

The Gospel Focus of Charles Spurgeon by Steven J. Lawson, Reformation Trust Publishing, a division of Ligonier Ministries, Sanford, FL (2012). (60 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols.)

1. The Bible Declared Salvation.

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible was now declaring, “Salvation is of the Lord.” [page xviii]

2. Spurgeon Was Well-loved and Admired.

There was no voice in the Victorian pulpit as resonant, no preacher as beloved by the people, no orator as prodigious as Charles Haddon Spurgeon. —Hughes Oliphant Old. [page 1]

3. Spurgeon, the Church’s Greatest Preacher.

If John Calvin was the greatest theologian of the church, Jonathan Edwards the greatest philosopher, and George Whitefield the greatest evangelist, Spurgeon surely ranks as its greatest preacher. [page 1]

4. Spurgeon Was an Evangelistic Expositor.

Through the centuries, expositors such as Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, Calvin, and countless others have committed themselves to preaching in a verse-by-verse style through entire books of the Bible. But this was not Spurgeon’s approach. Though he was “an expository preacher *par excellence*,” Spurgeon drew his message each week from a different book in the Bible. This free style distinguished Spurgeon from these other great preachers, positioning him, first and foremost, as an *evangelistic* expositor. [page 2]

5. Spurgeon Was Sent for a Particular Time and Place.

Hughes Oliphant Old notes, Spurgeon was sent “at a particular time to a particular place to preach the eternal gospel for the salvation of souls and God’s everlasting glory.” Perhaps none can compare with Spurgeon as an evangelistic pastor. [page 2]

6. Family Served with and after Spurgeon.

Charles was the eldest of seventeen children. His younger brother James would later serve as his co-pastor at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. Charles’ twin sons would likewise follow him in the ministry. [page 4]

7. From Salvation, Always Doing Something for Christ.

On Sunday morning, January 6, 1850, Charles, age fifteen, was walking to church in the little town of Colchester when a snowstorm drove him into a small Primitive Methodist

Church. Only a dozen people were in attendance, and even the minister could not arrive. A reluctant lay preacher stepped forward to expound Isaiah 45:22: “Look unto Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth.” This unassuming figure exhorted the small congregation to look by faith to Jesus Christ alone. Fixing his eyes on young Spurgeon, he urged: “Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothing to do but to look and live.”

Like an arrow from heaven’s bow, the gospel hit its intended target. Spurgeon wrote: “I saw at once the way of salvation. Like as when the brazen serpent was lifted up, the people only looked and were healed, so it was with me.” Gazing by faith on Christ, he was dramatically converted. Consumed with joy, he could scarcely contain himself “even for five minutes without trying to do something for Christ.” Such boundless energy would mark his life from that point forward. On April 4, 1850, he was admitted to fellowship at St. Andrews Baptist Church, and soon after he was baptized and took his first Communion. [page 5]

8. Spurgeon’s Wife Susannah.

In the midst of this prolific growth, Charles met Susannah Thompson, a member of his congregation. A friendship soon became an attraction, and the two were married on January 8, 1856, at New Park Street Chapel, filled to overflowing. Their affection for one another never waned. Sadly, Susannah became a semi-invalid after the birth of their twin sons later in 1856. She was confined to home for long periods of time throughout her adult life, unable to hear Charles preach. Despite this affliction, she remained a source of strong encouragement to him and oversaw a thriving ministry that provided her husband’s books for pastors and missionaries. [page 7]

9. London Embraced Spurgeon.

At a time when London was the most prominent metropolis in the world, the people embraced Spurgeon as no city had ever embraced a preacher. [page 8]

10. Spurgeon Trained Young Men for Ministry in His Bible College.

Providentially, this persecution attracted more allies to his side, especially young preachers. Though Spurgeon had no university degree and had no attended seminary, he founded the Pastors’ College when he was only twenty-two years old. Focusing on training of preachers, not scholars, he admitted only those who were already filling pulpits. For the first fifteen years, Spurgeon personally underwrote the entire cost of the school through the sale of his weekly sermons. In addition, he lectured to the students every Friday afternoon on a particular aspect of gospel preaching. These messages became the text for his beloved book *Lectures to My Students*. During his lifetime, Spurgeon saw nearly one thousand men trained for the ministry in his college. [page 9]

11. Spurgeon Believed in the Doctrines of Grace.

On March 18, 1861, the Metropolitan Tabernacle officially opened. At this grand occasion, Spurgeon preached an overview of the doctrines of grace, then had five other men preach, each addressing one of the five points of Calvinism. This action revealed Spurgeon's firm belief that these God-exalting truths form the very heart of the gospel. Spurgeon believed the doctrines of sovereign grace, far from being a hindrance to evangelism, are a great harvester of souls. The truths of God's elective, redeeming love infused soul-saving power into his preaching and brought many to faith in Christ. [pages 12-13]

12. His Presence in the Pulpit Emboldened and Encouraged Others.

Throughout the week, Spurgeon preached as many as ten times around London and the surrounding areas, including as far as Scotland and Ireland. Spurgeon's presence in any pulpit emboldened local pastors and encouraged their flocks. [page 13]

13. Spurgeon Found Strength in Preaching.

People warned Spurgeon that he would break down physically and emotionally under the stress of such expensive preaching. Spurgeon replied: "If I have done so, I am glad of it. I would do it again. If I had fifty constitutions I would rejoice to break them down in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ." He added: "We find ourselves able to preach ten or twelve times a week, and we find we are stronger for it... 'Oh,' said one of the members, 'our minister will kill himself.' ... That is the kind of work that will kill no man. It is preaching to sleepy congregations that kills good ministers." Spurgeon found strength in preaching. [pages 13-14]

14. Founded Organizations for Advancing the Gospel.

At his fiftieth birthday, a list was read of the sixty-six organizations he had founded for the purpose of advancing the gospel message. [page 15]

15. Died at 57 Years of Age.

In his final years, Spurgeon suffered several physical ailments, including a kidney disease and gout. With his health declining, Spurgeon preached what would be his last sermon at the Tabernacle on June 7, 1891. In much distress, he withdrew to the city of Mentone on the French Riviera. He died there January 31, 1892. "The Prince of Preachers" was only fifty-seven years of age. [page 16]

16. Most Widely Read Preacher.

In 1863, Spurgeon's sermons had already sold more than eight million copies. At the time of his death in 1892, fifty million copies had been sold. By the end of the nineteenth century, more than a hundred million sermons had been sold in twenty-

three languages, a figure unmatched by any preacher before or since. Today, this number has reached well over three hundred million copies. A century after his death, there were more works in print by Spurgeon than any other English-speaking author. Spurgeon is history's most widely read preacher. [page 17]

17. Sermons Bound in 63 Volumes.

To this day, Spurgeon continues to exert an enormous influence across evangelical Christianity. He authored 135 books, edited twenty-eight others, and wrote numerous pamphlets, tracts, and articles. This body of work remains unprecedented, the single largest publishing project by one author in the history of Christianity. With more than thirty-eight hundred messages in print, his sermons comprise the largest bound collection of one man's writings in the English language. These sermons collected in sixty-three volumes containing some twenty-five million words. [page 18]

18. The Bible, the Very Word of God.

For Spurgeon, the Bible was just that, the very Word of God to break the heart and bring the soul before the throne of God, thus bringing them to a redemptive knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Upon this foundation Spurgeon built his entire theology and ministry. — Lewis Drummond [page 19]

19. When the Bible Spoke, God Spoke.

Throughout his ministry, Charles Spurgeon's preaching rested squarely on this impregnable rock—that the Bible is exactly what it claims to be, the inspired Word of the living God. As he stepped into the pulpit, he spoke with confidence in the infallible purity and saving power of God's Word. For Spurgeon, when the Bible speaks, God speaks. [page 19]

20. Scripture Alone.

Though he agreed, on the whole, with Calvin and other Reform theologians, Spurgeon's beliefs were founded exclusively on what he saw plainly taught in Scripture. He was, as it were, the embodiment of *sola Scriptura*—Scripture alone. [page 20]

21. The Bible Is the Very Word of God.

This fundamental commitment to the Bible was the cornerstone on which Spurgeon built his ministry. Those who stand in pulpits, he contended, must believe that the Bible is not the word of men who recorded it. Rather, they must affirm that it is the written Word of the living God. Iain Murray explains: "They have a message to announce, that is not their own and they are sure of it. To entertain doubt over whether Scripture is all given by inspiration of God is instantly to lose the true authority that is required of a preacher and evangelist." Murray then emphatically adds, "No man will

preach the gospel aright who does not wholly believe it.” In just this manner, Spurgeon was convinced that the Bible is divine revelation, the very Word of God. [page 21]

22. The Bible Contains Both Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility.

As Spurgeon opened the Bible, he beheld the clear teaching of the sovereignty of God in man’s salvation. He believed he had no choice but to preach these truths because these are the teachings of God Himself. He simply would not be moved from these doctrines of grace. However, Spurgeon also found that God’s Word teaches the necessity of gospel preaching and evangelism, and that it the responsibility of every person to believe on Jesus Christ. Spurgeon held these twin truths—divine sovereignty and human responsibility—because *both* are unmistakably taught in the Bible. [page 22]

23. The Bible Is Divinely Inspired.

Spurgeon understood that if any preacher gives up the high ground of the divine inspiration of Scripture, he has no gospel to preach. By such a departure, he removes himself from the true source of power in evangelism. [page 23]

24. When the Bible Spoke, God Spoke.

Spurgeon was thoroughly convinced that in every page of Scripture is found the absolute truth of God. When the Bible speaks, Spurgeon believed, God speaks. [page 25]

25. The Bible Is Untainted by Any Error.

This is the Word of God; come, search, ye critics, and find a flaw; examine it, from its Genesis to its Revelation, and find an error. This is a vein of pure gold, unalloyed by quartz, or any earthly substance. This is a star without a speck; a sun without a blot; a light without darkness; a moon without its paleness; a glory without a dimness. O Bible! It cannot be said of any other book, that it is perfect and pure; but of thee we can declare all wisdom is gathered up in thee, without a particle of folly. This is the judge that ends the strife, where wit and reason fail. This is the Book untainted by any error; but is pure, unalloyed, perfect truth. [page 26]

26. The Bible Is a Pure Book.

A fallible book, Spurgeon reasoned, is not worth preaching. Only a pure book, believed, contains the perfect message of salvation. [page 27]

27. Spurgeon Felt He Was Simply Used of God.

Because Spurgeon believed that the Bible is divinely inspired and inerrant, he saw himself merely as a channel through which a message of God must flow. [page 28]

28. Surrender to the Infallible Mind of God.

He believed deeply that all the religious speculations of men and their vain imaginations must submit to the doctrines taught in the Bible. In other words, the fallible minds of men must surrender to the infallible mind of God. [page 29]

29. The Bible Is a Book of Authority.

This Bible is a Book of authority; it is an authorized Book, for God has written it. Oh! Tremble, lest any of you despise it; mark its authority, for it is the Word of God. [page 30]

30. Trust One's Soul with Jesus.

Hear Spurgeon extend his gospel invitation: "Have you any hope of heaven which will not stand the test of 'Thus saith the Lord?' What are you resting upon? ... Are you building upon your works? Are you depending upon your own feelings? Do you rely upon sacraments? Are you placing your trust upon the word of man?... Build upon the Word of my Lord and Master; trust your soul with Jesus." [pages 30-31]

31. Let God's Word Dwell on You Richly.

He declared to his students: "Be masters of your Bibles, brethren. Whatever other works you have not searched, be at home with the writings of the prophets and apostles. 'Let the Word of God dwell in you richly.'" As Spurgeon saw it, a minister's depth in the Word would ultimately determine the breadth of his ministry. [page 31]

32. The Very Essence of the Bible Flows from You.

He wrote, "To understand the Bible should be our ambition; we should be familiar with it, as familiar as the housewife with her needle, the merchant with his ledger, the mariner with his ship." He added, "It is blessed to eat into the very soul of the Bible until, at last, your blood is *Bibline* and the very essence of the Bible flows from you." Spurgeon followed his own advice and pursued an extensive understanding of the Scriptures. [page 31]

33. Ministry Demands Brain Labor.

Of course, a strong grasp of Scripture did not come automatically. Spurgeon said: "The ministry demands brain labor. The preacher must throw his thought into his teaching, and read and study to keep his mind in good trim." [page 32]

34. Depth in the Word of God Necessary.

Again, he warned: "He who has ceased to learn has ceased to teach. He who longer sows in the study will no more reap in the pulpit." Even for a genius like Spurgeon,

Bible study was hard work. But depth in the Word is absolutely necessary if there is to be depth of conviction and soundness of conversions. [page 32]

35. Had a Large Library and Had Instant Recall.

Despite lacking any formal education, Spurgeon was remarkably well read and exceedingly learned in “in a Puritan sort of way.” 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. Lewis A. Drummond states, “He could classify all he read and possessed the unusual gift of instant recall.” This retention enabled him to be a capable thinker and adept scholar. [page 32]

36. Guarding Sermon Prep Time.

Spurgeon guarded his Saturday evening sermon preparation time, allowing no intrusion. Once, an uninvited guest came to his home to see him while he was preparing for Sunday. When the maid answered the door, this person sent her to Spurgeon, requesting an audience with him. Spurgeon directed her to say that it was his rule to see no one at that time. The visitor replied, “Tell Mr. Spurgeon that a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ desires to see him immediately.” The frightened maid brought the message, but Spurgeon answered, “Tell him I am busy with his Master, and cannot see servants now.” [page 33-34]

37. Preached Divine Truth.

Though the gospel itself was being subverted, threatening the genuineness of conversions, Spurgeon held fast to the simple preaching of divine truth and witnessed countless new births. [page 35]

38. The Gospel through the Doctrines of Grace.

For Spurgeon, the gospel never shines brighter than through the lens of the doctrines of grace. [page 39]

39. Sovereignty and Evangelism.

When people asked him how he reconciled preaching election with extending the gospel, he asserted, “There’s no need to reconcile them, for they have never quarreled with one another.” He was right. Divine sovereignty and gospel evangelism go hand in hand, the former preparing the way for and ensuring the success of the latter. [page 46]

40. Limited Atonement in Both Arminians and Calvinists.

Though some call this doctrine “limited atonement,” Spurgeon insisted that both Arminians and Calvinists limit the atonement. Those who teach that Christ’s death made salvation possible limit its *effect*, while those who believe in a definite atonement limit its *extent*. Put another way, the former see an unlimited extent but a limited effect. The latter see a limited extent but an unlimited effect. [page 50]

41. People Were Saved.

Simply put, he held “that Christ came into the world not to put men into a *salvable* state, but into a *saved* state.” Spurgeon believed that the atonement was accomplished by an utterly triumphant death. [page 51]

42. Irresistible Grace.

Spurgeon affirmed the doctrine of irresistible grace. This is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, who convicts, calls, draws, and regenerates elect sinners. This work unflinchingly results in the faith of all those chosen. All whom the Father chose in eternity past and all those for whom the Son died are those whom the Spirit brings to faith in Jesus Christ. None whom the Father elected and for whom Christ died fail to believe. The Holy Spirit grants repentance and faith to these elect sinners and ensures their conversion. [page 52]

43. Unsaved Hearers to Believe There and Then.

Almost every sermon contained, especially toward its close, an entreaty of this nature—warning, begging, pleading, urging the sinner to come to Christ ...He did not ask people to walk to the front of the auditorium, raise a hand, sign a card, or perform any outward action. But throughout each sermon and especially as he drew it to its close, he pleaded with unsaved hearers to believe on Christ, and he expected them to do so then and there. – Arnold Dallimore [page 61]

44. Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility Are Friends.

Spurgeon was once asked how he could reconcile the apparent contradiction between these two truths. He replied: “I never have to reconcile friends. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility have never had a falling out with each other. I do not need to reconcile what God has joined together.” [page 62]

45. Spurgeon Was an Evangelist First.

Geoff Thomas writes, “Holding consistently to the tension of divine sovereignty and human responsibility meant that Spurgeon, wholeheartedly and without restriction of any kind, exhorted unconverted persons to repent and believe and to come to Christ as

the Son of God and receive Him immediately as Lord and Savior.” Spurgeon was, first and foremost, an evangelist. [pages 63-64]

46. Preach the Truth Clearly.

Spurgeon maintained that the way of salvation through Jesus Christ must be daringly proclaimed to all men, and this requires a strong presentation of gospel truth in a straightforward manner. [page 65]

47. An Earnest Invitation to All Sinners.

In yet another sermon, “An Earnest Invitation,” on Psalm 2:12, preached on July 3, 1859, Spurgeon powerfully employed this same word:

Sinner, you are bidden to trust in Christ this morning. Come, this is your *only* hope ... this is an open salvation. Every soul in the world that feels its need of a Savior, and that longs to be saved, may come to Christ ... come, come away; come, come away! Come now; trust now in Christ, and thou shalt now find that blessed are all they that trust in him. The door of mercy does not stand on the jar, it is wide open. The gates of heaven are not merely hanging on the latch, but they are wide open both night and day. Come. [pages 66-67]

48. The Gates of Paradise Wide Open.

“The law repels; the gospel attracts. The law shows the distance between God and man; the gospel bridges that distance, and brings the sinner across that great fixed gulf which Moses could never bridge.” Though he was an admirer of the Puritans, Spurgeon noted that many of them so emphasized the law in order to bring about conviction of sin that they neglected gospel invitations. By contrast, Spurgeon continually stressed that the gates of paradise are wide open. All sinners are invited to enter. [page 68]

49. Explained the Unreasonableness of Unbelief.

Spurgeon presented the gospel with compelling reasons for sinners to believe on Christ. He believed that he should convince sinners to commit their lives to Christ by use of rational arguments. He felt such arguments were necessary to remove excuses of unbelievers. Therefore, he often explained the unreasonableness of unbelief. [page 71]

50. The Gospel Presented Commands and Warnings to the Obstinate.

It is clear that Spurgeon believed the gospel must not be calmly presented as a mere set of facts. To the contrary, it must come as a bold proclamation with open invitations, tender appeals, sound reasonings and compelling persuasions. Such presentations should include even authoritative command and severe warnings to obstinate hearts and minds. Spurgeon did not shrink from this task but gloried in it. [page 83]

51. Faithful to the Gospel throughout His Ministry.

Spurgeon believed strongly in this evangelistic thrust. He saw it as his chief purpose in preaching: “If I was saved by a simple gospel, then I am bound to preach that same simple gospel till I die, so that others may be saved by it. When I ceased to preach salvation by faith in Jesus, put me into a lunatic asylum, for you may be sure that my mind is gone.” He remained faithful to this mission throughout his ministry. [page 85]

52. Christ Was the Topic of Spurgeon’s Ministry.

He loved to proclaim “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Christ—He was the glorious, all-absorbing topic of Spurgeon’s ministry and that Name turned his pulpit labor into “a bath in the waters of Paradise.” – Iain H. Murray [page 87]

53. Proclaiming the Excellencies of the Living Word.

With Spurgeon’s gospel ministry resting squarely on the written Word, it was only right that he proclaimed the excellencies of the Living Word. [page 88]

54. Heart of the Gospel Is Christ.

He believed that the heart of the gospel is Christ. Spurgeon asserted: “The less you make of Christ, the less gospel you have to trust in ... The more gospel we would preach, the more of Christ we must proclaim.” [page 89]

55. Proclaimed the Saving Death of Christ.

Spurgeon strongly proclaimed the saving death of Christ. Putting his finger on the vital nerve of the gospel message, he affirmed, “The heart of the gospel is redemption, and the essence of redemption is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. In other words, Jesus Christ died a vicarious death in the place of sinners, the just for the unjust. Spurgeon believed that every doctrine must be brought into alignment with this truth. [page 93]

56. Christ Made the Perfect Atonement for Sin.

“Atonement for sin is truly and in very deed to be found in the Son of God. In Him alone is there remission, for in His blood alone is there efficacy to satisfy the law.” In the gospel, Spurgeon believed, the center of gravity is the substitutionary death of Christ.

By this work, Spurgeon contended, the Son of God made the perfect atonement for sin: “There is nothing for God to do. ‘It is finished.’ There is nothing for you to do. ‘It is finished.’ Christ need not bleed. ‘It is finished.’ You need not weep. ‘It is finished.’ God the Holy Spirit need not delay because of your unworthiness, nor need you delay because of your helplessness. ‘It is finished.’” [pages 94-95]

57. Explanation of Ministry Found in the Holy Spirit.

The true explanation of Spurgeon's ministry, then, is to be found in the person and power of the Holy Spirit. – Iain H. Murray [page 105]

58. Working Through and With the Holy Spirit.

Spurgeon believed that the Holy Spirit must instruct his mind, giving him a clear understanding of the gospel. This enlightenment began when he opened the Bible in the solitude of his study. Spurgeon remarked: "It is our study-work, in that blessed labour when we are alone with the Book before us, that we need the help of the Holy Spirit...He takes the things of Christ, and shows them unto us ...By His light all things are rightly seen. He understood that it was only as the Holy Spirit gave divine enlightenment that he could rightly understand the gospel. [page 108]

59. Studied the Bible Diligently.

Spurgeon believed that the Spirit's illuminating work did not negate his responsibility to study the Bible diligently. Neither did it take away his need to read the works of gifted theologians and biblical teachers. Instead, the Spirit's teaching ministry actually required that he give maximum effort in his studies. He said, "I am bound to give myself unto reading and not tempt the Spirit by unthought-of effusions." A failure to study, he believed, would leave him superficial in his handling of Scripture.

Spurgeon possessed more than ten thousand books. With his brilliant intellect, he read the vast majority of these volumes, and he never preached without diligently consulting them. For this reason, many of his gospel sermons read like veritable systematic theologies. [pages 108-109]

60. Pleading the Unconverted to be Saved.

Spurgeon was enflamed with a passion to implore the unregenerate to look to Christ. He took seriously the biblical mandate to proclaim the gospel and compel lost sheep to come into the fold. Not only did he preach the gospel, he actually pleaded with the unconverted to be saved. He was not a stuffy, elite Calvinist, as if speaking from an ivory tower. Rather, he was consumed with power from on high that energized him to win the lost with many Spirit-enabled persuasions and pressing appeals for sinners to believe the gospel. [page 126]