

August 2024 – The Preacher



Have you ever heard a preacher who seemed simply on fire for God? Full of the Holy Spirit? Raised up by God ‘for such a time as this’? A preacher that could draw crowds – not because of ‘personality’, or ‘charisma’, simply because the Scriptures made sense when he/she expounded them?

One such preacher was Charles Haddon Spurgeon. This month I want to share some of his story, and also his wife’s story – she was his rock, support, confidence and strength.

Charles Spurgeon was a Baptist Preacher (1834-1892). Known as the ‘Prince of Preachers’, he opposed the liberal tendencies of the church and was highly influential. He was a Pastor in London for over 38 years and was not afraid to speak out on matters of doctrine and theology – indeed he eventually left the Baptist Union of Great Britain when he could not reconcile his doctrinal convictions with that of the church.

He worked tirelessly for the poor and was an advocate and justice seeker, writing many devotional aids, resources and books – and having his sermons published. Spurgeon was a man filled with the Spirit of the Living God. He was not scared to speak up, to challenge and to seek the Will of God before church politics and personalities. In many respects he was both loved and hated, depending on who you were. Interestingly, he spent his early years in ‘nominal congregationalism’ – then after sheltering from a snowstorm in a Primitive Methodist Chapel at the age of just 15, the Lord opened his heart to the message of salvation.

From there he attended a church in Newmarket and was baptised in the River Lark! He preached his first sermon at just 16 for an absent friend. He became a Pastor a short time later in Cambridge and published his first tract at just 19 years old.

He moved to Southwalk and his preaching made him famous. He faced criticism and opposition, but his congregations grew and grew. At just 22 he was the most popular preacher in England! He ministered in London and his words echoed throughout London streets.

He married Susannah in 1856 and they were incredibly happy. They went on to have twin boys, one became a Baptist preacher.

Charles was also a man who was deeply moved by tragedy – in 1856 several people died in a service he was leading after a fire. Remember, in some of these meetings there were thousands upon thousands of people attending.

In 1857 he preached to the largest number he had ever preached to – a congregation of almost 24000 people – can you imagine the atmosphere?!

Charles described in his writing how he had “gone to decide where the **platform** should be fixed.... to test the acoustic properties of the

building I cried out, 'Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the World'"

... and a workman on hearing this came to Christ!

Interestingly, note how Spurgeon uses the phrase '**platform**' and not '**stage**'. I have always understood this to be important. You can preach from a platform – but not a 'stage'. A 'stage is for acting' – a 'platform' is for truth telling and gospel imparting. There is a difference – preaching is not entertainment.

How do you use your space in church? What do you call the raised area at the front of church/chapel (if you have one)? Is it a platform or a stage?

Do you ever feel worship has become entertainment?

What can or should be done about it?

Is there ever a place for entertainment in church? Or is there a fine line to be drawn when it comes to the sermon?

There is so much more than can be said of Charles Spurgeon. He loved France, was a friend of James Hudson Taylor, smoked cigars and drank Brandy (moderately). He also suffered from depression.

He died at the age of just 57, his son taking over the reins at his church.

Next month we will be looking at some of the words penned by Charles' wife, Susannah – the woman behind the man.

Those who have gone before us are a part of the great crowd of witnessed cheering us on.

Be blessed – and remember, it is not a stage – it is a platform!