

Robert Chapman: Apostle of Love by Robert L. Peterson, Lewis & Roth Publishers, Colorado Springs, CO: 1995. (80 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols.)

1. Chapman Had Few Faults.

The biographer must resist the temptation to glorify his subject and leave Chapman's faults untouched. But the faults in Chapman's life are so few and minor that an honest biography sounds almost too good. According to the statements of a multitude, Chapman was a strikingly saintly, loving, and humble man. He is an excellent role model for all who wish to follow Christ. A better example of a balanced and compassionate worker in God's church would be hard to find. [page 7]

2. Loving One Another as Christ Loved.

For seventy years he [Robert Chapman] pastored in the hamlets and villages surrounding Barnstaple. With patience and gentleness he was a servant to those he led. "My business is to love others and not to seek that others shall love me" were words remembered by one of many missionaries he had influenced.

The word *love*, which so clings to any account of Chapman's life, refers to an attitude of caring, giving of himself that marked his long life. He understood the concept of Christian love as few others have. His life illustrated Christ's new commandment that we "love one another, even as I have loved you" (John 13:34, nasb); it was the very heartbeat of true Christianity. [pages 13-14]

3. A Giant in the Knowledge of God.

Robert Chapman became one of the most respected Christians of nineteenth-century Britain. He was a lifelong friend and mentor to George Müller, the founder of the large orphanage system at Bristol. He was an advisor to J. Hudson Taylor, who used him as a referee for China Inland Mission. His acquaintance C.H. Spurgeon called him "the saintliest man I ever knew." An Anglican clergyman wrote after a stay at Chapman's rest home, "For the first time I heard Robert Chapman expound the Scriptures. Deep called to deep as he warmed to his subject. The impression made on my mind is almost all that I can remember, as I took no notes; but as his Bible closed I felt like an infant in the knowledge of God, compared with a giant like this." [page 14]

4. Chose a Life of Poverty.

A brilliant man from a wealthy family, Chapman could have chosen any number of prestigious paths to follow. Yet he chose a life of poverty. He wanted to work and live with the poor and uneducated people. By seeing Christ's love in a person who loved them, they could more readily believe the gospel message. [page 14]

5. Determined to *Live* Christ.

Robert Chapman was not a noted orator, but he became a good preacher; he was not known as a theologian, but he was a thorough student of the Bible; he was not famous as a hymn writer, but many of his hymns are still sung. What then made Chapman so beloved and effective in his time? Quite simply, his utter devotion to Christ and his determination to *live* Christ. These were the driving forces in his life. From these flowed his other attributes, his balanced outlook, and most of all the love for which he was best known. In return, people loved him and God honored him with good health, a long life, and inward peace. [page 15]

6. Heard the Word Clearly and Was Baptized.

Chapman didn't know quite what to expect when he and Whitmore approached John Street Chapel that Sunday evening in 1823. People filing into the chapel came from many walks of life and the service was conducted with dignity by a man of evident culture who expressed every confidence in what he said. Here Chapman heard for the first time a sermon that opened the eyes of his heart. Never before had justification by faith and the atoning work of Christ been so clearly stated to him. As Evans preached, Chapman's intellectual reservations melted under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. He accepted Christ as God's Son and as the One who had taken his own sins upon Himself.

... a few days after being converted Chapman witnessed to Christ's workings by being publicly baptized. [page 26]

7. Communion Remembrance Meetings.

Chapman began attending the weekly communion service at John Street Chapel on Sunday evenings. Not many members of the congregation did this; most preferred to attend the more formal monthly communion service held on a Sunday morning. Little is known of how Harington Evans conducted this evening service; we do not know who served the elements and whether the meeting was open to any believer who wished to contribute in prayer or a brief word. But if Chapman's subsequent style for these remembrance meetings is a reflection of Evans'—and it probably was—the meeting must have encouraged open participation. Chapman loved this time in which people worshiped God from their hearts. It was a time of prayer, worship, and remembrance of Christ's work at Calvary—a type of meeting different from preaching and teaching services. When Chapman established his own ministry a few years later, he always stressed the importance of this type of meeting for all believers. [page 28]

8. Preaching Needed to be Simple.

[Chapman's] first attempts consisted of carefully constructed and sometimes convoluted arguments typical of a lawyer presenting his case before a jury. After a while he realized this type of preaching was not very helpful to most listeners. They needed encouragement and a demonstration of concern as well as doctrinal instruction, and it all needed to be presented simply. [page 29]

9. The Natural Gift of Chapman's Voice.

After hearing his first sermons some of Chapman's friends offered the opinion that he would never be a good preacher. This undoubtedly caused him a lot of anguish, and his reply was telling: "There are many who preach Christ, but not so many live Christ. My great aim will be to *live* Christ." This became his goal: to love Christ, to love and care for the poor, and to carry God's message of salvation. Chapman gradually developed his own style of preaching with Evans' help and was later recognized later as a good preacher. He had one quite remarkable natural gift: his voice. It was deep and resonant, and throughout his life many people remarked on it. Through the years he learned to use it with great effect in public reading as well as preaching. [page 29]

10. Evan's Influence on Chapman.

Evan's influence on Chapman's life and attitudes toward Christian worship was profound. Chapman's confidence in the all-sufficiency of the Bible, his devotedness to a weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, his emphasis on believer's baptism (although not insisting on it as a condition of membership or fellowship), and his views on the unity of all Christians—earmarks of his subsequent ministry—were the same as Evans'. [page 31]

11. Disagreement with Particular Baptists.

A distinctive of the Particular Baptists was their insistence that only those who had been baptized as believers would be allowed to participate in communion and admitted to membership. Not only was Chapman uncomfortable with denominational boundaries; he did not share Particular Baptist views on baptism. His only alternative was to tell them his beliefs plainly, which he did. He also told the congregation that he would come only on the condition that he could teach whatever he found in the Scriptures. [page 39]

12. A Retreat Home with the Gift of Encouragement.

Chapman had chosen his course before he came [to Barnstaple]. His goals extended far beyond pastoring Ebenezer Chapel. He had already decided to make the entire town his parish. The pockets of poverty reminded him of the London slums and his heart went out to their residents. But he had yet another goal. In London he had seen and heard

about many missionaries and preachers who had become weary and discouraged from overwork, yet had no place to flee to for rest and temporary relief from their responsibilities. Chapman wanted to make his home a resting place for such missionaries and other servants of the Lord. Like Barnabas of the New Testament, Chapman had the gift of encouragement. If he could pray with these workers, talk to them, listen to them, and provide them with a retreat, perhaps they could return to their tasks with renewed enthusiasm. [page 45]

13. A Place of Rest for Christian Workers.

As Chapman prepared and furnished the house, he sent word to those he knew in London, Devon, and elsewhere that any missionary or other type of Christian worker would be welcome to stay without cost at his dwelling for as long as he or she wished. As for the funds to maintain this enterprise, he believed that the Lord would see to that. This was to be a faith ministry and Chapman believed that those who came to rest for a while could be taught a valuable lesson even in this. [page 46]

14. Called to Do Visitation and Outdoor Preaching.

Chapman did not wait for organizational backing before beginning his work of visitation and preaching out-of-doors; it was not a requirement of his pastorate at Ebenezer. He knew that God had called him to do this this kind of work and he did it for the rest of his life.

Many people today are offended by the preaching of the gospel in public places. They would prefer that such preaching be confined to a church building. But much of Jesus' ministry took place in the open, where the people were, and this is no doubt why Chapman placed such importance on it. With a few exceptions, Chapman generally had little trouble with crowds when he preached in the open. He preached with dignity and sensitivity, and most people respected him. Many years later a woman related this story, which shows how well he was accepted:

While I was living in a situation in the country, Mr. Chapman came to preach in our village. He stood all alone, and people gathering around him. My master and I stood by the door listening for a little while, and suddenly I would go and get a chair for him to stand upon. My master, observing my movements, said, "What are you going to do, Mary?"

I replied, "Going to get a chair for that dear blessed young man to stand upon," for most blessed truth was pouring out of his mouth."

He said, "Get the very best you can find, Mary." [page 48]

15. His Way of Life Was to Imitate Christ.

It may be difficult for many of us to identify with Chapman. A man of culture and high intelligence from a family of wealth and influence, he now poured himself into the hearts and souls of poor and ignorant people. Having built a successful career and developed stimulating friendships, and being accustomed to the comforts of life, he now ate food and shared the discomforts of the poverty-stricken. Even some of his colleagues in the work felt he had gone to the unnecessary, even senseless, extremes. But the imitation of Christ was Chapman's chosen way of life. [page 48]

16. The Bible Sufficient for All Matters.

Chapman's objectives at Ebenezer Chapel quickly became evident. To Chapman, the Bible sufficiently addresses all matters of life and was life's only reliable book. He taught simply and only from the Bible because he was convinced that most churchgoers really knew little about what it contained. Believing that too much emphasis had been placed on denominational tradition and not enough on genuine searching of the Scriptures, he felt that believers should have fuller appreciation of what Christ's death on the cross meant for their personal lives. [page 51]

17. Communion.

Chapman changed both the style and frequency of the communion service at Ebenezer. He felt it desirable to celebrate the Lord's Supper, as communion was usually called, each Sunday in the manner he had learned at John Street Chapel. He wanted the observance to be not a solemn ritual, but a worship service in which all members of the church could openly participate as they felt led by the Holy Spirit. Someone would suggest singing a hymn; one of the men might speak briefly on a portion of Scripture; then perhaps the congregation would sing another hymn; another man would pray; and so forth as people felt led. The bread and cup would then be taken, passed hand to hand. Chapman or another recognized teacher who might be present would then teach from the Scriptures. This would be a single service, lasting perhaps two hours.

Chapman never asserted that a definite pattern for the Lord's Supper was decreed in Scripture. He did, however, insist that the service be focused on the cross and that it should not be considered a rite that provided saving grace to the participants. [page 51-52]

18. Hymns Emphasis on Christ to God.

Chapman also changed the congregational singing at Ebenezer. To him, an ideal hymn should lead one through the cross of Christ to God Himself. [page 53]

19. Hymns Emphasizing Christ's Death.

Chapman's sister Arabella once remarked that only those who knew him could fully appreciate his hymns, for they alone knew how fully his life corresponded to them. His emphasis on the sufferings of Christ may be a reflection of his anguish as through the years he watched Christians strive with one another, divide, and generally act in un-Christian ways. But we should remember that Chapman was convinced that only by returning in spirit to Calvary and reflecting on Christ's dying love for sinners can a Christian develop and maintain proper perspective toward the world and toward Christ. Hymns are one of the more powerful ways to express such truths. [page 54]

20. Opposed to Denominational Distinctions.

Records that have been found of these churches and the earlier ones near Tawstock, Lovacott, and Hiscot often reveal an ambiguity about denominational affiliation. This is the result of Chapman's influence, who had become quite opposed to denominational distinctions. The Christians in those churches were "Christian Brethren" to him, and several called themselves that after a time. [page 56]

21. Assembly of Christians.

Chapman's group, which now referred to itself simply as an "Assembly of Christians" in order to avoid any denominational connotation. [pages 60-61]

22. Exhibited Grace.

In 1842 Evans wrote a letter from his residence in London: "R. Chapman has just left us. He slept here late night, after preaching for me at John Street. Oh, what a man of God is he! What grace does he exhibit! Courage, meekness, love, self-denial, tenderness, perseverance, love for souls—all springing out of love of Christ and God—seem beautifully blended together in beautiful symmetry." [page 64]

23. First Call to Missions.

When Robert Chapman began to sense God's call to fulltime Christian work a few years after his conversion, his thoughts turned first to missions. Italy had long been on his heart, and Spain occupied his thoughts as well. His burden for Spain, Portugal, and Italy was a result of the stranglehold that a corrupted Roman Catholicism had on the people of those countries, which practically prevented them from knowing the true God. Superstition prevailed. Some priests showed great cynicism toward all things religious and many of them discouraged people from reading the Bible. [page 65]

24. The First Missionary Trip.

In 1838 Chapman made plans to return to Spain. Pick and Handcock would go with him. This was the time during which the flock Chapman was shepherding lacked its

own building, but he felt confident enough in the leadership present in the congregation to leave for a few months. Knowing that any public preaching in Spain would be severely limited and perhaps impossible, he planned to walk throughout the country, talking to individuals about Christ and giving them Bibles. He would carry just his backpack containing some clothes and smuggled Bibles.

There is an interesting dilemma here. Chapman decided to break the law of the land and he seemed to have had no misgivings about it. When man's law violates God's law, he believed that God's law must prevail. Chapman was also quite aware of the response of Peter and other apostles in a similar situation recorded in Acts 5:27-29. [page 67]

25. Encouragement to Missionaries.

Many hearts were stirred in England because of the stories he told of his experiences, and widespread missionary interest in Spain developed. Quite a few men and women decided to carry the gospel to Spain and Chapman ministered to them in many ways. He worked alongside them when he was there, preaching and distributing literature. A constant stream of encouraging letters flowed from his pen when he was home. His prayers for the missionaries were unceasing and they knew it. When they came back to England on furlough, he insisted they rest at his home when they could. Although his life's work was centered in Barnstaple, Chapman was a pioneer missionary to Spain and a source of strength to others. [pages 69-70]

26. Be a Student of the Bible, Immerse in It, Be the Center of One's Life.

Chapman did the majority of the preaching for the Assembly until his last decade of life. His own technique for preparing a sermon was to make copious notes during his daily meditations. These would fix in his mind what he would say, but he seems not to have used any notes when preaching. He insisted that any teacher or preacher be first of all a student of the Bible; he must be consistently immersed in it and keep it at the center of his life. No one was allowed to develop ideas in isolation from the Assembly, although much latitude was allowed. When someone preached in a way that was not particularly helpful, Chapman or another elder would speak to the person. [page 75]

27. Loving to Sing.

In addition to the emphasis on Biblical preaching and weekly observance of the Lord's supper, the Christians at Bear Street Chapel also loved to sing. They had no piano and the hymnal they used provided no musical accompaniment—not uncommon at the time. Chapman and others among the Brethren wrote many of the hymns sung at Bear Street Chapel. Most of these composers simply wrote the words and fit them to existing tunes, so a melody often had to serve many different hymns. The Assembly decided to have midweek singing practice for those who loved to sing and could take the lead on Sundays. The practice was usually held at Chapman's home. [pages 76-77]

28. Bear Street Chapel Was a Complete Church.

Thus the Assembly at Bear Street Chapel began a long tradition of social work. The Assembly was a complete church. Demonstrating a New Testament spirit of love and vitality, it had good preaching from the Bible, a separate time for worship and remembrance, active involvement by members who loved each other, a large Sunday School, evangelistic concern for the people of the community, and a concern for the material needs of the poor. It was a church alive. [page 79]

29. God Arranged Things for Each Day.

Chapman frequently told people that he had many trials of faith but that trials are sent to strengthen faith. His retreat for the Lord's servants was one arena in which his faith was tested. Often his guests or their friends sent money or provisions to Chapman. Sometimes, however, provisions ran low and there was no money to buy supplies. Anxious when he first started his hospitality ministry, Chapman came to understand that God was arranging things for each day. When the funds ran out, he would pray about it and soon there would be money for food. Child-like dependence on God became a habit and he tried to convey to his friends that this was the natural attitude of a child of God. [page 81]

30. Washing One Another's Feet [Shoes/Boots].

One of Chapman's customs was to clean the shoes or boots of his visitors. After showing arriving guests to their rooms, he would instruct them to leave their footwear outside their door so that he could clean them by the next morning. Typically they objected to his doing such a menial task, but he was quite insistent. One guest recorded Chapman's answer to his objections: "It is not the custom in our day to wash one another's feet; that which most nearly corresponds to this command of the Lord is to clean each other's boots." [page 82]

31. Health-conscious.

Robert Chapman enjoyed rising early each morning to go for a long walk until advanced age made it impossible. He was very health-conscious and walked for his body's sake, not merely for pleasure. With his long legs and rapid gait he covered great distances in brief times. Occasionally he walked to Ilfracombe, twelve miles north of Barnstaple on the coast of the Bristol channel, for breakfast. When he had guests, however, he usually walked a few miles and then returned in time to clean their boots and shoes and call them for breakfast. [page 87]

32. Great Prayer Life and Bible Study.

Chapman liked to pray—to commune with God—while engaged in physical activities. Life for the Christian should be filled with prayer and for him it was. He also

established a regular schedule of Bible study on weekdays, setting aside mornings for Bible reading and for meditation on what he read. His constant reading of God's Word made it so familiar to him that he was able to apply it readily to situations that occur in everyone's life. For this reason he was valued as a counselor and was frequently asked to intervene and give advice in family situations even though he never married. [page 88]

33. Christian Unity Struggles.

A divergence of views on Christian unity had developed among the Assemblies. By then J. N. Darby, who believed the church age was at an end, was promoting the view that Christians should separate themselves from all existing churches and their organizations. He also argued that the Assemblies should be strongly interconnected. These were not Chapman's views, nor those of Groves, Müller, Craik, or many other leaders in the new movement, but Darby—a constant traveler among the Assemblies and a prolific pamphleteer—was quite successful in spreading his beliefs. At the end of 1845 a troubling event occurred. Darby, following a conflict with B.W. Newton, set up a rival assembly in Plymouth, a move that brought the question of unity into sharp focus. Chapman attempted to mediate with Darby, but to no avail. The strife and confusion in Plymouth increased and at the end of 1847 Newton left the city under a cloud. Of all the prominent figures among the Brethren, Darby was the best known and most influential in Ireland. [page 92]

34. Supported Irish Orphans during Potato Famine.

Yet another reason to visit Ireland pressed upon Chapman's mind. A severe famine was underway, a result of the failure of the potato crops through disease. About 750,000 people died of starvation or disease from 1845 to 1847. The tales of misery and death were almost unbelievable. With Chapman's encouragement, Bear Street Chapel had started sending money to support the efforts of an Anglican rector and his wife who had established an orphanage near Cork for children whose parents had died in the famine. The Christians at Bear Street Chapel did not let differences with the Church of England stop them from supporting a vital effort. [page 92]

35. God's Word Not Returning Void.

As it turned out, Chapman's visit to Mallow had great impact. Some weeks after Chapman's stay there, a penniless and unemployed youth became seriously ill and was brought to the Mallow workhouse. Told of his dangerous condition, he was asked if he would like to see a priest. He replied that he had heard a stranger preach Christ in the marketplace on a Sunday and that the Savior was all sufficient for him. Possessing this faith, he died. Chapman learned of this only much later; a person in ministry often does

not see the fruit of his or her labor, but God's Word does not return to Him void (Isaiah 55:11). [page 97]

36. Lifestyle of Poverty Covenant between God and Chapman.

Although he [Chapman] had given away his fortune and had no fixed income, Chapman did not believe that all God's children must do the same. Chapman's chosen lifestyle of poverty was a covenant between himself and God. He did not press it upon his friends. [page 99]

37. Children and Servants.

Chapman loved children and always sought them out when visiting someone's home. Whether he stayed at an inn or in a home with servants, he made a point of discussing Christ with those who helped him. [page 100]

38. God Answers Prayer in His Time.

Chapman wrote, "I have frequently been severely tried in my faith, but the Lord in his own gracious time has sent the means." What seems to be unanswered prayer may produce a great trial of faith. It seemed to Chapman that his prayers for reconciliation of his fellow pioneers had gone unanswered, but he frequently said, "Our Father knows all about it," and this sustained him. [pages 116-117]

39. A Man of the Bible.

Mr. Chapman was a man of one book—the Bible...Not only was he a reader of the Bible, he also accompanied the reading with constant prayer...He watered with prayer the ground on which he trod. When [first] travelling in Spain, not knowing a single Christian in the whole country, he was not discouraged, but trusted in God. Years afterwards, when he saw the doors opened for the preaching of the Gospel...he was not in the least surprised; he had asked for it, and had patiently waited for the answer. [page 128]

40. Lifelong Friend William Hake.

Robert Chapman had many close friends and coworkers during his long life, but one stands out among them: William Hake. The two met in 1831—before Chapman moved to Barnstaple—at the home of the Thomas Pugsleys at Tawstock. As Müller and Craik had done a year earlier, Chapman and Hake at once found a natural bond, even though Hake was seven years older than Chapman and had a large family. Reminiscing on their friendship many years later, Chapman wrote: "Our hearts were presently knit together in the fellowship of the Spirit...Each found the other a lover of the Scriptures, and bent upon obedience to the Lord without reserve."

Unlike Müller and Craik, whose personalities were quite different, Chapman and Hake were quite similar. Each had a vivid manner of expressing himself and a good sense of humor. Hake's mother-in-law remembered William's reply when she told him, after he seceded from the Church of England, that he was cracked: "Yes, Mother; the crack lets in the light." Just as Chapman was known for his wise sayings, so was Hake. One of Hake's proverbs goes, "When considering your faults and inclined to dejection concerning them, don't talk with yourself—don't keep bad company. Talk with the Lord." [pages 129-130]

41. Nonessential Issues Did Not Create Division.

"[We] daily contributed each to the other's treasure of grace and truth. In regard to the Scriptures that have been fulfilled, our unity of judgment was blessedly complete; as to what is yet to be fulfilled, we attained to an excellent measure of unity ... We always waited on God together for His mind ... If judgment did not agree, we waited on God to give us oneness of mind, and neither of us ever took a step against the judgment of the other—hence no strife, no bitterness!"

This latter statement refers to the fact that Chapman and Hake did not agree on the interpretation of some prophecies. Chapman, for example, had taken the post-tribulational position for the rapture of the church, a position at variance with most of his friends. Although nonessential issues such as this frequently cause enmity between Christian friends, neither Chapman and Hake permitted them to cause unhappiness between them. Their Christlike love overrode all disagreements. [page 134]

42. Loved Proverbs.

Chapman used proverbs in his teaching, not only because he personally enjoyed doing it, but also because he knew, as Jesus knew, that pithy sayings are easier to remember than straight prose. [page 138]

43. "Satisfied and Full."

When someone asked Chapman how he was feeling, or if at the end of a meal someone asked if he had had enough to eat, one of his favorite replies was simply "Satisfied and full." If the inquirer didn't know what was coming next, he soon learned, for Chapman would merrily add, "satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 33:23). [page 140]

44. Provoked to Love and Good Works.

John Knox McEwen, a pioneering evangelist in Nova Scotia, related the following story. Chapman and Hake had invited him to come to their home of rest. On the first day of his visit, McEwen was talking with Chapman while Hake was absent. During a pause in the conversation Chapman said, "Mr. Hake is a very provoking brother. He has been

provoking me all morning.” McEwen was quite startled to hear this remark coming from man whose kindness was well known. But his surprise did not last long, for Chapman continued, “Mr. Hake has been provoking me all morning to love and good works” (see Hebrews 10:24). [page 140]

45. Bible Passage Memorization.

In order to urge acquaintances to memorize Bible verses so they would be readily accessible for meditation or use in conversation, Chapman often quoted the first part of the verse and waited for the one addressed to complete it. This approach could be quite threatening to a person unable to give the answer, but Chapman seems always to have done this with such sensitivity that people were not offended. A guest who stayed at Chapman’s house when Chapman was ninety-eight years old heard the following exchange with another visitor: “Let patience have her_____.” The answer was given after some hesitation, so Chapman repeated it with emphasis: “...perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” Then he added a few words to help fix James 1:4 in mind. This visitor later said, “I used to think, as I sat listening, that I would much rather hearken to Mr. Robert Chapman expounding God’s Word than the most gifted Hebrew and Greek Doctor of Divinity that could be found.” [pages 140-141]

46. The Bible Has All the News Necessary.

The mature Chapman’s preferred reading was in the Bible. He did not occupy himself with much with daily newspapers. One day a newsboy asked him to buy a newspaper. Chapman asked, “Does it give yesterday’s news?”

Oh no, sir!” the boy replied.

“Has it today’s news?”

“Yes sir!”

“And has it tomorrow’s news?” Chapman held up his bible to the surprised boy and said, “This book gives me the news of yesterday, today, and tomorrow as well!”

Someone once asked Chapman if he had read a certain new book. Chapman laid his hand on his Bible and lovingly replied, “I have not finished this yet.” [page 142]

47. The Lord Always Before Him.

Chapman knew that one who is called to give himself entirely to the Lord’s work holds a special place of responsibility. This is how he put it:

The servant of the Lord Jesus must be instant in season and out of season, knowing that he is the Lord’s messenger to everyone with whom he has to do, and ever learning of the Lord; seeing that he is to be continually ministering to others,

he must be receiving fresh supplies from the God of all grace through all channels. Meditation on the Word and prayer should occupy the chief part of his time. In his public ministry and in his private conversation he should aim at hearts and consciences, seeking in every way to magnify Christ and abase the creature. In short, he should set the Lord always before him, and so walk in His steps as to represent Him to every eye. [page 145]

48. Dealt with Contrarians in a Spirit of Love.

The forward or contrary brethren are always around, but Chapman learned how to deal with them through his spirit of love. With this attitude of heart, Chapman was a true shepherd and counselor of the flock at Bear Street Chapel. People often came to him for advice in family matters even though he never married. He helped many husbands and wives regain their respect and love for one another through a proper understanding of what the Bible says about the marriage relationship. When he was with just one spouse, he would keep the attention focused on that person, not the absent one; he wanted that person to recognize his or her faults first. He stressed the importance of a right relationship with God as the proper beginning for a right relationship with another person. This, he believed, was to be accomplished through prayer and repentance. [page 146]

49. Knew the Bible Well and Talked to the Father Often.

Chapman's intimate familiarity with the Scriptures and his constant prayers, spoken in the knowledge that his Father heard him, affected all aspects of his life. [page 148]

50. Intercessory Prayer.

He [Chapman] regarded intercessory prayer as a special ministry. he said, "It is well for a child of God to pray for himself, but a more excellent thing to pray for others." His list of those to pray for was practically endless; he would pray for them by name. [pages 148-149]

51. The Training of Children.

Although he had no children of his own, Chapman was very conscious of children and as concerned for them as for anyone. "Ask not merely for their conversion," he would advise parents, "but that they may be well-pleasing children of God and servants of Christ." In one of his last sermons, which was directed toward the training of children by their parents, he said, "there are so many people who are satisfied with just knowing they are saved. Tell them not to be satisfied with this. I want them to study the Word, and grow in the knowledge of God. Tell them I want them to become intimate with the Lord Jesus Christ." [page 149]

52. Starting and Ending on Time.

Being sensitive to other people's need is not always easy, but Chapman was sensitive and thoughtful. An example of his thoughtfulness was his habit of beginning and ending meetings on time; he knew that many in attendance were servants who were expected to be back at a certain hour. [page 151]

53. A Servant-leader.

His thoughtfulness extended even to his handwriting. As he grew older, his handwriting became more difficult to read. One day William Hake had to mention that he could not read a note Chapman had given him. Chapman then determined not to impose this hardship on recipients of his correspondence. Through deliberate attention, he markedly improved his penmanship from that time on. He was the type of leader God wants: a servant-leader who puts the needs of others first. [page 151]

54. Encouraged and Strengthened Faith.

"Do you count up your mercies?" he would ask. "Do your thanksgivings keep pace with them?" A great object of Chapman's public and private ministry was to encourage and strengthen faith, and he lived in the sure faith that God would supply all his needs. [page 152]

55. Determined to *Live* Christ.

Thus the years passed for Robert Chapman—years of giving, years of peace, years of love. Some Christian leaders gain fame as orators, evangelists, organizers, or theologians. But few achieve lasting fame as apostles of love. This is what Chapman achieved because of his determination to *live* Christ. [page 155]

56. Many Friends.

Caring, loving people usually have many friends and this was the case with Robert Chapman. His spirit is caught in this remembrance of a visitor to his home: "I can hear his loving voice even now exclaiming, 'I'm delighted to see you, yes, delighted to see you. Welcome, my dear brother!'" [page 157]

57. Charles Haddon Spurgeon's Opinion.

Spurgeon called Chapman the saintliest man he ever knew, and greatly valued Chapman's book *Choice Sayings*. [page 158]

58. Denham Smith's Opinion.

Denham Smith, a well-known evangelist, also became a good friend of Chapman. Smith's work centered around Dublin after the religious revival that swept the British Isles in 1859. Smith once told Chapman that someone should write his biography.

Chapman replied, "It is being written and will be published in the morning."
Expressing his views on biographies on another occasion, Chapman said, "If you want the perfect model biography, you may find it in Genesis 5:21-24 and Hebrews 11:5."
Who was this perfect model? Enoch, who walked with God. [page 161]

59. Chapman's Marvelous Voice.

Wright especially remembered Chapman's marvelous voice and how his simple delivery and inflection of voice rendered a great sympathy for the gospel message. He recalled someone saying, "To hear Mr. Chapman only read a psalm is as good as a sermon."
Wright continued:

Doubtless the flexibility and skillful inflections of his voice had something to do with it; still more, his unusual grasp of deeper meanings of Holy Scripture. But ... I believe the true explanation is to be found in the intense reverence for and love of the God-breathed words ... One result of his listening so intently to the voice of God was that Mr. Chapman excelled in the habit of speaking to God in prayer.
[page 162]

60. Training from God's Word.

Chapman received no formal theological training, but that was not unusual in his day. Many clergymen of the Church of England received almost none. He had learned at the feet of Harington Evans and must have studied many writings of the great reformers. Although he developed much of his Scriptural understanding during interaction with his friends, Chapman's theology was Bible-derived. [page 165]

61. Objected to Philosophy of Higher Criticism.

Although Chapman is remembered for his gentle and forgiving spirit, he occasionally used biting wit to emphasize specific points, such as his objection to higher criticism. About 1860 higher criticism of the Bible was attracting adherents in Britain, and C.H. Spurgeon had run into much opposition when he preached strongly against it. (Higher criticism is the philosophy that starts from the following assumptions: the Bible is not the inspired Word of God, but a collection of stories designed to illustrate certain truths; many Biblical characters never existed: and many events described in the Bible never happened.) [page 166]

62. The Bible Being the Focus of One's Reading.

Chapman did not trust anyone else's writings until they proved their consistency with the Bible. His admonitions to people to make the Bible their focus of reading probably reflected this aspect of his personality. There is also a very human tendency, even in Christian circles, to dwell on and argue over people's writings, sometimes to the near

exclusion of reading God's Word. Doubtlessly this is the primary reason why Chapman published very little. [page 167]

63. Life in Christ Is the Common Bond for Christians.

To Chapman, a proper appreciation of the Christian life began at the cross of Christ, and contemplation of it was important to a proper walk before God. That is why he so appreciated a weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper. His concept of the unity of the church meant that believers of all persuasions, provided they did not imbibe essential doctrinal error, comprised the true church and hence free to cross denominational lines in seeking fellowship and worship. He believed that *life* in Christ, not the degree of understanding of Scripture—as important as that is—is the common bond in Christ. [pages 168-169]

64. Chapman's View of the Rapture.

Chapman, together with George Müller and a small number of other leaders among the Brethren, did not believe that the Scriptures told of a secret rapture of all believers before a period of great tribulation on earth. They believed that the church as a whole must go through the period of tribulation. William Hake did not agree with Chapman's views and once told Chapman of a conversation he had with someone who was assured that the Lord might come (initiating the rapture) at any moment. Chapman replied, "Well, brother Hake, I am ready, but it's not in the Bible. [page 171]"

65. Was Not Divisive in Doctrine.

In spite of the fact that most of his friends did not agree with his views on prophecy, Chapman saw no reason to change. He had come to a "settled judgment" on the matter, but he did not believe it was important to convert people to his interpretation of prophetic Scriptures. He realized in fact that his views were potentially divisive because the other leaders at Bear Street Chapel favored the any-moment-rapture interpretation. In 1896 ninety-three-year-old Chapman called a meeting of the elders. "I have called you together," he said, "to explain that I shall not create dissension by teaching the opposite view in the Assembly." Chapman knew the difference between the essential doctrines of the Christian faith and those not essential to a saving faith. He did not permit his ego to defend nonessential, inferential doctrine at the expense of unity. [page 172]

66. Sensitive to Other's Feelings in Disagreements.

Robert Chapman's theology had its roots in the whole Bible. He played down speculative and inferential issues and was firm on matters in which the Scriptures are clear. Some people seem to lack the ability to see things from others' perspectives. Chapman was not one of those. He was sensitive to the feelings of people who

disagreed with him and upon finding himself in the minority on nonessential doctrines, he did not cause division by insisting his views were best. [page 175]

67. His Last Years Were the Best.

During his last decade Chapman often said that those were the best days of his life. He often prayed that his last years might be best and God answered His servant's prayer. Chapman reminded his friends that "the present times are the best for all of us; since our lot is cast in them, there is abundant grace to enable us to fully please God." He determined not to become a crotchety old man who looked back at opportunities lost or what might have been. There was still abundant grace for living and pleasing God, and Chapman sought to serve the Lord as long as he was physically able. [page 177]

68. Live Long for Christ's Service.

J. Norman Case said that when he visited Chapman in June of 1900, Chapman told him that during the first years of his Christian life he had become convinced that God was going to spare him to an old age—for His service. Chapman thus resolved that when he was old, he would not be prevented from spiritual service because of bodily infirmity. This explains why Chapman was so diligent throughout his life to take early morning walks and baths. [page 179]

69. Cold Bath, Scriptures, Walk, Rest, then Callers.

He rises usually about 3 a.m., takes a cold bath, and spends the rest of his time till 6:30 in reading the scriptures and intercessory prayer, then taking a morning walk in company with Mr. Pearce (his true helper) and any of his friends who were disposed to go for about twenty minutes ... After the [noon] meal he rests until 2;30 p.m. usually, being then open to receive callers, either from outside or friends staying in the house, who seek his counsel and advice on various matters. He partakes of tea at 6 p.m., and retires generally a little after 8 p.m. [page 180]

70. Chapman's and Saunders' Tuesday and Friday Meetings.

The subject for study on Tuesday is generally left for anyone to suggest, while Friday evening is spent in reviewing the subject taken for the [Thursday] District Meeting. In this meeting Mr. Chapman is seen in best form, his faculties being especially active, and his interest so keen and so well maintained throughout. The meeting is opened by singing a hymn, then usually Mr. Chapman leads in prayer. Mr. Saunders then reads the portion of Scripture to be studied, following with a brief exposition of the whole. Then Mr. Chapman and he will together enlarge on the subject; following this, the meeting becomes somewhat conversational. [page 180-181]

71. I Have No Will but His.

On the day before he died he dictated to Mr. Pearce a statement to be read at the annual fellowship meeting at Barnstaple: “I bow to the sovereignty of God my heavenly Father; I have no will but His. We know that God is love, and if, with the love which there is no measure, there be conjoined wisdom which makes no mistakes, what becomes us, His children, but to be full of thankfulness. We have the whole heart of Christ; it is all ours.”

On June 12, 1902, Robert Cleaver Chapman, God’s servant, went to his rest. [page 182-183]

72. Being a Servant-leader.

Chapman said that the man of God is one who makes it the business of his life to please God. This definition fits Chapman well. Pleasing God and living Christ were his objectives. Striving toward those goals enabled him to become a true leader—that is to say, a servant-leader. His long life of service and concern for others testify to his Christlike character. He was indeed an apostle of love. [page 187]

73. Prayed through Everything.

His insights came from long years of devoted Bible study. He began studying in earnest when he was about sixteen and continued to study the Bible, often many hours a day, during the next eighty-four years. This was the source of his spiritual strength as well as his knowledge of God’s will. Prayer was his constant business. He prayed in all activities and spoke to God on all matters. [page 188]

74. The Lord Will Provide.

Chapman did not expect others to copy his particular lifestyle of dependence on God’s provision for his material needs, but he did want Christians to live out the faith granted them and believe that dependence on God’s help should not be unusual. He took to heart the promise, “The Lord will provide” (Genesis 22:14, nasb), and the Lord did provide for him and his work. [page 189]

75. Not Necessary to Please Everyone.

Chapman’s great love of Christ was reflected in his actions and attitudes toward people. He had a great concern for their material as well as spiritual welfare and was able to love and care for people when they were unlovable. He realized, however, that Christlike love does not mean that it is necessary to *please* everyone. He once said, “My chief desire is to please Him. If I please my brethren, I am glad. If I fail, I am not disappointed. [page 189]

76. God Gave Chapman Godly Wisdom.

God used this yielded man to shepherd His flock, to teach believers and unbelievers, to heal wounds, and to restore and refresh His workers. God gave him godly wisdom and the ability to deal wisely with men. One selection from *Choice Sayings* reads, “If love sees a fault, love will reprove in faithfulness the fault it sees. I say sees, for love is discerning.” He defines love this way: The love we speak of is meek and lowly; behaves itself wisely and edifies; bearing with the foolish and self-conceited, while it shuns their folly. [page 189]

77. Had Wise Counsel.

He was so unbiased that people had great confidence in his wise counsel, which kept many families and churches together. His wisdom and intercession in prayer was part of the spiritual strength of the Müller orphanages in Bristol and the China Inland Mission of Hudson Taylor. [page 189]

78. Home Address: University of Love.

Robert Chapman became famous for his exceptional love, grace, and truth. He became so well known in England that a letter from abroad was delivered correctly to him, addressed only to “R.C. Chapman, University of Love, England.” He became famous as an apostle of love. [page 190]

79. Love Touched All His Actions.

This servant of God was sound in doctrine and right in attitude. Love touched all his actions and this love sprang from his devotion to Christ. God has, in Robert Chapman, given us an example of a man who lived out the Christian life. [page 190]

80. Müller Sought Chapman’s Advice.

Chapman continued to assist in the work of Müller and Craik through the years. In 1845 Müller asked Chapman’s judgment on the wisdom of greatly expanding the orphanage work. Funds for maintaining the work in the central part of Bristol had never been plentiful but were always sufficient. It was by no means clear that a greatly increased work would be supported, even though Müller had felt God’s urging in this direction. Chapman encouraged him to proceed with the new plans. Müller recorded: “His visit was to me of great help in this particular, especially in stirring me up yet more to bring everything in connection with this matter before God. He also laid it on my heart to seek direction from God with reference to the plan of the building.” [page 204]