

C. H. SPURGEON'S CONVERSION TO CHRIST

Fifteen-year-old Charles Haddon Spurgeon went home for the Christmas holidays at the end of 1849 with a firm determination to visit every place of worship in the town in order to find out the way of salvation. No record exists of exactly how many chapels he attended, but nowhere could he learn what he wanted to know. The ministers expounded the great truths of the Christian faith and their sermons were eminently suited to spiritually-minded people. But what the youth required was knowledge as to how he could get his sins forgiven, and this no man told him.

At last there came a day when the hand of God was unmistakably extended to lead Charles Haddon Spurgeon a way he thought not of. He had intended to go to a certain chapel some distance from his home and set out upon the road. But a heavy snowstorm came on and prevented him from continuing the journey. He turned into an obscure street, and saw at the end of a court a little sanctuary which proved to be the Artillery Street Primitive Methodist Chapel.

This church, hitherto known perhaps to few people even in Colchester, was destined to become world-famed as the result of that visit by the youth of little more than fifteen years. He was not prepossessed in its favour as he entered, for he had always heard that the Primitive Methodists were people who sang so loudly that they made one's headache. But even if this were true he cared not so long as they taught him how he might be saved. The remainder of the story shall be told by C. H. Spurgeon himself:

"The minister did not come that morning; he was snowed up, I suppose. At last a very thin-looking man, a shoe-maker, or tailor or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. Now it is well that preachers should be instructed; but this man was really stupid. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had little else to say. The text was 'Look unto Me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth.' He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter. There was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in that text. The preacher began thus.

"My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, "Look." Now, lookin' don't take a deal of pains. It ain't liftin' your foot or your finger; it is just "Look." Well, a man needn't go 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 a year to be able to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look. But then the text says, "Look unto Me." Ay! he said in broad Essex, 'Many on 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 to Christ. The text says, "Look unto Me."

"Then the good man followed up his text in this way: 'Look unto Me; I am sweatin' great drops of blood. Look unto Me; I am hangin' on the cross. Look unto Me; I ascend to Heaven. Look unto Me; I am sittin' at the Father's right hand. O poor sinner, look unto Me! Look unto Me!'

"When he had gone to about that length and managed to spin out ten minutes or so he was at the end of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I dare say with so few present he knew me to be a stranger. Just fixing his eyes on me, as if he knew all my heart, he said, 'Young man, you look very miserable,' Well, I did; but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made from the pulpit on my personal appearance before. However, it was a good blow, struck right home. He continued, 'And you always will be miserable—miserable in life and miserable in death—if you don't obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.'

“Then lifting up his hands he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do, ‘Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin’ to do but to look and live.’ I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said—I did not take much notice of it—I was so possessed with that one thought. Like as when the brazen serpent was lifted up, the people only looked and were healed, so it was with me. I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that word ‘Look!’ what a charming word it seemed to me! Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant and sung with the most enthusiastic of them of the precious blood of Christ and the simple faith which looks alone to Him.

“That happy day when I found the Saviour and learned to cling to His dear feet was a day never to be forgotten by me. An obscure child, unknown, unheard of, I listened to the Word of God; and that precious text led me to the cross of Christ. I can testify that the joy of that day was utterly indescribable. I could have leaped, I could have danced; there was no expression, however, fanatical, which would have been out of keeping with the joy of my spirit at that hour. Many days of Christian experience have passed since then, but there has never been one which has had the full exhilaration, the sparkling delight which that first day had. I thought I could have sprung from the seat on which I sat, and have called out with the wildest of those Methodist brethren who were present, ‘I am forgiven! I am forgiven! A monument of grace! A sinner saved by blood.’ I felt that I was an emancipated soul, an heir of Heaven, a forgiven one, accepted in Christ Jesus, plucked out of the miry clay and out of the horrible pit; with my feet upon a rock and my goings established I thought I could dance all the way home. I could understand what John Bunyan meant when he declared he wanted to tell the crows on the ploughed land all about his conversion.”

The great event took place on the morning of Sunday, January 6th, 1850.

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