The "Down Grade"*

emotional, physical, and denominational sacrifices. In keeping with the example of the apostle Paul, he was not ashamed of the gospel of the crucified Christ (Rom 1:16).

In reality, the measure of divine power upon Spurgeon's preaching had much more to do with his message than with his methods (1 Cor 1:18-24). Closely following homiletical and grammatical rules in the development of a flawless manuscript can never compensate for an incomplete, cross-less message. To spend one's life preaching messages void of the cross of Christ is nothing more than engaging in an elaborate meal with no main course. However, when Spurgeon preached, he had so communed with the crucified and risen Savior, that his messages were an invitation for his hearers to join him in the feast that overflowed from his life. In *Cheque Book of Faith*, Spurgeon shares yet another perspective on the nature of his intake and overflow in ministry: "Let me feed His flock, and He will feed me. Let me water His garden, and He will make a watered garden of my soul. . . . My cistern seems to fill as it flows. A secret spring is at work."<sup>80</sup> Because Spurgeon's life and ministry overflowed with Christ, the Holy Spirit was faithful to fill him as a powerful reservoir of the gospel to others. The next chapter explores practical ways in which today's preacher can apply the precepts and principles exemplified and taught by Spurgeon to foster a powerful pulpit ministry within the local church.

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*Controversy: Collected Materials Which Reveal the Viewpoint of the Late Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 2009), 17. Steven Lawson quantifies Spurgeon's concern: "He spoke out in defense of the gospel, confronting the doctrinal decline that was becoming prevalent in many pulpits. He compared the Baptist church to a train that had crested a high mountain pass and was barreling down the steep grade, gaining speed as it plummeted. . . . He strongly warned against the undermining of the authority of Scripture, which was resulting in worldly entertainment, Vaudeville techniques, and a circus-like atmosphere in many churches in his day." Steven J. Lawson, *The Gospel Focus of Charles Spurgeon* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2012), 15. John MacArthur has also explored the Down-Grade Controversy and its similarities and relevance for today. John MacArthur, *Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes Like the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1993).

<sup>80</sup>Spurgeon, *Cheque Book*, 10.

CHAPTER 5  
CONTEMPORARY IMPLEMENTATION  
OF ENDURING PRINCIPLES

This chapter explores the vital necessity of personal piety, especially as experienced in the consistent practice of spiritual disciplines for empowering one’s pulpit ministry. Cultivating personal piety simultaneously nurtures intimacy with God while overflowing in transformational ministry. As stated, the strong influence of Spurgeon’s Puritan predecessors, and other like-minded ministers before him, constantly pointed him to this reality.<sup>1</sup> Charles Brown (1806-1884), a Scottish pastoral contemporary of Spurgeon declared, “Oh, remember it well, that godliness is the foundation of all right preaching—as of the entire ministry. It will be wretched preaching, a miserable superstructure, that shall rise on any other foundation than that.”<sup>2</sup> Although there were many more spiritual disciplines practiced by Spurgeon, godliness nurtured through prayer and Scripture intake are the primary focus of this thesis. Prayer and Scripture intake in

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<sup>1</sup>Though Jonathan Edwards’ ministry influenced Spurgeon to a lesser degree than did that of George Whitefield, his influence is still relevant. Donald S. Whitney states, “Edwards, like Puritans both in England and New England, believed that a minister’s piety was an essential component for effectiveness in pastoral relations and pastoral preaching. Nothing could substitute for a minister’s piety. The personal holiness of a minister of Christ, cultivated through biblical spiritual disciplines in solitude, was deemed by Edwards and the Puritans as more essential for a minister’s true success than eloquence, learning, experience, or any other factor. In Edwards’ estimation, only an unconverted minister—a danger against which the Puritans often warned—was worse than an impious minister.” Donald S. Whitney, *Finding God in Solitude: The Personal Piety of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) and Its Influence on His Pastoral Ministry* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), 148. Spurgeon loudly echoed these sentiments from the pulpit and in his lectures.

<sup>2</sup>Charles J. Brown, *The Ministry: Addresses to Students of Divinity* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2006), 39.

Spurgeon's life and ministry are explored from both the personal and congregational perspective, and are considered in the order in which they appear in Acts 6:4.<sup>3</sup>

### **Personal Spiritual Disciplines of the Preacher**

A preacher will find it impossible to accurately represent in public a God with whom he is not intimately acquainted in private. Regardless of what is transpiring in the personal circumstances of the pastor, he must enter the pulpit each week with the assurance that he is proclaiming a word from God about His Word. He dare not misrepresent the God of the Word or undermine His activity in the corporate worship of His people. Thus, preaching the Word of God presents a tremendous weekly obligation and opportunity to fulfill God's call in one's life from the overflow of intimacy with Him. The spiritual well-being of both pastor and people are at stake.

### **The Spiritual Discipline of Prayer**

Prayerlessness in the life of a preacher has a plethora of ramifications for him as a man of God and for his congregation. The health and vitality of the life of the congregation are linked to the health and vitality of his walk with God. As much as God prizes a life of prayerfulness, the enemy prizes a life of prayerlessness. The front line of demonic assault in a preacher's life is strategically aimed at his life of prayer. Even important acts of ministry and administration can subtly be substituted for the empowering practice of consistent daily fellowship with God. Spurgeon warned,

Fussy work that is done for Christ without communion with Christ comes to nothing because it is not wrought in the strength of God. . . . If we get out of fellowship with Jesus, it will lead to innumerable evils; and the more we try to do, the more those evils will show themselves.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Acts 6:4 reads, "But we will continually give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word."

<sup>4</sup>Charles Spurgeon, "A Practical Discourse," in *The Sword and the Trowel* (1883, repr., Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1989), 6:213.

This text is a sober warning against prayerlessness as well as a clarion call for prayerfulness. It is important to define these two extremes. Prayerlessness is the condition of a preacher's life in which prayer has become severely limited or non-existent. On the other hand, prayerfulness is the condition of a life lived in the constant atmosphere of prayer. Every believer and every preacher lives within one of these two realities. Powerful preaching demands a lifestyle of prayerfulness. Thus, there is a drastic difference between prayerless preaching and prayerful preaching.

The pastor of a local church is to be the lead-disciple among the flock with which God has entrusted him (Eph 4:11-16). Thus, although the pastor of the local church lives under the weight of exercising healthy spiritual influence, his primary focus must be his personal walk with God. He must guard against the shortsighted Pharisaical temptation of simply maintaining a "spiritual" reputation based on the false assumptions and misperceptions of his congregation (Matt 6:5-6). Thus, Spurgeon repeatedly challenged his students to consider the high cost of chronic prayerlessness: "How much of blessing we may have missed through remissness in supplication we can scarcely guess. . . . We not only ought to pray more, but we *must*."<sup>5</sup> In one lecture, he even stated it would be better to leave the ministry than to attempt it prayerlessly:

A very important part of our lives consists in praying in the Holy Ghost, and that minister that does not think so had better escape from his ministry. Abundant prayer must go with earnest preaching. We cannot be always on the knees of the body, but the soul should never leave the posture of devotion. The habit of prayer is good, but the spirit of prayer is better. Regular retirement is to be maintained, but continued communion with God is to be our aim. As a rule, we ministers ought never to be many minutes without actually lifting our hearts in prayer.<sup>6</sup>

In order to saturate the sermon preparation process with prayer, the preacher's entire life must first be saturated in prayer. In practical terms, the praying pastor should schedule daily time for prayer, extended times of prayer, and annual retreats for seasons of prayer.

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<sup>5</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1875; repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 49.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 196.

## The Spiritual Discipline of Scripture Intake

The spiritual discipline of prayer must intertwine with that of Scripture intake for a preacher to maximize his spiritual health.<sup>7</sup> According to Jesus, effective prayer flows from a life filled with God's Word (John 15:5-8). It is imperative that the preacher spend quality time in the presence of God with the Word of God to effectively live for Him and serve Him. Just as prayer is the lifeline of the believer, Scripture intake is the lifeline of prayer. Scripture intake is also the source of spiritual nutrition. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones cautions preachers:

One of the most fatal habits a preacher can ever fall into is to read his Bible simply in order to find texts for sermons. This is a real danger; it must be recognized and fought and resisted with all your might. Do not read the Bible to find texts for sermons, read it because it is the food that God has provided for your soul, because it is the Word of God, because it is the means whereby you can get to know God. Read it because it is the bread of life, the manna provided for your soul's nourishment and well-being.<sup>8</sup>

Without consistent Scripture intake through reading, meditation, and memorization of Scripture, the pastor becomes nothing less than the spiritual equivalent of a malnourished, emaciated, gourmet chef.

It is imperative that all believers, especially pastors, practice daily Scripture intake in order to avoid spiritual malnutrition. His reading must be broad throughout the pages of Scripture, accompanied by strategic meditation upon specific segments as well. The pastor is to read Scripture, meditate on Scripture, study Scripture, memorize Scripture, and pray Scripture so that he may think Scripture and live Scripture.<sup>9</sup> God's

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<sup>7</sup>George Müller, a contemporary and friend of Spurgeon, wrote, "Neither eloquence nor depth of thought make the truly great preacher, but such a life of prayer and meditation and spirituality, as may render him a vessel meet for the Master's use, and fit to be employed both in the conversion of sinners and in the edification of the saints." George Müller, *George Müller: Narratives and Addresses* (Muskegon, MI: Dust and Ashes, 2003), 1:51.

<sup>8</sup>D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 172.

<sup>9</sup>In commenting on Ps 119:9, Spurgeon states, "You must take heed to your daily life as well as study your Bible, and you must study your Bible that you may take heed to your daily life. With the greatest care a man will go astray if his map misleads him; but with the most accurate map he will lose his



command to Joshua is appropriate for the preacher's personal interaction with the Word of God: "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success" (Josh 1:8). Also, he must obey the command of Paul to Timothy: "Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Tim 4:15-16). The preacher's relationship to the Word of God is an accurate measure of his relationship with the God of the Word. Preaching can tragically degenerate into an impersonal relationship with the Word of God, instead of resulting from a vital relationship with the God of the Word. The goal is to prepare and preach messages which are Father-focused, Spirit-led, Christ-centered, and Scripture-driven. Thus, the initial focus should not be "What do the people need to hear?" but rather, "What is it that the Father is speaking to me from His Word?" The constant prayer of the preacher should be "Father, please speak to me, and then through me by Your Word."

### **The Preacher's Participation in Congregational Spiritual Disciplines**

Prayer positions believers to hear the Word of God, and the Word of God conditions believers for prayer both individually and corporately. As the pastor experiences the rhythms of prayer and the Word daily, he is also equipped to effectively lead his people in corporate prayer and Scripture intake. He is simply taking his congregation with him to a place with which he has personally become familiar: the presence of God. In this way, the pastor becomes a spiritual trailblazer and mentor in the things of God.

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road if he does not take heed to it." Charles Spurgeon, *Treasury of David* (McLean, VA: MacDonald, 1988), 3:157.

## Public and Corporate Prayer

An aspect of corporate worship which has fallen into neglect and misuse is that of the public pastoral prayer. There is a tendency to polarize at one of two extremes regarding public prayer: written rehearsed prayers and spontaneous prayers with no preparation. That was the case in Spurgeon's day as well. He, and preachers with whom he associated, were more given to extemporaneous public prayer. One Spurgeon biographer relates, "He rather astonished a company of ministers by advising that they should prepare their prayers, not the wording but the topics, and most of all prepare themselves to pray."<sup>10</sup> His perspective was that of building a life-giving bridge between the prayer closet and the pulpit. For, unless public prayer is anchored to private prayer, it becomes hypocritical and lifeless. As George Müller warns, "Often the work of the Lord itself may be a temptation to keep us from that communion with Him which is so essential to the benefit of our own souls. . . . But let none think that public prayer will make up for closet communion."<sup>11</sup> Public prayers quickly become an act of empty ritualism when not given a high priority and thoughtful preparation.<sup>12</sup> A pastor will value and prioritize prayer publicly to the extent he does so privately. In addressing ministerial students, Spurgeon expressed his deep conviction concerning this issue: "I feel, my

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<sup>10</sup>J. C. Carlile, *C. H. Spurgeon: An Interpretive Biography* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1933), 211.

<sup>11</sup>Müller, *George Müller*, 1:68.

<sup>12</sup>John Broadus provided most helpful and extensive instructions regarding sincerity in public prayer: "The general preparation for leading in public prayer consists chiefly in the following things: (1) Fervent piety. This will include the habit of praying in private, and in social meetings. If it be true that "the only way to learn to preach is to preach," it is still more emphatically true that the only way to learn to pray is to pray. . . . (2) Familiarity with Scripture, both as furnishing topics of prayer, and supplying the most appropriate and affecting language of prayer. The minister should be constantly storing in his memory the more directly devotional expressions found everywhere in the Bible, and especially in the Psalms and Prophets, the Gospels, Epistles and Revelation. . . . (3) Study of instructive specimens of prayer. In the Bible there are found, besides the numerous single devotional expressions, various striking examples of connected and complete prayers, and very many instances in which the substance of a prayer is given though not the form. These ought to be carefully studied, for instruction in the matter and manner of praying." John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (1870; repr., New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), 365.

brethren, that we ought to prepare ourselves by private prayer for public praying. By living near to God we ought to maintain prayerfulness of spirit, and then we shall not fail in our vocal pleadings.”<sup>13</sup> It is important for the congregation to hear the pastor publicly praying on their behalf. Brian Croft, a contemporary pastor, states, “When pastors fail to pray during their weekly public gatherings, they miss a huge opportunity to model for their members how to pray for one another.”<sup>14</sup> The pastoral prayer models sincere prayer and reassures the congregation of the pastor’s intercession on their behalf in his private prayers.

Spurgeon placed a high priority upon the pastoral prayer in corporate worship: “Cast your whole soul into the exercise. If ever your whole soul was engaged in anything, let it be in drawing near unto God in public. So pray, that by a divine attraction, you draw the whole congregation with you up to the throne of God.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, he challenged his students to give the public prayer preeminence in preparation and practice: “It is my solemn conviction that the prayer is one of the most weighty, useful, and honourable parts of the service, and that it ought to be even more considered than the sermon. . . . I will sooner yield up the sermon than the prayer.”<sup>16</sup> He further stressed the value which

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<sup>13</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 68. Although Spurgeon did not write out his prayers, he viewed proper preparation of heart and mind as a necessity for nurturing earnestness: “Prepare your prayer . . . which consists in the solemn consideration beforehand of the importance of prayer, meditation upon the needs of men’s souls, and a remembrance of the promises which we are to plead; and thus coming before the Lord with a petition written upon the fleshly tables of the heart. . . . We counsel, therefore, the committing to memory of the inspired devotional exercises of the word of truth, and then your continued reading of the Scriptures will keep you always furnished with fresh supplications, which will be as ointment poured forth, filling the whole house of God with its fragrance, when you present your petitions in public before the Lord. Seeds of prayer thus sown in the memory will yield a constant golden harvest, as the Spirit shall warm your soul with hallowed fire in the hour of congregational prayer.” *Ibid.*, 68-69.

<sup>14</sup>Brian Croft and Ryan Fullerton, *Pray for the Flock: Ministering God’s Grace through Intercession* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 83.

<sup>15</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 60.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 58-59. Although Spurgeon discouraged people from recording his pastoral prayers in print, some have been preserved. These prayers give a taste of the depth and biblical basis with which he interceded publicly. Charles Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon’s Prayers: Prayers Offered during Services at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, England* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1990); Charles Spurgeon, *The Pastor*

he placed on this aspect of public ministry when he insisted, “You must highly esteem public prayer, and seek of the Lord for the gifts and graces necessary to its right discharge.”<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, when properly executed, public prayer can extend and nurture the pastor’s personal intimacy with God. Spurgeon testifies, “Sometimes you will enjoy closer fellowship with God in prayer in the pulpit than you have know anywhere else. To me my greatest secrecy in prayer has often been in public.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, he also viewed the practice of public prayer from the perspective of its benefits to the pastor’s personal spiritual life. The pastor who intentionally prepares to publicly intercede on behalf of his congregation must consider and meditate upon the heart of God and needs of the people. The pastor’s public prayers should be Spirit-led and scripturally-driven.<sup>19</sup> Scripture-prompted prayer can spiritualize and personalize the pastor’s ministry to those who gather for public worship.<sup>20</sup>

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*in Prayer: A Collection of the Sunday Morning Prayers of C. H. Spurgeon* (1893; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2004).

<sup>17</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 59. Some of these “gifts and graces” of which Spurgeon spoke should impact the length as well as the depth of the prayers. His humor flavors the practical advice given to his students regarding the length of public prayer: “Long prayers either consist of repetitions, or else of unnecessary explanations which God does not require; or else they degenerate into downright preachings, so that there is no difference between the praying and preaching except that in the one the minister has his eyes shut, and in the other he keeps them open. . . . It is necessary in prayers to draw near unto God, but it is not required of you to prolong your speech till everyone is longing to hear the word, ‘Amen.’” *Ibid.*, 61-62.

<sup>18</sup>Charles Spurgeon, “Inaugural Address,” in *The Sword and the Trowel*, 4:411.

<sup>19</sup>Spurgeon states, “Let your prayers be earnest, full of fire, vehemence, prevalence. . . . In our converse with God, no speech can be more appropriate than the words of the Holy Ghost—‘Do as Thou hast said,’ will always prevail with the Most High. We counsel, therefore, the committing to memory the inspired devotional exercises of the word of truth, and then your continued reading of the Scriptures will keep you always furnished with fresh supplications, which will be as ointment poured forth, filling the whole house of God with its fragrance, when you present your petitions in public before the Lord. Seeds of prayer thus sown in the memory will yield a constant golden harvest, as the Spirit shall warm your soul with hallowed fire in the hour of congregational prayer.” Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 69.

<sup>20</sup>Wesley L. Duewel observes, “Your pastoral prayer can do more to prepare your people for your message than perhaps any other aspect of the service. Your pastoral prayer can help bring the awareness of God’s nearness and heartbeat. You must not only prepare your heart for the sermon, but you must prepare it for your prayer. You must prepare it with heart hunger, heart humility, and heart purpose. You must carry a daily prayer burden if you would have power with God when you intercede in the pulpit.

Yet another integral expression of corporate spiritual disciplines was the leadership that Spurgeon gave to congregational prayer meetings.<sup>21</sup> Dallimore describes the impact Spurgeon’s walk with God had on his congregation in these gatherings: “Spurgeon’s own praying proved of great influence upon his people. Deeply moved by the reality of his intercession, many of them became ashamed of their own ‘pretty pious words’ . . . little by little they began to wrestle with God in true prayer.”<sup>22</sup> Through example and exhortation, he consistently emphasized the utmost necessity of scheduled, scriptural, pastor-led, corporate prayer gatherings in the local church: “All who are familiar with Mr. Spurgeon’s writings, know that he regarded the prayer-meeting as the thermometer of the church; and, judging by that test, the spiritual temperature of the large community under his charge stood very high.”<sup>23</sup> Spurgeon’s example is a strong reminder that in order for the church to be a house of prayer, the pastor must be a man of prayer. Only a praying pastor will genuinely place a high priority on weaving corporate prayer into the very fabric of congregational life. Corporate prayer must focus on strategic kingdom themes such as revival, evangelism, missions, and the empowering of gospel proclamation. It is imperative that the pastor not simply attempt to maintain a peripheral

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You must daily commune in the intimacy of God’s sweet presence if you are to lead the church in public adoration, worship, and praise.” Wesley L. Duwel, *Ablaze for God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 222.

<sup>21</sup>Spurgeon emphasized the importance of pastoral leadership in the prayer meeting: “Let the minister himself set a high value upon this means of grace. Let him frequently speak of it as being dear to his own heart, and let him prove his words by throwing all his vigour into it, being absent as seldom as possible, and doing all in his power to give an interest to the meeting. If our pastors set the ill example of coming in late, of frequently staying away, or conducting the engagements in a drowsy, formal way, we shall soon see our people despising the exercise, and forsaking the assembling of themselves together.” Charles Spurgeon, *Only a Prayer Meeting! Forty Addresses at Metropolitan Tabernacle and Other Prayer-Meetings* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1973), 27.

<sup>22</sup>Arnold Dallimore, *C. H. Spurgeon: The New Biography* (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 48-49.

<sup>23</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon’s Autobiography: Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records by His Wife and His Private Secretary* (1899; repr., Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1992), 3:80-81.

prayer ministry; rather, he must nurture a ministry of prayer in every area of the congregation and throughout the church calendar.

### **Public Scripture Reading**

The apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to give prominence to reading Scripture publicly: “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Tim 4:13). In keeping with this admonition, Spurgeon placed high priority on the public reading of Scripture in worship. In a lecture to his students, he stressed, “It is as good as a sermon to hear our best men read the Scriptures. . . . Never fall into the idea that the mere utterance of the words before you is all that is required of you in reading; good reading is a high, but rare attainment.”<sup>24</sup> In contrast with his sermons, which were usually based on a single verse or short passage, it was his practice to read larger passages accompanied by the intermingling of expository comments.<sup>25</sup> Thus, in worship services, the congregants received both an exposition and sermon.<sup>26</sup> Tom Nettles describes the process that Spurgeon followed:

He did not avoid verse-by-verse exposition, but included it in every worship service as he did a running homily on a larger portion of Scripture from which was taken

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<sup>24</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries: A Reference Guide to Buying the Best Books* (1890; repr., Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian, 2006), 31-32.

<sup>25</sup>Spurgeon explained the importance of this practice to his students: “Never open the Bible in the pulpit to read the chapter for the first time, but go to the familiar page after many rehearsals. You will be doubly useful if in addition to this you ‘give the sense.’ You will then, by God’s blessing, be the pastor of an intelligent, Bible-loving people. You will hear in your meeting-house that delightful rustle of Bible leaves which is so dear to the lover of the Word; your people will open their Bibles, looking for a feast.” *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>26</sup>J. I. Packer interjects, “C. H. Spurgeon mistrusted continuous exposition of who books of Scripture because it increased the risk of boring the congregation, and Simeon, like Spurgeon, like Claude, and like most revival preachers, past and present, looked instead for single verses carrying specific messages about God and ourselves that, as it were, said to the preacher as he read, thought, and prayed, ‘Preach me.’” J. I. Packer, “Expository Preaching: Charles Simeon and Ourselves,” in *Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching in Honor of R. Kent Hughes*, ed. Leland Ryken and Todd Wilson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 148. Although Spurgeon did not make it his practice to preach sermon series or to preach systematically verse-by-verse through a book in the Bible, his alternative approach was to provide a time in worship for biblical exposition of extended passages.

the verse that provided his text for the day. He disliked the plan of using short texts to the neglect of commenting publicly on larger passages.<sup>27</sup>

Many of these expositions, which sometimes rivaled the length of Spurgeon's sermons, are included in the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*.<sup>28</sup> He confessed, "As a rule, I spend much more time over the exposition than over the discourse."<sup>29</sup> This is much different from randomly selecting a text immediately before a worship service without any prior consideration or meditation. Thus, he emphasized to his students the intensity and necessity of preparation for this exposition: "You will soon reveal your ignorance as an expositor if you do not study; therefore diligent reading will be forced upon you. Anything which compels the preacher to search the grand old Book is of immense service to him."<sup>30</sup> He saw exposition as an added opportunity to provide biblical instruction in a more thorough exploration of scriptural themes and doctrinal truths. He explained, "Nowadays since expository preaching is not so common as it ought to be, there is the

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<sup>27</sup>Tom Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Spurgeon* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2013), 157-58. Nettles further amplifies the relationship between Spurgeon's expositions and his sermons: "One can be sure that the expository element in Spurgeon's preparation constantly fueled his discourses. For Spurgeon the bucket of syrup was oceanic indeed and the strings hung within it were as numerous as fishing lines in the Pacific. Large ideas implicit in Spurgeon's mind soon gathered as aggregate of supportive biblical truths that ordered themselves in the most attractive fashion for presentation. Logical or theoretical ordering seemed naturally to flow as Spurgeon unfolded the great idea into its constituent parts—from a greater to a lesser, from a lesser to a greater, the investigation of equally important petals of a single flower, the argument from a major premise in syllogistic fashion, or several syllogisms, to a conclusion, the piling up of a variety of evidences to prove the point, the teasing out of a variety of implications that sealed the intrinsic importance of a foundational truth." Ibid., 158. An example of his exposition is found in Spurgeon's sermon entitled, "To You," based on Acts 13:26. It is accompanied by an exposition of the larger context, Acts 13:13-49. Charles Spurgeon, Sermon 2899, "To You," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit: Sermons Preached by C. H. Spurgeon and Revised during the Year 1876* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1973), 50:421.

<sup>28</sup>Stephen Butter, *An Index to C. H. Spurgeon's Expositions of Scripture Published in the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Volumes 38-63* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1987). In the introduction of this work, Bob L. Ross quotes one of Spurgeon's successors, Eric W. Hayden: "These appear in the volumes published after his death in 1892, the publishers probably wanting to fill up space since they were making use of sermon material that had not been reviewed by Spurgeon himself." Ibid., i.

<sup>29</sup>Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries*, 24.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

more necessity for our commenting during the time of our reading of the Scriptures.”<sup>31</sup> This observation could also be made of the current sermonic landscape. The practice of effectively reading and commenting on the Scriptures could deepen a congregation spiritually and theologically. From Spurgeon’s perspective, reading Scripture interspersed with expositional comments also broadens scriptural instruction and understanding: “It will give you an opportunity of saying many things which are not of sufficient importance to become the theme of a whole sermon, and therefore would probably remain unnoticed.”<sup>32</sup> Due to the contemporary practice of imposing time constraints that result in a shorter and, in many cases, a shallower sermon, the thought of including a lengthy Scripture reading may seem impractical. However, this could prove to be a step toward recovering a much-needed biblical reorientation to worship. As a starting point, perhaps there is a practical way in which a preacher can incorporate this approach in the reading of the sermon text within current pastoral ministry.

### **Permeating Sermon Preparation and Delivery with Prayer**

It is all too common for textbooks on homiletics to assume that prayer will be factored into the sermon preparation process. In some cases, prayer is imply mentioned as an addendum within the sermon-making. Yet, another approach is to discount preparation altogether, and to simply assume prayer as a complete substitute for diligent study.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries*, 22.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 23. Spurgeon goes on to say, “If you want to make full proof of your ministry, and to leave no single point of revelation untouched, your easiest mode will be to comment upon Scripture habitually. Without this much of the word will be utterly unknown to many of your people . . . if only that part which we preach upon be expounded to them, how little of the Bible can they ever know! If you will mark your Bibles with lines under the texts from which you have spoken, as I have always done with an old copy which I keep in my study, you will discover that in twelve or fourteen years very little of the book has been gone through; a very large proportion of it remains unmarked, like a field unploughed. Try, then, by exposition to give your people a fair view of the entire compass of revelation. . . . Earnestly do I advocate commenting.” Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>James Rosscup contributes a valuable discussion of books on preaching “that slight prayer’s importance” with those “that emphasize prayer’s importance.” James E. Rosscup, “The Priority of Prayer



Thus, there is a great need for a resource that intentionally displays a way in which prayer can be emphasized and incorporated as one prepares to preach God's Word.<sup>34</sup> Charles Bridges articulated how effective sermon preparation demands both head and heart: "We must beware, however, of fixing our minds upon the mechanism of the sermon, so as to forget that which alone can infuse life and power into it. . . . A spiritual, as well as an intellectual habit, is essential both to the composition and the delivery of discourses."<sup>35</sup> Thus, prayer must become centrally intertwined within the preacher's life, study, and pulpit ministry. Spurgeon observed, "The best and holiest men have ever made prayer the most important part of pulpit preparation."<sup>36</sup> Every aspect of sermon preparation must be set in motion and sustained with life-giving prayer. Spurgeon upheld Christ as the ultimate example of prayerful proclamation:

There was also in the Saviour's preaching a wonderful mixture of devotion. He might have prayed his sermons; he did pray in his sermons; his sermons were the result of his prayers, and were followed by his prayers. His public discourses were the children of his midnight devotions; they were born in the morning, but he travailed with them all night, and agonised until they were brought forth. This is the way to preach. Pray the divine message into yourself, and then preach it out of yourself. Speak with God for men, and then speak with men for God.<sup>37</sup>

Intentional imitation of Christ's life of prayer demands a transformation of both attitude and activity. This implementation of Christlikeness is not just a matter of praying more,

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and Expository Preaching," in *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically*, ed. John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 49-50.

<sup>34</sup>A goal of this thesis is to provide such a resource. This chapter culminates in an exploration of how a preacher can intentionally proceed through the sermon preparation process with appropriate and strategic biblical focuses of prayer.

<sup>35</sup>Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry: With an Inquiry into the Causes of Its Inefficiency* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2009, 1830), 204. Bridges further states, "We cannot feel too deeply the importance of this part of pulpit preparation. To study and meditate much, and to pray little, paralyses all." *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>36</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 44. John Piper echoes this sentiment, "The preacher must labor to put his preaching under divine influence by prayer." John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 98.

<sup>37</sup>Charles Spurgeon, "Preach Christ in a Christly Manner," in *Sword and Trowel*, 6:249.

but also becoming a more prayerful person. Alistair Begg, pastor of Parkside Church in Cleveland, Ohio, states, “There is no chance of fire in the pews if there is an iceberg in the pulpit; and without personal prayer and communion with God during the preparation stages, the pulpit will be cold.”<sup>38</sup> Prayerfulness must be maintained at every juncture throughout one’s preparation and proclamation of God’s Word in order to powerfully minister from the overflow of one’s walk with God.

### **Sanctify the Study as a Place of Prayer**

Spurgeon acknowledged, “The closet is the best study.”<sup>39</sup> One of the most subtle temptations in the preaching ministry is to allow the study to degenerate into a place of intellectual and homiletical preparation only. To combat this temptation, the preacher can sanctify his study as a place of prayer and dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Spurgeon’s prayerfulness in preparation exhibited the recognition of his personal inadequacy apart from God. Upon entering his study he was acutely aware of his nothingness, and his desperate need to depend upon the Holy Spirit. In light of this recognition, he abhorred and lamented the thought of a proud, prayerless preacher: “The minister who does not earnestly pray over his work must surely be a vain and conceited man. . . . The preacher who neglects to pray much must be very careless about his ministry. He cannot have comprehended his calling.”<sup>40</sup> However, when one does comprehend the humanly impossible nature of his calling and is driven to his knees for divine intervention and guidance, prayerfulness impacts each stage of what would otherwise become a lifeless academic exercise of public oration. Esteemed author on

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<sup>38</sup>Alistair Begg, *Preaching for God’s Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999), 43. He goes on to say, “To borrow from the marriage ceremony, it is imperative that ‘what God has joined together, no man should put asunder.’ We dare not divorce our preaching from praying.” Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Charles Spurgeon, “The Christian Minister’s Private Prayer,” in *The Sword and the Trowel*, 2:112-13.

<sup>40</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 48.

prayer, E. M. Bounds (1835-1913), holds, “To pray over our sermons in the same way as we say grace over our meals does no good. Every part of the sermon should be born in the throes of prayer.”<sup>41</sup> When the sermon is birthed in prayer, the preacher’s objective is transformed from a desire for human eloquence to an unquenchable yearning for divine unction. It is unction, the divine empowering of a Spirit-illuminated message, that infuses the sermon with the Spirit-empowered potential for life transformation. Through the preacher’s sanctification of life and study, transformation is experienced by the preacher in his preparation, and among the people during delivery.

### **Prayerfully Select the Sermon Text**

The blessing of the Spirit of God rests upon the Word of God. An initial intimacy shared with God by the prayerful preacher centers on the determination of the Scripture text that is to be the source of the sermon. Even if the preacher is preaching his way through a book of the Bible, he faces the decision of what verse or paragraph will be the extent and focus of his exposition. Many have the false assumption that it is the responsibility of the preacher to choose the text, and that it is then God’s responsibility to bless the preacher’s preparation and proclamation. Although this view may be common, it is a deadly distortion of the nature of the sermon and the way in which it should be prepared and delivered. Spurgeon describes this misunderstanding, “Many ministers appear to think that *they* are to choose the text; *they* are to discover its teaching; *they* are to find a discourse in it. We do not think so.”<sup>42</sup> It was the prayerful practice of waiting for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in this matter that caused Spurgeon to push through high levels of anxiety and concern. Although seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the

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<sup>41</sup>E. M. Bounds, *Powerful and Prayerful Pulpits: Forty Days of Readings*, ed. Darrel D. King (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 19.

<sup>42</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 85.

selection of the text seems to intensify and complicate the process, according to

Spurgeon, there are rich spiritual benefits in doing so:

The difficulty of settling upon a topic, if it makes you pray more than usual, will be a great blessing to you. Praying is the best studying . . . pray over Scripture . . . prayer is twice blest; it blesseth the pleading preacher, and the people to whom he ministers. When your text comes in answer to prayer, it will be all the dearer to you; it will come with divine savour and unction altogether unknown to the formal orator to whom one theme is as another.<sup>43</sup>

When the sermon preparation process is initiated in a spirit of prayer, the entire process can become thoroughly Spirit-empowered and God-centered.

### **Prayerfully Determine the Original Meaning of the Scripture Text**

The prayerful selection of the sermon text must be followed by prayerful exploration of the context and exegesis of the passage. It is at this level of preparation that the preacher will wrestle with the text in prayer. Spurgeon proposed,

Whenever you want to understand a text of Scripture, try to read the original. Consult anybody who has studied what the original means; but remember that the quickest way into a text is praying in the Holy Ghost. Pray the chapter over. I do not hesitate to say that, if a chapter is read upon one's knees, looking up at every word to him that gave it, the meaning will come to you with infinitely more light than by any other method of studying it.<sup>44</sup>

Prayerfulness heightens one's sensitivity to the leadership of the Holy Spirit and also deepens one's expectancy to encounter God Himself within the pages of Scripture. The focus of exegesis is not simply to explore the minds of men and determine the meaning of words, but rather to pursue the heart of God within the passage. The preacher should prayerfully allow the Holy Spirit to be vitally involved in this process as one consults lexical aids and commentaries. Spurgeon further emphasized, "The commentators are good instructors, but the author himself is far better, and prayer makes a direct appeal to

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<sup>43</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 86.

<sup>44</sup>Charles Spurgeon, Sermon 2213, "Honey in the Mouth," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 37:376.

Him and enlists Him in our cause. It is a great thing to pray one's self into the spirit and marrow of a text."<sup>45</sup> The goal is not just for the preacher to get into the text, but for the text to get into the preacher. Thus, it is imperative that the Holy Spirit speak to the preacher in order that He may speak through the preacher.<sup>46</sup> The Father is faithful to answer the sincere prayer of His servant who deeply desires to understand the interpretation and application of a passage of Scripture as it relates to his personal life, and then to his congregation.

### **Prayerfully Outline the Text and Sermon**

The Holy Spirit, who inspired the writing of Scripture, can guide the preacher toward the discovery of the divinely determined structure of the passage. When this stage of preparation is done in the context of prayer, the Holy Spirit is given freedom to illumine the mind of the preacher. Therefore, the preacher must tenaciously guard against feverishly and prayerlessly attempting to establish an outline. Rather, outlining the text should be the outgrowth of Spirit-led exploration its structure. This structure, in turn, will determine the structure of the sermon.<sup>47</sup> Spurgeon reminisced about his preparation: "Much hard labour have I spent in manipulating topics, ruminating upon points of doctrine, making skeletons out of verses. . . . Almost any Saturday in my life, I prepare

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<sup>45</sup>Charles Spurgeon, "The Christian Minister's Private Prayer," in *The Sword and Trowel*, 2:112-113. Also, Robert Thomas, New Testament Professor at Master's Seminary, admits, "Accurate exegesis is ultimately dependent on the leading of the Holy Spirit in the exegete's research. Apart from His guidance, not only does the meaning of the text evade him, but also valid applications of the text will prove elusive." Robert L. Thomas, "Exegesis and Expository Preaching," in *Preaching*, 108.

<sup>46</sup>David Allen, Dean of the School of Preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, admonishes, "You must be on your face before God and say, 'O Lord, I do not have anything to say to these people but you do. I am going to preach your Word Sunday. Here is my text. Holy Spirit, you inspired it. Holy Spirit, you indwell me; teach me what this passage means.'" David Allen, "The Process of Preparation in Text-Driven Preaching," in *A Pastor's Guide to Text-Driven Preaching* (Fort Worth, TX: Seminary Hill, 2012), 19.

<sup>47</sup>David Allen states, "Text-driven preaching stays true to the substance of the text, the structure of the text, and the spirit of the text." Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Mathews, eds. *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 8.

enough outlines of sermons, if I felt at liberty to preach them, to last me for a month.”<sup>48</sup>

Once the preacher gains a clearer understanding of the structure of the text, he is then better equipped to determine the wording and flow of the outline of the sermon. In a manner of speaking, the text will almost preach itself through the preacher as a result of his Spirit-led diligence in exploring the structure of the text.

### **Prayerfully Add Flesh to the Skeleton of the Sermon Outline**

Whether one is preparing to preach from an outline or from a manuscript, the preacher should begin to prayerfully consider the extended content of each section of the sermon. Spurgeon highlighted the importance of prayer as the preparation continues:

Your prayers will be your tender assistants while your discourses are yet upon the anvil. . . . If you can dip your pens into your hearts, appealing in earnestness to the Lord, you will write well; and if you can gather your matter on your knees at the gate of heaven, you will not fail to speak well.<sup>49</sup>

Hence, Spurgeon commended prayerful patience at this juncture of the sermon preparation process. He continues, “Prayer supplies a leverage for the uplifting of ponderous truths . . . Waiting upon God often turns darkness into light. Persevering inquiry at the sacred oracle uplifts the veil and gives grace to look into the deep things of God.”<sup>50</sup> The urgency of the rapidly approaching hour of preaching demands perseverance instead of panic. The preacher must proceed prayerfully and meditatively. Initially, his prayerful meditation must focus intently upon the message. This will be followed by compassionate intercession and meditation upon the congregation, which the Lord will providentially assemble to hear the message. As he proceeds, it should be with a

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<sup>48</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 85.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 43. Charles Spurgeon, “The Christian Minister’s Private Prayer,” in *The Sword and the Trowel*, 2:113

<sup>50</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 44.

humbling sense of dependence upon the Holy Spirit to illuminate the people's hearts and minds to receive and apply the Word of God.

### **Pray through the Content of the Finished Sermon**

The writing of a weekly sermon can be such a daunting task, that, when it is complete, the preacher is tempted to relax. However, the time between the writing and delivery of the sermon affords a strategic opportunity for more focused prayer. A preacher must be just as committed to prayerfulness once the sermon-writing deadline is met as he was in the throes of desperate urgency. Concerning the temptation toward prayerlessness, Spurgeon solemnly states,

The minister who does not earnestly pray over his work must surely be a vain and conceited man. He acts as if he thought himself sufficient of himself, and therefore need not to appeal to God. Yet what a baseless pride to conceive that our preaching can ever be in itself so powerful that it can turn men from their sins, and bring them to God without the working of the Holy Ghost. . . . The preacher who neglects to pray much must be very careless about his ministry. He cannot have comprehended his calling. He cannot have computed the value of a soul, or estimated the meaning of eternity. . . . He will surely become a superficial talker best approved where grace is least valued and a vain show most admired. . . . He is a mere loiterer, not a labourer.<sup>51</sup>

British evangelist Leonard Ravenhill (1907-1994) advises, "The preacher should give at least one day a week to prepare his sermons and yet another day to prepare the preacher to preach the prepared sermons."<sup>52</sup> A practical goal for the preacher is to spend as much time in prayer as he does in study during the sermon preparation process. It is possible to do this by interweaving prayer and study. Preaching professor Faris Whitesell (1895-1984) observes, "Prayer and verbalizing go together. The idea is to pray through the sermon either on one's knees or by walking up and down in the study. . . . The Holy Spirit can use this prayer-saturation period to inspire additions or deletions in what has

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<sup>51</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 48.

<sup>52</sup>Leonard Ravenhill, *Why Revival Tarries* (1959; repr., Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2004), 156-57.

been prepared.”<sup>53</sup> Praying through the content of the sermon will be beneficial to the heart and mind of the preacher. It will reinforce his memory with the truths the Holy Spirit has laid upon his mind, and it will also deepen his reflection on his personal application of the text. An initial means of accomplishing this is by *prayeraphrasing* the text of the sermon, which involves personally paraphrasing the text into the form of specific prayers for both preacher and congregation as prompted by the text. Second, the preacher can begin to *prayeraphrase* the content of the sermon. This method was practiced by the Puritan pastor Cotton Mather (1663-1728). His biographer shares, “In preaching, he would fetch an ejaculation out of every head and every text, sending up these silent and obiter prayers for his hearers.”<sup>54</sup> Possible subjects for prayer include the meaningful public reading of the text; a fertile receptivity to the message; and the ability to address and meet specific spiritual needs within the congregation.

### **Write Brief Prayers on Your Sermon Notes**

The recent scholarship of Christian George has revealed that Spurgeon expressed his reliance upon God by writing brief prayers at the end of his sermon notes prior to preaching. George explains,

However, Spurgeon is not—and should not be—immune to critique. He was capable of both weakness and greatness. His dependency on the Holy Spirit is evident throughout his sermons and reveals the force of his spirituality. . . . The prayers Spurgeon scripted at the conclusion of his sermons are also illuminating. Some of the prayers include: “God, help me a poor thing,” “Oh Father, help thro’ Jesus,” “God, my Father, help me, I entreat thee,” “Lord, help thy weakling,” “Lord, revive both me and the people,” and “Lord, revive my stupid soul!”<sup>55</sup>

This was also a practice of Robert Murray McCheyne. Once McCheyne’s sermon was

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<sup>53</sup>Faris D. Whitesell, *Power in Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1963), 128.

<sup>54</sup>Abijah P. Marvin, *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather: A Boston Minister of Two Centuries Ago* (Boston: Congregation Sunday School and Publishing Society, 1892), 105.

<sup>55</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *The Lost Sermons of C. H. Spurgeon: His Earliest Outlines and Sermons Between 1851 and 1854*, ed. Christian George (Nashville: B & H, 2017), 25-26.



completed, he would write brief cries of prayer for God's empowerment and assistance.<sup>56</sup> This practice yields a twofold benefit by keeping the preacher in a spirit of prayer, and by leaving a visible expression of one's inadequacy apart from divine enablement in the study and pulpit.

### **Intercede for the Congregation Before, During, and After the Sermon**

Following Spurgeon's example demands an intense focus on intercessory prayer. Intercession undergirded his instruction, just as prayer permeated his preparation. For Spurgeon, prayerless preaching was never a consideration. The title, "praying pastor" would have been viewed by him as a redundant designation. For him, to preach was to pray. He draws analogies from the blacksmith and the prophet Elijah to help his students better envision the vital necessity of pastoral intercession:

A blacksmith can do nothing when his fire is out, and in this respect he is the type of a minister. . . . We must regard the people as the wood and the sacrifice, well wetted a second and a third time by the cares of the week, upon which, like the prophet, we must pray down the fire from heaven.<sup>57</sup>

He prized divine unction over human eloquence, which demanded spontaneous and strategic pastoral intercession as he prepared for the hour of preaching.

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<sup>56</sup>McCheyne biographer, Alexander Smellie submits, "McCheyne himself seemed refined in those years into a new holiness and zeal. His sermons, written still with comparative fullness, and bearing evidence always of thought and care, had in them more yearning, more eagerness, and more of a divine haste to magnify Christ and to move the hearts and wills of men. Very interesting are the short *prayers* which he got in the habit of appending to them, once the writing was finished. Now this was the winged arrow of prayer, 'Lord, incline their hearts to run to Thyself'; or it was, 'Out of weakness make me strong; send showers of the Spirit'; or again, 'Awake, O North Wind, awake'; or, 'Own Thine own truth to the conversion of sinners and comfort of saints'; or, 'O Life of the world, help me'; or, once more, 'Lord Jesus, help!'" Alexander Smellie, *Biography of R. M. McCheyne: A Burning Light* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 1995), 126. A later biographer of McCheyne, L. J. Van Valen, reinforces the presence of this practice: "We often come across words such as the following at the end of his sermon outlines: "Master help!" "Help, Lord, help!" "Send showers" and "May the opening of my lips be right things." L. J. Van Valen, *Constrained by Love: A New Biography on Robert Murray McCheyne* (Fearn Scotland: Christian Focus, 2003), 357). Spurgeon was impressed with McCheyne's spirituality and ministry. He refers to him at least five times in *Lectures to My Students*. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 8, 44-45, 50, 305, 319.

<sup>57</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 306-7.

Pleading with God for the souls of men preceded his pleading with men for the glory of God. Hence, his preaching proceeded with prayerfulness. Because conviction and salvation are the work of the Holy Spirit, it is imperative that the preacher desperately pursue His filling and empowering. Spurgeon built an intercessory bridge between preparation and proclamation:

Prayer will singularly assist you in the delivery of your sermon; in fact, nothing can so gloriously fit you to preach as descending fresh from the mount of communion with God to speak with men. None are so able to plead with men as those who have been wrestling with God on their behalf.<sup>58</sup>

The spirit in which one prepares will be mirrored by the spirit in which one preaches. Spirit-led dependence in the study produces Spirit-empowered confidence in the pulpit.<sup>59</sup> Prayerful, Spirit-saturated study supplies the message to the messenger, and conditions the messenger for the message. Thus, a life of prayer equips the preacher to be spontaneously spiritually-minded in the pulpit.<sup>60</sup> Spurgeon experienced extemporaneous freedom through Spirit-given insight into the text and into the hearts of his hearers by preaching in the atmosphere of prayer. There is also evidence that Spurgeon offered spontaneous prayers during the sermon itself.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Spurgeon, "The Christian Minister's Private Prayer," 2:114.

<sup>59</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 193, explains, "In our pulpits we need the spirit of dependence to be mixed with that of devotion, so that all along, from the first word to the last syllable, we may be looking up to the strong for strength. It is well to feel that though you have continued up to the present point, yet if the Holy Spirit were to leave you, you would play the fool ere the sermon closed. Looking to the hills whence cometh your help all the sermon through, with absolute dependence upon God, you will preach in a brave confident spirit all the while."

<sup>60</sup>Spurgeon further commends, "As fresh springs of thought will frequently break up during preparation in answer to prayer, so will it be in the delivery of the sermon. Most preachers who depend upon God's Spirit will tell you that their freshest and best thoughts are not those which were premeditated, but ideas which come to them, flying as on wings of angels. . . . But how dare we pray in the battle if we have never cried to the Lord while buckling on the harness! The remembrance of wrestlings at home comforts the fettered preacher when in the pulpit: God will not desert us unless we have deserted Him. You, brethren, will find that prayer will ensure you strength equal to your day." *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>61</sup>Eswine observes, "According to Spurgeon's example, the preacher may also occasionally pray publicly during his sermon. . . . One wonders if Spurgeon learned this seemingly rare pulpit practice from George Herbert, whose poems Spurgeon would quote in his sermons and whose works he often

A preacher's intercessory responsibility does not end once the sermon has been delivered. Rather, passionate pastoral intercession is an utmost necessity in the ensuing spiritual battle for the hearts of the hearers. The preacher must water the seeds that have been sown with the tears of compassionate intercession.<sup>62</sup> Spurgeon concludes,

Our zeal while in the act of preaching must be followed up by intense solicitude as to the after results; for if it be not so we shall have cause to question our sincerity. God will not send a harvest of souls to those who never watch or water the field which they have sown. When the sermon is over we have only let down the net which afterwards we are to draw to shore by prayer and watchfulness.<sup>63</sup>

In many ways, the spiritual battle intensifies after the sermon (Matt 13:3-23). The demonic onslaught on the minds of the hearers necessitates an intensified intercession.

Along with intercession, sincerity and spirituality also demand supplication following the sermon. According to Spurgeon, the preacher's heart is vulnerable to the two extremes of pride and despair:

After the sermon, how would a conscientious preacher give vent to his feelings, and find solace for his soul, if access to the mercy-seat were denied him? Elevated to the highest pitch of excitement, how can we relieve our souls but in importunate pleadings. Or depressed by a fear of failure, how shall we be comforted but in moaning out our complaint before God?<sup>64</sup>

In personal supplication one must release all glory to the Father while admitting inadequacy and expressing trust in the continued activity of the Holy Spirit. The following prayer outline provides examples of supplication and intercession following the preaching of the Word:

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enjoyed on Sunday evenings with his wife." Zack Eswine, *Kindled Fire: How the Methods of C. H. Spurgeon Can Help Your Preaching* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2013), 145.

<sup>62</sup>Spurgeon writes, "If we cannot prevail with men for God, we will, at least, endeavor to prevail with God for men. We cannot save them, or even persuade them to be saved, but we can at least bewail their madness and entreat the interference of the Lord. . . . There is a distinct connection between importunate agonising and true success, even as between the travail and the birth, the sowing in tears and the reaping in joy. . . . We must steep all our teachings in tears." Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 46

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 308. He further illustrates this reality: "When we have done with preaching, we shall not, if we are true ministers of God, have done with praying, because the whole church, with many tongues, will be crying in the language of the Macedonian, 'Come over and help us' in prayer." Ibid., 47.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 46. Spurgeon, "The Christian Minister's Private Prayer," 2:115.

1. Praise the Father as the God of the Word (2 Tim. 3:16).
2. Thank the Father for revealing His strength in your weakness (2 Cor 12:9-10).
3. In prayer, magnify the Spirit of God and the Word of God as the source of power in the pulpit (Eph 6:17).
4. Celebrate the power of God's Word in the lives of your hearers, rather than basking in your eloquence (Heb 4:12).
5. Rejoice that God's Word does not return void but accomplishes what He wills (Isa 55:11).
6. Ask the Father to enable your hearers to be doers of the Word and not hearers only, rather than becoming forgetful hearers (Jas 1:22-25).
7. Intercede intensely that the enemy will not snatch the Word away from their hearts and minds (Matt 13:19).
8. Pray that difficulties will not cause hearers to stumble and forget the Word (Matt 13:20-21).
9. Pray that the Word will not be choked out by the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches (Matt 13:22).

Once the sermon is completed, the preacher will find it beneficial to return from the pulpit across the bridge of prayer.

### **Enlist, Equip, and Encourage Intercession on Your Behalf**

The enlistment and equipping of strategic intercessors is a final area in which the enduring principles of Spurgeon should be practiced. He trained and mentored others in a life of prayer. He especially developed intercessors who would specifically focus their intercession on the preaching of the Word. At least two of his sermons were devoted to the necessity of intercession by the people for the pastor.<sup>65</sup> He viewed this mutual intercession between pastor and people as life-giving and life-sustaining in his ministry:

As for me, I beg a special interest in your prayers that I may be sustained in the tremendous work to which I am called. A minister must be upheld by his people's prayers, or what can he do? When a diver is on the sea-bottom, he depends upon the pumps above, which send him down the air. Pump away, brethren, while I am

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<sup>65</sup>Charles Spurgeon, Sermon 1887, "Pleading for Prayer," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 32:109. Charles Spurgeon, Sermon 1139, "The Minister's Plea," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 19:601.

seeking for my Lord's lost money among the timbers of this old wreck. I feel the fresh air coming in at every stroke of your prayer-pump; but if you stop your supplications, I shall perish. When a fireman climbs upon the roof with the hose, he can do nothing if the water is not driven up into it. Here I stand, pointing my hose at the burning mass. Send up the water, brethren! Send up a continual supply! What will be the use of my standing here with an empty hose? Every man to the pump! Let each one do better still, let him turn on the main. The reservoir is in Heaven; every saint is a turncock; use your keys, and give me a plentiful supply.<sup>66</sup>

He desperately depended upon the activity of the Holy Spirit in answer to the prayers of this army of intercessors. Thus, it is not surprising that he challenged his students to develop relationships of mutual intercession with their members.<sup>67</sup> Though this principle of mutual intercession is the last to be identified, perhaps it should be the first to be implemented. Humbly and transparently, the preacher can plead with his people, "Please pray for me, and with me, as I seek to proclaim the unfathomable truths of God's Word! Pray about my praying, and pray for my preaching."

This list is not exhaustive of possible applications. Each preacher must personally choose how to apply principles from Spurgeon's life and ministry. Responses may vary due to one's personality, education, experience, and ministry setting. Regardless of specifics, there is much that one may consider from Spurgeon's exemplary lifestyle of prayer and Scripture intake with the objective of developing the practice of preaching from the overflow of personal piety.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Although Spurgeon is a rather lofty example, a preacher whose achievements seem beyond the reach of most men, the God whom he served and the godliness he

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<sup>66</sup>Charles Spurgeon, "Short and Stirring," in *The Sword and the Trowel*, 8:129.

<sup>67</sup>Spurgeon instructed his students: "I am sure you feel the necessity of having a truly praying people. Be much in prayer yourself, and this will be more effectual than scolding your people for not praying. Set the example. Draw streams of prayer out of the really gracious people by getting them to pray whenever they come to see you, and by praying with them yourself whenever you call upon them. . . . Oh, for a pleading people! The praying legion is the victorious legion. One of our most urgent necessities is fervent, importunate prayer." Charles Spurgeon, *An All-Around Ministry* (1900; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2003), 358-59. Charles Spurgeon, "The Preacher's Power and the Conditions of Obtaining It," in *The Sword and the Trowel*, 414.

pursued are available and accessible to all who genuinely seek them. He was not without his flaws and was relentlessly hounded by foes. Some of his habits, while questionable to others, became the source of criticism privately and publicly. Betrayal and rejection also wounded him. The pens of others produced everything from hagiography to satire and slander. He ministered through the pains of physical suffering, and bore the heavy weight of his wife's infirmity. Depression was a lifelong companion that seemed to visit him often.<sup>68</sup> At times he was immobilized by anxiety and paralyzed by physical and emotional exhaustion. Some of his victories seem to have been short-lived, and some of his failures lingered long. However, the one consistent reality in his life, which never wavered, was his faithful Father in heaven.

Much of the contemporary church has fallen prey to the unhealthy pursuit of methods and mechanics of ministry. This ailment could lead well-meaning preachers to extract the wrong things from Spurgeon's example. In many ways, it was not so much what he did that distinctly marked his efforts. Thousands of men were preaching and hundreds of men were founding similar organizations. The distinction of Spurgeon comes when one reflects on why and how he went about doing what he did. His personal piety enabled him to bear up under the weight of his immense responsibilities. Others may have been more clever or gifted, but Spurgeon sought to keep his work in proper perspective by maintaining his walk with God. Lewis A. Drummond concludes, "He was a man of God with a contagious spirituality."<sup>69</sup> His students may have envied his accomplishments, but they could not ignore his passion for Christ and the personal piety

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<sup>68</sup>For an in-depth treatment of Spurgeon's struggle with depression, consult Zack Eswine, *Spurgeon's Sorrows: Realistic Hope for Those Who Suffer from Depression* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2014); and John Piper, *A Camaraderie of Confidence: The Fruit of Unfailing Faith in the Lives of Charles Spurgeon, George Müller, and Hudson Taylor* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016). Also, William Brian Albert, "'As the Wind Blows Cold': The Spirituality of Suffering and Depression in the Life and Ministry of Charles Spurgeon" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015).

<sup>69</sup>Lewis A. Drummond, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon," in *Baptist Theologians*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman, 1990), 286.

it produced. It is my prayer that those who read this thesis will not come away saying, “I want to preach like Spurgeon,” but rather, “I want to pray like Spurgeon.” It is not just a matter of how Spurgeon upheld and handled the Word of God; instead, it is much more about how the Word of God upheld and shaped him.

All biographies are limited in perspective. They are shaped by the author’s experience and motives, or by the perceptions they have received from others. Objectivity is virtually impossible. However, Spurgeon’s biographer, Arnold Dallimore, has articulated the thoughts of thousands who have been impacted by the many attempts of retelling the story of Spurgeon’s life and ministry:

How rich his life had been. He had walked with God and lived in prayer. Nothing in his actions was merely put on, but all was wonderfully real. His one purpose had been to ‘preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified,’ and in this determination he had devoted all his talents—the extraordinary memory, the great powers of public speech—and his joy had been found in brining glory to the Savior and in leading souls to know Him. Early in life he had lost all consideration of his own self, and his prayer that he might be hidden behind the cross, that Christ alone might be seen, had expressed his heart’s chief purpose.<sup>70</sup>

Perhaps the following scene from Spurgeon’s life illustrates how one might follow his example:

As I neared the chapel, I perceived that someone was in the pulpit preaching, and who should the preacher be but my clear and venerable grandfather! He saw me as I came in at the front door, and made my way up the aisle, and at once he said, “Here comes my grandson! He may preach the gospel better than I can, but he cannot preach a better gospel; can you, Charles?” As I pressed through the throng, I answered, “You can preach better than I can. Pray go on.” But he would not agree to that. I must take the sermon, and so I did, going on with the subject there and then, just where he left off. “There,” said he, “I was preaching on ‘For by grace are ye saved.’ I have been setting forth the source and fountain-head of salvation; and I am now showing them the channel of it, ‘through faith.’ Now, you take it up, and go on.”<sup>71</sup>

Charles did “take it up and go on,” not only with that sermon, but with his many years of pulpit ministry. Spurgeon longed to pass the baton of preaching from the overflow of personal piety to the next generation of preachers through his personal example and

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<sup>70</sup>Dallimore, *C. H. Spurgeon*, 238-39

<sup>71</sup>Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:86.

through the lectures he delivered. For successive generations, he has made his mark on fellow preachers. It is my prayer that when preachers read this thesis, they will have the words of Spurgeon's grandfather resounding within their heart: "Now, you take it up, and go on."



## APPENDIX 1

### SERMONS AND ADDRESSES BY CHARLES SPURGEON THAT EMPHASIZE PRAYER

- “Certain Fulfillment of Promises (Josh 21:45).” In *The Lost Sermons of C. H. Spurgeon: His Earliest Outlines and Sermons Between 1851 and 1854*, Vol. 1. Edited by Christian T. George, 242-45. Nashville: B & H, 2016, 242-45.
- “Christ about His Father’s Business” (Luke 2:49).” In *The Lost Sermons*, 148-51.
- “Christ Is All (Col 3:11).” In *The Lost Sermons*, 182-85.
- “Christian and His Salvation (Is 45:17).” In *The Lost Sermons*, 156-59.
- “Christian Prosperity and Its Causes (Psa 1:1-3).” In *The Lost Sermons*, 316-21.
- “The Church and Its Boast (Psa 22:31).” In *The Lost Sermons*, 462-69.
- “A Comprehensive Prayer (Psalm 84:9).” In *Able to the Uttermost: Forgotten Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon*, 169. Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1985.
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- “Sermon 21: Christ’s People—Imitators of Him (Acts 4:13).” In *NPSP*, 1:157-64.
- “Sermon 32: The Necessity of Increased Faith (Luke 17:5).” In *NPSP*, 1:245-52.
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- “Sermon 78: The Character of Christ’s People (John 17:16).” In *NPSP*, 2:193-201.
- “Sermon 84: Salvation to the Uttermost (Heb 7:25).” In *NPSP*, 2:241-48.
- “Sermon 85: Omniscience (Gen 16:11).” In *NPSP*, 2:249-57.

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 63 vols. (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1970-2006). The first six volumes of the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* are titled, *New Park Street Pulpit*. Throughout this appendix *The New Park Street Pulpit* will be referred to as *NPSP*, and the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* will be referred to as *MTP*.

“Sermon 108: The Question of Fear and the Answer of Faith (Job 23:6).” In *NPSP*, 3:9-16.

“Sermon 110: Heavenly Worship (Revelation 14:1-3).” In *NPSP*, 3:25-32.

“Sermon 111: A Mighty Savior (Is 63:1).” In *NPSP*, 3:33-40.

“Sermon 117: Do You Love Me? (John 21:15-17).” In *NPSP*, 3:81-88.

“Sermon 119: Rahab’s Faith (Heb 11:31).” In *NPSP*, 3:97-104.

“Sermon 129: David’s Dying Prayer (Ps 72:19).” In *NPSP*, 3:177-84.

“Sermon 138: Prayer—The Forerunner of Mercy (Ezek 36:37).” In *NPSP*, 3:249-56.

“Sermon 149: Independence of Christianity (Zech 4:6).” In *NPSP*, 3:333-40.

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“Sermon 185: The Great Revival (Is 52:10).” In *NPSP*, 4:161-68.

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“Sermon 213: The Fatherhood of God (Matt 6:9).” In *MTP*, 4:385-92.

“Sermon 216: Confession and Absolution (Luke 18:13).” In *MTP*, 4:409-16.

“Sermon 217: Declension from First Love (Rev 2:4).” In *MTP*, 4:417-24.

“Sermon 240: Prayer Answered, Love Nourished (Psa 116:1).” In *NPSP*, 5:121-128.

“Sermon 272: Limiting God (Psa 78:41) In *NPSP*, 5:377-384.

“Sermon 288: Let Us Pray (Psa 73:28).” In *NPSP*, 6:17-24.

“Sermon 317: Characteristics of Faith (John 4:48).” In *NPSP*, 6:245-52.

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“Sermon 354: A Sermon for the Week of Prayer (Col 4:2).” In *MTP*, 7:49-60.

“Sermon 364: The Shulamite’s Choice Prayer (Songs 8:6-7).” In *MTP*, 7:129-40.

“Sermon 404: Intercessory Prayer (Job 42:10).” In *NPSP*, 7:449-56.

“Sermon 500: Ebenezer (1 Sam 7:12).” In *MTP*, 9:158-168.

“Sermon 507: The Power of Prayer and the Pleasure of Praise (2 Cor 1:11-12).” In *MTP*, 9:241-52.

“Sermon 508: Comfort to Seekers from What the Lord has not Said (Isa 45:19).” In *MTP*, 9:253-264.

“Sermon 509: Lead Us Not Into Temptation (Matthew 6:13).” In *MTP*, 9:265-276.

“Sermon 513: The Young Man’s Prayer (Psa 90:14).” In *MTP*, 9:313-24.

“Sermon 532: Thanksgiving and Prayer (Psa 65:11).” In *MTP*, 9:541-52.

“Sermon 582: The Restoration and Conversion of the Jews (Ezek 37:1-10).” In *MTP*, 10:425-36.

“Sermon 586: The Child Samuel’s Prayer (1 Sam 3:9).” In *MTP*, 10:473-84.

“Sermon 591: Thus Saith The Lord: The Book of Common Prayer Weighed in the Balances of the Sanctuary (Ezek 11:5).” In *MTP*, 10:533-44.

“Sermon 596: Praying and Waiting (1 John 5:13-15).” In *MTP*, 10:597-608.

“Sermon 597: Preparation for Revival (Amos 3:3).” In *MTP*, 10:609-20.

“Sermon 608: A Discourse for a Revival Season (Jer 8:19-20).” In *MTP*, 11:13-24.

“Sermon 619: The Golden Key of Prayer (Jeremiah 33:3).” In *MTP*, 11:145-56.

“Sermon 645: The Blind Man’s Earnest Cries (Mark 10:47-48).” In *MTP*, 11:457-68.

“Sermon 653: A Blow for Puseyism (John 6:63).” In *MTP*, 11:553-564.

“Sermon 672: The Raven’s Cry (Psa 147:9).” In *MTP*, 12:49-60.

“Sermon 679: The Amen (Rev 3:14).” In *MTP*, 12:133-44.

“Sermon 700: Order and Argument in Prayer (Job 23:3-4).” In *MTP*, 12:385-96.

“Sermon 717: Pray for Jesus (Psa 72:15).” In *MTP*, 12:589-600.

“Sermon 719: Praying in the Holy Ghost (Jude 20).” In *MTP*, 12:613-24.

“Sermon 734: The Dawn of Revival/Prayer Speedily Answered (Dan 9:23).” In *MTP*, 13:73-84.

“Sermon 739: The Sin Offering (Lev 4:3).” In *MTP*, 13:133-44.

“Sermon 741: A Troubled Prayer (Psa 25:18).” In *MTP*, 13:157-68.

“Sermon 768: A Prayer for the Church Militant (Psa 28:9).” In *MTP*, 13:481-92.

“Sermon 798: Special Protracted Prayer (Luke 6:12).” In *MTP*, 14:121-32.

“Sermon 802: Good Earnests of Great Success (Acts 6:7).” In *MTP*, 14:169.

“Sermon 855: Everyday Usefulness (John 1:42).” In *MTP*, 15:85-96.

“Sermon 856: The Importunate Widow (Luke 18:1-8).” In *MTP*, 15:97-108.

“Sermon 897: The First Cry from the Cross (Luke 23:34).” In *MTP*, 15:589-600.

“Sermon 954: A Most Needful Prayer Concerning the Holy Spirit (Psa 51:11).” In *MTP*, 16:553-64.

“Sermon 959: Right Replies to Right Requests (Luke 11:11-13).” In *MTP*, 16:613-24.

“Sermon 960: Iconoclast (2 Kgs 18:4-5).” In *MTP*, 16:225-36.

“Sermon 985: The Touchstone of Godly Sincerity (Job 27:10).” In *MTP*, 17:205-16.

“Sermon 994: The Prayer of Jabez (1 Chron 4:10).” In *MTP*, 17:313-24.

“Sermon 1,009: Travailing for Souls (Isa 66:8).” In *MTP*, 17:493-504.

“Sermon 1,018: Pleading (Psa 70:5).” In *MTP*, 17:601-12.

“Sermon 1,023: Praise and Vows Accepted in Zion (Psa 65:1-2).” In *MTP*, 17:661-72.

“Sermon 1,024: The Throne of Grace (Heb 4:16).” In *MTP*, 17:673-84.

“Sermon 1,039: Pray Without Ceasing (1 Thess 5:17).” In *MTP*, 18:133-44.

“Sermon 1,049: Intercessory Prayer (Psa 141:5).” In *MTP*, 18:253-64.

“Sermon 1,051: Golden Bowls Full of Incense (Rev 5:8).” In *MTP*, 18:277-288.

“Sermon 1,072: My Prayer (Psa 119:37).” In *MTP*, 18:529-40.

“Sermon 1,084: The Young Man’s Prayer (Psa 90:14).” In *MTP*, 18:673-84.

“Sermon 1,091: Prayer Certified of Success (Luke 11:9-10).” In *MTP*, 19:25-36.

“Sermon 1,103: The Conditions of Power in Prayer (1 John 3:22-24).” In *MTP*, 19:169-80.

“Sermon 1,139: The Minister’s Plea (Phil 1:19).” In *MTP*, 19:601-12.

“Sermon 1,154: Daniel Facing the Lion’s Den (Dan 6:10).” In *MTP*, 20:49-60.

“Sermon 1,192: Hindrances to Prayer (1 Peter 3:7).” In *MTP*, 20:505-16.

“Sermon 1,247: The Special Prayer Meeting (Acts 12:12).” In *MTP*, 21:433-44.

“Sermon 1,255: How to Converse with God (Job 13:22).” In *MTP*, 21:529-40.

“Sermon 1,266: Paul’s Doxology (Eph 3:20-21).” In *MTP*, 21:661-72.

“Sermon 1,304: Enquire of the Lord (Ezek 36:37-38).” In *MTP*, 22:397-408.

“Sermon 1,340: Manoah’s Wife and Her Excellent Argument (Judges 13:22-23).” In *MTP*, 23:109-20.

“Sermon 1,344: The Student’s Prayer (Psa 119:27).” In *MTP*, 23:157-68.

“Sermon 1,390: Ejaculatory Prayer (Neh 2:4).” In *MTP*, 23:709-20.

“Sermon 1,391: A Golden Prayer (John 12:28).” In *MTP*, 24:1-12.

- “Sermon 1,412: Where True Prayer is Found (2 Sam 7:27).” In *MTP*, 18:673-84.
- “Sermon 1,419: Encouragements to Trust and Pray (Isa 30:19).” In *MTP*, 24:337-48.
- “Sermon 1,435: Adoption—The Spirit and the Cry (Gal 4:6).” In *MTP*, 24:529-40.
- “Sermon 1,454: The Poor Man’s Prayer (Psa 106:4-5).” In *MTP*, 25:41-52.
- “Sermon 1,469: Prayer Perfumed with Praise (Phil 4:6).” In *MTP*, 25:217-28.
- “Sermon 1,505: Prayer Weighed in the Balances of the Sanctuary/Prayer to God in Trouble an Acceptable Sacrifice (Psa 50:15).” In *MTP*, 25:649-60.
- “Sermon 1,515: A Woman of a Sorrowful Spirit (1 Sam 1:15).” In *MTP*, 26:37-48.
- “Sermon 1,532: The Holy Spirit’s Intercession (Rom 8:26-27).” In *MTP*, 26:217-28.
- “Sermon 1,537: Samuel: An Example of Intercession (1 Sam 12:23).” In *MTP*, 26:277-88.
- “Sermon 1,657: My Hourly Prayer (Psa 119:117).” In *MTP*, 28:241-52.
- “Sermon 1,661: Praying and Pleading (Jer 14:7-9).” In *MTP*, 28:289-300.
- “Sermon 1,682: Ask and Have (Jas 4:2-3).” In *MTP*, 28:541-552.
- “Sermon 1,723: Knock (Matt 7:12).” In *MTP*, 29:301-12.
- “Sermon 1,737: John’s First Doxology (Rev 1:5-6).” In *MTP*, 29:468-80.
- “Sermon 1,769: Before Day-break with Christ (Mark 1:35-39).” In *MTP*, 30:133-44.
- “Sermon 1,787: Humility, the Friend of Prayer (Genesis 32:10).” In *MTP*, 30:349-60.
- “Sermon 1,860: Behold, He Prayeth (Acts 9:11).” In *MTP*, 31:505-16.
- “Sermon 1,887: Pleading for Prayer (Rom 15:30-33).” In *MTP*, 32:109-20.
- “Sermon 1,890: Our Lord’s Prayer for His People’s Sanctification (John 17:17).” In *MTP*, 32:145-56.
- “Sermon 1,927: Our Sympathizing High Priest (Heb 5:7-10).” In *MTP*, 32:589-600.
- “Sermon 1,969: Pleading Prayer (Psa 119:49).” In *MTP*, 33:349-60.
- “Sermon 2,002: The Secret Power of Prayer (John 15:7).” In *MTP*, 34:13-24.
- “Sermon 2,035: Peter After His Restoration (Luke 22:32).” In *MTP*, 34:409-20.
- “Sermon 2,050: A Paradox (2 Cor 12:10).” In *MTP*, 34:589-600.
- “Sermon 2,053: Concerning Prayer (Psa 86:6-7).” In *MTP*, 34:625-36.
- “Sermon 2,064: Essential Points in Prayer (1 Kgs 9:2-3).” In *MTP*, 35:25-36.

“Sermon 2,189: A Call to Prayer and Testimony (Isa 62:6-7).” In *MTP*, 31:85-96.

“Sermon 2,215: Young Man! A Prayer for You (2 Kgs 6:17).” In *MTP*, 37:397-408.

“Sermon 2,220: Three Decisive Steps (1 Sam 7:2-5).” In *MTP*, 37:457-68.

“Sermon 2,249: Even Now (John 11:22).” In *MTP*, 38:145-56.

“Sermon 2,254: The Two Guards—Praying and Watching (Neh 4:9).” In *MTP*, 38:205-16.

“Sermon 2,263: Christ’s Plea for Ignorant Sinners (Luke 23:34).” In *MTP*, 38:313-24.

“Sermon 2,282: David’s Prayer in the Cave (Psa 142).” In *MTP*, 38:541-52.

“Sermon 2,311: Our Lord’s Last Cry from the Cross (Luke 23:46).” In *MTP*, 39:265-76.

“Sermon 2,312: Achsah’s Asking, a Pattern of Prayer (Judg 1:12-15).” In *MTP*, 39:277-88.

“Sermon 2, 331: Christ’s Pastoral Prayer for His People (John 17:9-10).” In *MTP*, 39:505-16.

“Sermon 2,351: Prayer, the Cure for Care (Phil. 4:6-7).” In *MTP*, 40:121-32.

“Sermon 2,355: Christ’s Negative and Positive Prayer (John 17:15).” In *MTP*, 40:157-68.

“Sermon 2,372: A Page from a Royal Diary (Psalm 119:132).” In *MTP*, 40:361-72.

“Sermon 2,380: Encouragements to Prayer (Psa 81:10).” In *MTP*, 40:457-68.

“Sermon 2,395: The Blessings of Public Worship (Luke 18:10).” In *MTP*, 41:13-24.

“Sermon 2,426: A Prayer for Revival (Psa 85:6).” In *MTP*, 41:385-96.

“Sermon 2,433: Heman’s Sorrowful Psalm (Psa 88:13).” In *MTP*, 41:469-80.

“Sermon 2,437: Prayer, the Proof of Godliness (Psa 32:6).” In *MTP*, 41:517-28.

“Sermon 2,487: Ordered Steps (Psa 119:133).” In *MTP*, 41:493-504.

“Sermon 2,519: Why Should We Pray? (Luke 18:1).” In *MTP*, 43:253-64.

“Sermon 2,520: A Programme Never Carried Out (Luke 15:20-21).” In *MTP*, 43:265-76.

“Sermon 2,521: Deadness and Quickening (Psa 119:37).” In *MTP*, 43:277-88.

“Sermon 2,527: David’s Five-Stringed Harp (Psa 140:6, 7, 12, 13).” In *MTP*, 43:349-60.

“Sermon 2,535: A Singular Plea in Prayer (Psa 41:4).” In *MTP*, 43:445-56.

“Sermon 2,556: Life Proved by Love (1 John 3:14).” In *MTP*, 44:73-84.

“Sermon 2,597: A Prayer for Everybody (Matt 15:25).” In *MTP*, 44:553-64.

“Sermon 2,620: Christ’s Prayer for Peter (Luke 22:32).” In *MTP*, 45:205-216.

- “Sermon 2,637: The Place of Prayer and Pardon (2 Chron 6:28-30).” In *MTP*, 45:409-20.
- “Sermon 2,644: The Last Words of Christ on the Cross (Luke 23:46; Psa 31:5; Acts 7:59).” In *MTP*, 45:493-504.
- “Sermon 2,649: Girded for the Work (1 Peter 1:13).” In *MTP*, 45:553-64.
- “Sermon 2,696: Wordless Prayers Heard in Heaven (Isa 41:17).” In *MTP*, 46:481-92.
- “Sermon 2,788: Prayer for the Church (Dan 9:17).” In *MTP*, 48:337-48.
- “Sermon 2,795: The Double Drawing Nigh (Jas 4:8).” In *MTP*, 48:421-32.
- “Sermon 2,796: A Man of God Alone with God (Psa 119:26).” In *MTP*, 48:433-44.
- “Sermon 2,800: Pray, Always, Pray (John 16:26-27).” In *MTP*, 48:481-92.
- “Sermon 2,836: Prayerful Importunity (Luke 18:7).” In *MTP*, 49:289-300.
- “Sermon 2,841: Prayer, Its Discouragements and Encouragements (Matt 15:23).” In *MTP*, 49:349-60.
- “Sermon 2,851: Unseasonable Prayer (Exod 14:15).” In *MTP*, 49:469-80.
- “Sermon 2,869: Prayer Found in the Heart (2 Sam 7:27).” In *MTP*, 50:61-72.
- “Sermon 2,943: Restraining Prayer (Job 15:4).” In *MTP*, 51:325-36.
- “Sermon 2,950: True and Not True (John 9:31).” In *MTP*, 6:333-44.
- “Sermon 3,010: Jacob’s Model Prayer (Genesis 32:9-12).” In *MTP*, 52:505-16.
- “Sermon 3,083: Comfort for Those Whose Prayers are Feeble (Lam 3:56).” In *MTP*, 54:121-132.
- “Sermon 3,133: Christ’s Prayer for Believers (John 17:20).” In *MTP*, 55:97-108.
- “Sermon 3,178: The Preparatory Prayers of Christ (Luke 3:21-22; 6:12-13; 9:28-29; Matt 14:23-25; John 11:41-42; Luke 22:31-32).” In *MTP*, 56:1-12.
- “Sermon 3,182: Boldness at the Throne (Heb 4:16).” In *MTP*, 56:49-60.
- “Sermon 3,186: Peter’s Shortest Prayer (Matt 14:30).” In *MTP*, 56:97-108.
- “Sermon 3,190: Christ in Gethsemane (Mark 14:32).” In *MTP*, 56:145-56.
- “Sermon 3,212: A Command and a Promise (Jas 4:8).” In *MTP*, 56:409-20.
- “Sermon 3,274: Sickness and Prayer, Healing and Praise (Psa 107:17-22).” In *MTP*, 57:517-28.
- “Sermon 3,280: Christ’s Prayer and Plea (Ps 16:1).” In *MTP*, 57:589-600.
- “Sermon 3,282: Preparing for the Week of Prayer (Rev 8:3-4).” In *MTP*, 57:613-24.



“Sermon 3,313: A Practical Discourse (1 Kgs 5:14).” In *MTP*, 58:361-72.

“Sermon 3,315: Joy in Harvest (Is 9:3).” In *MTP*, 58:385-96.

“Sermon 3,321: God in Heaven, and Men on the Sea (Psa 65:5).” In *MTP*, 58:457-68.

“Sermon 3,344: Unanswered Prayer (Psa 22:2).” In *MTP*, 59:109-20.

“Sermon 3,376: God’s Answer to Persistent Prayer (1 Kings 18:41).” In *MTP*, 59:493-504.

“Sermon 3,381: The Broken Fence (Prov 24:30-32).” In *MTP*, 59:553-64.

“Sermon 3,407: Peter’s Prayer (Luke 5:8).” In *MTP*, 60:241-52.

“Sermon 3,421: Prayer Meetings (Acts 1:14).” In *MTP*, 60:409-20.

“Sermon 3,470: An Earnest Entreaty (Psalm 17:7).” In *MTP*, 61:361-73.

“Sermon 3,484: Daniel: A Pattern for Pleaders (Dan 9:19).” In *MTP*, 61:529-40.

“Sermon 3,537: A Definite Challenge for Definite Prayer (Mark 10:51).” In *MTP*, 62:529-40.

“Sermon 3,546: Assurance Sought (Psa 35:3).” In *MTP*, 63:13-24.

“Sermon 3,558: A Plea from the Cross (Luke 23:34).” In *MTP*, 63:157-68.

“Slavery Destroyed (Rom 6:17).” In *Lost Sermons*, 448-51.

“Three Model Prayers (Gen 32:24-26; 1 Ki 18:42-43; Luke 11:1).” In *Forgotten Prayer Meeting Addresses*, 11.

“The Wrong Roads (Prov 14:12).” In *The Lost Sermons*, 226-229.

“Unseasonable Prayer (Exod 14:15).” In *My Sermon Notes*, Part 1, 60-65.

## APPENDIX 2

### SERMONS AND ADDRESSES BY CHARLES SPURGEON THAT EMPHASIZE THE BIBLE

- “The Bible: Speech at Annual Meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society, May 4, 1864.” Part 1. In *Speeches by C. H. Spurgeon at Home and Abroad*. Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1974, 9-15.
- “The Bible: Speech at Annual Meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society, May 5, 1864.” Part 2. In *Speeches by C. H. Spurgeon at Home and Abroad*. Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1974, 16-24.
- “Sermon 15: The Bible (Hos 8:12).” In *New Park Street Pulpit*, 1:109-116. Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1969.<sup>1</sup>
- “Sermon 50: The Holy Spirit—The Great Teacher (John 16:13) In *NPSP*, 1:379-87.
- “Sermon 79: The Form of Sound Words (2 Tim 1:13) In *NPSP*, 2:201-8.
- “Sermon 172: Search the Scriptures (Is 8:20) In *NPSP*, 4:57-64.
- “Sermon 347: Preaching! Man’s Privilege and God’s Power (Mark 6:20).” In *NPSP*, 6:485-92.
- “Sermon 591: Thus Saith the Lord (Ezek 11:5).” In *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 10:533-44. Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1981.
- “Sermon 1,017: The Talking Book (Prov 6:22).” In *MTP*, 17:589-600.
- “Sermon 1,132: The Seed Upon Stony Ground (Mark 4:5-6).” In *MTP*, 19:517-28.
- “Sermon 1,208: Infallibility—Where to Find It and How to Use It (Matt 4:4).” In *MTP*, 20:697-708.
- “Sermon 1,217: Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth (2 Tim 2:15).” In *MTP*, 21:85-96.
- “Sermon 1,372: God Our Portion and His Word Our Treasure (Psa 119:57).” In *MTP*, 23:493-504.
- “Sermon 1,431: The Message from the Lord’s Mouth (Ezek 3:17).” In *MTP*, 24:481-92.

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 63 vols. (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1970-2006). The first six volumes of the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* are titled, *New Park Street Pulpit*. Throughout this appendix *The New Park Street Pulpit* will be referred to as *NPSP*, and the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* will be referred to as *MTP*.

“Sermon 1,488: More and More, or Less and Less (Matt 13:12).” In *MTP*, 25:445-56.

“Sermon 1,503: How to Read the Bible (Matt 12:2-7).” In *MTP*, 25:625-36.

“Sermon 1,654: At Thy Word (Luke 5:5).” In *MTP*, 28:205-16.

“Sermon 1,697: The Word of a King (Ecc 8:4).” In *MTP*, 28:709-20.

“Sermon 1,715: A Description of Young Men in Christ (1 John 2:13-14).” In *MTP*, 29:205-16.

“Sermon 1,748: Jehovah Hath Spoken—Will Ye Not Hear? (Jer 13:15-17).” In *MTP*, 29:601-12.

“Sermon 1,792: Do You Understand What You Are Reading? (Acts 8:30-33).” In *MTP*, 30:409-20.

“Sermon 1,847: Before Sermon, At Sermon, and After Sermon (Jas 1:21-22).” In *MTP*, 31:349-60.

“Sermon 1,848: The Looking Glass (Jas 1:23-25).” In *MTP*, 31:361-72.

“Sermon 1,866: The Sunday School and the Scriptures (2 Tim 3:15).” In *MTP*, 31:577-88.

“Sermon 1,890: Our Lord’s Prayer for His People’s Sanctification (John 17:17).” In *MTP*, 32:145-56.

“Sermon 1,955: Jesus Declining the Legions (Matt 26:53-54).” In *MTP*, 33:181-92.

“Sermon 1,969: Pleading Prayer (Psa 119:49).” In *MTP*, 33:349-60.

“Sermon 1,998: Not Bound Yet: (2 Tim 2:9).” In *MTP*, 33:685-96.

“Sermon 2,004: The Lover of God’s Law Filled with Peace (Psa 119:65).” In *MTP*, 34:37-48.

“Sermon 2,010: The Word a Sword (Hebrews 4:12).” In *MTP*, 34:109-20.

“Sermon 2,013: The Infallibility of Scripture (Is 1:20).” In *MTP*, 34:145-56.

“Sermon 2,040: Sown Among Thorns (Matt 13:7, 22).” In *MTP*, 34:469-80.

“Sermon 2,071: Trembling at the Word of the Lord (Is 66:2).” In *MTP*, 34:97-108.

“Sermon 2,084: The Bible Tried and Proved (Psa 12:6).” In *MTP*, 35:253-64.

“Sermon 2,085: A Dirge for the Down-Grade and a Song for Faith (Is 66:10).” In *MTP*, 35:265-76.

“Sermon 2,114: The Burden of the Word of the Lord (Mal 1:1).” In *MTP*, 35:613-24.

“Sermon 2,135: The Warnings and the Rewards of the Word God (Psa 19:11).” In *MTP*, 36:157-68.

“Sermon 2,151: Holy Longings (Psa 119:131-133).” In *MTP*, 36:349-60.

“Sermon 2,201: The Sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17).” In *MTP*, 37:229-40.

“Sermon 2,235: A Warrant for Your Apprehension (Zeph 2:5).” In *MTP*, 37:637-48.

“Sermon 2,278: Feeding on the Word (Is 55:2).” In *MTP*, 38:493-504.

“Sermon 2,460: God’s Fire and Hammer (Jer 23:29).” In *MTP*, 42:169-80.

“Sermon 2,577: Living on the Word (Deut 8:3).” In *MTP*, 44:313-24.

“Sermon 2,810: Nevertheless at Your Word (Luke 5:5).” In *MTP*, 48:601-12.

“Sermon 2,842: The Sower (Matt 13:3).” In *MTP*, 49:361-72.

“Sermon 2,843: The Seed by the Wayside (Luke 8:5).” In *MTP*, 49:373-84.

“Sermon 2,844: The Seed Upon a Rock (Matt 13:5-6).” In *MTP*, 49:385-96.

“Sermon 3,144: The True Sayings of God (Rev 19:9).” In *MTP*, 55:229-240.

“Sermon 3,197: The Sweetness of God’s Word (Psa 119:103).” In *MTP*, 56:229-40.

“Sermon 3,263: Intelligent Obedience (1 Chron 28:8).” In *MTP*, 57:385-96.

“Sermon 3,270: The Truly Blessed Man (Psa 1:1-3).” In *MTP*, 57:469-80.

“Sermon 3,272: How to Become Full of Joy (1 John 1:4).” In *MTP*, 57:493-505.

“Sermon 3,318: How to Read the Bible (1 Tim 4:13).” In *MTP*, 58:421-32.

“Sermon 3,492: God’s Word Not to Be Refused (Heb 12:25).” In *MTP*, 61:613.

### APPENDIX 3

#### MESSAGES AND LECTURES DELIVERED BY CHARLES SPURGEON TO MINISTERS AND STUDENTS

A large number of lectures delivered by Charles Spurgeon to students and ministers at The Pastors' College are contained in *Lectures to My Students* and *An All-Around Ministry*.<sup>1</sup> Still more of these lectures appear in the first six chapters of *The Soul-Winner*.<sup>2</sup> However, numerous other messages, addresses, and articles which he wrote and/or delivered to pastors and students are found in *The Sword and the Trowel*.<sup>3</sup>

“Advice to Young Preachers.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1868, 2:99.

“Breaking the Long Silence.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1892, 28:50.

“Communion with Christ and His People.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1883, 7:19-25.

“Crazy Ministers.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1875, 4:286-87.

“Different Styles of Preaching.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1892, 28:694.

“Dying Ministers.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1875, 4:283-85.

“Falling at His Feet: Communion Address Delivered at the Conclusion of the College Conference.” In *The Sword and the Trowel*, 1882, 18:505-10.

“Feed My Sheep: The Closing Sermon Delivered to the Conference of the Pastors' College, April, 13, 1877.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1877, 5:98-108.

“Fighting and Praying: A Bugle Blast.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1889, 25:585-91.

“Gifts Neglected and Gifts Stirred Up: An Address to the Students of the Pastors' College.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1893, 29:357-62, 421-24.

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (1875; repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982). Charles Spurgeon, *An All-Around Ministry: Addresses to Ministers and Students* (1900, repr., Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 2003).

<sup>2</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *The Soul-Winner: How to Lead Sinners to the Savior* (1895; repr., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1963).

<sup>3</sup>Charles Spurgeon, ed., *The Sword and the Trowel: A Record of Combat with Sin and Labour for the Lord*. 38 vols. (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1865-1902). Charles Spurgeon, ed., *The Sword and the Trowel: A Record of Combat with Sin and Labour for the Lord*. 8 vols. (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1975-2006).

- “A Good Stayer.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1882, 18:349.
- “Growing on the Wall: A Discourse by C. H. Spurgeon.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1889, 25:153-160.
- “Help for Poor Ministers.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1888, 14:60.
- “Holding Forth the Word of Life.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1890, 26:49-52.
- “How Shall We Sing?” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1870, 16:277-78.
- “How to Attract a Congregation: An Address by Mr. Spurgeon to His Students.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1883, 7:170-77.
- “Live Prayers.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1888, 24:531.
- “Long Sermons: An Address to the Students of the Pastors’ Conference.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1886, 8:250.
- “A Minister’s Equipment from the Congo.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1887, 23:133-34.
- “The Minister’s Ordinary Conversation: A College Lecture.” In *The Sword and the Trowel*, 1874, 4:13-21.
- “Ministers Sailing Under False Colours.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1870, 2:314-17.
- “The Ministry Needed by the Churches and Measures for Providing It.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1871, 3:41-54.
- “The Months of Spiritual Harvest.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1890, 26:545-47.
- “Our First Sermon.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1880, 6:5-7.
- “Our Lord’s Preaching.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1877, 5:171-75.
- “Pastorless Flocks.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1877, 5:389-91.
- “Peculiar Power in Prayer.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1889, 25:491-96.
- “Peril from the Pulpit.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1879, 5:425-26.
- “Poor Ministers Helped.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1888, 24:61.
- “Practical Effort for Truth the Best Effort against Error.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1891, 27:305-8.
- “Preach Christ in a Christly Manner.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1881, 6:244-49.
- “Preaching on Unprofitable Subjects.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1877, 5:153.
- “Preaching to Sinners.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1883, 7:206-8.
- “Preaching to the Ear, or to the Heart.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1891, 27:31.
- “Preparing the Sermon.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1883, 7:148-49.

- “The Pulpit as a Warning Apparatus.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1880, 6:28-9.
- “Pulpits.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1877, 5:127-30.
- “Put More Christ in Your Sermons.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1881, 6:403.
- “Qualifications for Soul-Winning Godward: A Lecture to the Students of the Pastors' College.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1893, 29:157-62.
- “A Sermon to Ministers and Other Tried Believers.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1881, 6:369-74.
- “A Sermon for Sermonizers.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1879, 5:468.
- “Sermons in Candles.” In *The Sword and the Trowel*, 1865, 1:40-45.
- “Sham Spirituality.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1875, 4:322-28.
- “Special Pleading with the Specially Feeble.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1889, 25:105-10.
- “Spiritual Dredging.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1888, 24:177.
- “Stand Fast.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1888, 24:620.
- “Street Preaching.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1876, 4:485-88.
- “The Best Conduct towards Unbrotherly Brethren.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1879, 5:508.
- “The First Baptist Minister” In *The Sword and the Trowel*, 1894, 30:481-87, 529-35.
- “The Flock in Winter.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1889, 25:651.
- “This Must Be a Soldier’s Battle.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1889, 25:633-35.
- “Thoughts about Church Matters.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1890, 26:209-12.
- “Use the Pen: An Exhortation.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1871, 3:57-60.
- “Want of Naturalness in Preaching.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1871, 3:61-2.
- “What Is Heresy-Hunting?” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1892, 28:195.
- “What Is It To Win a Soul?—A College Lecture.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1879, 5:516.
- “What Is It To Win a Soul? (continued).” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1879, 5:529.
- “What We Aim at in the Pastors' College.” In *The Sword and the Trowel*, 1887, 25:205-8.
- “Who Shall Keep the Keepers?” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1889, 25:129-30.
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“Young Preachers Encouraged.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1881, 6:216-20.

“Interruptions.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1882, 18:424.

“When I Am Weak, Then I Am Strong: Inaugural Address at the Eighteenth Annual Conference of the Pastors’ College, April 18, 1882.” In *The Sword and Trowel*, 1882, 6:401-8, 459-66.

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## ABSTRACT

### PREACHING FROM THE OVERFLOW OF PERSONAL PIETY: THE CONTRIBUTION OF PRAYER AND BIBLE INTAKE TO THE PULPIT MINISTRY OF CHARLES SPURGEON

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This thesis explores the impact of personal piety and the spiritual disciplines of prayer and Scripture intake on the pulpit ministry of Charles Spurgeon. Chapter 1 explores his example of a ministry nurtured by personal piety. Chapter 2 charts the biblical and historical rationale upon which this thesis is based. It establishes how the practice of prayer and Scripture intake has been the consistent foundation for God's spokesmen throughout history. Chapter 3 focuses on how Spurgeon pursued personal holiness, character, and integrity by consistently practicing the spiritual disciplines of prayer and Bible intake. Chapter 4 highlights the way in which the persistent practice of prayer and Scripture intake contributed to the preparation of Spurgeon, as God's messenger. Chapter 5 emphasizes why caution must be exercised when attempting to emulate the practice of Spurgeon due to factors such as intellect, ministry setting, and personality. However, timeless principles can be gleaned and practically applied in the preparation and delivery of sermons.



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