

A Minister's Farewell

C.H. Spurgeon

"Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" -Acts 20:26-27

When Paul was parting from his Ephesian friends, who had come to bid him farewell at Miletus, he did not request of them a commendation of his ability; he did not request of them a recommendation for his fervid eloquence, his profound learning, his comprehensive thought, or his penetrating judgment. He knew right well that he might have credit for all these, and yet be found a castaway at last. He required a witness which would be valid in the court of heaven, and of value in a dying hour. His one most solemn adjuration is: "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." In the apostle this utterance was no egotism; it was a fact that he had, without courting the smiles or fearing the frowns of any, preached the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as it had been taught to him by the Holy Spirit, and as he had received it in his own heart. O that all ministers of Christ could honestly challenge the like witness!

Now, this morning I propose, by the help of God's Spirit, to do two things. The first will be to say a little upon *the apostle's solemn declaration at parting*; and then, afterwards, in a few solemn words, to take my own personal farewell.

In the first place, THE APOSTLE'S WORD AT PARTING: "I call you to record I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." The first thing that strikes us is the declaration of the apostle *concerning the doctrines he had preached*. He had preached ALL the counsel of God. By which I think we are to understand that he had given to his people the entire gospel. He had not dwelt upon some one doctrine of it, to the exclusion of the rest; but it had been his honest endeavour to bring out every truth according to the analogy of faith. He had not magnified one doctrine into a mountain, and then diminished another into a molehill; but he had endeavoured to present all blended together, like the colours in the rainbow, as one harmonious and glorious whole. Of course, he did not claim for himself any infallibility as a man, although as an inspired man he was without error in his writings. He had, doubtless, sins to confess in private, and faults to bemoan God. He had, doubtless, sometimes failed to put a truth as clearly as he could have wished, when preaching the Word; he had not always been earnest as he could desire; but at least he could claim this, that he had not willfully kept back a single part of the truth as it is in Jesus.

Now, I must bring down the apostle's saying to these modern times; and I take it, if any one of us would clear our conscience by delivering the whole counsel of God, we must take care that we preach in the first place *the doctrines of the gospel*. We ought to declare the grand doctrine of the Father's love towards his people from before all worlds. His sovereign choice of them, his covenant purposes concerning them, and his immutable promises to them, must all be uttered with trumpet tongue. Coupled with this the true evangelist must never fail to set forth the beauties of the person of Christ, the glory of his offices, the completeness of his work, and

above all, the efficacy of his blood. Whatever we omit, this must be in the most forcible manner proclaimed again and again. That is no gospel which has not Christ in it, and the modern idea of preaching THE TRUTH instead of Christ, is a wicked device of Satan. Nor is this all, for as there are Three Persons in the Godhead, we must be careful that they all have due honour in our ministry. The Holy Spirit's work in regeneration, in sanctification and in perseverance, must be always magnified from our pulpit. Without his power our ministry is a dead letter, and we cannot expect his arm to be made bare unless we honour him day-by-day.

Upon all these matters we are agreed, and I therefore turn to points upon which there is more dispute, and consequently more need of honest avowal, because more temptation to concealment. To proceed then:--I question whether we have preached the whole counsel of God, unless predestination with all its solemnity and sureness be continually declared—unless election be boldly and nakedly taught as being one of the truths revealed of God. It is the minister's duty, beginning from this fountain head, to trace all the other streams; dwelling on effectual calling, maintaining justification by faith, insisting upon the certain perseverance of the believer, and delighting to proclaim that gracious covenant in which all these things are contained, and which is sure to all the chosen, blood-bought seed. There is a tendency in this age to throw doctrinal truth into the shade. Too many preachers are offended with that stern truth which the Covenanters held, and to which the Puritans testified in the midst of a licentious age. We are told that the times have changed: that we are to modify these old (so-called) Calvinistic doctrines, and bring them down to the tone of the times; that, in fact, they need dilution, that men have become so intelligent that we must pare off the angles of our religion, and make the square into a circle by rounding off the most prominent edges. Any man, who doth this, so far as my judgment goes, does not declare the whole counsel of God. The faithful minister must be plain, simple, pointed, with regard to these doctrines. There must be no dispute about whether he believes them or not. He must so preach them that his hearers will know whether he preaches a scheme of freewill, or a covenant of grace—whether he teaches salvation by works, or salvation by the power and grace of God.

But beloved, a man might preach all these doctrines to the full, and yet not declare the whole counsel of God. For here comes the labour and the battle; here it is that he who is faithful in these modern days will have to bare the full brunt of war. It is not enough to preach doctrine; we must preach *duty*, we must faithfully and firmly insist upon practice. So long as you will preach nothing but bare doctrine, there is a certain class of men of perverted intellect who will admire you, but once begin to preach responsibility—say outright, once for all, that if the sinner perish it is his own fault, that if any man sinks to hell, his damnation will lie at his own door, and at once there is a cry of "Inconsistency! How can these two things stand together?" Even good Christian men are found who cannot endure the whole truth, and who will oppose the servant of the Lord who will not be content with a fragment, but will honestly present the whole gospel of Christ. This is one of the troubles that the faithful minister has to endure. But he is not faithful to God—I say it solemnly, I do not believe that any man is even faithful to his own conscience, who can preach simply the doctrine of responsibility. I do assuredly believe that every man who sinks into hell shall have himself alone to curse for it. It shall be said of them as they pass the fiery portal: "Ye would not." "Ye would have none of my rebukes. Ye were bidden to the supper and ye would not come. I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hands, and no man regarded. And now, behold, I will mock at your calamities. I will laugh

when your fear cometh." The apostle Paul knew how to dare public opinion, and on one hand to preach the duty of man, and on the other the sovereignty of God. I would borrow the wings of an eagle and fly to the utmost height of high doctrine when I am preaching divine sovereignty. God hath absolute and unlimited power over men to do with them as he pleases, even as the potter doeth with the clay. Let not the creature question the Creator, for he giveth no account of his matters. But when I preach concerning man, and look at the other aspect of truth, I dive to the utmost depth. I am, if you will so call me, a low-doctrine man in that, for as an honest messenger of Christ I must use his own language, and cry: "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he believeth not on the Son of God." I do not see that the whole counsel of God is declared, unless those two apparently contradictory points are brought out and plainly taught. To preach the whole counsel of God it is necessary to declare the promise in all its freeness, sureness and richness. When the promise makes the subject of the text the minister should never be afraid of it. If it is an unconditional promise, he should make its unconditionally one of the most prominent features of his discourse; he should go the whole way with whatever God has promised to his people. Should the command be the subject, the minister must not flinch; he must utter the precept as fully and confidently as he would the promise. He must exhort, rebuke, command with all long-suffering. He must ever maintain the fact that the perceptive part of the gospel is as valuable—nay, as invaluable—as the promissory part. He must stand to it, that "By their fruits ye shall know them;" that "Unless the tree bring forth good fruit it is hewn down and cast into the fire." Holy living must be preached, as well as happy living. Holiness of life must be constantly insisted on, as well as that simple faith which depends for all on Christ. To declare the whole counsel of God—to gather up ten thousand things into one—I think it is needful that when a minister gets his text, he should say what that text means honestly and uprightly. Too many preachers get a text and kill it. They wring its neck, then stuff it with some empty notions and present it upon the table for an unthinking people to feed upon. That man does not preach the whole counsel of God who does not let God's Word speak for itself in its own pure, simple language. If he finds one day a text like this: "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy," the faithful minister will go all the lengths of that text. And if on the morrow the Spirit of God lays home to his conscience this: "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life," or this other: "Whosoever will, let him come," he will be just as honest with his text on that side as he was on the other. He will not shirk the truth. He will dare to look at it straight in the face himself and then he will bring it up into the pulpit, and there say to it: "O Word, speak for thyself, and be thou heard alone. Suffer me not, O Lord, to pervert or misinterpret thine own heaven-sent truth." Simple honesty to the pure Word of God is I think requisite to the man who would not shun to declare the whole counsel of God.

Moreover, this is not all, If a man would declare the whole counsel of God, and not shun to do so, he must be very particular upon the crying sins of the times. The honest minister does not condemn sin in the mass; he singles out separate sins in his hearers, and without drawing the bow at a venture he puts an arrow on the string and the Holy Spirit sends it right home to the individuals conscience. He who is true to his God does not look to his congregation as a great mass, but as separate individuals, and he endeavours to adapt his discourse to men's conscience, so that they will perceive he speaks of them. It is said of Rowland Hill, that he was so personal a preacher, that if a man were far away sitting in a window, or in some secret corner, he would nevertheless feel—"That man is speaking to me." And the true preacher who declares the

whole counsel of God, so speaks, that his hearers feel that there is something for them; a reproof for their sins, an exhortation which they ought to obey, a something which comes pointedly, pertinently and personally home. Nor do I think any man has declared the whole counsel of God, who does not do this. If there be a vice that you should shun, if there be an error that you should avoid, if there be a duty that you ought to fulfill, if all these things be not mentioned in the discourses from the pulpit, the minister has shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. If there be one sin that is rife in the neighbourhood, and especially in the congregation, should the minister avoid that particular vice in order to avoid offending you, he has been untrue to his calling, dishonest to his God. I do not know how I can describe the man who declares the whole counsel of God better than by referring you to the epistles of St. Paul. There you have the doctrine and the precept, experience and practice. He tells of corruption within and temptation without. The whole divine life is portrayed, and the needed directions given. There you have the solemn rebuke, and the gentle comfort. There you have the words that "drop as the rain, and distil as the dew," and there you have the sentences that roll like thunders, and flash like lightning. There you see him at one time with his crook in his hand, gently leading his sheep into the pastures; and, anon, you see him with his sword drawn, doing valiant battle against the enemies of Israel. He who would be faithful, and preach the whole counsel of God must imitate the apostle Paul, and preach as *he* wrote.

The question, however, is suggested, is there any temptation which arises to the man who endeavours to do this? Is there anything which would tempt him from the straight path and induce him not to preach the whole counsel of God? Ah, my brother, little do you understand the minister's position, if you have not sometimes trembled for him. Espouse but one phase of the truth, and you shall be cried up to the very heavens. Become such a Calvinist that you shut your eyes to one half the Bible, and cannot see the responsibility of the sinner, and men will clap their hands, and cry Hallelujah! and on the backs of many you shall be hoisted to a throne, and become a very prince in their Israel. On the other hand, begin to preach mere morality, practice without doctrine, and you shall be elevated on other men's shoulders; you shall, if I may use such a figure, ride upon these asses into Jerusalem; and you shall hear them cry, Hosanna! and see them wave their palm branches before you. But once preach the whole counsel of God, and you shall have both parties down upon you; one crying, "The man is too high," the other saying, "No, he is too low;" the one will say, "He's a rank Arminian," the other, "He's a vile hyper-Calvinist." Now, a man does not like to stand between two fires. There is an inclination to please one or other of the two parties, and so, if not to increase one's adherents, at least to get a more ferociously attached people. Ay, but if we once begin to think of that, if we suffer the cry of either party on either hand to lead us from that narrow path—the path of right and truth and rectitude, it is all over with us then. How many ministers feel the influence of persons of wealth. The minister in his pulpit, perhaps, is inclined to think of the squire in his green pew. Or else he thinks: "What will deacon so-and-so say?" or, "What will the other deacon say, who thinks the very reverse?" or, "What will Mr. A, the editor of such a newspaper, write next Monday?" or, "What will Mrs. B. say next time I meet her?" Yes, all these things cast their little weight into the scale; and they have a tendency, if a man be not kept right by God the Holy Spirit, to make him diverge a little from that narrow path, in which alone he can stand if he would declare the whole counsel of God. Ah, friends, there are honours to be had by the man who will espouse the opinion of a clique; but while there are honours, there are far more dishonours to be gained by him who will stand firm to the unstained banner of truth,

singly and alone, and do battle against mischief of every shape, as well in the church as in the world. Therefore, it was no mean testimony that the apostle asked for himself, that he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.

But, then, let me remark further, while there is this temptation not to declare all the counsel of God, the true minister of Christ feels impelled to preach the whole truth, because it and it alone can meet the wants of man. What evils has this world seen through a distorted, mangled, man-moulded gospel. What mischiefs have been done to the souls of men by men who have preached only one part and not all the counsel of God. My heart bleeds for many a family where Antinomian doctrine has gained the sway. I could tell many a sad story of families dead in sin, whose consciences are seared as with a hot iron, by the fatal preaching to which they listen. I have known convictions stifled and desires quenched by the soul-destroying system which takes manhood from man and makes him no more responsible than an ox. I cannot imagine a more ready instrument in the hands of Satan for the ruin of souls than a minister who tells sinners that it is not their duty to repent of their sins or to believe in Christ, and who has the arrogance to call himself a gospel minister, while he teaches that God hates some men infinitely and unchangeably for no reason whatever but simply because he chooses to do so. O my brethren! may the Lord save you from the voice of the charmer, and keep you ever deaf to the voice of error.

Even in Christian families, what evil will a distorted gospel produce! I have seen the young believer, just saved from sin, happy in his early Christian career, and walking humbly with his God. But evil has crept in, disguised in the mantle of truth. The finger of partial blindness was laid upon their eyes, and but one doctrine could be seen. Sovereignty was seen, but not responsibility. The minister once beloved was hated; he who had been honest to preach God's Word, was accounted as the off-scouring of all things. And what became the effect? The very reverse of good and gracious. Bigotry usurped the place of love; bitterness lived where once there had been a loveliness of character. I could point you to innumerable instances where harping upon any one peculiar doctrine has driven men to excess of bigotry and bitterness. And when a man has once come there, he is ready enough for sin of any kind to which the devil may please to tempt him. There is a necessity that the whole gospel should be preached, or else the spirits, even of Christians, will become marred and maimed. I have known men diligent for Christ, labouring to win souls with both hands; and on a sudden they have espoused one particular doctrine and not the whole truth, and they have subsided into lethargy. On the other hand, where men have only taken the practical side of truth, and left out the doctrinal, too many professors have run over into legality; have talked as if they were to be saved by works, and have almost forgotten that grace by which they were called. They are like the Galatians; they have been bewitched by what they have heard. The believer in Christ, if he is to be kept pure, simple, holy, charitable, Christ-like, is only to be kept so by a preaching of the whole truth as it is in Jesus. And as for the salvation of sinners, ah, my hearers, we can never expect God to bless our ministry for the conversion of sinners unless we preach the gospel as a whole. Let me get but one part of the truth, and always dwell upon it, to the exclusion of every other, and I cannot expect my Master's blessing. If I preach as he would have me preach, he will certainly own the word; he will never leave it without his own living witness. But let me imagine that I can improve the gospel, that I can make it consistant, that I can dress it up and make it look finer, I shall find that my Master is departed, and that Ichabod is written on the walls of the

sanctuary. How many there are kept in bondage through neglect of gospel invitations. They are longing to be saved. They go up to the house of God, crying to be saved; and there is nothing but predestination for them. On the other hand, what multitudes are kept in darkness through practical preaching. It is do! do! do! and nothing but do! and the poor souls come away and say: "Of what use is that to me? I can do nothing. Oh, that I had a way shown to me available for salvation." Of the apostle Paul we think it may be truly said, that no sinner missed a comfort from his keeping back Christ's cross; that no saint was bewildered in spirit from his denying the bread of heaven and withholding precious truth; that no practical Christian became so practical as to become legal, and no doctrinal Christian became so doctrinal as to become unpractical. His preaching was of so savoury and consistent a kind, that they who heard him, being blessed of the Spirit, became Christians indeed, both in life and spirit, reflecting the image of their Master.

I feel I cannot dwell very long upon this text. I have been so extremely unwell for the last two days, that the thoughts which I hoped to present to you in better form, have only come tumbling out of my mouth in far from an orderly manner.

II. I must now turn away from the apostle Paul to address you A VERY FEW EARNEST, SINCERE AND AFFECTIONATE WORDS BY WAY OF FAREWELL. "Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." I wish not to say anything in self-commendation and praise; I will not be my own witness as to my faithfulness; but I appeal unto you, I take you to witness this day, that I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Often have I come into this pulpit in great weakness, and I have far more often gone away in great sorrow, because I have not preached to you as earnestly as I desired. I confess to many errors and failings, and more especially to a want of earnestness when engaged in prayer for your souls. But there is one charge which my conscience acquits me of this morning, and I think you will acquit me too, for I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. If in anything I have erred, it has been an error of judgment; I may have been mistaken, but so far as I have learned the truth, I can say that no fear of public opinion, nor of private opinion, has ever turned me aside from that which I hold to be the truth of my Lord and Master. I have preached to you the precious things of the gospel. I have endeavoured to the utmost of my ability to preach grace in all its fullness. I know the preciousness of that doctrine in my own experience; God forbid that I should preach any other. If we are not saved by grace, we can never be saved at all. If from first to last the work of salvation be not in God's hands, none of us can ever see God's face with acceptance. I preach this doctrine, not from choice, but from absolute necessity, for if this doctrine be not true, then are we lost souls; your faith is vain, our preaching is vain, and we are still in our sins, and there we must continue until the end. But, on the other hand, I can say also, I have not shunned to exhort, to invite, to entreat. I have bidden the sinner come to Christ. I have been urged not to do so, but I could not resist it. With bowels yearning over perishing sinners, I could not conclude without crying: "Come to Jesus, sinner, come." With eyes weeping for sinners, I am compelled to bid them come to Jesus. It is not possible for me to dwell upon doctrine without invitation. If you come not to Christ it is not for want of calling, or because I have not wept over your sins, and travailed in birth for the souls of men. The one thing I have to ask of you is this:--bear me witness, my hearers, bear me witness, that in this respect I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have preached all that I know of the whole

counsel of God. Have I known a single sin which I have not rebuked? Has there been a doctrine that I have believed which I have kept back? Has there been a part of the Word, doctrinal or experimental, which I have willfully concealed? I am very far from perfect, again with weeping I confess my unworthiness; I have not served God as I ought to do; I have not been so earnest with you as I could desire. Now that my three years' ministry here is over, I could have wished that I might begin again, that I might fall on my knees before you and beseech you to regard the things that make for your peace. But here, again, I do repeat it, that while as to earnestness I plead guilty, yet as to truth and honesty I can challenge the bar of God, I can challenge the elect angels, I can call you all to witness, that I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.

It is easy enough, if one wills to do it, to avoid preaching an objectionable doctrine, by simply passing over the texts which teach it. If an unpleasant truth thrusts itself on you, it is not hard to put it aside, imagining that it would disturb your previous teaching. Such concealment may, for a while succeed, and possibly your people will not find it out for years. But if I have studied after anything, I have sought always to bring out that truth which I have neglected beforehand; and if there has been any one truth that I have kept back hitherto, it shall be my earnest prayer that from this day forth it may be made more prominent, that so it may be the better understood and seen. Well, I simply ask you this question, and if I indulge in some little egotism, if on this parting day "I am become a fool in glorying;" it is not for the sake of glorying, it is with a better motive my hearer, I put this question to you. There may come sad disasters to many of you. In a little time some of you may be frequenting places where the gospel is not preached. You may embrace another and a false gospel. I only ask this thing of you: Bear me witness that it was not my fault,—that I have been faithful and have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. In a little time some here who have been restrained by the fact of having attended a place of worship, seeing the chosen minister has gone, may not go anywhere else afterwards. You may become careless. Perhaps next Sabbath day you may be sitting at home, lolling about and wasting the day. But there is one thing I should like to say before you make up your mind not to attend the house of God again:—Bear me witness that I have been faithful with you. It may be that some here who have professedly run well for a time while they have been hearing the Word, may go back; some of you may go right into the world again; you may become drunkards, swearers and the like. God forbid that it be so! But I charge you, if you plunge into sin, do at least say this one thing for him who desires nothing so much as to see you saved—say, I have been honest with you; that I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. Oh, my hearers, some of you in a little time will be on your dying-beds. When your pulse is feeble, when the terrors of grim death are round about you, if you are still unconverted to Christ, there is one thing I shall want you to add to your last will and testament; it is this—the exclusion of the poor minister who stands before you this day from any share in that desperate folly of yours which has led you to neglect your own soul. Oh, have I not cried to you to repent? Have I not bidden you look to it ere death surprised you? Have I not exhorted you, my hearers, to flee for a refuge to the hope set before you? Oh, sinner, when thou art wading through the black river, cast back no taunt on me as though I was thy murderer, for in this thing I can say: "I wash my hands in innocency; I am clear of your blood." But the day is coming when we shall all meet again. This great assembly shall be submerged into a greater, as the drop loses itself in the ocean. And I shall stand on that day to take my trial at God's bar. If I have not warned you, I have been an unfaithful watchman, and your blood will be required at

my hands; if I have not preached Christ to you, and bidden you flee for refuge, then, though you perish, yet shall your soul be required of me. I beseech you, if you laugh at me, if you reject my message, if you despise Christ, if you hate his gospel, if you will be damned, yet at least give me an acquittal of your blood. I see some before me who do not often hear me; and yet I can say concerning them, they have been the subject of my private prayers; and often, too, of my tears, when I see them going on in their iniquities. Well, I do ask this one thing, and as honest men you cannot deny it me. If you will have your sins, if you will be lost, if you will not come to Christ, at least, amid the thunders of the great day, when I stand for trial at God's bar, acquit me of having destroyed your souls.

What can I say more? How shall I plead with you? Had I an angel's tongue, and the heart of the Saviour, then would I plead; but I cannot say more than I have often done. In God's name I beseech you flee to Christ for refuge. If all hath not sufficed before, let this suffice thee now. Come, guilty soul, and flee away to him whose wide open arms are willing to receive every soul that fleeth to him with penitence and faith. In a little time the preacher himself will lie stretched upon his bed. A few more days of solemn meeting, a few more sermons, a few more prayers, and I think I see myself in yon upper chamber, with friends watching around me. He who has preached to thousands now needs consolation for himself. He who has cheered many in the article of death is now passing through the river himself. My hearers, shall there be any of you whom I shall see upon my death bed who shall curse me with being unfaithful? Shall these eyes be haunted with the visions of men whom I have amused, and interested, but into whose hearts I have never sought to plunge the truth? Shall I lie there, and shall these mighty congregations pass in dreary panorama before me, and as they subside before my eyes, one after the other, shall each one curse me as being unfaithful? God forbid. I trust you will do me this favour: that when I lie a-dying you will allow that I am clear of the blood of all men, and have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. I see myself standing at the last great day a prisoner at the bar. What if this shall be read against me:—"Thou hast had many to listen to thee; thousands have crowded to hear the words which fell from my lips; but thou hast misled, thou hast deceived, thou hast willfully mistaught this people." Thunders such as have been never heard before must roll over this poor head, and lightnings more terrific than have ever scathed the fiend shall blast this heart, if I have been unfaithful to you. My position—If I had but once preached the Word to these crowds, not to speak of many thousands of times—my position were the most awful in the whole universe if I were unfaithful. Oh may God avert that worst of ills—unfaithfulness—from my head. Now, as here I stand, I make this my last appeal: "I pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." But if ye will not be, I ask you this single favour—and I think you will not deny it me—take the blame of your own ruin, for I am pure from the blood of all men, since I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

This much by way of calling you to witness. Now, I come to put up a request. I have a favour to ask of all here present. If in aught you have been profited, if in anything you have ever had comfort, if you have found Christ in any way during the preaching of the gospel here, I beg you, even though you should not listen to my words again, I beg you to carry me up in your heart before the throne of God in prayer. It is by the prayers of our people that we live. God's ministers owe more to the prayers of their people than they ever know. I love my people for their prayerfulness for me. Never minister was so much prayer for as I have been. But will those of you who will be compelled to separate from us by reason of distance, and the like, will

you still carry me in your thoughts before God, and let my name be engraven on your bosoms as often as you present yourselves before the mercy seat. It is a little thing I ask. It is simply that you say: "Lord, help thy servant to win souls to Christ." Ask that he may be made more useful than he has ever been; that if he is in aught mistaken he may be set right. If he has not comforted you, ask that he may do so in the future; but if he has been honest with you, then pray that your Master may have him in his holy keeping. And while I ask you to put up this request for me, it is for all those that preach the truth in Jesus. Brethren, pray for us. We would labour for you as those that must give account. Ah, it is no little thing to be a minister if we are true to our calling. As Baxter once said, when someone told him the ministry was easy work: "Sir, I wish you would take my place, if you think so, and try it." If to agonize with God in prayer, if to wrestle for the souls of men, if to be abused and not to reply, if to suffer all manner of rebukes and slanders, if this be rest, take it, sir, for I shall be glad to get rid of it. I do ask that you would pray for all ministers of Christ, that they may be helped and upheld, maintained and supported, that their strength may be equal to their day.

And, then, having put up this request for myself, and therefore a selfish one, I have an entreaty to put up for others. My hearers, I cannot shut my eyes to the fact, that there are still many of you who have long listened to the Word here, but who have still not given your hearts to Christ. I am glad to see you here, even though it should be for the last time. If you should never tread the hallowed courts of God's house again, never hear his Word, never listen to hearty invitation or honest warning, I have one entreaty to put up for you. Mark, not a request, but an entreaty; and such a one, that if I were begging for my life I could not be more honest and intensely earnest about it. Poor sinner, stop awhile, and think. If thou hast heard the gospel and been profited by it, what wilt thou think of all thy lost opportunities when thou art on thy dying bed? What wilt thou think when thou art cast into hell, when this thought shall come ringing in thy ears: "Thou didst hear the gospel, but thou didst reject it;" when the devils in hell shall laugh in thy face, and say: "We never rejected Christ, we never despised the Word," and they shall thrust thee into a deeper hell than ever they themselves experienced. I entreat thee, stop, and think of this. Are the joys that thou hast in this world worth living for? Is not this world a dull and dreary place? Man, turn over a fresh leaf. I tell thee, there is no joy for thee here, and there is none hereafter whilst thou art what thou art. Oh, may God teach thee that the mischief lies in thy sin. Thou hast unforgiven sin about thee. As long as thy sin is unforgiven, thou canst neither be happy here, nor in the world to come. My entreaty is, go to thy chamber; if thou knowest thy self to be guilty, make a full confession there before God; ask him to have mercy upon thee, for Jesus' sake. And he will not deny thee. Man, he will not dent thee; he will answer thee; he will put all thy sins away; he will accept thee; he will make thee his child. And as thou shalt be more happy here, so shalt thou be blessed in the world to come. Oh, Christian men and women, I entreat you, implore the Spirit of God to lead many in this crowd to full confession, to real prayer, and humble faith; and if they have never repented before, may they now turn to Christ. Oh, sinner, thy life is short, and death is hastening. Thy sins are many, and if judgment has leaden feet, yet has it a sure and heavy hand. Turn, turn, turn, I beseech thee. May the Holy Spirit turn thee. Lo, Jesus is lifted up before thee now. By his five wounds, I beseech thee, turn. Look thou to him and live. Believe on him and thou shalt be saved, for whosoever believeth on the Son of Man hath everlasting life, and he shall never perish, neither shall the wrath of God rest upon him.

May the Spirit of God now command his own abiding blessing, even life for evermore, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

The most widely popular of English preachers in the nineteenth century was without question, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. He was born in Kelvedon, Essex, England, June 19th, 1834. Both his father and grandfather being pastors, young Spurgeon was raised in the knowledge and understanding of the Christian gospel; but it was not until a stormy January night in 1850 that he was converted. In August of the same year, Spurgeon preached his first sermon to a small gathering of farmers.

A year later he was called to pastor a village church; and in 1854 in his nineteenth year was installed as shepherd over the flock of the New Park Street Chapel, Southwark, London, later to become the Metropolitan Tabernacle. In January, 1855, Spurgeon published his first sermon, a practice which would not cease until 1916, twenty-four years after his death. During his pastorate at London, Spurgeon ministered to a congregation of almost 6,000 people each Sunday, published his sermons weekly, wrote a monthly magazine, and founded a college for pastors, two orphanages, an old-folks home, a colportage society, and several mission stations.

His body wracked by pain in the later years, and his ministry attacked by his opponents, Spurgeon continued to preach the gospel until his death in January, 1892.

What was the secret to Spurgeon's success? He was a man gifted with a powerful voice, a mastery of plain language and illustration, and a great intellect. Power, fervor of conception, and passionateness of appeal individualized his sermons, as they were saturated with Christian earnestness. However, the real secret to Spurgeon's success was his deep yet very simple trust in and understanding of his Lord and Saviour and of His great grace and love. Out of this came a great longing to have others come to know, to love and to worship the Lord Jesus as he did.