

Reformation
& Revival



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A dead creed is of no use; we must have our creed baptized with the Holy Ghost.

C. H. Spurgeon

I do not believe in a repetition of Pentecost, but I do believe in a perpetuation of Pentecost—and there is a vast difference between the two.

A. W. Tozer

The gospel is light but only the Spirit can give sight.

A. W. Tozer

The first work of the Spirit is to make a man look upon sin as an enemy, to hate it as an enemy, to loathe it as an enemy and to arm against it as an enemy.

Thomas Brooks

Spurgeon and Revival

Robert Lescelius

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the “Prince of Preachers,” shines as a bright luminary in the sky of church history. Certainly the word *revival* must come to mind as we consider such a life and labor owned by God with such phenomenal success. Without doubt his success was the fruit of revival, and his doctrine, passion and practice were inseparable from the biblical truths of spiritual renewal.

Here are the simple facts of history in a nutshell. A young nineteen-year-old goes as pastor to a 200-year-old church in the River Flood district—“the gloomy, narrow streets of a dingy repellent section of London.”¹ The New Park Street Church had a membership of 232, but a congregation of eighty heard the young C. H. Spurgeon for the first time on Sunday morning, December 18, 1853. The church extended him a call, which he accepted on April 28, 1854, and within ten months the congregation, growing rapidly, moved to Exeter Hall, while the church building was expanded to accommodate the crowds.

Upon returning to the church location in May the renovation was already found inadequate, and the church was finally forced in June 1856 to return to Exeter Hall for Sunday evening services. Soon Exeter Hall was too small, and a momentous move was made to the Surrey Gardens Music Hall, where for three years Spurgeon preached to 9,000-10,000 people every Sunday. The young pastor’s fame spread, and he had invitations to preach in open-air meetings to thousands throughout England, Scotland and Wales. On October 7, 1857, he preached to a record crowd of 23,654 in the famous Crystal Palace.

In March 1861 the congregation moved into their new facility, the Metropolitan Tabernacle, where for the next thirty-one years Spurgeon preached to an average of 5,000-6,000 people every Sunday, morning and evening.

In the decade from 1854 to 1864, the church recorded 3,569 baptisms. During the entirety of his pastorate, from

April 29, 1854, to Spurgeon's death, January 31, 1892, a total of 14,460 were added to the church.

Besides this should be mentioned the Pastor's College and the orphanage, as well as Spurgeon's printed sermons and writings that circled the globe and bless the church to this day. How can all of this (and much more) be explained? Talent? To a certain extent we must say "Yes," for C. H. Spurgeon was truly a man of extraordinary gifts and abilities. We must admit his brilliance and eloquence. Yet Spurgeon himself acknowledged it to be all of God. He testified:

If we had the Spirit sealing our ministry with power it would signify very little about talent. Men might be poor and uneducated, their words might be broken and ungrammatical; but if the might of the Spirit attended them, the humblest evangelist would be more successful than the most learned divine, or the most eloquent of preachers.

It is extraordinary power from God, not talent, that wins the day. It is extraordinary spiritual unction, not extraordinary mental power, that we need. Mental power may fill a chapel, but spiritual power fills the church with soul anguish. Mental power may gather a large congregation, but only spiritual power will save souls.²

The quickening, renewing power of the Spirit of God is the real answer to the fruitful labors of C. H. Spurgeon. We will, therefore, consider the subject of "Spurgeon and Revival," looking at it from three basic standpoints: Spurgeon and personal revival, local church revival, and the Evangelical Awakening.

We regard personal revival and local church revival as really normative New Testament Christianity. They are works of spiritual power but are to be sought, expected and experienced by every believer and every New Testament church. The outworking of God into the community and the

measure of fruit reaped in gospel labor is a sovereign work of God. Certainly this is also true in the movings of God from church to church and across lands and seas in great "weather patterns" of the Wind of God that have been called Evangelical Awakenings.

Spurgeon and Personal Revival

While we must admit the gracious bestowal of talents and gifts upon Spurgeon and the sovereign movings of God in his ministry, we must also acknowledge the truth of human responsibility and recognize the fact of Spurgeon's devotion to Christ, consecration to God's cause, yieldedness to His Spirit and resolve and zeal to obey His Lord to the end. There appears to be no singular extraordinary experience of the Holy Spirit in his life, comparable to that of a D. L. Moody or Duncan Campbell. Spurgeon's life seems to have been marked by perpetual personal revival.

In his teenage years he was thwarted in an opportunity for a formal education by an ignorant maidservant who placed the young Spurgeon and Dr. Joseph Angus of Stepney College in separate rooms, resulting in the missing of their appointment. To the disappointed Spurgeon the Lord brought to mind the words of Jeremiah: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not" (45:5). His later comment on this experience reflected his obedience to this word from God:

From that first day until now, I have acted on no other principle but that of perfect consecration to the work whereunto I am called. I surrendered myself to the Saviour, I gave him my body, my soul, my spirit ... for eternity! I gave him my talents, my powers, my eyes, my ears ... my whole manhood! So far from regretting what I then did, I would fain renew my vows and make them over again!³

He sought to maintain this intimate fellowship with his

Savior throughout his life on a continual basis. Note this confession: "If Christ commands me to hold up my little finger, and I do not obey Him, it looks like coolness in my love to Him."⁴ And again: "I would wail out my penitent confession of times in which I failed to observe unvarying allegiance to my Lord. I pray God, if I have a drop of blood in my body which is not His, let it bleed away."⁵

Spurgeon believed in personal revival. In a message on Psalm 119:37 he made these comments:

The prayer before us, "Quicken Thou me in Thy way," *deals with the believer's frequent need*. I am sure it is a frequent want of believers, because we find David in this Psalm so often confessing his need thereof; and where the best of God's servants feel their need of a thing, we may be quite sure that the rest of the family are under the same necessity.

But, beloved, there is not reason to refer to others of God's servants for proof of this. You yourselves know, in your own souls, that your spirit is most apt to become sluggish and that you have need frequently to put up this prayer, "Quicken Thou me." If there is a prayer in the book which well becomes my lips, it is just this, "Lord, quicken Thou me in Thy way."⁶

The verb translated "quicken" throughout Psalm 119 is the same one translated "revive" in Psalm 85:6; 138:7 and Habakkuk 3:2. The Hebrew verb *chayah*, "to live," is found in a mood which is intensive active with a causative force (the Piel). It is used in this way sixteen times in the Psalms (plus Hab. 3:2), meaning "to quicken, revive, renew." It refers to something already alive but needing a revitalization.

The sermon points out that afflictions, the world, sin, along with the zeal of other saints and our obligation to the Savior, make it necessary for us to call continually upon God for personal renewal. This the Lord does through His written Word, through affliction and the means of grace: inward

graces (faith, hope, love) and the ministry of the church.⁷

Spurgeon is an example of the need for, the way to and the possibility of personal revival.

Spurgeon and Local Church Revival

It is evident from our introductory remarks that Spurgeon experienced a perpetual spirit of revival in New Park Street Baptist Church. The phenomenal growth must be attributed to the gracious workings of a sovereign God, yet we must realize that Spurgeon constantly prayed, preached and labored for a church that experienced New Testament standards of holiness, power and evangelism.

1. Spurgeon preached for revival in his local church.

Throughout his printed sermons we can find calls to his people to seek God for revival blessings. Hear this exhortation in a sermon from Psalm 80:19: "Restore us, O Lord God Almighty; make Your face shine upon us, that we may be saved." The message titled, "One Antidote for Many Ills," begins:

This morning's sermon, then, will be especially addressed to my own church, on the absolute necessity of true religion in our midst, and of revival from all apathy and indifference. We may ask God for multitudes of other things, but amongst them all, let this be our chief prayer: "Lord, revive us; Lord, revive us!" We have uttered it in song; let me stir up your pure minds, by way of remembrance, to utter it in your secret prayers, and make it the daily aspirations of your souls. I feel, beloved, that notwithstanding all opposition, God will help us to be "more than conquerors, through him that loved us," if we are true to ourselves, and true to Him. But though all things should go smoothly, and the sun should always shine upon our heads, we should have no prosperity if our own godliness failed; if we only maintained the form of religion, instead of having the very power of the Holy Spirit manifested in our midst.⁸

The kind of revival Spurgeon called for was not mere religious excitement and superficial activism, but true biblical renewal. In the same sermon he further states:

The benefits of revival to any church in the world will be a lasting blessing. I do not mean that false and spurious kind of revival which was so common a few years ago. I do not mean all that excitement attendant upon religion, which has brought men into a kind of spasmodic godliness and translated them from sensible beings, into such that could only rave about a religion they did not understand. I do not think that is a real and true revival. God's revivals, whilst they are attended with a great heat and warmth of piety, yet have with them knowledge as well as life, understanding as well as power. The revivals that we may have considered to have been genuine, were such as those wrought by the instrumentality of such men as President Edwards in America, and Whitefield in this country, who preached a free-grace gospel in all its fullness. Such revivals I consider to be genuine, and such revivals, I repeat again, would be a benefit to any church under heaven. There is no church, however good it is, which might not be better; and there are many churches sunken so low that they have abundant need, if they would prevent spiritual death, to cry aloud, "Lord, revive us."⁹

In the light of this conviction Spurgeon preached doctrines that he firmly believed promoted true revival. He preached without apology the historic truths of Calvinism in the spirit of the Puritans. He saw a vital connection between these doctrines and revival. In the introduction to a volume of Spurgeon's sermons the publisher wrote:

In the history of the Church, with but few exceptions, you could not find a revival at all that was not produced by the orthodox faith. What was that great work which was done by Augustine, when the Church suddenly woke up from the pestiferous and deadly sleep into which Pelagian doctrine had cast it? What was the Reformation itself but the awaking

up of men's minds to those old truths? However far modern Lutherans may have turned aside from their ancient doctrines . . . yet, at any rate, Luther and Calvin had no dispute about Predestination. Their views were identical, and Luther's *Bondage of the Will* is as strong a book upon the free grace of God as Calvin himself could have written.... Need I mention to you better names than Huss, Jerome of Prague, Ferel, John Knox, Wickliffe, Wishart and Bradford? Need I do more than say that these held the same views, and that in their day anything like an Arminian revival was utterly unheard of and undreamed of? And then, to come to more modern times, there is the great exception, that wondrous revival under Mr. Wesley, in which the Wesleyan Methodists had so large a share; but permit me to say, that the strength of the doctrine of Wesleyan Methodism lay in its Calvinism. The great body of the Methodists disclaimed Pelagianism, in whole and in part. They contended for man's entire depravity, the necessity for the direct agency of the Holy Spirit, and that the first step in the change proceeds not from the sinner, but from God. They denied at that time that they were Pelagians. Does not the Methodist hold as firmly as ever we do, that man is saved by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost only? And are not many of Wesley's sermons full of that great truth, that the Holy Ghost is necessary to regeneration? ... And then, let me say, if you turn to the continent of America, how gross the falsehood that Calvinistic doctrine is unfavorable to revivals. Look at that wondrous shaking under Jonathan Edwards, and others which we might quote. Or turn to Scotland—what shall we say of M'Cheyne? What shall we say of those renowned Calvinists, Dr. Chalmers, Wardlaw, and before them Livingstone, Haldane, Erskine and the like? What shall we say of the men of their school, but that, while they held and preached unflinchingly the great truths which we would propound today, yet God owned their word, and multitudes were saved. And if it were not perhaps too much like boasting of one's own work under God, I might say, personally I have never found the preaching of these doctrines lull this church to sleep, but ever while they have loved to maintain these truths, they have agonized for the souls of men, and the 1,600 or more whom I have myself baptized, upon profession

of their faith are living testimonies that these old truths in modern times have not lost their power to promote a revival of religion.¹⁰

Spurgeon believed the truths of free grace are blessed of God, being His truth, and that in revival times free grace would be preached. He was not speaking of mere intellectual argumentation over the “Five Points” or dead recitation of theological dogmas, but the truths of grace proclaimed under the unction of the Holy Spirit. Hear again a word from his sermon, this one titled “The Pentecostal Wind and Fire” (Acts 2:2-4):

The Holy Spirit being thus at work, what was *the most prominent subject* which these full men began to preach about with words of fire? Suppose that the Holy Spirit should work mightily in the church, what would our ministers preach about? We should have a revival, should we not, of the old discussion about predestination and free agency? I do not think so: these are happily ended, for they tended towards bitterness, and for the most part the disputants were not equal to their task. We should hear a great deal about premillennialism and the postmillennial advent, should we not? I do not think so. I never saw much of the Spirit of God in discussions or dreaming upon times and seasons which are not clearly revealed. Should we not hear learned essays upon advanced theology? No, sir; when the devil inspires the church we have modern theology; but when the Spirit of God is among us that rubbish is shot out with loathing. What did these men preach about? Their hearers said: “We do hear them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.”

Oh, that this might be to my dying day my sole and only topic—“The wonderful works of God.”¹¹

He then proceeds to show that the wonderful works of God proclaimed at Pentecost include redemption, regeneration and remission of sins. “These are the doctrines

which the Holy Ghost will revive in the midst of the land when He worketh mightily—redemption, regeneration, remission.”¹²

In his longings for revival in the local church Spurgeon was ever motivated by love for God and desire to glorify Him and a passion for the souls of men. He preached: “Yet, above all, we want a revival, if we would promote the glory of God. The proper object of a Christian’s life is God’s glory. The Church was made on purpose to glorify God; but it is only a revived Church that brings glory to His name.”¹³

Spurgeon’s sermons are full of expressions of intense desire to see sinners saved. This is why he sought revival power in his ministry. “Among the blessings of the revival of Christians we commence, by noting the salvation of sinners.”¹⁴ He was utterly dependent upon the working of the Holy Spirit to bless his preaching with souls. He expressed this realization many times. Here is one:

The preaching that kills may be, and often is, orthodox—dogmatically, inviolably orthodox. In the Christian system, unction is the anointing of the Holy Ghost, separating a parson unto God’s work, and preparing him for it.

This unction is the one divine enablement by which the preacher accomplishes the peculiar and saving ends of preaching. Without this unction there are no true spiritual results accomplished.

The results and forces in preaching do not rise above the results of unsanctified speech. Without the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the Gospel has no more power to propagate itself than any other system of truth. Unction in the preacher puts God in the Gospel.¹⁵

Spurgeon preached for revival in his church and preached in revival, anointed as one who lived in an experience of personal revival regularly.

2. Spurgeon prayed for revival in his local church.

Believing as he did in the sovereignty of God, the necessity of the power of the Holy Spirit for the believer and the church to have spiritual life and vitality, and for sinners to be regenerated, Spurgeon believed in prayer—effectual, fervent prayer. He realized how utterly dependent the church is upon God for its every need. We have numerous calls to prayer for revival in his sermons. He pleaded with his people to turn to God and beseech Him to shine His face upon them in revival blessing (Ps. 80:19). He saw the signs of coming revival blessing in the spontaneous burden of prayer that manifested itself in two or three members who would be gathered unto Christ in prayer (Matt. 18:18-20).

Usually when God intends greatly to bless a church, it will begin in this way—two or three persons in it are distressed at the low state of affairs, and become troubled even to anguish. Perhaps they do not speak to one another, or know of their common grief, but they begin to pray with flaming desire and untiring importunity. The passion to see the church revived rules them. They think of it when they go to rest, they dream of it on their bed, they muse on it in the streets. This one thing eats them up. They suffer great heaviness and continual sorrow in heart for perishing sinners; they travail in birth for souls. I have happened to become the centre of certain brethren in this church; one of them said to me the other day, “O sir, I pray day and night for God to prosper our church: I long to see greater things, God is blessing us, but we want much more.” I saw the deep earnestness of the man’s soul, and I thanked him and thanked God heartily, thinking it to be a sure sign of coming blessing. Sometime after, another friend, who probably now hears me speak, but who did not know anything about the other, felt the same yearning, and must needs let me know it; he too is anxious; longing, begging, crying, for a revival; and thus from three or four quarters I have had the same message, and I feel hopeful because of these tokens for good. When the sun rises the mountain tops first catch the light, and those who

constantly live near to God will be the first to feel the influence of the coming refreshing. The Lord give me a dozen importunate pleaders and lovers of souls, and by his grace we will shake all London from end to end yet.... Oh, may God give us this first sign of the travail in the earnest ones and twos.¹⁶

Spurgeon himself exercised such a prayer ministry and led his people in revival praying, as for example:

And now, Oh Lord God of Hosts, hear our ardent appeal to Thy throne. “Turn us again.” Lighten our path with the guidance of Thine eye: cheer our hearts with the smiles of Thy face. O God of armies, let every regiment and rank of Thy militant Church be of perfect heart, undivided in Thy service. Let great grace rest upon all Thy children. Let great fear come upon all the people. Let many reluctant hearts be turned to the Lord. Let there now be times of refreshing from Thy presence. To Thine own name shall be all the glory. “O Thou that are more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey!”¹⁷

Spurgeon preached and prayed for revival, and God heard his prayers and the prayers of his church and honored his efforts with spiritual power and fruit. He would settle for nothing less, believing that anything less would be vanity. Ponder the solemnity of these words:

Death and condemnation to a church that is not yearning after the Spirit, and crying and groaning until the Spirit has wrought mightily in their midst. He is here; He has never gone back since He descended at Pentecost. He is often grieved and vexed, for He is peculiarly jealous and sensitive, and the one sin never forgiven has to do with His beloved Person; therefore let us be very tender towards Him, walk humbly before Him, wait on Him very earnestly, and resolve that there should be nothing knowingly continued which would prevent His working in our midst.

Brethren, if we do not have the Spirit of God, it were better to shut the churches, to nail up the doors, to put a blank cross on them and say: "God have mercy on us!" If you ministers have not the Spirit of God, you had better not preach, and you people had better stay at home. I think I speak not too strongly when I say that a church in the land without the Spirit of God is rather a curse than a blessing. This is a solemn word: the Holy Spirit—or nothing and worse than nothing.¹⁸

May Spurgeon's zeal for revival in the local church kindle a like burden in the heart of every true pastor and member of the body of Christ!

Spurgeon's heart for revival was broader than his local congregation, however. He longed to see the reviving of God's work throughout the world.

Spurgeon and Evangelical Awakening

No study of Spurgeon and revival would be complete without seeing his ministry in the setting of the worldwide awakening that was taking place during his own lifetime. We must see more clearly that he was a specially chosen vessel, sovereignly appointed by God for his place and time, and that he was used greatly in a special season of Spirit outpouring.

1. Revival is a principle of salvation history.

Spurgeon's warrant in praying for and expecting a revival was found in Scripture. He believed it was truth solidly grounded in the Word of God and exemplified over and over in biblical history. The God of the Bible was the God of revival. In a sermon titled "Travail for Souls," Spurgeon illustrated revival principles from sacred history. "Let me first establish this fact from history."¹⁹ He then proceeds to Israel's oppression in Egypt and comments:

The whole nation cried, "O God visit us; God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, remember Thy covenant, and deliver

us." This travail brought its result; for the Lord smote the field of Zoan with mighty plagues, and forth from under the bondage of the sons of Mizraim the children of Israel marched with joy.²⁰

He then moved to David's time:

As we shall not have time to narrate many instances, let us leap in history to the days of David. The era of the son of Jesse was evidently a time of religious revival. God was honored and his service maintained in the midst of Judaea's land in the days of the royal bard; but it is clear to readers of the scriptures that David was the subject of spiritual throes and pangs of the most intense kind. His bosom throbbed and heaved like that of a man made fit to be the leader of a great revival. What yearnings he had, he thirsted after God, after the living God! What petitions he poured forth that God would visit Zion, and make the vine which he had planted to flourish once again.²¹

Spurgeon recalled similar lessons of revival from the times of Josiah and Nehemiah.²² Biblical history records the revival movements of God.

Pentecost in the New Testament marked a guarantee of the success of the gospel and the triumph of the church. Spurgeon's convictions regarding the facts can be noted by the following quote from William Binnie, found in his *Treasury of David*, commenting on Psalm 67. The Psalm calls for the blessing of the Lord upon His people, "that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations." Binnie writes:

Such is the church's expectation. And who shall say it is unreasonable? If the little company of a hundred and twenty disciples who met in the upper chamber at Jerusalem, all of them persons of humble station, and unconscious talents, were endued with such power by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, that within three hundred years the paganism of the empire was overthrown, one need not fear to affirm that, in

order to the evangelization of the world, nothing more is required than that the churches of Christendom be baptized with a fresh effusion of the same Spirit of Power.²³

Spurgeon was correct in his conviction. Eric Sauer lists seven principles of salvation history, one of which is “continuous reformation.”²⁴ He speaks of a continual “requickening into a new reformation” so that “the plan of God should not fail.”²⁵ Thus revival is a principle of redemptive history, the mechanism of God’s eternal program in time. The purpose of God is maintained through periodic infusions of life from above to pick up the divine program and advance it. This can be illustrated in the history of the divided kingdom. Israel in the North and Judah in the South obviously had their beginning as separate nations at the same time. Both kingdoms had nineteen kings, yet Israel went into captivity to Assyria for her sins in 722 B.C., while Judah lasted until 586 B.C., before she was taken to Babylonia. What accounts for this extension of 136 years for Judah? The answer: Judah had five revivals: under Rehoboam (in measure), Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah. Israel had no good kings and no national revival, except for a movement under Elijah that preserved Yahwehism, the prophetic ministry and a remnant in that apostate land. God preserves and advances His program through revival. Witness the Exodus, the pattern of revival in the Old Testament (cf. Hab. 3:2ff.), the Judges, David and Solomon, the revivals in Judah mentioned above, and the movements after the Exile under Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah. Witness also John the Baptist, and *the* Life from above, our Lord Jesus Christ, and Pentecost.

2. Revival was powerful in Spurgeon’s day.

The principle of revival continues throughout this age of the church. God has advanced His church through outpourings of the Holy Spirit. This was manifestly clear from the

history of the first centuries of Christianity. It is also quite evident since the Reformation, which gave birth to the age of revivals. Historians have noted the Evangelical Awakenings that have moved like waves of power to advance the gospel further and further. Each one has been increasingly worldwide. These have been variously designated and dated. The late J. Edwin Orr listed them as follows:

The First Evangelical Awakening, 1725-75

The Second Evangelical Awakening, 1792-1822

The Third Evangelical Awakening, 1830-47

The Fourth Evangelical Awakening, 1858-98

The Fifth Evangelical Awakening, 1900-15

Since the Fifth Awakening there have been sporadic revival movements throughout the world. Some have noted a Sixth Awakening in the late 1940s and 50s, and there have been a number of post-World War II movements. It is evident that Charles Spurgeon ministered in the time of the Fourth Awakening. He longed for the Lord to move in worldwide revival, even though he was experiencing a measure of it in his own church. Note this plea, made on January 4, 1859, to a YMCA gathering at Exeter Hall:

We must confess that, just now, we have not the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that we could wish.... Oh, if the Spirit of God should come upon those assembled tonight, and upon all the assemblies of the saints, what an effect would be produced! We seek not for extraordinary excitements, those spurious attendants of genuine revivals, but we do seek for the pouring out of the Spirit of God.... The Spirit is blowing upon our churches now with His genial breath, but it is as a soft evening gale. Oh, that there would come a rushing mighty wind, that should carry everything before it! This is the lack of the times, the great want of our country. May this come as a blessing from the Most High!²⁶

His prayer was answered, along with the intercessions of a multitude of others. In the winter of 1857-58 the Spirit

began to move in America, the outstanding commencement being a noontime prayer meeting convened by Jeremiah Lanphier on Fulton Street in New York City. The movement spread across the United States, adding a million people to the churches in the two years. It has been called the 1858 Revival, though it continued on even through the Civil War, converting 100,000 Confederate soldiers. It spread to Ulster, then to Scotland, Wales and England (where it was called the 1859-60 Revival), putting another million into the churches of the United Kingdom. Spurgeon reaped many converts in the crest of this revival, noting in 1859: "At this time the converts are more numerous than heretofore, and the zeal of the church groweth exceedingly."²⁷

The revival spread into Scandinavia, the rest of Europe, South Africa, the South Sea Islands and India, being called the 1860-61 Revival.

Spurgeon noted this worldwide awakening and rejoiced in it. He noted how surprising and rapid can be the advancement of the gospel when God comes on the scene:

It is frequently surprising for *rapidity*. "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth children." God's works are not tied to time. The more spiritual a force is the less it lies within the chains of time.... As soon as we agonize in soul the Holy Spirit can, if he pleases, convert the person for whom we have pleaded. While we are yet speaking he hears, before we call he answers. Some calculate the expected progress of the Church by arithmetic; and I think I have heard of arithmetical sermons in which there have been ingenious calculations as to how many missionaries it would take to convert the world and how much cash would be demanded. Now there is no room here for the application of mathematics; spiritual forces are not calculable by arithmetic which is most at home in the material universe. A truth which is calculated to strike the mind of one man today may readily enough produce a like effect upon a million minds tomorrow. The preaching which moves one heart needs not to be altered to tell upon ten thousand. With God's Spirit our present

instrumentality will suffice to win the world to Jesus, whereas without him ten thousand times as much apparent force would be only so much weakness. The spread of truth, moreover, is not reckonable by time. During the ten years, which ended in 1870, such wondrous changes were wrought throughout the world that no prophet would have believed had he foretold them. Reforms have been accomplished in England, in the United States, in Germany, in Spain, in Italy, which, according to ordinary reckoning, would have occupied at least one hundred years. Things which concern the mind cannot be subjected to those regulations of time which govern steamboats and railways; in such matters God's messengers are flames of fire.²⁸

Spurgeon was a chosen, prepared and ready instrument to reap the harvest of the Fourth Awakening. In its context we must note that the movement affected the whole of England as the Spirit swept that way. London especially saw a unique phase of the world movement, differing somewhat from the pattern in general. Great crowds gathered for prayer and evangelistic preaching in such places as St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey (100,000 aggregate in the latter). Theaters were used to house the crowds, such meetings being convened both by the Church of England and the Free Churches. One example was the Victoria Theatre, Waterloo, where over four winters 559 services were held with an aggregate of 865,100 people in attendance.²⁹

Protestant churches of London added 200,000 seats to their buildings in the decade before 1865, a 60 percent increase, exceeding the population increase of the city.³⁰

Church growth was realized by all denominations, the Baptists increasing 60 percent in London in the revival decade. By 1865 the Baptists of Britain added 100,000 members.³¹

Clearly Spurgeon was not alone in seeing crowds, building a building and enjoying church growth. He was living in

a season of *spiritual awakening*. This in no way takes away from his greatness but puts it in perspective. God was moving in sovereign mercy, and He had His man through whom He could work mighty wonders. In our estimate of Spurgeon and the work of revival in his own life and ministry we are compelled to magnify the God of Spurgeon, a God who grants showers of blessing in His own season.

Lessons to Learn

What lessons can we glean from what we have learned about Spurgeon and Revival? We list them briefly in conclusion.

1. We benefit from rehearsing the mighty works of God.

Israel was commanded to rehearse to succeeding generations the mighty redemptive works of Yahweh (Ps. 78:4). The Psalmist was delivered from his depression, when he remembered the years of the right hand of the Most High (Ps. 77:10). He went on to resolve: "I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember Your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all Your works and consider all Your mighty deeds" (Ps. 77:11-12). Revivals have been sparked by the retelling of the mighty movements of God in the past. The rehearsing of revival times, such as that in the days of Spurgeon, can have an effect for good upon this present generation. This is why Spurgeon related the story of God's mighty acts to his own people:

My dear friends, the first effect which the reading of God's mighty works should have upon us, is that of gratitude and praise. Have we nothing to sing about today?— then let us sing concerning days of yore. If we cannot sing of our well-beloved a song concerning what He is doing in our midst, let us, nevertheless, take down our harps from the willows, and sing an old song, and bless and praise His holy name for the things which He did in His ancient church, for the wonders which He wrought in Egypt, and in all the lands wherein He

led His people, and from which He brought them out with a high hand and with an outstretched arm.

When we have thus begun to praise God for what He has done, I think I may venture to impress upon you one other duty. Let what God has done suggest to you the prayer that He would repeat the like signs and wonders among us! Oh! men and brethren, what would this heart feel if I could but believe that there were some among you who would go home and pray for a revival of religion—men whose faith is large enough to exercise unceasing intercession that God would appear among us and do wondrous things here, as in the times of former generations.³²

May the same effect be realized in the church today!

2. We are encouraged in our personal and local church life.

The God of Spurgeon still lives. There is no reason why each individual believer cannot have the same fellowship with his Savior that Spurgeon had. Personal revival is our portion as well as his. The provisions of grace and the ministry of the indwelling Spirit are still available today. May we follow the example of Spurgeon in consecration and obedience! Better yet, may we follow Spurgeon's Savior!

The New Testament standard for local church life has not been lowered since Spurgeon's era. Spurgeon saw revival in his church even before days of general awakening. It has often been the case that God has sent local church revivals to prepare the instruments of widespread revival. May we preach and pray for such return to New Testament practice in our churches!

3. We can be faithful even in times of declension.

One may become discouraged by rehearsing the life of Spurgeon, saying, "But I'm not a Spurgeon." Or, "We're not living in times of revival." The temptation is to sit back in passivity and wait for God to move, or to dismiss the positive lessons that could be gleaned from his life and

ministry because we do not have the gifts and abilities he had. We must remember the truth of God's sovereign distribution of His gifts (1 Cor. 12:11) and realize that if God wanted us to be a Spurgeon, He would have made us the way He did this man. He gave us the gifts and ministries that we have and expects of us faithfulness within the arena of our gifts and calling.

Spurgeon lived in unique times of spiritual awakening. All fruit comes as God gives the increase. Though we ought to expect fruit and plead for it, the extent and increase of our ministries is dependent upon His blessing. God does not expect the same results from us as of a Spurgeon. He may glue us more, or less. The judgment seat is where it will all be made manifest (1 Cor. 3:13-15). Let us be faithful!

4. Revival cannot be separated from reformation.

The Reformation, we noted, gave birth to the age of revivals. The church must reform itself in accordance with the Word of God. Spurgeon believed the doctrines of sovereign grace were owned of God in revival blessing.

Whether we become accomplished "theologians" or not is not the issue. The issue today is the gospel and the way it is preached. Is the message we preach God-centered or man-centered? The answer you give will mean you have either a God-centered or man-centered methodology. Spurgeon believed in a God-centered gospel. Such a message must be preached in utter dependence upon God, for its efficacy is in His hands.

We noted that Spurgeon believed that "the preaching that moves one heart needs not to be altered to attend upon ten thousand." Herein lies the relationship between Spurgeon's theology and revival. In revival the same God who operates through the ordinary ministrations of the gospel, operates in the same way, only the intensity and extent are greater. The same regenerating grace that saves a sinner here, and another there, in one season is multiplied

to the salvation of multitudes in times of general awakening.

A deficient theology in times of declension (besides contributing to the declension) will not stand one in good stead in times of revival. The advice of Spurgeon will stand us in good stead today: "John Newton put Calvinism into his sermons as he put sugar in his tea. Don't be afraid of putting in an extra lump now and then."³³

5. We are moved to pray for revival.

Surely upon reflecting on the marvelous life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon our hearts are moved to pray, "Lord, do it again." Oh, that He would raise up another of his caliber in our day! Oh, that He would pour out His Spirit upon our churches and our land! We close with this prayer of Spurgeon for revival:

O God, send us the Holy Ghost! Give us both the breath of spiritual life and the fire of unconquerable zeal. O Thou who art our God, answer us by fire, we pray Thee! Answer us both by wind and fire, and then we shall see Thee to be God indeed. The kingdom comes not, and the work is flagging. Oh, that Thou wouldst send the wind and the fire! Thou wilt do this when we are all of one accord, all believing, all expecting, all prepared by prayer.

Lord, bring us to this waiting state! God, send us a season of glorious disorder. Oh, for a sweep of the wind that will set the seas in motion, and make our ironclad brethren, now lying so quietly at anchor, to roll from stem to stern!

Oh, for the fire to fall again—fire which shall affect the most stolid! Oh, that such fire might first sit upon the disciples, and then fall all round! O God, Thou art ready to work with us today even as Thou didst then. Stay not, we beseech Thee, but work at once.

Break down every barrier that hinders the incoming of Thy might! Give us now both hearts of flame and tongues of fire to preach Thy reconciling Word, for Jesus' sake! Amen!³⁴

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