

**Spurgeon** by Arnold Dallimore, Banner of Truth, Carlisle, PA: 1985 (31 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

## **1. Conditions in England during Spurgeon's Time**

Spurgeon was born in 1834 and died in 1892. Conditions during that period were different in several regards from those of today, and a brief look at them will help us toward understanding his life.

Throughout those years Queen Victoria was on the throne. She exercised a strong influence for morality in government and in daily life. During her reign Britain greatly extended its empire, and the economy of the nation prospered markedly.

In London, horses, carriages, and carts were so many that traffic, which was governed by no rules of the road, was often brought to a standstill. The railroads were being steadily enlarged, but although England led the world in this regard, trains were slow and passenger travel was uncomfortable and often grimy.

Bathrooms with running water were gradually being installed in the homes of the wealthy and a few of the middle class. Among the poor they were entirely unknown. Heating was done largely through burning coal, and lighting was provided by oil and gas lamps, although the poorest still used candles.

During the years in which Spurgeon lived, great strides were made in medical knowledge. The existence of bacteria was discovered, a knowledge was acquired of antiseptics, and science realized that the drinking water supply could be contaminated if located too near sewage disposal, thus spreading cholera and other diseases. Surgery was performed without anesthetic until 1847, when chloroform was discovered, and in 1860, under the influence of Florence Nightingale, the first standards for nursing practice were set.

The class system generally prevailed. The upper class not only had wealth but also held privileges denied to all others. But the middle class was growing and opportunities for men to acquire considerable possessions were steadily increasing. Still, there were many poor and among them much ignorance, sickness, and need. The utterly destitute could apply for refuge at a workhouse, but conditions in those places were designed to be so bad that the inmates would make every effort to obtain some kind of employment and thus escape so terrible an existence. A large number of homeless children roamed the streets, and petty crime proved to be the only way they could keep themselves alive. We shall need to bear those circumstances in mind when we see Spurgeon creating an almshouse and an orphanage and providing education without charge for needy children and young men.

The Church of England was the state religion. It was supported by the government and was granted privileges that were denied to all who were not of its membership. The Nonconformist bodies—the Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Presbyterians—had made much growth as a result of the revival under Whitefield and Wesleys during the preceding century, but by Spurgeon’s time much of the fervor had died down, and a rather dreary formalism characterized a great deal of church life. The chief figures among the Congregationalists were Thomas Binney and Joseph Packer and, among the Baptist, John Clifford and Alexander MacLaren. The Brethren movement under John Darby began in the 1830s, and the Salvation Army under William Booth came into being during the 1870s.

One of the most important religious activities of the century was the Oxford Movement. Under the leadership of John Henry (later Cardinal) Newman, a large number of people left the church of England to join the roman Catholic Church, and that influence remained a strong factor in everyday English life.

Throughout this book the costs of buildings and other items are presented in the English money of those times. In order to translate the value into those of any other nation and any other age, the reader may use as a norm the wages paid to a workingman. A good wage for a skilled laborer was then about £100 a year.

Spurgeon was in many senses a typical Victorian Englishman. There was much that was good in society around him but also much that was evil. He devoted himself to one overwhelming task—the declaration of the life-transforming message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And he saw its power displayed in the conversion of thousands. (Page XIII, XIV, XV)

## **2. Spurgeon had vast knowledge of the Bible, History, and Ancients**

When he stood to preach he had that vast learning at his disposal. He could quote at will from any book of the Bible, using a most apt selection and repeating it exactly. He had memorized an immense number of hymns, and from those too he could in an instant repeat a verse or several verses. He could refer by way of illustration to incidents from history of the ancients, the Reformers, and the Puritans, and he made much use of events in the lives of Whitefield and Wesley and others of their tomes. (Page 63)

## **3. He was ever reading literature about the Bible**

He was ever reading literature about the Bible—a breadth of study that enabled him less than twenty years later to write his volume *Commenting on Commentaries*. In the preparation of this book he “passed under review,” he said, “some three or four thousand volumes.” His one hobby, if it can be so termed, was that of scouting out and buying second-hand books, and his personal library grew till its volumes were numbered more than ten thousand. (Page 64)

#### **4. “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you”**

Nevertheless, he was wounded in seeing himself thus accused and held up to ridicule. Mrs. Spurgeon gathered all the defamatory statements and pasted them in a scrapbook, till it finally became a huge volume. She also framed a text and hung it on the wall. It read: “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” (Page 66-67)

#### **5. Salvation is of the Lord**

But although he declared “Salvation is of the Lord!” Spurgeon also preached “Whosoever will come.” Into the new Park Street Chapel and into Exeter Hall came hundreds of men and women who did not know the Lord. In virtually every sermon he pleaded with them to recognize their lost condition, to know that Christ could save them, and to believe on Him then and there. His preaching abounded with the free offer of the gospel to all mankind and was fruitful in the conversion of a great number.

Spurgeon recognized that the two concepts seemed contradictory. But he declared the Scripture taught both—that God would save His elect ones, but also that man was responsible concerning his soul. Therefore he constantly urged, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” (Page 68)

#### **6. He spoke in Spurgeon “the common man’s language”**

And as they listened they found that he did not speak in some difficult style, but he spoke their language, the tongue of the common man. He used words they knew well and illustrations they could understand, and he seemed to be talking to each one personally. Above all, he had a message that reached many hearts as he told of the new life that could be had in Christ. (Page 76)

#### **7. His place at such time is with God, weeping out the failure of his preaching**

Spurgeon spoke out against the kind of minister who before preaching can be a jolly fellow, happily greeting the people, and who after the service can gather jovially with them at the door, having fair words for all. His place at such time, he declared, is with God, weeping out the failure of his preaching and pleading that the seed sown in hearts might take root and bring forth fruit unto eternal life. (Page 77)

## **8. Spurgeon Could Really Pray**

This earnestness characterized the whole service—the singing, the Scripture reading, and the preaching—but it was especially evident as Spurgeon led the congregation in prayer. Throughout his entire ministry many hearers remarked that, moved as they were by his preaching, they were still more affected by the praying. D. L. Moody, after his first visit to England, being asked upon his return to America, “Did you hear Spurgeon preach?” replied, “Yes, but better still, I heard him pray.” (Page 77)

## **9. “His name shall endure forever.”**

I remember . . . the Sunday evening when he preached from the text, “His name shall endure forever.” It was a subject in which he reveled; it was his chief delight to exalt his glorious Savior, and he seemed in that discourse to be pouring out his very soul and life in homage and adoration before his glorious King.

But I really thought he would have died there, in the face of all those people! At the end of the sermon he made a mighty effort to recover his voice, but utterance well-nigh failed, and in only broken accents could the pathetic peroration be heard—“Let my name perish, but let Christ’s name last forever! Jesus! *Jesus!* JESUS! Crown Him Lord of all! You will not hear me say anything else. These are my last words in Exeter Hall for this time. Jesus! *Jesus!* JESUS! Crown Him Lord of all!” and then he fell back, almost fainting, in the chair behind him.

(Page 79)

## **10. A Five-o’clock Wakeup Call**

The story is told that when staying in a small hotel one night, he asked that he be awakened at five in the morning to catch a train. At three a youth knocked upon his door, when Spurgeon finally answered, the lad said, “Just to let you know, sir, that you have only two more hours to sleep.” (Page 95)

## **11. No Fellowship with Slave-Holders**

The matter of slavery was then sorely dividing America and leading toward civil war, and Spurgeon’s action brought strong criticism upon him. Persons in both north and south demanded that he clearly declare his position on the matter, and in reply he wrote an article for an American publication.

I do from my inmost soul detest slavery . . . and although I commune at the Lord’s table with men of all creeds, yet with a slave-holder I have no fellowship or any sort or kind. Whenever one has called upon me, I have considered my duty to express my detestation

of his wickedness, and I would as soon think of receiving a murderer into my church . . . as a man-stealer. (Page 96)

## **12. The Doctrinal Position is Jesus Christ**

The meeting celebrating the opening of the tabernacle lasted for two weeks. The first words Spurgeon spoke in the building clearly declared his doctrinal position and his overall purpose.

I would purpose that the subject of the ministry of this house, as long as this platform shall stand, and long as the house shall be frequented by worshippers, shall be the person of Jesus Christ.

I am never ashamed to avow myself a Calvinist; I do not hesitate to take the name of Baptist; but if I am asked what is my creed, I reply “It is Jesus Christ.” . . . Jesus who is the sum and substance of the Gospel, who is in Himself all theology, the incarnation of every precious truth, the all-glorious personal embodiment of the way, the truth and the life. (Page 99)

## **13. Calvinism Defended**

Spurgeon himself replied to objections often raised against Calvinism, asserting that most of the great men of God of previous centuries had held this form of doctrine and that this was the body of truth God had historically used in sending revival. (Page 99)

## **14. How the orphanage came about**

The orphanage came about in the following manner. In addressing his prayer meeting in the summer of 1866 Spurgeon said, “Dear friends, we are a huge church, and should be doing more for the Lord in this great city. I want us, tonight, to ask Him to send us *some new work*, and if we need money to carry it on, let us pray that *the means also be sent*.” (Page 126)

## **15. Spurgeon’s Faith Produced Good Christian Works**

The orphanage was a lasting demonstration of the fact that Spurgeon’s faith was not merely theory but that it produced good works. It was the kind of project that was widely regarded with strong good will, and many were moved both to pray for it and to give toward its support.

The Almshouse and the orphanage were, of course, the fruit of Christianity, and they stood out in sharp contrast to institutions among the unbelievers. England had then its Free Thinkers’ Societies and its Agnostic Associations, but those organizations did

nothing to help the poor and the suffering. They labored to denounce Christianity, but they knew nothing of self-sacrifice for the sake of the needy. Like the Levite in the parable, they “passed on the other side.”

But evangelical Christians had long been associated with the building of homes for the aged and for orphaned children. Professor Francke had erected and maintained a great orphanage in Germany, and George Whitefield has molded his life around such a project in the American colony of Georgia. George Mueller was conducting an orphanage that was home to more than two thousand youngsters in England. Dr. Bernardo gave up his medical practice to devote himself to aiding homeless children, and other less prominent Christians were now beginning to undertake similar efforts.

To an agnostic who one day accosted him and challenged his Christian beliefs, Spurgeon pointed out the failure of the unbelievers’ organizations to take on any definite and sustained program of help to the thousands of needy around them. In contrast he pointed to the works that sprang from evangelical Christianity, and he closed the conversation by paraphrasing the triumphant cry of Elijah, vigorously asserting, as well he might, “The God who answereth by Orphanages, (Page 129-130)

## **16. Spurgeon’s tremendous weekly load of work**

No one living knows the toil and care I have to bear . . . I have to look after the orphanage, have charge of the a church with four thousand members, sometimes there are marriages and burials to be undertaken, there is a weekly sermon to be revised, *The Sword and the Trowel* to be edited, and besides all that, a weekly average of five hundred letters to be answered. *Spoken by Spurgeon.* (Page 133)

## **17. Our Father, Help Me! Rescue me!**

We can still say “Our Father,” and when it is very dark, and we are very weak, our childlike appeal can go up. “Father, help me! Father, rescue me!” (Page 139)

## **18. Spurgeon’s sickness caused a burden**

Although the construction of the college fulfilled one of the great ambitions of Spurgeon’s life, it also added to his burdens. Had he been in excellent health he could more capably have carried the load, but subject as he was to the periodic attacks of gout with all their pain and depression, he felt the weight of the institution was becoming too much for him to bear. “I feel,” he wrote on one of his days of dejection. “as though I had created a great machine and it is ever grinding, grinding, and that I may yet be its victim.” But most of his time he lived in the joy of the Lord and was an attractive example of Christian happiness. (Page 142)

## **19. Best Relief is Lord Jesus**

Let every believer accept this as the influence of experience, that for most humans maladies the best relief and antidote will be found in self-sacrificing work for the Lord Jesus. (Page 148)

## **20. The Tabernacle and Other Organizations**

The Tabernacle was a great, working church. The vast majority of the members lived in the heavily populated area of London south of the Thames, and many were so near they could walk to the services. A very large number of young men—apprentices and young businessmen—had been converted under Spurgeon’s ministry. Now they attended regularly and brought their wives and children with them. Apart from the sick and infirm, there were very few who came only on Sunday. There were activity and work that brought great numbers to the Tabernacle on many occasions during the week.

Besides the Tabernacle itself, there were a number of other organizations which, speaking in the human sense, had sprung up under Spurgeon’s ministry. The most important of those were, of course, the Pastor’s College, the Almshouse, the Orphanage, and the Colporteurs’ Association.

But there were also several less prominent institutions: the Evangelists’ Association, the County mission, the Home and Foreign Working Society, the Loan and Tract Society, the Sermon Loan Society, the Maternal Society, the Police Mission, the Coffee House Mission, the Loan Building Fund, the Christian Brothers’ Benefit Society, the Flower Mission, the Gospel Temperance Society, the Female Servants Home Society, the Blind Society, the Ladies Benevolent Society, the Tabernacle Evangelistic Society, and the Spurgeon’s Sermon Tract Society.

This is an amazing list, but it is not complete. In fact, on the occasion of Spurgeon’s Jubilee—the celebration of his twenty-five years in London—the secretary, J. W. Harrald, read the name of his institutions and they then amounted to the amazing number of sixty-six. (Page 153-154)

## **21. The Tabernacle was a place of constant activity**

The Tabernacle was a place almost constant activity. On each of the seven days of the week the doors were opened at 7:00 in the morning and did not close till 11:00 at night, and there were persons coming and going all the time. (Page 155)

## **22. Spurgeon's work load was great**

The library contained 12,000 volumes, and every month he reviewed ten or twelve new ones for his paper. Besides the numerous books that he wrote, he penned around 500 letters every week. When we remember those were written by hand, and with a pen that had to be constantly dipped in an ink bottle, we can understand something of the labor involved. Undoubtedly, had the telephone been available in that day he would have made abundant use of it. It would have spared him the labor of many of the little notes he wrote in making arrangements for his visits to other churches, for the work of his institutions, and the printing of his writings. (Page 169)

## **23. He knew what suffering was, and his words were full of sympathy**

In his audience each Sunday sat hundreds of persons who had come from a week of trial and who needed kindness and needed encouragement, and here was the man who could give it. His voice was often broken with his feeling for the sorrow. Many times he was in excruciating pain as he preached. He knew what suffering was, and his words were full of sympathy that lifted spirits and sent tired man and women forth to face their circumstanced with new strength.

(Page 186-187)

## **24. A great capacity for laughter and humor**

In spite of his depression, Spurgeon was basically a very happy man. William Williams was often in his company, and he wrote:

What a building foundation of humor Mr. Spurgeon had: I have laughed more. I verily believe, when in his company that during all of the rest of my life besides. He had the most fascinating gift of laughter . . . and had also the greatest ability for making all who heard him laugh with him. When someone blamed him for saying humorous things in his sermons, he said, "He would not blame me if he only knew how many of them I kept back." (Page 187)

## **25. Scripture interpreted by experience**

There are many passages of scripture which you will never understand thoroughly until some trying or singular experience shall interpret them to you. (Page 187)

## **26. Great Faith Brings Heaven to Your Soul**

Brethren, be great believers. Little faith brings your soul to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to your soul. (Page 187)



## **27. All his letters were hand written in ink with a dip pen**

It has been mentioned that Spurgeon wrote about five hundred letters every week. They were not dictated to a secretary but were the product of his own hand and were written with a pen that had to be dipped every few seconds into an ink bottle. Moreover, his hand was often so swollen from his arthritic condition that he could scarcely hold a pen, and then the writing which normally so well formed and readable became irregular and rough. Most of his letters were written either to comfort a saint or to plead with some sinner to receive Christ, and the pain of moving the hand could not be allowed to hinder so important a responsibility. (Page 197)

## **28. Spurgeon Would Not Compromise**

In the midst of the controversy Spurgeon wrote,

The Lord knoweth the way that I take, and His divine arbitration I leave the matter . . . I have born my protest and suffered the loss of friendship and reputation, and the infliction of pecuniary withdrawments and bitter reproach; I can do no more. My way is henceforth far removed from their ways.

But the pain it has cost me none can measure. I can never compromise the truth of Good . . . It is not a matter of personalities, but of principles. And when two sets of men are diametrically opposed upon vital points, no form of words can make them one. (Page 211)

## **29. He did not like to fight**

The experiences proved all the more difficult for him because he did not like to fight. He was utterly unflinching in his stand for what he believed to be God's truth, but his affections for his fellowmen were very large, and it was with deep sorrow that he parted from many dear friends in the Baptist Union. His battle was waged with boldness and decision, yet he labored to avoid anything that would cause the least unnecessary strife. "I am anxious to have nothing said," he wrote, "which can trouble our friends or cause discord. A few heedless persons would be glad to see strife; but I can differ and not quarrel." (Page 213)

## **30. Agnostic and Modernist Basically the Same**

The future of the new theology, or Modernism—call it what you will—is forcefully brought out by E. J. Poole-Connor in his *Evangelicalism in England*. He tells of a conversation between the editor of an agnostic magazine and a modernist minister. The editor told the minister that despite their different vocations they had much in common. "I don't believe the Bible," said the agnostic, "but neither do you. I believe the story about creation, but you don't either. "I don't believe in the deity of Christ, nor His resurrection

or ascension—I don't believe any of those things, but neither do you. I am as much a Christian as you, and you are as much an infidel as I!" (Page 214)

### **31. I am no man's enemy**

I am no man's enemy but I am the enemy of all teaching that is contrary to the Word of the Lord, and I will be in no fellowship with it. (Page 219)