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Ten Baptists Everyone Should Know: Charles Haddon Spurgeon

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Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born on June 19, 1834, to Thomas and Eliza Spurgeon. He came into this world as both the son and grandson of preachers. At the age of eighteen months, the toddling Spurgeon went to stay with his grandfather James and his grandmother in Stanbourne, Essex. It was in his grandparents' home that Spurgeon's lifelong love affair with books would begin. When just six years old, the young Spurgeon found a treasure in an old room in the manse. It was a collection of leather-bound Puritan works. Among these musty volumes was one *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan, a work with Spurgeon would read over one hundred times in his lifetime. Through this encounter, the Puritans of the seventeenth century became this nineteenth-century young man's friends and allies. As an adult he was called "The Last of the Puritans" by William Gladstone. There is no doubt of the influence of the Puritans upon this young man who began reading major Puritan theological works at such an early age.

At the age of fifteen, Spurgeon fell under deep conviction of sin and after at least a solid year of this conviction he entered a Primitive Methodist chapel on a snowy Sunday morning in January of 1850. The pastor had not arrived when the service began and presently another simple appearing man took charge of the service. He preached on the text: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Years later Spurgeon recalled the preacher's exact words:

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My dear friends this is a simple text indeed. It says, Look. Now lookin' don't take a great deal of pains. It ain't lifting your foot or your finger. It is just "look." Well, a man needn't get to college to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool and yet you can look. A man needn't be worth a thousand pounds a year to be able to look. Anyone can look: even a child can look. But then the text says, "look unto me"...many of ye are lookin' to yourselves, but it's no use lookin' there. You'll never find any comfort in yourselves. Some look to God the Father. No, look to him by and by. Jesus Christ says, "Look unto me." Some of ye say, "We must wait for the Spirit's workin'." You have no business with that just now. Look unto *Christ*. The text says, "Look unto me."

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Spurgeon looked and he said that he "could have almost looked" his "eyes away." He was converted that day at the little Primitive Methodist chapel. Shortly thereafter, Spurgeon was baptized by immersion after being convinced of its biblical basis. His mother expressed dismay that he had become a Baptist by saying, "Charles, I have often prayed for your conversion, but *not* that you would become a Baptist." To this Spurgeon replied, "That shows, dear mother, that God has done exceeding abundantly above all you asked or thought."

Four years later, Charles Spurgeon received a call to pastor the legendary New Park Street Baptist Church in London at the young age of nineteen. This church had been previously pastored by such luminaries as Benjamin Keach, John Gill, and John Rippon. Spurgeon preached his first sermon beginning a ministry of nearly forty years to a congregation of about eighty. Within six months, two thousand people were hearing him preach, with another thousand being turned away at the door. As a result of the tremendous crowd, the six-thousand seat Metropolitan Tabernacle that was built was filled to capacity each Sunday. During Spurgeon's London ministry, he started over twenty different ministries, two hundred new churches, a Pastor's College, and an Orphanage.

Spurgeon saw himself primarily as a pastor-evangelist. He had a strong foundation in the theology of the Puritans. He was a Calvinist, though not a high or hyper-Calvinist. He once confessed, "I have been charged with being a mere echo of the Puritans, but I had rather be the echo of truth than the voice of falsehood." Spurgeon believed in "free grace" that was bestowed by the sovereignty of God granted to whomever He pleases.

Although Spurgeon clearly believed as a Calvinist in matters of soteriology, he was never a hyper-Calvinist. He was convinced that the Bible taught both divine election and human responsibility; therefore, he preached both. Once when asked how he reconciled divine sovereignty and human responsibility he responded: "I do not try to reconcile friends."

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Spurgeon's Christology is seen in his belief in the all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ and his work on the cross. He could say that: "There is no preaching the gospel if the atonement is left out." As an evangelist Spurgeon was without peer. He believed strongly in the importance of evangelistic preaching. He said, "The revealed Word awakened me; but it was the preached Word that saved me; and I must ever attach peculiar value to the hearing of the truth." His ministry bore the fruits of his own evangelistic preaching. He baptized over ten thousand new converts in the Tabernacle.

What was the source of the tremendous power seen in the ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon? It was his use and confidence in the Bible as the Word of God:

After preaching the Gospel for forty years, and after printing the sermons that I have preached for more than six and thirty years reaching now to the number of 2,200 in weekly succession, I think I'm fairly entitled to speak about the fullness and richness of the Bible as a preacher's book. Brethren, it is inexhaustible. No question about its freshness will arise if we keep closely to the text of the Sacred Volume. There can be no difficulties as to finding themes totally distinct from those we've handled before. The variety is as infinite as the fullness. A long life will only suffice us to skirt the shores of this great continent of light. In the forty years of my own ministry, I've only touched the hem of the garment of Divine Truth. But oh, what virtue has flowed out of it. The Word is like its author, infinite, immeasurable, without end. If you were to be ordained to be a preacher throughout eternity, you would have before you a theme equal to everlasting demands. Our Bible will suffice for ages to come for new themes every morning and for fresh songs and discourses, world without end.

Recommended Resources

There have been some great biographies of Spurgeon. Two of the more recent excellent ones (with slightly different emphases) are [*Communion with Christ and His People: The Spirituality of C.H. Spurgeon*](#) by Peter J. Morden and [*Living By Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*](#) by Thomas J. Nettles. Spurgeon's own two-volume autobiography is available on Google Books ([vol. 1](#), [vol. 2](#)). Spurgeon's daily devotional, [*Morning and Evening*](#), is a treasure trove of biblical encouragement. Spurgeon's sermons are still in print. The 63 volumes of *The New Park Street Pulpit* and *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (published by [Pilgrim Publications](#)) contain 20-25 million words; equal to the 27 volumes of the ninth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Several collections of Spurgeon's sermons are [available on Google Books](#). An incredible source for all things Spurgeon is found at www.spurgeon.org. Hosted by The Spurgeon Center

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for Biblical Preaching at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, this website contains a searchable index of Spurgeon sermons by date, topic, or Scripture reference.

This is Part Nine of ten of an ongoing series by Steve Weaver.



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