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# Spurgeon on Conversion and the Cross

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# Introduction

Spurgeon is well known as the “Prince of Preachers” This title comes, at least in part, because of the sheer volume of printed material by Spurgeon that exists to this day. Also of course he was a great orator. By his voice alone he could move people almost like rock music does today. His voice coupled with innumerable graphic illustrations and intense pleadings was a force to be reckoned with as he himself well knew. This is true of the written word as well as the spoken. In seeking to evaluate Spurgeon’s teaching honestly and objectively one must deal with this huge amount of material containing so much non-doctrinal content.

There is also a second element which cannot be ignored if we wish to reach any pertinent conclusions. There is a fact that can be easily established regarding all the Spurgeon taught. That fact is that he delights in contradictions. Not only so but in fundamental contradictions of doctrine. He takes to himself the absolute right to teach and preach whatever a particular scripture means to him. At one time he appears as a full-fledged five-point Calvinist. At another time equally as much a though Arminian. Professed Christians from remarkably diverse backgrounds find a friend and supporter in Spurgeon. To James Wells, the sovereignty of God was the single thread that runs through all his writings. To Spurgeon, as we shall see, the single thread is the importance of people being saved. All is made to bend to that commitment.

These two facts, the volume and the diverseness present a daunting challenge to defining just what Spurgeon taught on any given subject. For many years Spurgeon was almost a hero to me. I devoted much to the study of his life and teaching. For many years since that time, I have struggled to find a way to impartially see the true man. In my mind’s eye I have come to see two sides of this man. One side is when his purpose is to expound any given doctrine. There are excellent sermons, or parts of sermons where he gives an almost textbook exposition highlighting the doctrines of grace. The other is when he takes up the task of getting people converted. He becomes emotional, passionate, and personal. In other words when he preaches the Gospel. These states come and go constantly, but the underlying issues of his heart come to the surface often. As our Lord taught, we can tell what is in the heart by the fruit we bear. My purpose here is to use his words to get at the fruit. What did conversion and Christ’s substitution mean to him in his inmost being? The key is how he defines the words he uses.

Why then the topic of conversion and the atonement which is at the heart of true conversion? One reason as I touched upon already is the fact that this is the heart and soul of Spurgeon’s preaching and teaching. The second is that fact that Spurgeon gives us an incredibly detailed account of his own personal conversion and how he sought to make converts himself.

In Section One I lay out, briefly what the scriptures teach about conversion and the cross. In section Two I examine some of Spurgeon’s preaching and teaching on these topics comparing that to orthodox teaching.

## Section One: What is ‘Conversion’ in the Biblical sense?

### Part One: It is a new spiritual birth.

God in his rich grace through the Lord Jesus Christ has given us abundant insight into this most important subject. Indeed, the Old and New Testament are so full of examples, instruction and doctrine that many books and innumerable sermons can and have been written on this subject. Differences of opinion abound despite the clarity of its nature as revealed in the Bible. Our starting point will be the Lord Jesus teaching as given to us in John 3:1-21.

1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; 2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” 3 answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” 5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 “Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” 9 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can these things be?” 10 Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things? 11 “Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. 12 “If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 “No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. 14 “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; 15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. 16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18 “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. 20 “For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21”But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”<sup>2, 3, 4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> New American Standard Bible: 1995 update. (1995). (John 3:1–21). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

<sup>3</sup> Please note that I have removed the reference notations in all the Bible quotations for easier reading. RCS

<sup>4</sup> All scripture references are in the NASB update referenced above: Unless otherwise noted

The Lord Jesus here teaches us some noticeably clear and specific things about true conversion. Among others:

1. Conversion involves such a radical change that it must be compared to being born again. Born not physically but spiritually. (Verse 3)
2. Earthly means are of no avail. They may force or coerce a sinner into a false profession but that is all it is. The 'free will' gospel is of the flesh, fleshly. (Verse 6)
3. This new birth is an act of God the Holy Spirit (verses 7 and 8)
4. At the heart of this conversion is the birth, life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Verses 14 to 17)
5. The new birth itself involves both the cleansing of all sin and the creation of a new heart, a new principle of life in the soul of the saved person. (Verse 5 and of course the New Birth itself)
6. Belief is an essential part of conversion. Indeed, from the human part of the experience it is central. This is what we call saving faith. As the Lord so clearly teaches belief comes after the Holy Spirit creates a new heart in the one he chooses to save. (Verses 15 and 18)
7. Man by nature is dead, totally in hatred of anything spiritual. (Verses 19 and 20)
8. That mankind is divided into two groups: those who hate the light and those who come to the light. (Verses 18 -21)

To my mind, at least, one sentence, the substance of which is found in various scriptures, sums up all that the Bible tells us of salvation by grace and in fact also sums up the eight points given above. Jonah 2:9: "But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. **Salvation is from the LORD**<sup>5</sup>." Psalm 3:8: "**Salvation belongs to the LORD**; may Your blessing be on Your people." Selah Psalm 62:1 "**My soul waits in silence for God alone; From Him comes my salvation.**" Of course, it is one thing to say, as Spurgeon himself said, that: "Salvation is of the Lord". The question is what do we mean by that statement? How does it work out in our personal lives and in our ministry (for all God's people have some form of ministry)?

Let us refer again to John 3:5-8 "Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; **so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.**'" Jesus words here have everything to do with the sovereignty of God in salvation.

First, water and the Holy Spirit (vs. 5) where Jesus joins these two with the new birth. John 7:37-39 is the key here to his meaning.

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink." "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

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<sup>5</sup> Emphasis in bold is mine though out this document unless otherwise stated.

Without the operation of the Holy Spirit there can be no new life, no conversion, and no spiritual understanding.

Second, it's helpful to realize that the English words translated as 'wind' / 'breath' and 'Spirit' are the same word in both Hebrew and in the Greek of the New Testament. In the New Testament, almost without exception, the Holy Spirit is the correct meaning. The words are correctly translated in the NASB quoted above. Jesus is speaking of God the Holy Spirit and is comparing his work to what was known of the wind in biblical times. Unlike today, they had extraordinarily little knowledge of the winds beyond what they could personally experience. Many commentators suggest that the wind was blowing past Jesus and Nicodemus when this conversation took place giving rise to Jesus' choice of illustration.

The new birth is clearly in focus, so what is Jesus teaching us about the Spirit's work in conversion? Two passages from Ezekiel form the Old Testament backdrop to Jesus' words.

First: Ezekiel 36:24–27

For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

This is one of the most glorious passages on the New Covenant in the Old Testament. In the translation I am using (NASB 1995) The Holy Spirit uses the pronoun 'I' six times in this short four verse passage. As the passages we have examined show conversion starts as the Holy Spirit takes up residence within the person being saved. A new life, a spiritual new birth takes place and all things become new. The New Testament makes it crystal clear that mankind is not only totally sinful, but that we are actually dead spiritually<sup>6</sup>. Its time now to look at our second passage:

Ezekiel 37:1-10 The dry bones:

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, they were very dry. He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know." Again He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.'" "Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. 'I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the LORD.'" So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the

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<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 2:1

bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and behold, sinews were on them, and flesh grew and skin covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then He said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.” So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

What could those bones do to begin or aid in their coming to life? Absolutely nothing at all! Least there be any doubt I quote one more scripture on this aspect of conversion.

Ephesians 2:1-5

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

Clearly then scripture shows that all men and all women are totally dead to anything spiritual. The supposed ability to have any part, no matter how small, in our own choice of Christ, or coming to Christ; apart from the life-giving action of the Holy Spirit is an illusion. Conversion starts with a new principle of life implanted by the Holy Spirit. By this life we can see and act; without this we are totally blind and in fact in hatred against God.

## **Part Two: The Gospel.**

The birth, life, teaching, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is central to biblical conversion. This is what Bible calls the good news, that which the angels declared to the shepherds at Bethlehem when Jesus was born. Therefore, the first four books of the New Testament are called the Gospel's. They tell the story of Jesus Christ. In a sermon I recently heard the Gospel and doctrine were united in this way: ‘Gospel equals doctrine’. I like this very much and agree completely. I also like something else that equates with the Gospel. Let us refer again to the passage from John 3:

John 3:13-18

“No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. “He who

believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed **in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**

I have placed some of the text of verse 18 in bold as that statement means or equals the Gospel. We live in an age of easy believe-ism which began in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century with the advent of the modern missionary movement. What is it to “believe in Jesus”? Is, for example, picturing in our mind’s eye the physical sufferings of Christ in all their gory details, and taking that to be for us personally what is meant? Just look at the idol that the Roman Catholic Church makes of Christ on the cross! Satan does not want us to see the risen Christ, only the suffering one. Or perhaps we can pick and choose some parts of the Bible but reject others in our belief. Or worse yet make the Bible say what we choose rather than what it really teaches. Jesus himself is emphatic on this point. He states that: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.”<sup>7</sup> The Greek word translated ‘name’ in verse 18 is Strong’s number 3686. ὄνομα ὄνόμα. One example from among many shows that Christ’s name is representative of all that he is as the God / man redeemer.

e. Believing in His Name. In Jn. 2:23 believing in the name of Jesus is believing in him as the Christ, the Son of God (3:18). Belief arises through his acts of power (10:25). It confers a right relation to the Father (1:12). God commands it (1 Jn. 3:23).<sup>8</sup>

This is in perfect keeping with Jesus being the way, the truth, and the life. We must see something of the finished work of Christ to be saved. This is not a question of having to be a Bible scholar to be converted. This knowledge comes from the Holy Spirit implanted in regeneration at the start of the conversion process. At that point, the dead come alive, and the blind can see by spiritual sight. Just like when Christ opened the eyes of a blind person, the whole process can be instantaneous. However, like in slow motion photography we can see from the Bible the various parts. Certainly, the person being saved must have some knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, hence the importance of preaching the Gospel in the first place. There must be some fundamental knowledge of who Christ is. The salvation of the thief on the cross is instructive on this subject. We know from the scriptures that the Lord Jesus was crucified between two hardened criminals: one on his left and one on his right hand. **Humanly speaking** all three were suffering the same things physically. This is a particularly important fact to take notice of. One thief was chosen to salvation, but one was left in his condemnation. Here is what Luke tells us about how this change came about.

Luke 23:39-43

One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, “Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!” But the other responded, and rebuking him, said, “Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our crimes; but this man has done nothing wrong.” And he was saying,

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<sup>7</sup> John 14:6

<sup>8</sup> Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (p. 699). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

“Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!” And He said to him,  
“Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

Hanging on the cross, in the same outward physical condition as his Lord and savior the one thief was given eyes to see that Christ was God as well as man; that he was holy and without sin; That he would rise from the dead and reign in heaven; that he alone had the power to save souls; that sinner had the fear of God upon him. He was regenerated. In other words that Christ was indeed the way, the truth, and the life. One moment he was hurling abuse, the next giving glory to God in his saved state.

Conversion then, must include at some level a recognition of Christ as God and man and of his ability to save. That salvation is the work of God and not of man.

### **Part Three: The heart of the Gospel: The Atonement**

My purpose here is limited to the subject of conversion and therefore only a partial treating of this most important subject is given. Below we will examine examples of how Spurgeon handled this matter when pleading with sinners and in his own conversion. Here two verses of John 3 are under consideration:

14 “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man  
be lifted up; 15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

Commentators suggest two aspects of what Christ means when he speaks of being “lifted up” 1. His crucifixion. 2. His exaltation in heaven. I think both are correct. If we lose sight of one, we lose sight of both. Christ’s mediatorial work is a complete work. He was Prophet, Priest and King. Here we are concerned primarily with this priestly office. He was both the priest and the sacrifice offered by himself. Again, if we center in only on one or the other, we lose both.

Scripture, both in the Old and in the New Testament sums up this aspect of Christ’s work as “the blood of the covenant” or just “blood”. Also, by indirect reference like in Isaiah 53:5 “But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.” Many will be more familiar with the King James rendering at the end of the verse: “with his stripes we are healed.” This is such an important concept that volumes have been written about it through the ages<sup>9</sup>.

Sadly, and I have seen this by personal experience, many people take the blood as blood, blood only or primarily. The physical blood that Christ shed. Indeed, the scriptures superficially seem to speak in that way: Hebrews 9:22 says: “And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” However, the sacrificial animals in the Old Testament shed their blood by dying. Death, not the physical blood is the central factor. 1 Peter 2:24 does not actually say that Christ died: “and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the

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<sup>9</sup> For example, a journal article by Leon Morris: THE BIBLICAL USE OF THE TERM 'BLOOD' L. Morris  
The Journal of Theological Studies New Series, Vol. 3, No. 2 (October 1952), pp. 216-227 (12 pages)  
Published By: Oxford University Press

cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds, you were healed.” His death, however, is clearly implied. Finally, 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 states the fact of his death clearly “For I handed down to you as of first importance what I also received, that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that **He was raised on the third day** according to the Scriptures.” In these and all the scriptures that treat of the atonement and priestly office of Christ there is a common factor: **death**. Among other factors like Christ’s sinlessness and divinity it was imperative that he assumed human form. God cannot die. Christ being both fully God and fully man enabled the human part of Christ to die. Without question, all that Christ suffered, in whatever form, is exceedingly precious and worthy of our highest attention. The fact however is that the atonement centers around Christ’s death and resurrection as Paul so clearly states in the passage above. Without these two acts of God there could be no salvation. Therefore, they are of the “first importance”.

Why then was Christ’s death so vital? Let’s look at two passages. Ezekiel 18:20 “**The person who sins will die**. The son will not bear the punishment for the father’s iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son’s iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.” Genesis 2:17 “but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for on the day that you eat from it **you will certainly die**.” Our sin in Adam and our personal sins put us under that curse of God. Physical death and eternal hell are our punishment. Christ took this curse upon himself so that his elect could become his righteousness. He had to die in our place.

An obvious question then is: What happened when Christ died on the cross? For the sake of space and doctrinal clarity I am using a book on the Atonement by Hugh Martin. This is an ideal reference for at least two reasons: 1. His exactness of detail and scriptural conformation. 2. This book is not only highly recommended by Banner of Truth Trust, but it is sold by them.<sup>10,11</sup> The fact that Banner of Truth approves of this book is important because they are one of the main promoters of C. H. Spurgeon and his works. The author, Rev Hugh Martin DD (11 August 1822 – 14 June 1885) was a 19th-century Scottish minister of the Free Church of Scotland. He upheld the Westminster Confession.

Hugh Martin covers many aspects of the Atonement in his book. This includes, in detail, the need for Christ’s physical death on the cross. I will be quoting from Chapter 3 (Atonement and Christ’s Priestly Office), Chapter 4 (Christ’s Priestly Action in His Death), Chapter 5 (Atonement and Intercession), and Chapter 8 (“The Counter-Imputations of Sin and Righteousness”). Chapter 8 deals with the relationship Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 5:21 “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin in our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

At one point in chapter 3 he gives a summary of what has gone before:

For if it be true, in the *first* place, that Priesthood rests on personal relation; in the *second* place, that its whole action is immediately towards God; and in the *third* place, that its immediate action is real action, not mere *sufferings*, but real action, and that action *offering*; then we are prepared to take preliminary and effectual

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<sup>10</sup> Banner approval link: <https://banneroftruth.org/uk/store/theology/the-atonement/>

<sup>11</sup> It can be found on Amazon and many other places as well.

protest against a whole host of heretical ideas, to the effect that they are not even entitled to a hearing...<sup>12</sup>

I love his words near the end of chapter 3. They give much glory to God and illuminate the true nature of the Cross of Christ. The sheer positivity of this section thrills me. It also gives a stark contrast to Spurgeon's views in section 2 below.

He endures the cross. He suffers death. He dies a sufferer. So much the more wondrous is the truth that He dies a conquering agent in dying. He trembles; but He does not faint. He does not swoon but agonize. Any "*agony*" is action to the uttermost. This is the glory of His triumph. **Leave out this view, put aside His priestly agency and priestly action in His death, suppose His agency and action to have been mere death, exhausted, leaving room for passive sufferance and patience merely; and you cannot "glory in the Cross," nor teach the Church of God to glory in it.**<sup>13</sup> You leave the glory of Christ's triumph, and the evidence of Christ's love, deep buried in the shame of Calvary, and in the grave of Golgotha. ...But he died a triumphant agent, He prevailed against death to live until He said, "'Tis finished'," and then to die, not merely voluntarily, but by positive priestly action, giving Himself to God. **The Cross itself is glorious; not from the subsequent resurrection and enthronement, but glorious from itself.** It is itself a chariot of triumph. There is more agency and power in Christ's cross, than in all His work as Creator of the universe. There is as much spiritual glory in the Cross of Calvary, as in the throne of the Lamb in heaven. Christ crucified is – not after, but in being crucified – the Power of God. And He is the Power of God, because He is the Priest of God. ... "He *offered* Himself." "He loved the Church, and *gave* Himself for it."<sup>14</sup>

In part first of the next chapter (the fourth), Hugh Martin makes another arresting observation which is truly relevant to this study. He says:

... There is, indeed, good reason to think that the severe mental exercise for which there is in this simple familiar truth, such manifest scope, is precisely what has let many minds to pass by without any attempt to fathom it. That "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures," they are content to believe. But that in this transaction of the death at Calvary He combined two apparently antagonistic attitudes of suffering and offering; - *suffering* unto such an extent and such intensity as would have quelled all the active powers, not to say the patience, of any but a Divine person; and *offering* also in such activity, and such unquelled and excelling triumphant action, as if no sufferings were making a drain upon His active powers at all; - this is the apparent paradox in the death of Christ which many, we fear, have far too lightly considered.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The Atonement by Hugh Martin, DD; Knox Press (Edinburgh) 15 North Bank Street Edinburgh KH1 2LS 1976; pg. 61 His emphasis.

<sup>13</sup> All emphasis in bold is my own unless otherwise noted.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid: pg. 73, 74

<sup>15</sup> Ibid: pg. 80

At the end of this chapter, he shows that the heart of redemption is the death of Christ. He is refuting Arminian arguments when he states:

... And it is *Redemption* – not removal of bars. The very and immediate action of Christ in dying for His people is intrinsically their *redemption*. He offers Himself to God for them as a sacrifice for their sins; and herein He offers them to God with Himself. And it cannot be too emphatically affirmed, or too gratefully believed, or too resolutely contended, that this *is* their redemption – their redemption, efficacious, complete, and infallible.<sup>16</sup>

In the second part of chapter 5 he gives another summary before going more deeply into Christ's intercession. In doing so he again stresses what is true biblically of the cross of Christ. He states:

Let it be admitted that, in the death of Christ, we have not a mere infliction of the penalty of the law on an unmurmuring sufferer, but an active and vicarious oblation of Himself as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of those for whom, as a representative and priest, Christ is now acting; let the idea of active obedience and oblation on the cross be that on which we fasten, in contemplation the sacrifice of Calvary; and we are ready in possession of the fundamental and constituting notion of the Intercession.<sup>17</sup>

Let us examine what he is saying and put that into simpler words. In both the Old and New Testament Christ is prefigured and portrayed as the sacrificial lamb: "The Lamb of God". In the Old Testament sacrifice (Exodus 12) the Lamb did typically save the people from death. It did suffer death in an outwardly passive way again as a type of Christ. That is true of the other sacrifices as well. All that the various animals, including the lamb, could do was to suffer death. Christ's actual death, which includes the penalty of the law which brought death and the attending suffering means much more than that. Of course, he suffered and died but unlike the animals he was highly active as a Priest in his death. He fulfilled all that the Law of God demanded as an exact payment for the sins of his elect alone. Concentrating on his suffering more than anything else falls far short of the real meaning of his atonement. His death was an offering to God. It was substitutional offering. He for his elect alone. It took away the wrath of God as well as all the sins of the people for whom it was offered and for those alone. If we want to "look unto Jesus" in the context of salvation and conversion these facts are of upmost importance. Remember the Lord's teaching from John 3. How simple yet profound and complete. Remember as well that "salvation is of the Lord." When the Lord saves, he regenerates the man or woman first, they become the fertile ground in the parable of the Sower. Part of the process by its very nature is an enlightened understanding of the God – Man Christ Jesus at some level. It may be a very basic level no more than a grain of faith, a ray of light but it will be a true knowledge containing in it the basic elements we are looking at in detail. Anything less, is not a true looking to Jesus on the cross. The importance of this will become more obvious when we get to section two.

Skipping over many other factors but keeping what we have learned above, it's time to examine how Christ was made our sin and us his righteousness. Let us keep Ephesians 5:2 in mind as we do so: "and

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid: pg. 103

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, pg. 119

walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”

Later in his book Hugh Martin takes up the subject of the “Counter Imputations of Sin and Righteousness”. This is the heart of what I want to convey about the atonement.

The two transactions are imputations, - out and out, exclusively, imputations; pure, unmingled, complete imputations of sin on the one side; pure, unmingled, complete imputations of righteousness on the other.<sup>18</sup>

A simple definition of imputation is: “The act of reckoning a legal debit or credit to an account.” Christ receives our entire **exact** debt (sin); we receive his entire **exact** righteousness (credit). He goes on to state this even more clearly:

Besides, as they are imputations, pure and simple, so they are complete. He is made *all* our sin, as truly as He has none of His own; we are made all His righteousness, as truly as we have none of ours. For it is *we*, wholly and completely, that are His sin; *He*, wholly and completely, that is our righteousness. For *us* He is made sin; in *Him* we are made the righteousness of God. If we are in Him, then all our sin; - the sin of our life, and heart, and nature; - our original sin and our actual sin; our sin that has been, is, and shall be; that sin that dwelleth in us; - in short, the sin that we *are*; - *this*, Christ is made for us. All of us that is sin; all on which the sword of justice could smite, and the sting of death fasten; we ourselves thus are made over to Him as His sin. And all His righteousness; - the righteousness of His heart and life, and nature; His original and His actual righteousness; the entire lovely moral beauty of His person, His every righteous principle of thought, affection, will, desire, and deed; the righteousness, in short, which He is; - this, we are made in Him. ... For it is the whole Christ that is “the end of the law for righteousness unto everyone that believeth.”

It takes all the wonderful definiteness, and precision, and personality out of this transaction **to represent the righteousness of saints as merely something that Christ suffered, or something in which Christ served** on their behalf.<sup>19</sup>

It’s hard to imagine language more vivid or exact. This gives an excellent description of what Paul means in Colossians 2:10 when he says: “and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over every ruler and authority;”

However, Hugh Martin finishes this part with even more to fill us with praise and glory to our God.

... The thread of our sinful state and history and ill-deserving destiny, even from our mother’s womb, He hath conjoined with the thread of His own from the Virgin’s womb, intertwining the two in one, Himself thus made sin for us. And keeping them conjoined in one ... **He hath followed it conjointly with He own, unbroken, down**

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, pg. 216

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, pgs. 217, 218

**into the depths of wrath, and death, and hell,**<sup>20</sup> in which ours had its righteous and inevitable issue. And as purged from our sin, He rose from the dead, and ascended for above all heavens, still He brought the thread of our destiny with Him, entwined still in one with His own, and riveted it forever to the throne of God and of the Lamb, on which throne He now sits, made of God unto us righteousness, we the righteousness of God in Him. Thus perfect and complete are these imputations.<sup>21</sup>

#### **Part Four:** The act of believing in Jesus.

John 3:18: “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

Another part of conversion is saving faith or the act of believing in the Lord Jesus for salvation. Believing in the Gospel if you like. If you ask a search engine on the internet, ‘what does it mean to believe in Jesus Christ?’, be prepared for a myriad of different answers. Our only safe guide is what the Bible says about it. Acts 16:31 states this in its simplest form: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” A fuller explanation is given in Romans 10:9 “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;” Both these passages are equally true if they are understood in the context in which the Bible places them. Being true to the Bible means taking not only both these verses together but all else that the Bible teaches.

Let us examine first what is not saving faith. In Matthew 7:22-23 the Lord Jesus taught us that: “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; leave Me, you who practice lawlessness.’” Jesus is speaking of the Judgment Day, giving us a very stern warning about a false profession of faith. Those he is speaking about not only professed salvation in his name, but they were proud of their self-righteous works. Notice he says many, not few will falsely profess to be his children. They did this in his name, giving the false impression that they trusted in him for their actions. Truly this is a terrifying passage, showing as it does the need for careful self-examination in these matters.

How is it then that these ‘many’ could do such works? There can be only one answer: by satanic power. Satan and his demons know and confess a great deal about Christ. Just look at how they addressed the Lord Jesus through the Gerasene demonic in Mark 5:6,7 “Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; and shouting with a loud voice, he said, ‘What business do You have with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!’” What belief, what high language, what homage: all from demons. They believed in Jesus! These passages, among many others, teach us there is more to believing in Jesus than many presume.

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<sup>20</sup> Emphasis in bold is mine as previously noted

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, pg. 219

True belief, genuine saving faith, comes from God alone. It is a gift from God, something that only God has the right and power to bestow. As stated above “Salvation is of the Lord”. The man or women being saved responds, but it is God, in every sense, who acts first and foremost. The scriptures are very precise on this: John 6:44 “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.” Ephesians 2:8,9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” Titus 3:5 “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we did in righteousness, but in accordance with His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit”.

What then can a person under the conviction of sin do to be the saved? One under conviction, yes even in despair over sin, who has the desire for Christ’s salvation, completely apart for personal merit is on the path of salvation. It is to such that Christ says “Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is comfortable, and My burden is light.”<sup>22</sup> The evidence of being in need and seeing Christ as the only hope of salvation are in themselves signs of true saving faith. No one who is truly seeking will be turned away. The reverse of that is that no one acting from self, apart from the operation of the Holy Spirit, will be saved at all.

Peter in Acts 2:38 shows us another important aspect of true conversion. He says: “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” A conversion without a turning away from sin coupled with an outward profession of faith in Christ is no conversion at all. This is what Paul is telling us in Romans 10:9 (see above). We must confess publicly and believe from our hearts, our in most being, in order to be saved. Neither repentance nor baptism save, they are however results of salvation: human responses to God’s actions.

The 1646 Baptist Confession of Faith, article 22 “Faith is the gift of God” with its scripture references gives us good definition of saving faith.

They state:

## **22. Faith is the gift of God<sup>23</sup>**

Faith is the gift of God, wrought in the hearts of the elect by the Spirit of God; by which faith they come to know and believe the truth of the Scriptures, and the excellency of them above all other writings, and all things in the world, as they hold forth the glory of God in His attributes, the excellency of Christ in His nature and offices, and of the power and fulness of the Spirit in its [His] workings and operations; and so are enabled to cast their souls upon His truth thus believed.

Eph. 2:8,9

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

John 6:29

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22 Matthew 11:28-30

23 <http://www.sgapologetics.com/resources/1646LondonConfession.pdf>

Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”

John 4:10

Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”

Phil. 1:29,30

29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, 30 experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

Gal. 5:22

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

John 17:17

Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

Heb. 4:11,12

11 Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart

John 6:63-65

63 “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. 64 “But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. 65 And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.

**Part Five:** Faith is the gift of God: therefore, who are they that make up the “world” in John 3:16 - 21?

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. “For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”

All mankind, since the fall of Adam are in the class of people that the Lord Jesus describes in verse 20 above unless they have been born again: “For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.” Without God’s intervention all mankind would be included in that little word ‘everyone’. There would be no conversions, no one would be saved. Paul in Romans 3:10-14, quoting from Old Testament passages states that:

... as it is written: “There is no righteous person, not even one; There is no one who understands, There is no one who seeks out God; They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, There is not even one.”  
“Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving,” “The venom of asps is under their lips”; “Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness”

In fact, in the first few chapters of Romans Paul lays out the fact that all mankind: both Jew and Gentile, are under God’s wrath. Hence the Gospel of God is the only hope for anyone.

John 3:16 to 21 quoted above speaks clearly of two groups of people. One, as we have seen including all mankind without exception. Another distinct group whose deeds come from God’s working in them. This world of people love the light and come to it. This is a fact that there are only two classes of people in the whole world: those who love God and those who hate God. All the religions of the world, including atheism and satanism are based on the self-same division. Hating the light or loving the light. Think again of Christ’s declaration: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.”<sup>24</sup> Either the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and God saves alone or man by his own will and design saves. Simply put either ‘Salvation is of the Lord’ or of man. There is no middle ground.

Among those who profess to believe the Bible there are again two and only two choices regarding the means of conversion. The vast majority today give the man or woman, girl or boy some degree of choice. To them the individual person must choose, will, perform or act in some manner before God can save them. To them much of the preacher’s preaching the gospel involves moving the sinner to make this choice, to perform some act toward their personal salvation. No matter what they may say regarding God the final choice is left with man. Their gospel is a man centered gospel with God in the background.

Obviously, I am one of the small company who believe that God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, sovereignly chose in eternity, through the Covenant of Redemption, those, and those alone who would be saved. If it were not for this choice no one would be saved at all. We must be given the right to be saved. In other words, we must be regenerated and given a new heart first. John 1:12-13 shows this clearly: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a man, but of God.”

Scripture clearly teaches predestination and election. In order to be as concise as possible I’m going to summarize and modernize parts of a sermon by the famous Baptist preacher and teacher John Gill.

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<sup>24</sup> John 14:6

III. The nature of this covenant. It is said to be an everlasting one. That is, from everlasting to everlasting. It bears date from all eternity and will continue so for evermore. It springs from the everlasting love of God to his people: that is the source of it. God has loved his people with an everlasting love; not only with a love, which shall abide forever; but with a love which was from all eternity; for, our Lord says to his Divine Father, You have loved them as you have loved me; and you loved me before the foundation of the world (John 17:23, 24). Now this covenant of grace, springs from this love of God; and is as early as that. Jehovah said, in his eternal mind, mercy, love and grace shall be built up for ever; and in order to it, makes this covenant (Ps. 89:2, 3). The basis and foundation of this covenant are, the purposes, decrees, and counsels of the most High; for he does all things after the counsel of his own will; and it may be depended upon, as a most sure and certain thing, that an affair, of so much importance as the covenant of grace is, could not be made any otherwise than after the counsel of his will, and depends upon that counsel; and his counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.

Jesus Christ is the Mediator of this covenant; so, he is more than once called, in the epistle to the Hebrews. As such, he was set up from everlasting; from the beginning, or ever the earth was: and therefore, the covenant of grace, of which he is Mediator, must be as early. ...David considers the promises of it, and especially that grand promise in it, everlasting life by Christ, that was made before the world was; as it is expressly said, Titus 1:2, In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began. Now, there could be no such promise as this, unless there was a covenant so early. All the blessings of this covenant are of as ancient date. They are styled the grace (or blessings of grace) given us in Christ before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9).

And as this covenant is from everlasting, so it is to everlasting, for God has commanded his covenant forever; Holy and Reverend is his name (Ps. 111:9): that is, he has ordained and established this covenant of grace, so as to continue forever; nothing shall ever be able to subvert it or make it null and void. Notwithstanding all that is done by, or done unto, these covenant ones, God will not break his covenant, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips. ...

In the next place, it is ordered in all things. Ordered in all things to advance the glory of all the Three Divine Persons; who are jointly concerned therein. To advance and secure the glory of God the Father, and his eternal choice of persons to everlasting life and happiness, in all his purposes and decrees concerning them; which, through this covenant taking place, have their full and complete accomplishment. As also to advance the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; who is the Mediator, surety, and messenger of this covenant: the federal head and representative of the body the church, and the Savior thereof; that in all things he may have the preeminence. And to advance the glory of the blessed Spirit; whose office it is to be the applier of the grace of this covenant to take of the things of God and of Christ, and shew them unto those who are interested in them; and to convey and apply all

grace, needful for them in time, till they come into an eternal world. ... In short it contains all things needful for them here, and eternal glory and happiness hereafter.

And then it is a covenant that is sure. Sure to Christ, the Covenant Head; and sure to all the seed. Sure to Christ. All the promises made to him are sure as, that he shall see his seed; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. And that he should be exalted on high; therefore, when he fulfilled the work, he said, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee, before the world was (John 17:4,5). It is sure to all the seed, and spiritual offspring: all the promises of it made to them, in him, are yea, and amen. All the blessings and mercies of it, are the sure mercies of David; and the surer, as they are put into the hands of Christ, their covenant head and representative: so their spiritual and eternal life is hid with Christ in God: safe and secure: and because he lives, they shall live also. <sup>25</sup>

God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit from all eternity determined who to save and the way to accomplish that salvation. It is all of God and all by grace alone. Nothing is left to man; nothing is left to chance. God's purpose in Christ is sure and steadfast. Only his elect will be saved but their salvation is certain and has been from and to all time. Christ died for the elect alone.

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<sup>25</sup> THE SUPPORT OF A BELIEVER UNDER OUTWARD AND INWARD TROUBLES. 2 SAMUEL 23:5. The Stability of the Covenant of Grace. Part 2 By John Gill As noted the text is edited and abridged.

## Section Two: ‘Conversion’ in Spurgeon’s experience and preaching

### Preface

Spurgeon loudly and frequently proclaimed himself to be a Calvinist. He is held up almost universally as the greatest Calvinistic Baptist preacher of all time. He fervently showed again and again his professed adherence to what are called the Five Points of Calvinism. The acronym of which is TULIP. Two quotations will suffice at the point to show the factualness of what I am stating.

And I have **my own private opinion** that there is no such a thing as preaching Christ and him crucified, unless you preach what **now-a-days** is called Calvinism. I have **my own ideas**, and those I always state boldly. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the gospel, if we do not preach justification by faith, without works; nor unless we preach the sovereignty of God in his dispensation of grace; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering, love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel, unless we base it upon the peculiar redemption which Christ made for his elect and chosen people; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called, and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation after having believed. Such a gospel I abhor. The gospel of the Bible is not such a gospel as that. We preach Christ and him crucified in a different fashion, and to all gainsayers we reply, “We have not so learned Christ.”<sup>26</sup>

Brethren, hold the five points of the Calvinistic doctrine, but mind you do not hold them as babbling questions. What you have received of God do not learn in order to fight with it, and to make contention and strife, and to divide the church of God, and rail against the people of the Most high, as some do.<sup>27</sup>

The Bible passages we have looked at above are intimately connected with the ‘Five Points’. The five points of Calvinism are often summarized by the acronym TULIP. T stands for total depravity, U for unconditional election, L for limited atonement, I for irresistible grace, and P for perseverance of the saints. What is important to understand is that these titles and the acronym are only guides, like flash cards. Their purpose is to help us to understand and present in a logical way what the scriptures teach. Enough has been stated in section one above to give the reader some idea of what the ‘Five Points’ are about. Simply put Spurgeon professed to believe and firmly hold to the beliefs represented by these five points. The purpose of the section, which makes up the bulk of this document is to examine this claim: Did he really uphold these doctrines **in the historic, orthodox meaning of them?**

Notice in the quotation above I bolded the words: “**my own private opinion**” and “unless you preach what **now-a-days** is called Calvinism” Here he is making a clear distinction between what was historically Calvinism and what he saw, in his day as Calvinism. He did, as we shall see, substitute historic Calvinism (now-a-days often termed hyper-Calvinism) with a false non-Calvinism.

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<sup>26</sup> Sermon number 98 - New Park Street Pulpit 1:100)

<sup>27</sup> Sermon number 3394 - Metropolitan Pulpit 60:121)

## Part One: Spurgeon's conversion

The first part of the title of this study is "Spurgeon on Conversion". Fortunately for our purposes Spurgeon has given an incredibly detailed account of his conversion experience. Not only so, but he also refers very frequently to that experience in his published sermons for every year they were published. There is a wealth of resource material available in his very own words. When we know where and how to look all is clearly seen. As the Lord Jesus said: "But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. 'For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.'"<sup>28</sup>

Spurgeon's fullest account of his conversion is found in his autobiography. This is available on the internet for free, for a small price in printed form from Amazon and other sources. It runs to many pages and contains a lot of needless rhetoric. For these reasons I will confine my remarks to what I feel are the most relevant parts for this study. For a full and glowing account of his conversion experience I would recommend Thomas Geoff's "The Conversion of Charles Haddon Spurgeon: January 6, 1850. This was published by the Banner of Truth, July 1, 2000, and is available for free from their site."<sup>29</sup> I will readily acknowledge that almost anyone who reads the account published by Spurgeon will come away with a favorable estimation. Such is Spurgeon's command of English and the power of his suasion. I leave it to the reader to decide but I find the account to be full of contradictions and indeed dubious as a whole. Its title is "CONVERSION THE GREAT CHANGE AND EXPERIENCES AFTER CONVERSION" by Charles Spurgeon.

Near the end of his introduction, he states:<sup>30</sup>

Dying, all but dead, diseased, pained, chained, scourged, bound in fetters of iron, in darkness and the shadow of death, Jesus appeared unto me. **My eyes looked to Him;** the disease was healed, the pains removed, chains were snapped, prison doors were opened, darkness gave place to light. What delight filled my soul! — what mirth, what ecstasy, what sound of music and dancing, what soaring's towards Heaven, what heights and depths of ineffable delight! Scarcely ever since then have I known joys which surpassed the rapture of that first hour. — C. H. S.

Shortly after he states:

When I was in the hand of the Holy Spirit, under conviction of sin, I had a clear and sharp sense of the justice of God. Sin, whatever it might be to other people, became to me an intolerable burden. **It was not so much that I feared hell, as that I feared sin;** and all the while, I had upon my mind a deep concern for the honor of God's name, and the integrity of His **moral government. I felt that it would not satisfy my**

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<sup>28</sup> Matthew 12:36,37

<sup>29</sup> <https://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2000/the-conversion-of-charles-haddon-spurgeon-january-6-1850/>

<sup>30</sup> Please note again any emphasis in any of the quotations is mine alone

**conscience if I could be forgiven unjustly.** But then there came the question, — “How could God be just, and yet justify me who had been so guilty?” I was worried and wearied with this question; neither could I see any answer to it. Certainly, I could never have invented an answer which would have satisfied my conscience. The doctrine of the atonement is to my mind one of the surest proofs of the Divine inspiration of Holy Scripture. Who would or could have thought of the just Ruler dying for the unjust rebel? This is no teaching of human mythology, or dream of poetical imagination. This **method of expiation** is only known among men because it is a fact: fiction could not have devised it. God Himself ordained it; it is not a matter which could have been imagined.

I had heard of the plan of salvation by the sacrifice of Jesus from my youth up, but I did not know any more about it in my innermost soul than if I had been born and bred a Hottentot. The light was there, but I was blind: it was of necessity that the Lord Himself should make the matter plain to me. It came to me as a new revelation, as fresh as if I had never read in Scripture that Jesus was declared to be **the propitiation for sins** that God might be just. I believe it will have to come as a revelation to every new-born child of God whenever he sees it; I mean that glorious doctrine of the substitution of the Lord Jesus. I came to understand that salvation was possible **through vicarious sacrifice**; and that provision had been made in the first constitution and arrangement of things for such a **substitution**. I was made to see that He who is the Son of God, co-equal, and co-eternal with the Father, had of old been made the covenant Head of a chosen people, that He might in that capacity suffer for them and save them. Inasmuch as our fall was not at the first a personal one, for we fell in our federal representative, the first Adam, it became possible for us to be recovered by a second Representative, even by Him who has undertaken to be the covenant Head of His people, so as to be their second Adam. I saw that, ere I actually sinned, I had fallen by my first father's sin; and I rejoiced that, therefore, **it became possible in point of law for me to rise by a second Head and Representative. The fall by Adam left a loophole of escape; another Adam could undo the ruin wrought by the first. ...** Personally, I could never have overcome my own sinfulness. I tried and failed. My evil propensities were too many for me, till, **in the belief that Christ died for me, I cast my guilty soul on Him, and then I received a conquering principle by which I overcame my sinful self.**

**The doctrine of the cross** can be used to slay sin, even as the old warriors used their huge two-handed swords, and mowed down their foes at every stroke. There is nothing like faith in the sinners' Friend: it overcomes all evil. If Christ has died for me, ungodly as I am, without strength as I am, then I cannot live in sin any longer, but must **arouse myself** to love and serve Him who hath redeemed me. I cannot trifle with the evil which slew my best Friend. **I must be holy for His sake. How can I live in sin when He has died to save me from it?**

There was a day, as I took my walks abroad, when I came hard by a spot for ever engraven upon my memory, for there I saw this Friend, my best, my only Friend, murdered. **I stooped down in sad affright and looked at Him. I saw that His hands**

**had been pierced with rough iron nails, and His feet had been rent in the same way. There was misery in His dead countenance so terrible that I scarcely dared to look upon it. His body was emaciated with hunger, His back was red with bloody scourges, and His brow had a circle of wounds about it: clearly could one see that these had been pierced by thorns. I shuddered,** for I had known this Friend full well. He never had a fault; He was the purest of the pure, the holiest of the holy.

... I felt myself most guilty **while I bowed over His corpse... My sins were the scourges which lacerated those blessed shoulders, and crowned with thorns those bleeding brows: my sins cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and laid the cross upon His gracious shoulders.**

Before proceeding on with his account let's examine the quotations above. Notice first that he gives a technical description of salvation. Three facts are especially noteworthy: 1. He speaks of the atonement in terms of "moral government" 2. The one and only time he uses the word "propitiation" its use is confined to very narrow sphere. He refers to it as something he knew of before his conversion experience. 3. Again with reference to the atonement he speaks of expiation but not of propitiation. After this there is an abrupt change in content and manner. The "doctrine of the cross" is presented in a very, may I say gory physical way. He draws us to the physical and very much away from the spiritual aspects of the atonement. To me, at least, this is very suggestive. Just think of what Jesus taught in the latter part of John 6. In that passage he teaches that salvation and walking with him involves eating his flesh and drinking his blood. In other words, as physical a representation as possible. Many left off following him and were greatly offended. Then in verse 63 he explains: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh provides no benefit; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." I am in no way lessening or negating the physical suffering of Christ. 1 Peter 4:1 says: "Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin," The reference there is the Christ becoming man and all that he suffered unto and including physical death as man. I'm seeking, though, to follow the Lord's own teaching on this subject in order to compare it to Spurgeon's.

Shortly after this he writes:

**Many a man has been slandered and abused, but never was man abused as God has been. Many have been treated cruelly and ungratefully, but never was one treated as our God has been. I, too, once despised Him. He knocked at the door of my heart, and I refused to open it,** He came to me, times without number, morning by morning, and night by night; He checked me in my conscience, and spoke to me by His Spirit, and when, at last, the thunders of the law prevailed in my conscience, I thought that Christ was cruel and unkind. Oh, I can never forgive myself that I should have thought so ill of Him! But what a loving reception did I have when **I went to Him! ...**

**There is a power in God's gospel beyond all description.** Once I, like Mazeppa, lashed to the wild horse of my lust, bound hand and foot, incapable of resistance, was galloping on with hell's wolves behind me, howling for my body and my soul as their just and lawful prey. There came a mighty hand which stopped that wild horse, cut

my bands, set me down, and brought me into liberty. **Is there power in the gospel? Ay, there is, and he who has felt it must acknowledge it. There was a time when I lived in the strong old castle of my sins and rested in my own works. There came a trumpeter to the door and bade me open it. I with anger chide him from the porch and said he ne'er should enter. Then there came a goodly Personage, with loving countenance; His hands were marked with scars where nails had been driven, and His feet had nail-prints, too. He lifted up His cross, using it as a hammer; at the first blow, the gate of my prejudice shook; at the second, it trembled more; at the third, down it fell, and in He came; ... I know it is a thing of might, because it has conquered me, and bowed me down. "His free grace alone, from the first to the last, Hath won my affections, and bound my soul fast."**

**In my conversion, the very point lay in making the discovery that I had nothing to do but to look to Christ, and I should be saved.**

In this quote Spurgeon deals more specifically with his actual conversion, giving as we shall see more details afterward. Again, there is talk of "free grace" but the physical suffering on the cross are turned into a hammer to break open the door of his heart. When examined carefully there is a consuming concentration on the physical. As we shall see this trend continues. Spurgeon also explicitly refers to Revelation 3:20 though he does not quote it. Christ, he says, came knocking at the door of his heart, not once but "times without number". Spurgeon refused to answer! This is a theme we see often in Spurgeon: the great Calvinistic preacher using the standard tools of the Arminian preacher and track writer. Again, as his words both here and elsewhere show this is a second trend that weaves its way throughout all he says about conversion. Here are his words again: "In my conversion, the very point lay in making the discovery that I had nothing to do but to look to Christ, and I should be saved."

He then gives a long account of his search for salvation through books and preachers. This includes some very picturesque language including a raven who finds its resting place on a floating body: "The raven had found its resting-place upon a floating body and was feeding itself upon the carrion of some drowned man's carcass; but my poor soul found no rest. I flew on; ..." Part of his search was through different preachers. One is very noteworthy: "One man preached **Divine Sovereignty**; I could hear him with pleasure, but **what was that sublime truth to a poor sinner who wished to know what he must do to be saved?** ... what I wanted to know was, — 'How can I get my sins forgiven?' — and they never told me that." Now the very statement of Jonah that: "Salvation is of the Lord" means that it is a sovereign act of God. Spurgeon rejects this outright, needing a gospel that gives man something to do. I realize that my reader may be offended at this, even shocked that I should say such a thing. Please if such is the case do as the Bereans did and search out the truth of this matter for yourself. Read the source material, read the positive account published by the Banner of Truth I referenced before. Don't just accept or reject, rather seek the Holy Spirit's mind on this very important matter. Please also read on as my statement is backed up by what follows.

A little further on he comes to his actual conversion experience which he gives us in some detail. He makes a special point to stress the ignorance of the Methodist lay preacher who was instrumental in the process. He even goes to the length of telling us that the man could not even pronounce the words of his short sermon correctly. For example: "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.’”

Speaking directly to Spurgeon the preacher said:

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 had 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. Oh, that somebody had told me this before, “Trust Christ, and you shall be saved.” Yet it was, no doubt, all wisely ordered, and now I can say, —

“E'er since by faith I saw the stream  
**Thy flowing wounds supply,**  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die.”

... I had passed from darkness into marvelous light, from death to life. Simply by looking to Jesus, ...

This Methodist lay preacher stressed some things that Spurgeon fails to stress:

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 am dead and buried. Look unto Me; I rise again. Look unto Me; I ascend to Heaven. Look unto Me; I am sittin' at the Father's right hand.**

Spurgeon is stressing the utter simplicity of the message and minister for a purpose. Unfortunately, it's not to exalt the sovereignty of God. It is to make the gospel as rudimentary as possible. I spoke above about easy believe-ism. I would like to illustrate what I mean using a simple illustration. If you were extremely sick, in pain, bleeding and in fear of your life (true conviction of sin) you would seek medical help. A doctor would be most likely (a pastor). Would you be satisfied if the doctor looked at you, perhaps took your temperature and felt your pulse and then simply told you to take two pills of uncertain benefit and then sleep for ten hours? (a free will type of gospel answer). Even if you were, by some chance, feeling better your underlying condition would not have changed. Sooner or later (at the day of judgment) you would realize this to your final damnation. Any right-minded person would seek the best possible care as the earliest opportunity. The doctrines of free will, Arminianism easy

believe-ism have watered down the gospel to the extent that there is virtually no gospel left. It is in fact an anti-gospel.

Spurgeon goes on to relate the emotions he felt when “my soul cast itself on Jesus” He then continues:

Between half-past ten o'clock, when I entered that chapel, and half-past twelve o'clock, when I was back again at home, what a change had taken place in me! I had passed from darkness into marvelous light, from death to life. **Simply by looking to Jesus**, I had been delivered from despair, and I was brought into such a joyous state of mind that, when they saw me at home, they said to me, “Something wonderful has happened to you;” and I was eager to tell them all about it. . . . Yes, I had looked to Jesus as I was, and found in Him my Savior. Thus had the eternal purpose of Jehovah decreed it; and as, the moment before, there was none more wretched than I was, so, **within that second**, there was none more joyous. It took no longer time than does the lightning-flash; it was done, and never has it been undone. I looked, and lived, and leaped in joyful liberty as I beheld my sin **punished** upon **the great Substitute** and put away forever. I looked unto Him, **as He bled upon that tree**; His eyes darted a glance of love unutterable into my spirit, and in a moment, I was saved.

Looking unto Him, the bruises that my soul had suffered were healed, the gaping wounds were cured, the broken bones rejoiced, the rags that had covered me were all removed, my spirit was white as the spotless snows of the far-off North; I had melody within my spirit, for I was saved, washed, cleansed, forgiven, **through Him that did hang upon the tree. My Master, I cannot understand how Thou couldst stoop Thine awful head to such a death as the death of the cross, — how Thou couldst take from Thy brow the coronet of stars which from old eternity had shone resplendent there; but how Thou shouldst permit the thorn-crown to gird Thy temples, astonishes me far more. That Thou shouldst cast away the mantle of Thy glory, the azure of Thine everlasting empire, I cannot comprehend: but how Thou shouldst have become veiled in the ignominious purple for a while, and then be mocked by impious men, who bowed to Thee as a pretended king; and how Thou shouldst be stripped naked to Thy shame, without a single covering, and die a felon's death; — this is still more incomprehensible.** But the marvel is that Thou shouldst have suffered all this for me! Truly, Thy love to me is wonderful, passing the love of women! Was ever grief like Thine? Was ever love like Thine, that could open the flood-gates of such grief? Was ever love so mighty as to become the fount from which such an ocean of grief could come rolling down? There was never anything so true to me as those bleeding hands, and that thorn-crowned head.

Here as before there is overwhelming emphasis of the physical sufferings of Christ. Spurgeon goes on to give a definition of the gospel:

I have always considered, with Luther and Calvin, that **the sum and substance of the gospel lies in that word Substitution**, — Christ standing in the stead of man.

If I understand the gospel, it is this: I deserve to be lost forever; **the only reason why I should not be damned is, that Christ was punished in my stead**, and there is no need to execute a sentence twice for sin. On the other hand, I know I cannot enter Heaven unless I have a perfect righteousness; I am absolutely certain I shall never have one of my own, for I find I sin every day; but then Christ had a perfect righteousness, and He said, “There, poor sinner, take My garment, and put it on; you shall stand before God as if you were Christ, and I will stand before God as if I had been the sinner; I will **suffer** in the sinner's stead, and you shall be rewarded for works which you did not do, but which I did for you.” I find it very convenient every day to come to Christ as a sinner, as I came at the first.

One final quotation from this source. Twice in this document Spurgeon uses the word ‘expiate’. Both times in reference to Christ’s work. The one reference is near the beginning of this section. Here is the second that occurs shortly before the previous quote given above.

That stern law-work had hammered me into such a condition that, if there had been fifty other saviors, I could not have thought of them, — I was driven to this One. I wanted a Divine Savior, **I wanted One who was made a curse for me, to expiate my guilt. I wanted One who had died, for I deserved to die.** I wanted One who had risen again, who was able by His life to make me live. I wanted the exact Savior that stood before me in the Word, revealed to my heart; and I could not help having Him.

Also, in the quotation above he makes one of a number of references to Christ’s death. In these references he points out that Christ died for him, in other words a simple statement.

In his account, undoubtedly and without dispute, the physical aspects of Christ’s life and death coupled with this divinity dominate Spurgeon’s thoughts and emotions. The priestly office of Christ (his being the sacrifice and the priest offering that sacrifice) are to be found in some few theological words alone. He used the word “atonement” only twice and that near the beginning of his discourse. His descriptions of the cross, as we have seen are wholly physical in nature. What exactly does the atonement mean to Spurgeon? What do the sufferings of Christ encompass? He uses a lot of the correct terminology giving the impression that his views are completely orthodox. We will next examine several sermons to get a better understanding of his views.

## **Part Two Spurgeon on “Looking to Jesus” a false atonement**

I have chosen the following two sermons for numerous reasons. Firstly, the one is representative of Spurgeon’s early years (1858) and the second his prime, mature years (1886). Secondly because of the titles he gave each: “Looking unto Jesus” and “The Heart of the Gospel”. What could be more appropriate to the topic of conversion? Thirdly because of the scriptures he bases the sermons on. Especially the second sermon. Fourthly due to the phrases and words that he uses. My purpose is not to trick or deceive my reader in any way. Nor is it to misrepresent Spurgeon in any matter either. Years ago, I studied John Calvin in some detail. I concluded that I could often use him to present two opposite sides of the same doctrine or argument. His writing is so vast and detailed, his concentration so intense

that his arguments are not always consistent. Spurgeon is much the same, though I think for different reasons. In both cases though, doctrine was taught that cannot be ignored. We cannot in fairness to the truth pick just what we like or dislike. Spurgeon preached these sermons. They are his words, not mine. They have meaning and it behooves us to examine what he taught, remembering that we are concentrating here about ‘Conversion’ and “Looking unto Jesus” (the Cross).

The first sermon then is “Looking unto Jesus”<sup>31</sup>. The scripture given is Psalm 34:5 “They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.”

First, then, we shall LOOK TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IN HIS LIFE.

... Come, my tried brother, “Look unto Him and be lightened.” No longer groan over your own miseries, but come with me and look unto Him, if you can. See the Garden of Olives? It is a cold night, and the ground is crisp beneath your feet for **the frost is hard. And there in the gloom of the olive garden, kneels your Lord. Listen to Him! Can you understand the music of His groans, the meaning of His sighs? Surely your griefs are not as heavy as His were, when drops of blood were forced through His skin and a bloody sweat did stain the ground!** Say, are your trials greater than His? If then, He had to combat with the powers of darkness, expect too also do so! And look to Him in the last solemn hour of His extremity and hear Him say, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” And when you have heard that, murmur not, as though some strange thing had happened to you—as if you have to join in His “*lama sabachthani*”—and have to sweat some few drops of His bloody sweat. **“They looked unto Him and were lightened.”**

... II. And now, I have to invite you to a **more dreary** sight. But strange it is, just as the sight becomes blacker, so to us does it grow brighter! **The more deeply the Savior dived into the depths of misery, the brighter were the pearls which He brought up—the greater His griefs, the greater our joys, and the deeper His dishonor, the brighter our glories!** Come, then—and this time I shall ask poor, doubting, trembling sinners and saints to come with me—come now to Calvary’s cross. There, on the summit of that little hill, outside the gates of Jerusalem, where common criminals were ordinarily put to death—the Tyburn of Jerusalem, the Old Bailey of that city where criminals were executed—there stand three crosses. The center one is reserved for one who is reputed to be the greatest of criminals! See there! They have nailed Him to the cross! It is the Lord of life and glory, before whose feet angels delight to pour full vials of glory. They have nailed Him to the cross—He hangs there in mid-heaven, dying, bleeding—He is thirsty, and He cries. They bring Him vinegar and thrust it into His mouth. He is in suffering, and He needs sympathy, but they mock Him and they say, “He saved others, Himself He cannot save.” They misquote His words; they challenge Him now to destroy the temple and build it in three days. While the very thing was being fulfilled, they taunt Him with His powerlessness to accomplish it! **Now see Him, before the veil is**

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<sup>31</sup> NO. 195 DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 23, 1858,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**drawn over agonies too black for eyes to behold. See Him now! Was ever face marred like that face? Was ever heart so big with agony? And did eyes ever seem so pregnant with the fire of suffering as those great wells of fiery agony? Come and behold Him! Come and look at Him now. The sun is eclipsed, refusing to behold Him! The earth quakes; the dead rise; the horrors of His sufferings have startled earth itself—**

“He dies! The friend of sinners dies.”

And we invite you to look to this scene that you may be lightened. What are your doubts this morning? Whatever they are, they can find a kind and fond solution here—**by looking at Christ on the cross!** You have come here, perhaps, doubting God’s mercy. Look to Christ upon the cross and can you doubt it then? **If God were not full of mercy and plenteous in His compassion, would He have given His Son to bleed and die? Do you think that a Father would rend His darling from His heart, and nail Him to a tree that He might suffer an ignominious death for our sakes and yet be hard, merciless, and without pity?** God forbid the impious thought! There must be mercy in the heart of God or else there had never been a cross on Calvary!

But do you doubt God’s power to save? Are you saying to yourself this morning, “How can He forgive so great a sinner as I am?” Oh, look there, sinner, **look there to the great atonement made—to the utmost ransom paid! Do you think that that blood has not an efficacy to pardon and to justify?** True, without that cross it had been an unanswerable question—“How can God be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly?” **But see there the bleeding substitute! And know that God has accepted His sufferings as an equivalent for the woes of all believers! And then let your spirit dare to think, if it can, that the blood of Christ is not sufficient to enable God to vindicate His justice and yet to have mercy upon sinners.**

But I know you say, “My doubt is not of His general mercy, nor of His power to forgive, but of His willingness to forgive me.” Now I beseech you, by Him that lives and was dead, do not this morning look into your own heart in order to find an answer to that difficulty! Do not sit down and look at your sins. They have brought you into the danger—they cannot bring you out of it. **The best answer you will ever get is at the foot of the cross. Sit down, when you get home this morning, for half-an-hour in quiet contemplation. Sit at the foot of the cross and contemplate the dying Savior and I will defy you, then, to say, “I doubt His love to me.” Looking at Christ begets faith! You cannot believe on Christ except as you see Him and if you look to Him you will learn that He is able to save!** You will learn his loving kindness. And you cannot doubt Him after having once beheld Him. Dr. Watts says

“His worth, if all the nations knew,  
Surely the whole world would love Him too,”  
and I am sure it is quite true if I read it another way—  
“His worth, if all the nations knew

Surely the whole world would trust Him too.”

Oh, that you would look to Him now and your doubts would soon be removed, for **there is nothing that so speedily kills all doubt and fear as a look into the loving eyes of the bleeding, dying Lord!**... Stop! Look to Him and be lightened. What business have you to be looking to yourself? The first business of a sinner is not with himself, but with Christ! Your business is to come to Christ—sick, weary and soul-diseased—and ask Christ to cure you. You are not to be your own physician and then go to Christ—but just as you are! The only salvation for you is to trust implicitly, simply, nakedly on Christ. As I sometimes put it—make Christ the only pillar of your hope and never seek to buttress or prop Him up. **“He is able, He is willing.” All He asks of you is just to trust Him!**... But remember, it is not your repentance that saves you—it is **the blood of Christ streaming from His hands and feet and side!** Oh, I beseech you by Him whose servant I am. This morning turn your eyes to the cross of Christ! There He hangs this day. He is lifted up in your midst. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so is the Son of Man lifted up today in your eyes that whoever believes in Him may not perish, but have everlasting life!

I have read and examined this sermon carefully to see what there is of the Priestly office of Christ; of the imputation of our sins to him, of the atonement we studied above. I found nothing! The closest he comes is in his fifth of six points where he says:

V. And now once more “Look unto him and be lightened.” See there he sits is, heaven, **he has led captivity captive, and now sits at the right hand of God, forever making intercession for us.** Can your faith picture him to-day? Like a great high priest of old, he stands with outstretched arms: **there is majesty in his mien, for he is no mean cringing suppliant. He does not beat his breast, nor cast his eyes upon the ground, but with authority he pleads enthroned in glory now. There on his head is the bright shining mitre of his priesthood, and look you, on his breast are glittering the precious stones whereon the names of his elect are everlastingly engraved;** hear him as he pleads, hear you not what it is? —is that your prayer that he is mentioning before the throne? The prayer that this morning you offered ere you came to the house of God, Christ is now offering before his Father's throne. The vow which just now you uttered when you said, “Have pity and have mercy,”—he is now uttering there. **He is the Altar and the Priest, and with his own sacrifice he perfumes our prayers.**

He refers to Christ as altar, priest, and sacrifice in reference to Christ's intercession but not in reference to his atonement. Also, his words in this fifth section are very unguarded. How can one tell if he is speaking only to the saved or to both groups? He appears to be speaking to both, if so, this is again not preaching the true gospel but an Arminian version.

The second sermon is “The Heart of The Gospel”<sup>32</sup>. The scripture given is 2 Corinthians 5:20, 21 “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Christ was not guilty and could not be made guilty; but **he was treated as if he were guilty**, because he willed to stand in the place of the guilty. Yea, he was not only treated as a sinner, but he was treated **as if he had been sin itself in the abstract**. This is an amazing utterance. The sinless one was made to be sin.

Sin pressed our great Substitute very sorely. He felt the weight of it in the Garden of Gethsemane, where he “sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground.” The full pressure of it came upon him when he was nailed to the accursed tree. There in the hours of darkness he bore infinitely more than we can tell. We know that he bore condemnation from the mouth of man, so that it is written, “He was numbered with the transgressors.” **We know that he bore shame for our sakes. Did not your hearts tremble last Sunday evening when our text was, “Then did they spit in his face?” It was a cruel scorn that exhausted itself upon his blessed person. This, I say, we know. We know that he bore pains innumerable of body and of mind: he thirsted, he cried out in the agony of desertion, he bled, he died. We know that he poured out his soul unto death and yielded up the ghost. But there was at the back, and beyond all this, an immeasurable abyss of suffering.** The Greek Liturgy fitly speaks of “Thine unknown sufferings:” probably to us they are unknowable sufferings. He was God as well as man, and the Godhead lent an omnipotent power to the manhood, so that there was compressed within his soul, and endured by it, an amount of anguish of which we can form no conception. **I will say no more: it is wise to veil what it is impossible to depict.** This text both veils and discovers his sorrow, as it says, “He made him to be sin.” Look into the words. Perceive their meaning, if you can. The angels desire to look into it. Gaze into this terrible crystal. Let your eyes search deep into this opal, within whose jeweled depth there are flames of fire. The Lord made the perfectly innocent one to be sin for us: that means more of humiliation, darkness, agony, and death than you can conceive. It brought a kind of distraction and well-nigh a destruction to the tender and gentle spirit of our Lord. **I do not say that our substitute endured a hell, that were unwarrantable. I will not say that he endured either the exact punishment for sin, or an equivalent for it; but I do say that what he endured rendered to the justice of God a vindication of his law more clear and more effectual than would have been rendered to it by the damnation of the sinners for whom he died.** The cross is under many aspects a more full revelation of the wrath of God against human sin than even Tophet, and the smoke of torment which goeth up for ever and ever. **Who would know God’s hate of sin must see the Only Begotten bleeding in body and bleeding**

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<sup>32</sup> NO. 1910 A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING,  
JULY 18TH, 1886, BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**in soul even unto death:** he must, in fact, spell out each word of my text, and read its innermost meaning. There, my brethren, I am ashamed of the poverty of my explanation, and I will therefore only repeat the full and sublime language of the apostle — “He hath made him to be sin for us.” It is more than “He hath put him to grief;” it is more than “God hath forsaken him;” it is more than “The chastisement of our peace was upon him;” it is the most suggestive of all descriptions — “He hath made him to be sin for us.” Oh **depth of terror**, and yet height of love!

Let us look again at one part, as it is an astonishing statement!

I do not say that our substitute endured a hell, that were unwarrantable. **I will not say that he endured either the exact punishment for sin, or an equivalent for it;** but I do say that what he endured rendered to the justice of God a vindication of his law more clear and more effectual than would have been rendered to it by the damnation of the sinners for whom he died.

According to Spurgeon, God accepted something less than even an equivalent of what our sins deserved. That signifies and can only signify, if words have any meaning at all, that our very righteousness in heaven is something less than the righteousness of Christ himself. As we saw in Part One on the Atonement the Scales of the Justice of God must be balanced. In order to make the atonement as broad as possible, while still seeming to believe in Limited Atonement, Spurgeon waters down the real meaning of Christ’s death to physical suffering and something less than the justice the Law of God requires.

### **Part Three Spurgeon’s source and its error exposed.**

It’s time to pause for a moment and reflect again on Doctor Hugh Martin’s “The Atonement”. My objective here is threefold: 1. To show how unbiased a resource that book is. 2. To use that book as a benchmark, marking out what Christ did in his death on the cross. 3. To show in more detail the error of Spurgeon’s teaching. I quoted from various chapters of this book in Section One, Part Three above. I mentioned The Banner of Truth Trust and their approval of his book. Here is a brief quotation from one of their reviews: “The way in which he penetrates to the heart of the work of Christ and then expounds the gospel out of its true centre calls for our best thinking and humblest Spirit’s.”<sup>33</sup> On the same webpage there is a short video by Derek Thomas. In this he states that if he could have only one book on the Atonement it would be Hugh Martin’s. Without question The Banner of Truth Trust, that bastion of support for Spurgeon, approves of this book.

Turning then to my second purpose here is a quotation I have already given but which needs to be repeated here:

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<sup>33</sup> <https://banneroftruth.org/uk/store/theology/the-atonement/>

Besides, as they are imputations, pure and simple, so they are complete. He is made *all* our sin, as truly as He has none of His own; we are made all His righteousness, as truly as we have none of ours. For it is *we*, wholly and completely, that are His sin; *He*, wholly and completely, that is our righteousness. For *us* He is made sin; in *Him* we are made the righteousness of God. If we are in Him, then all our sin; - the sin of our life, and heart, and nature; - our original sin and our actual sin; our sin that has been, is, and shall be; that sin that dwelleth in us; - in short, the sin that we *are*; - *this*, Christ is made for us. All of us that is sin; all on which the sword of justice could smite, and the sting of death fasten; we ourselves thus are made over to Him as His sin. And all His righteousness; - the righteousness of His heart and life, and nature; His original and His actual righteousness; the entire lovely moral beauty of His person, His every righteous principle of thought, affection, will, desire, and deed; the righteousness, in short, which He is; - this, we are made in Him. ...For it is the whole Christ that is “the end of the law for righteousness unto everyone that believeth.”

It takes all the wonderful definiteness, and precision, and personality out of this transaction **to represent the righteousness of saints as merely something that Christ suffered, or something in which Christ served**<sup>34</sup> on their behalf.<sup>35</sup>

Simply put Spurgeon’s view of the Atonement is **not** the same as Hugh Martin’s. Martin’s is based on the Bible. Spurgeon’s is based on the false teaching of Andrew Fuller. Martin was refuting the teachings of Fuller among other false views. For many years now Christian leaders like Spurgeon and J. I. Packer have hidden behind a belief in contradictions. Two things they say seem opposed to each other, but they are both equally true. They use fancy names like “antinomy”. Not only is that erroneous but it cannot apply in this case. To put it quite simply Spurgeon is saying Christ did something indefinite and partial, Martin that Christ did something exact and complete. Spurgeon that the physical sufferings of Christ are all important, the center of the Gospel. Martin that death as an exact substitute that including his sufferings are all important.

In order both to see and to understand that Spurgeon is the mouthpiece of Fuller it’s important that we hear from Fuller on this subject. In typical double speak he says:

“1. Did not the law of God require of Christ, considered as a man, a perfect obedience on his own account? If it did, how can that obedience be imputed to sinners for their justification?”

“2. How does it appear to be necessary that Christ should both obey the law in his people’s stead, and yet suffer punishment on the account of their transgressions; seeing obedience is all the law requires?”

To the former I should answer, The objection proceeds upon the supposition that a public head, or representative, whose obedience should be imputable to others, must possess it in a degree over and above what is required of him. But was it thus with

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<sup>34</sup> Emphasis in bold is mine

<sup>35</sup> Martin, pgs. 217, 218

the first public head of mankind? Had Adam kept the covenant of his God, his righteousness, it is supposed, would have been imputed to his posterity, in the same sense as the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers; that is, God, to express his approbation of his conduct, would have rewarded it, by confirming him and his posterity in the enjoyment of everlasting life; yet he would have wrought no work of supererogation, nor have done any more than he was required to do on his own account.

But though, for argument's sake, I have allowed that the human nature of Christ was under obligation to keep the law on his account; yet I question the propriety of that mode of stating things. In the person of Christ the Divinity and humanity were so intimately united, that perhaps we ought not to conceive of the latter as having any such distinct subsistence as to be an agent by itself, or as being obliged to obey or do anything of itself, or on its own account; Christ, as man, possessed no being on his own account. He was always in union with the Son of God; a public person, whose very existence was for the sake of others. Hence his coming under the law is represented, not only as a part of his humiliation, to which he was naturally unobliged, but as a thing distinct from his assuming human nature; which one should think it could not be, if it were necessarily included in it. He was "made of a woman, made under the law;"— "made in the likeness of men, he took upon him the form of a servant;"\*—"being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death."

As to the second question, Obedience is not all that the law requires of a guilty creature (and in the place of such creatures our Saviour stood): a guilty creature is not only obliged to be obedient for the future, but to make satisfaction for the past. The covenant made with Adam had two branches: "Obey, and live; sin, and die." Now the obedience of Christ did honour to the preceptive part of the covenant, but not to the penal part of it. Mere obedience to the law would have made no atonement, would have afforded no expression of the Divine displeasure against sin; therefore, after a life spent in doing the will of God, he must lay down his life; nor was it "possible that this cup should pass from him."

As obedience would have been insufficient without suffering, so it appears that suffering would have been insufficient without obedience; the latter was preparatory to the former. "Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." And such a meetness could not have appeared, but by a life of obedience to God. As a Mediator between God and man, it was necessary that he should be, and appear to be, an enemy to sin, ere he should be admitted to plead for sinners. Such was our Redeemer to the last, and this it was that endeared him to the Father. "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Finally, the sufferings of Christ could go only to the removal of the curse; they could afford no title to eternal life, which being promised on condition of obedience, that condition must be fulfilled in order to insure the blessing. Hence it is by "the righteousness of one" that we partake of "justification of life."

The great ends originally designed by the promise and the threatening were to express God's love of righteousness and his abhorrence of unrighteousness; and these ends are answered by the obedience and sufferings of Christ, and that in a higher degree, owing to the dignity of his character, than if man had either kept the law or suffered the penalty for the breach of it. But if Christ had only obeyed the law, and had not suffered; or had only suffered, and not obeyed; one or other of these ends must, for aught we can perceive, have failed of being accomplished. **But his obedience unto death, which includes both, gloriously answered every end of moral government, and opened a way by which God could honourably, not only pardon the sinner who should believe in Jesus but bestow upon him eternal life.**<sup>36</sup> Pardon being granted with a view to Christ's atonement would evince the resolution of Jehovah to punish sin; and eternal life being bestowed as a reward to his obedience would equally evince him the friend of righteousness.<sup>37</sup>

This is in fact the "loophole that Spurgeon referenced in his conversion account. He loves to think of the Atonement of Christ as a "loophole"! Here for example in a sermon on Isaiah 53:6<sup>38</sup>:

"All we like sheep have gone astray;" sin must be punished; what, then, can become of us? Infinite love has devised the **expedient**<sup>39</sup> of representation and substitution. **I call it an expedient, for we can only use the language of men.** You remember, brethren, that you and I fell originally from our first estate by no act of our own, we all of us fell in the first Adam's transgression. Now, had we fallen individually and personally, in the first place, apart from another, it may be that our fall would have been hopeless, like the fall of the apostate angels, who having sinned one by one and not representatively, are reserved in chains of darkness forever under the condemnation and wrath of God; but inasmuch as the first fountain of evil came to us through our parent, Adam, **there remained for God a loophole** through which his divine love might enter **without violation of justice.** The principle of representation wrecked us; the principle of representation rescues us. Jesus Christ the Son of God becomes a man and re-heads the race, becomes the second Adam, obeys the law of God, **bears the penalty of sin,** and now stands as the Head of all those who are in him: and **who are these, but such as repent of sin and put their trust in him?** These get out of the old headship of the first Adam wherein they fell, and through the atoning sacrifice are **cleansed from all personal guilt,** brought into union with the second Adam, and stand again in him, abiding forever in acceptance and felicity. See, then, how it is that God has been pleased to deliver his people. It has been through carrying out a principle with which the very system of the universe commenced, namely, that of representation. **I repeat it, had we been always and altogether separate units, there might have been no possibility of our salvation;**

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<sup>36</sup> Emphasis is mine as stated previously.

<sup>37</sup> Excerpt from "The Obedience and Suffering of Christ," in Answers to Queries. Fuller, A. G. (1988). The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller: Expositions—Miscellaneous. (J. Belcher, Ed.) (Vol. 3, pp. 785–786). Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications.

<sup>38</sup> "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." KJV

<sup>39</sup> All emphasis in mine

**but though every man sins separately, and the second clause of our text confesses that fact, yet we all sin in connection with others.** For instance, who shall deny that each man receives propensities to sin from his parents, and that we transmit peculiarities of sin to our own children? We stand in connection with race, and there are sins of races peculiar to races and to nationalities. We are never put on a probation of entire separation; we always stand in connection with others, and **God has availed himself of this which I called a loophole to bring in salvation for us,** by virtue of our union with another man, who is also more than man, the Son of God and yet the son of Mary, the Infinite who once became an infant, the Eternal who lived, and bled, and died as the representative of all who put their trust in him.

Now you will say, perhaps, that still, albeit this might have been at the bottom of the whole system of **moral government**, you do not quite see the justice of it. The reply to that remark is this, **if God sees the justice of it you ought to be content with it.** He was against whom every sin was aimed, and if he pleased to gather up the whole bundle of the sin of his people, and say to his beloved Son, “I will visit thee for all these,” and if Jesus our representative joyously consented to bear our sins as our representative, who are you and who am I that we should enter any caveat against what God the infinitely just One consents to accept? The text does not say that our sins were laid on Christ Jesus by accident, but “the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” We sing sometimes, “I lay my sins on Jesus;” that is a very sweet act of faith, but at the bottom of it there is another laying, namely, that act in which it pleased the Lord to lay our sins on Jesus, for apart from the Lord’s doing it our sins could never have been transferred to the Redeemer. The Lord is so just, that we dare not think of examining his verdicts, so infinitely pure and holy, that what he does we accept as being necessarily right; and inasmuch as we derive such blessed results from the divine plan of substitution, far be it from us to raise any question concerning it. Jesus was accepted as the natural substitute and representative of all those who trust him, and all the sin of these was laid on him, so that they were freed from guilt. Jesus was **regarded as if all these sins were his sins**, was punished **as if** these were his sins, was put to shame, forsaken of God, and delivered to death **as if he had been a sinner**; and thus, through divine grace those who actually committed the sins are permitted to go free. **They have satisfied justice through the sufferings of their substitute.**<sup>40</sup>

Notice please that Spurgeon in the above quotation uses these exact words in reference to Christ: “bears the penalty of sin”. As his words clearly show he does not mean what Hugh Martin taught. He means something far short of that. For one thing alone, why use that word ‘loophole’. For a second why even bring up the question of God being just or not! Only because this proposed method does not satisfy the exact justice of God. Just look how obvious his meaning is: **“if God sees the justice of it you ought to be content with it.”** To Spurgeon there is no such thing as Christ paying the exact price that justice required! There is no such thing as our having the exact righteousness of Christ! Spurgeon must have a fake gospel that he can apply to anyone who shows any concern at all, however slight or

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<sup>40</sup> INDIVIDUAL SIN LAID ON JESUS. No. 925  
Delivered on Lord’s-Day Morning, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1870,  
BY C. H. Spurgeon, at the METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

fleeting. He must have an atonement that he can apply to all, a Christ who loves all as his preaching necessitated this.

It is horribly sad to say that in Calvinistic circles of today's world many will cheer and rejoice that this is what Spurgeon believed and taught. Of that group few would approve of William Rushton's book "A DEFENSE OF PARTICULAR REDEMPTION". Its subtitle is "WHEREIN THE DOCTRINE OF THE LATE MR. FULLER RELATIVE TO THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST, IS TRIED BY THE WORD OF GOD." There are however many who still desire the truth above all else and these are found in many and diverse places. Rushton is teaching us the truth as it is in Jesus. The same truths that give all the Glory to God and none to man. Unlike Martin he is fighting against a particular form of error: Andrew Fuller's. This viewpoint though gives us even deeper insight into what God accomplished on the cross.

In reference to the Gospel Rushton writes<sup>41</sup>:

All the expressions of the New Testament writers in relation to this subject seem to have a reference to the legal sacrifices. As the animal offered in sacrifice was called sin, because it typically bore transgression, so Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.<sup>42</sup> Yea, he was made a curse for us,<sup>43</sup> and he was so, because he was once offered to bear the sins of many.<sup>44</sup> This one offering was not typical, like the sacrifices of the law, but real expiation of iniquity; nor was the imputation of sin to Jesus of a figurative or improper nature, but an imputation connected with a real transfer of our iniquities to him, as is clearly comprehended in those forcible words of Peter, who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness.<sup>45</sup>

**If there be a doctrine of the gospel with which we should desire to be acquainted, a doctrine on which our salvation and comfort depend, it is that of the translation of our sins to Christ.**<sup>46</sup> If we would know Christ, and the fellowship of his sufferings; if we would look on him whom we have pierced and mourn; if we would die unto sin, and bring forth fruit unto God, we must have the gift of the blessed Spirit to reveal to us this great mystery, that the Father hath laid on Christ the iniquity of us all. Why did the holy Redeemer go mourning to the grave? Why did divine justice pursue him? Only because he bare the sin of many. From this fountain the streams of free salvation flow: we die unto sin, we live unto righteousness, only because his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree. O mysterious transfer! O wondrous secret! which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor ever entered into the heart of man to conceive, but which thou, O God, will reveal to thine elect by the Spirit!

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<sup>41</sup> The footnotes in this quotation are original to the quotation

<sup>42</sup> 2 Cor. 5:21

<sup>43</sup> Gal. 3:13

<sup>44</sup> Heb. 9:28

<sup>45</sup> 1 Pet. 2:24

<sup>46</sup> As elsewhere all emphasis in bold or bold and underline are my own.

I shall only add, in further confirmation of this fundamental doctrine, the following arguments:

Arg. 1. **If sin itself be not transferable, but only its effects, then it is not true that Christ bore our sins. Their consequences in part he might bear, but our sins themselves he could not bear, unless they were transferred to him.** “He shall bear their iniquities,” saith the prophet: for the original word signifies to bear, as a porter carries a burden. The Old Testament saints were well acquainted with their God, as a sin-bearing God, and considered this the glory of his character. “Who is a God like unto thee, that beareth iniquity; and that passeth over the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?”<sup>47</sup> But because it is impossible among mortals that guilt should be transferred, Mr. F. argues that it is impossible with God.

Arg. 2. If sin itself be not transferable, Christ could not have borne all the effects and consequences of our iniquities. The shame and pain which the undefiled Redeemer endured from the Jews, the Roman soldiers, the cross, the nails, and the thorns, were a very small part of the reward of our transgressions. **The principal part of the punishment of sin, consists in a sense of guilt, and of Divine wrath: but neither of these could Immanuel have endured, unless he had borne our sins themselves.**

Arg. 3. **If sin be not transferable, then infinite justice still finds guilt upon believers and glorified saints and will do so for ever; in which case, justice would require to be satisfied, and mercy would be displayed at the expense of righteousness.** But contrary to this, the Scripture represents it as the glory of salvation, that the guilt of sin itself is done away in the blood of the Lamb. In this consists the glory of his righteousness, not only that the curse is removed, but the cause of the curse also; “for as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our TRANSGRESSIONS from us.” Our sins were so transferred to Christ, that if he had not conquered and destroyed them, they would have destroyed him. His resurrection was a proof that sin was on him no longer; and the apostle confirms this by a remarkable expression in Heb. 9:26, where, after teaching that Christ bare the sins of many, he says, “he shall appear the second time without sin.” **“Mark it well,” says a holy man, “there was a time that Christ did not appear without sin; for he bore the sins of many; but there is a second time when he shall appear, and then he shall be without sin; so that believers have no sins upon them, and Christ hath none either.”**<sup>48</sup> A glorious truth, and worth more than a mountain of gold!

Arg. 4. **If the sins of men were not transferred to Christ, then his sufferings were not of a penal nature, nor could infinite justice be satisfied with them. Justice requires that iniquity should be punished, but the sufferings of Christ were not punishment, unless our sins were transferred to him.** An innocent

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<sup>47</sup> Micah 7:18

<sup>48</sup> Dr. Crisp—Christ alone exalted, vol. i. p. 428

person may suffer, but an innocent person cannot properly be punished; nor can justice admit that an innocent person, considered as innocent, should suffer in the room of the guilty. But divine justice is satisfied with the sufferings of Christ; because he bore both iniquity and its consequences, and thus God hath “condemned sin in the flesh.”

**“Penalty,” says a judicious author, “is suffering under a charge of offence, and without a just imputation of guilt, punishment cannot in equity be inflicted on any subject. It is a most unrighteous thing to punish any one considered as innocent; and therefore, if it was not possible with God to impute sin to the innocent Jesus, neither could he inflict punishment on him; and if Christ did not endure proper punishment, his suffering were not, nor could be, satisfactory to the law and justice of God for our sins, and it is in vain to hope for salvation through his sufferings and death.”<sup>49</sup> What a serious thing it is that any professed friends of Christ should be found opposing this foundation principle of the gospel!<sup>50</sup>**

Much more could be said, and other sources quoted. It is very tempting to investigate John Brine’s sermon that Rushton referred to above or more from Tobias Crisp who was also quoted by Rushton. If the reader is not open to the truth at this point little would be gained on that side of the issue. There is another area that does deserve more examination though: Spurgeon’s use of words.

#### **Part Four Spurgeon: Preaching “*truth*” is central to conversion**

Iain Murray, in his book “Spurgeon and Hyper-Calvinism”<sup>51</sup> holds Spurgeon up as a model of truth saying: “One of the deepest convictions of Spurgeon’s life was that there is a **continuity**<sup>52</sup> in the work of God **and that continuity centers round the body of truth which lies in Scripture**, ‘the faith which was once delivered unto the saints’.” He goes on to speak of the Protestant Reformation and the various creeds and catechisms of the Reformers and Puritans. He stresses in strong terms Spurgeon’s commitment to this body of truth and his rejection of anything different. Murray goes so far as to state “Spurgeon’s fundamental sympathies and commitment could be easily recognized as identical with historic **evangelical** Christianity.”<sup>53</sup> I have already shown that this is not the case. My purpose here is to delve deeper into what Spurgeon believed and taught regarding “truth” in relation to conversion and the atonement. That is specifically to see his own personal meaning regarding common theological terms. There was continuity from first to last in his teaching. It was, however, his own unique blending of what he saw as truth. Contradictions abound in this mixture, but there are no true contradictions in the Bible.

Spurgeon in his “Lectures To My Students” is very precise in describing the atonement and justification. He is not only meticulous, but also emphatically dogmatic. He is as it were laying down

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<sup>49</sup> Brine's Sermon on 2 Cor. 5:21.

<sup>50</sup> As noted from: A DEFENSE OF PARTICULAR REDEMPTION LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND 1831

<sup>51</sup> Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching Iain H. Murray Banner Of Truth Trust Pg. 13

<sup>52</sup> All emphasis is mine

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, pg. 15

the law on which doctrines must be preached as of first importance. He later puts this aside and concentrates more on methods and putting pressure to bear to achieve conversion.<sup>54</sup> For this part of our study, we must keep in mind that Spurgeon was first and foremost a preacher. This is vital. When he says “We must preach” he is including himself and his words relate directly to what he himself preached. No matter what the students were taught in class, either good or bad, he was their head and role model in the first and foremost sense. Here is what he said after dealing with some other subjects:

Beloved brethren, we must be most of all clear upon the great soul-saving doctrine of the atonement; we must preach **a real bona fide substitutionary sacrifice and proclaim pardon as its result**. Cloudy views as to atoning blood are mischievous to the last degree; souls are held in unnecessary bondage; and saints are robbed of the calm confidence of faith, because they are not definitely told that “God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” **We must preach substitution straightforwardly and unmistakably**, for if any doctrine be plainly taught in Scripture, it is this, — “The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.” “He, His own self, bare our sins in His own body on the tree.” This truth gives rest to the conscience by showing how God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth. This is the great net of gospel fishermen: the fish are drawn or driven in the right direction by other truths, **but this is the net itself**.

If men are to be saved, we must in plainest terms preach justification by faith, as the method by which the atonement becomes effectual in the soul’s experience. **If we are saved by the substitutionary work of Christ, no merit of ours is wanted, and all men have to do is by a simple faith to accept what Christ has already done.** It is delightful to dwell on the grand truth that “This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.” O glorious sight - the Christ sitting down in the place of honor because his work is done. Well may the soul rest in a work so evidently complete.

**Justification by faith must never be obscured**, and yet all are not clear upon it. I once heard a sermon upon “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy,” of which the English was, “Be good, very good, and though you will have to suffer in consequence, God will reward you in the end.” The preacher, no doubt, believed in justification by faith, but he very distinctly preached the opposite doctrine, many do this when addressing children, and I notice that they generally speak to the little ones about loving Jesus, and not upon believing in him. This must leave a mischievous impression upon youthful minds and take them off from the true way of peace.

Preach earnestly the love of God in Christ Jesus and magnify the abounding mercy of the Lord; but **always preach it in connection with his justice**. Do not extol the single attribute of love in the method too generally followed, **but regard love in the high theological sense**, in which, like a golden circle, it holds within itself all the divine attributes: for God were not love if he were not just and did not hate every unholly thing. **Never exalt one attribute at the expense of another. Let boundless**

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<sup>54</sup> See part four below

**mercy be seen in calm consistency with stem justice and unlimited sovereignty. The true character of God is fitted to awe, impress, and humble the sinner be careful not to misrepresent your Lord.**

All these truths and others which complete the evangelical system are calculated to lead men to faith; therefore, make them the staple of your teaching.<sup>55</sup>

He uses the correct sounding words; “substitutionary sacrifice”, “justification by faith”, “love in the high theological sense”, “unlimited sovereignty”, and “the true character of God”. As seen above his “real bona fide substitutionary sacrifice” is far short of what the Bible reveals to us by the Holy Spirit. It is a fake replacement hidden under fancy words. What about these other terms? One sermon, among many others, provides an excellent basics to judge what he means.

It is titled “Salvation By Knowing the Truth”. From the title alone anyone can see that what he preaches in this sermon is to Spurgeon, at least, truth (what the Bible teaches). His verse is 1 Timothy 2:3,4 which reads in the KJV as “God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” His opening statement is very instructive:

MAY God the Holy Ghost guide our meditations to the best practical result this evening, that sinners may be saved, and saints stirred up to diligence. I do not intend to treat my text controversially.<sup>56</sup>

His concern is the salvation of souls, to move people to action based on the “truth”. He states emphatically that he does mean to be controversial. He immediately tells us what not being controversial with this passage means **to himself**.

It is like the stone which makes the corner of a building, and it looks towards a **different side of the gospel** from that which is mostly before us. Two sides of the building of truth meet here. In many a village there is a corner where the idle and the quarrelsome gather together; and theology has such corners. It would be very easy indeed to set ourselves in battle array, and during the next half hour to carry on a very fierce attack against those who differ from us in opinion upon points which could be raised from this text. I do not see that any good would come of it, and, as we have very little time to spare, and life is short, **we had better spend it upon something that may better tend to our edification**. May the good Spirit preserve us from a contentious spirit and help us really to profit by his word.<sup>57</sup>

This first paragraph, with its close relation to conversions tells us a wealth of information about Spurgeon and his doctrine. He is laying the basis for his belief of paradoxes in scripture and for freedom to minimize one doctrinal truth to exalt another for a given purpose. Worse yet it frees him to wage a battle with Scripture contradicting Scripture. Let’s see how he does this.

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<sup>55</sup> Vol 3 of Spurgeon’s Lectures to my students. It is that last lecture of that volume; number 10; “On Conversion as our aim”

<sup>56</sup> Salvation By Knowing the Truth Number 1516 Delivered by C. H. Spurgeon, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle Newington. No date given

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. The two quotes above make up the whole first paragraph.

First, he gives, in brief, something that sounds accurate:

It is quite certain that when we read that God will have all men to be saved it does not mean that he wills it with the force of a decree or a divine purpose, for, if he did, then all men would be saved. He willed to make the world, and the world was made he does not so will the salvation of all men, for we know that all men will not be saved.<sup>58</sup>

After just three more sentences he goes on to what he calls truth, in other words what he says the scriptures teach:

What then? Shall we try to put another meaning into the text than that which it fairly bears? I trow<sup>59</sup> not. You must, most of you, be acquainted with the general method in which **our older Calvinistic friends** deal with this text. “All men,” say they, “that is, some men”: as if the Holy Ghost could not have said “some men” if he had meant some men. “All men,” say they; “that is, some of all sorts of men”: as if the Lord could not have said “all sorts of men” if he had meant that. **The Holy Ghost by the apostle has written “all men,” and unquestionably he means all men.** I know how to get rid of the force of the “all’s” according to that critical method which **some time ago was very current**, but I do not see how it can be applied here with due regard to truth.<sup>60</sup>

Again, these few sentences open a wide window into the heart of Spurgeon’s teaching. He is categorically rejecting those Calvinistic divines who went before him in history on this passage. This means many of the Puritans themselves as most, I believe, did not follow Baxter, Howe and others who agree, at least in some degree with Spurgeon. Not only so but by direct inference with what was taught on all similar passages of scripture are affected. Why does he use the words “which some time ago was very current”? The answer is simple, and it ties in with what we have already learnt in a previous section. Andrew Fuller and the modern missionary movement, which he was so much a part, are the main cause of this departure from the real gospel. This new view of the Atonement, this watering down of the gospel so that man can play a part in his own salvation, these and other factors are at fault. We saw above what Iain Murray boasted about Spurgeon: “Spurgeon’s fundamental sympathies and commitment could be easily recognized as identical with historic evangelical Christianity.” Here we find Spurgeon rejecting some of the most basic parts of that very heritage! The two are not reconcilable, though Murray would like us to believe they are.

This false view is even clearer, if possible, when, in the next sentence he continues:

I was reading just now the exposition of a very able doctor who explains the text so as to explain it away; he applies grammatical gunpowder to it and explodes it by way of expounding it. **I thought when I read his exposition that it would have been a very capital comment upon the text if it had read, “Who will not**

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> ‘trow’ is old English meaning ‘to believe’ or ‘to think or suppose’ as from Webster’s 1828 dictionary.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

have all men to be saved, nor come to a knowledge of the truth.” Had such been the inspired language every remark of the learned doctor would have been exactly in keeping, but as it happens to say, “Who will have all men to be saved,” his observations are more than a little out of place. **My love of consistency with my own doctrinal views is not great enough to allow me knowingly to alter a single text of Scripture. I have great respect for orthodoxy, but my reverence for inspiration is far greater.** I would sooner a hundred times over appear to be inconsistent with myself than be inconsistent with the word of God. **I never thought it to be any very great crime to seem to be inconsistent with myself; for who am I that I should everlastingly be consistent?** But I do think it a great crime to be so inconsistent with the word of God that I should want to lop away a bough or even a twig from so much as a single tree of the forest of Scripture. God forbid that I should cut or shape, even in the least degree, any divine expression. So runs the text, and so we must read it, “God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”

We have no way, that I am aware of, to know who this able doctor was but it is possible that he means Doctor John Gill, his predecessor. Whether or not, Gill would be a perfect fill in as this is exactly what Gill teaches. That was the orthodox Calvinistic position on this verse and still is by many who place the sovereignty of God first and foremost. Spurgeon, however, takes the classic Arminian understanding of this and similar verses. Just look at his words! “My love of consistency with my own doctrinal views is not great enough to allow me knowingly to alter a single text of Scripture. **I have great respect for orthodoxy, but my reverence for inspiration is far greater.**” He is putting doctrinal orthodoxy in direct opposition to inspiration! In actual fact true doctrinal orthodoxy is based squarely on the inspiration of scripture. What makes something unorthodox is the fact that it is not based on a true understanding of the scriptures. He is admitting that his understanding of this scripture is not the same that the orthodox understanding that went before him! With his far superior wisdom he is free to break with what went before and to join Arminianism and Calvinism at this point: as if such a thing were even possible. As we shall see this can only be done by abandoning the truth.

To Spurgeon all means **ALL** period no matter what the cost to all the rest of scripture. In some way he says, God wants all mankind to be saved. The cost of his **ALL**, in terms of the truth of the scriptures, is very great indeed. So great that it is far beyond the scope of this document. I will content myself with looking at just a bit of the cost. He goes on to say in the next sentence and following:

Does not the text mean that it is the **wish** of God that men should be saved? The word “**wish**” gives as much force to the original as it really requires, and the passage should run thus- “whose wish it is that all men should be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.” **As it is my wish that it should be so, as it is your wish that it might be so, so it is God’s wish that all men should be saved; for, assuredly, he is not less benevolent than we are.**

Speaking very much in human terms, he uses human desire as the basis of what God must desire. For surely to wish is to desire. Our benevolence, our desire becomes the standard to which God himself must be held. All that has been taught down through the ages against this Arminian view of this

passage apply against Spurgeon. Let the reader, for instance refer to the Puritan John Owen's Death of Death in the Death of Christ. Much more importantly let's see what the Lord Jesus Christ who is both God and Man has to say about the conversion of all men. Early in the Gospel of Mark he begins to teach his special disciples whom he takes apart from the masses. He starts in Mark 4 to teach them that the Gospel (we could say truth here instead) is like seed that is sown among different types of people. He then goes on to show that rather than God (Jesus sowing the seed and his disciples after him) wanting, wishing, or desiring that all the seed bear fruit, he wants the exact opposite. Jesus as God does not want all to be saved! His wish is the opposite. He removes all obstacles from the elect only by preparing their hearts to receive his truth, that is the good ground in the parable of the Sower. The seed was never intended to grow and bear fruit in the other soils (the non-elect). Please do not misunderstand me, however. God has chosen to let vast numbers of mankind with the results of their own and Adam's sin. Their being left to judgment is in strict justice. Please refer to Roman's 9. After the parable Jesus continues his teaching in this way:

And He was saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables. And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, so that WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN."<sup>61</sup>

Jesus is quoting from Isaiah chapter 6 where the prophet Isaiah was commissioned. Despite obvious passages like this Spurgeon says all is all no matter what the consequences. Passages like the one in 1 Timothy 2:3-4 must be examined by the basic rules of exegesis. How does one particular interpretation compare to what the rest of scripture says? My favorite example of the consequences of not doing so is to join these two phrases together: "Judas went and hung himself" "go and do likewise". Does Jesus really teach us to pluck out our eye or cut off our hand if a part of our body causes us to sin? Of course not! Does the word "world" have the exact same meaning everywhere it is used in the New Testament? Of course not. Does the word "all" always mean all without exception? Of course not. There is a second feature of the passage that I missed until I heard Peter L. Meney preach on this passage a few days ago. Our Lord says: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." This was spoken to the multitude. However, it is a command to God's elect and to them alone. The little word "let" there is the same "let" as when God said "let there be light" when he created the world. It's the same "let" as found all through all the Bible when God commands. It's a let that excludes the non-elect from hearing. Only the elect are given ears to hear and by God's "let" they will hear.

What then is Spurgeon's defense, on what grounds does he say all must mean all mankind and God wishes them all to be saved? He continues:

Then comes the question, "But if he wishes it to be so, why does he not make it so?" "Beloved friend, have you never heard that a fool may ask a question which a wise man cannot answer, and, if that be so, I am sure a wise person, like yourself, can ask me a great many questions which, fool as I am, I am yet not foolish enough to try to answer. Your question is only one form of the great debate of all the ages,

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<sup>61</sup> Mark 4:9-11 NASB

- “If God be infinitely good and powerful, why does not his power carry out to the full all his beneficence?” It is God’s wish that the oppressed should go free, yet there are many oppressed who are not free. It is God’s wish that the sick should not suffer. Do you doubt it? Is it not your own wish? And yet the Lord does not work a miracle to heal every sick person. It is God’s wish that his creatures should be happy. Do you deny that? He does not interpose by any miraculous agency to make us all happy, and yet it would be wicked to suppose that he does not wish the happiness of all the creatures that he has made. He has an infinite benevolence which, nevertheless, is not in all points worked out by his infinite omnipotence; and if anybody asked me why it is not, I cannot tell. I have never set up to be an explainer of all difficulties, and I have no desire to do so. It is the same old question as that of the negro who said, “Sare, you say the devil makes sin in the world.” “Yes, the devil makes a deal of sin.” “And you say that God hates sin.” “Yes.” “Then why does not he kill the devil and put an end to it?” Just so. Why does he not? Ah, my black friend, you will grow white before that question is answered. I cannot tell you why God permits moral evil, neither can the ablest philosopher on earth, nor the highest angel in heaven.

This is one of those things which we do not need to know.

The answer to my question is that he gives no answer! He ignores Romans chapter 9, saying in effect that it’s a secret and we are not given the answer. His defense is no defense at all, just a retreat into ignorance. He turns his back upon what Scripture so clearly teaches from cover to cover so he can see conversions at whatever cost. This is his “salvation by knowing the truth” God wants everyone to be saved! God sincerely wishes their salvation. The real answer is that God does all things for his own glory and all the nations are as nothing compared to him. Not only so but he says to all of his listeners: “I am sure a wise person, like yourself”. A sinner dead in trespasses and sins, wise in the things of God?

I said above that the cost of what Spurgeon teaches is very great. As quoted above he preaches that: “As it is my wish that it should be so, as it is your wish that it might be so, so **it is God’s wish that all men should be saved; for, assuredly, he is not less benevolent than we are.**” What says the scriptures? “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”<sup>62</sup> So says the Lord God almighty. It may shock the reader, but I say in truth Spurgeon by saying what he said makes God less than God, in effect he makes him to be a liar and a failure. Remember his words to his students quoted above where he used expressions like these: “love in the high theological sense”, “unlimited sovereignty”, and “the true character of God”. We have learned something now of what he means by “love in the high theological sense” and “the true character of God”. God loves everyone, at least in the sense of wishing all mankind to be saved. Anyone who falls short of this standard is labeled a hyper Calvinist<sup>63</sup>. This false version of what scripture teaches becomes part of God’s true character according to Spurgeon. What, however, does this mean regarding God’s “unlimited sovereignty”?

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<sup>62</sup> Numbers 23:19 KJV

<sup>63</sup> See for example Iain Murray’s book already referred to. See also Spurgeon’s sermon Sovereign Grace and Man’s Responsibility: number 207 from 1858. That sermon is a perfect example of his misuse of scripture. Playing scripture against scripture in a pitched battle rather than using basic tools of interpretation to harmonize God’s word.

Keep in mind that he clearly defined what this supposed wish is **not**: “It is quite certain that when we read that God will have all men to be saved it does not mean that he wills it with the force of a decree or a divine purpose ...” Clearly however he means something by saying that God wishes the salvation of all man. Remember Spurgeon clearly states that he rejects the old standard Calvinistic teaching on this verse. This wish, to Spurgeon, is a real wish, all is all men. Unfortunately, he leaves his hearers without a dogmatic statement of what this wish is other than that it is! To Spurgeon it’s so profound that it cannot be explained, it’s a contradiction. Clearly it is something God himself feels and desires, it’s not what theologians call the “revealed will of God” as that is what God would have us to do and not what he wishes to do himself. What God wishes or wills to do is called the secret will of God.

Notice, please that I just said: “What God **wishes** or **wills** to do.” The Geek and Hebrew words, such as the one Spurgeon was so careful to give the meaning of “wish” to are in fact used interchangeably in the scriptures. The Holy Spirit nowhere draws a line between God’s wish or desire and God’s will or decree as they are one and the same thing<sup>64</sup>. **Scripture teaches that God is sovereign and that His sovereignty is demonstrated in the exercise of His will.** In other words that whatsoever God desires to do He actually does. The following passages from the Old and New Testament are given by way of example.

#### 1. 1 Chronicles 29:10-12

These verses provide a full and clear statement of the Sovereignty of God. David exalts God in the highest degree. He ascribes greatness, power, glory, majesty and splendor to God. He does not say that God is great or powerful in the way that we would say that David himself was a great and powerful king. David says that these qualities are God's as he is the originator or source of all that is good and blessed. He, by His very essence and nature, exhibits these qualities to an infinite degree. Verse 11(a) tells us four things about God. 1. His is the greatness. Isa. 40:17ff, all the nations are less than nothing in comparison to Him. 2. His is the power (Gen. 17:1). God Himself says that He is all powerful. 3. Rev. 1:6 etc. His is the glory. Here the idea is of praise for His greatness and beauty. He is worthy of all the praise and adoration that we could possibly give Him. 4. In a similar way His is the majesty and splendor (Ps. 93:1,2; Is. 6:1,3). Verse 11(b) God is revealed as the supreme ruler of all creation both in heaven and on earth (Rev. 5:13). By virtue of God being the creator of all He is the owner of all (Rom. 11:36). Verse 12 shows that **the destiny of all men is in the hand of God alone** (Rom. 9:17). An excellent illustration and commentary on these verses is found in Daniel 4:34,35 and 5:18-21.

#### 2. Job 23:13-14

The Hebrew word translated desires or desire is “avah”. It means to wish for, greatly desire, be desirous. In the greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, the Greek word “thelo” was used in place of “avah”. “Thelo” has the same meaning. The same Hebrew word is used for does. In this case the meaning is slightly different. It means to do or make in the broadest sense and widest application. It is used in many places in the Old Testament. Verse thirteen then means that **whatever God desires or wishes to accomplish He brings to pass completely.** Any doctrine that states that there is an unfulfilled desire in God is a direct contradiction of this verse.

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<sup>64</sup> As different words are used in the original, they do have nuances of meaning. My point is that when the reference is to God and his attributes they have same meaning as there are not two wills in God.

### 3. Isaiah 46:9-10

God states specifically that He will do all that is His “good pleasure”. According to the New Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon, the Hebrew word translated “good pleasure” means the will or purpose of God.<sup>65</sup>

### 4. Isaiah 55:6-13

As this is such a relevant passage here is the text:

Seek the Lord **while He may be found**; Call upon Him **while He is near**. Let the wicked abandon his way, And the unrighteous person his thoughts; And let him **return** to the Lord, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. **“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.** For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it produce and sprout, And providing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; **So will My word be which goes out of My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the purpose for which I sent it.** For you will go out with joy and be led in peace; The mountains and the hills will break into shouts of joy before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thorn bush, the juniper will come up, and instead of the stinging nettle, the myrtle will come up; And it will be a memorial to the Lord, an everlasting sign which will not be eliminated.”

Looking at the text I have bolded notice first that to those whom God is addressing he gives a warning: God will not wait forever. This was a special time, “while He may be found” and “while He is near”. Next notice the little word “return”. He is not speaking to everyone; he is speaking to those who once were near but have now gone after other gods who are no gods. He is speaking to the Jews under the Old Covenant. He is showing that he is willing to be merciful to them if they repent and come back to him as a nation. He is not asking them to exercise saving faith as a duty but to repent from their evil deeds and return to him as the only true God. Next there is both an encouragement and a warning. Without direct disobedience to God, we cannot compare God to ourselves as Spurgeon does. His ways simply are not our ways! Finally, God’s word, the gospel always accomplishes that which he desires. Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:16 explains that the gospel brings either a savor of either death or life. God simply does not wish, desire or will the salvation of all mankind. He died for his elect alone, paying their debt alone.

### 5. Proverbs 16:4

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<sup>65</sup>Francis Brown, The New Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius, Hebrew and English Lexicon, (Christian Copyrights, Inc., 1979), 343(a).

Charles Bridges, in his commentary on Proverbs, gives some interesting observations on this verse. He says:

**The Lord hath created all things** -- all the works of creation -- all the events of nations -- all the dispensations of Providence -- for himself; ... even **the wicked**, whose existence might seem scarcely reconcilable to the Divine perfection, he includes in the grand purpose of setting out his Name. 'It is the greatest praise of his wisdom, that he can turn the evil of men to his own glory!' **He hath made even the wicked for the day of evil.** -- **Wicked** they are of themselves. He made them not so. (Gen. 1:27) He compels them not to be so. (John 3:19) He abhors their wickedness. But he foresaw their evil. He permitted it; and though "he hath no pleasure in their death," (Ezek. 33:11), he will be glorified in them **in the day of evil**.<sup>66</sup>

Scripture knows of no unfulfilled purpose of God.

#### 6. Ephesians 1:11

William Hendriksen, in his commentary on this verse, remarks that:

Neither fate nor human merit determines our destiny. The benevolent purpose - that we should be holy and faultless (verse 4), sons of God (verse 5), destined to glorify him forever (verse 6, cf verses 12 and 14) - is fixed, being part of a larger, universe-embracing plan. Not only did God **make** this plan that includes absolutely all things that ever take place in heaven, on earth, and in hell; past present, and even the future, **pertaining to both believers and unbelievers**, to angels and devils, to physical as well as spiritual energies and units of existence both large and small; he also **wholly carries it out**. His providence in time is as comprehensive as is his decree from eternity. Literally Paul states that God works (**operates with his divine energy in**) all things.<sup>67</sup>

The following remarks by Gary D. Long are taken from his work on the atonement. He shows that the "willing" of 2 Peter 3:9, so misused by Arminians must refer to the decretive will. He writes:

Although this writer believes in the free offer of the gospel, he has become concerned with the manner in which present day five point Calvinists are using dubious language, especially with reference to the revealed and secret will of God, to establish a warrant for the free offer of the gospel to all mankind universally. It is possible that pursuing this distinction will lead men to believe that they can repent at any time because Christ died for them. It may, in time, water-down historic Calvinism and lead to error just as surely as the false distinction between natural ability and moral inability led to error in seventeenth century French Calvinism and eighteenth and nineteenth century New England Calvinism. Hence,

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<sup>66</sup>Charles Bridges, A Commentary on Proverbs, 1846, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), 228.

<sup>67</sup>William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary: Ephesians, 1967, (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), 88.

this writer disagrees with those five point Calvinists (including John Calvin, the Marrow-men of early 18th century Scotland and some contemporary Calvinists) who understand “willing” (boulomenos) in 2 Peter 3:9 to refer to the revealed will or desire of God that may not come to pass and different from His secret or decretive will that will come to pass. They use this approach to help justify the free offer of the gospel to all mankind without exception. Although this writer believes in preaching a universal gospel to all mankind without exception (because all in their lost state are outside the covenant fold of God), he does not believe 2 Peter 3:9 teaches that God desires the repentance and salvation of all mankind without exception. The word used in this verse is boulomai, which often, in context, as here, refers to the decretive will of God; that is, His will based upon counsel and deliberation. (Speaking in human terms, this counsel and deliberation took place in “eternity past” between the members of the triune Godhead in the covenant of redemption.) Neither does the writer believe that God's will **as desire** (thelo), which logically proceeds from inclination, supports His desire to save all mankind without exception, for what God's soul 'desireth (thelo), even that he doeth' (Job 23:13).<sup>68</sup>

From the above we see that it is inconceivable for God, **as He reveals Himself**, to will, desire, or wish something and not carry out that will, desire, or wish. Stephen Charnock when speaking of God's knowledge of future events wrote, “Either God knows them or desires to know them; if he desires to know them and does not, there is something wanting to him: all desire speaks an absence of the object desired, and a sentiment of want in the person desiring.”<sup>69</sup> It is an impossibility, and not as some would have us believe an antinomy for God to desire and not find fulfillment of that desire. An antinomy is a paradox. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility are sometimes falsely represented as an antinomy. Two things that are both equally true yet seem to be contradictory. God cannot will something and at the same time not will the same thing. All things, no matter what they are, are a result of His eternal purpose and single will. One of the great questions of the Christian religion is how God can permit sin and yet not be the author of sin. Yet, even here, sin is a part of God's eternal purpose. He is not the author of sin, yet sin did not take God by surprise, it is a part of His all-encompassing master plan. The ultimate damnation of the non-elect, because of Adam's and their own sin, is nonetheless part of God's eternal purpose.

There are many other passages that teach the same truth. For example, Psalm 75:7, Proverbs 15:9, 16:33, Isaiah 14:24,27, Daniel 4:35, and Matthew 7:23. Based upon these and other sections of Scripture Reformed theologians teach that there is only one will of God. It is true, as we shall see presently that they speak of two different wills which they give different terms to. It's unfortunate that they use the word “will” for both terms because they mean two totally different things. Spurgeon used A.A. Hodge's “Outlines of Theology” as a textbook for his students.

A.A. Hodge defines the terms in question as follows:

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<sup>68</sup> Gary D. Long, *Definite Atonement*, (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1977), 109-110. (No Pub. address in book)

<sup>69</sup> Stephen Charnock, *Discourses on the Existence and Attributes of God*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Pub., 1840), 1: 486

What is intended by the distinction between the decretive and preceptive will of God?

The decretive will of God is God efficaciously purposing the certain futurity of events. The preceptive will of God is God, as moral governor, commanding his moral creatures to do that which he sees is right and wise that they in their circumstances should do.

These are not inconsistent. What he wills as our duty may very consistently be different from what he wills as his purpose. What it is right for him to permit may be wrong for him to approve, or for us to do.<sup>70</sup>

He further clarifies this showing that the secret will is the decretive and the preceptive the revealed will:

What is meant by the distinction between the secret and revealed will of God?

The secret will of God is his decretive will, called secret because although it is sometimes revealed to man in the prophecies and promises of the Bible, yet it is for the most part hidden in God.

The revealed will of God is his preceptive will, which is always clearly set forth as the rule of our duty. -- Deut. 29:29.<sup>71</sup>

Herman Bavinck noted that there seems to be a conflict between the preceptive and decretive will of God. While discussing this he wrote:

It should be observed, however, that the idea of the two wills in God opposed to each other is erroneous: (1) By the decretive will God has determined what He will do; by the preceptive will He reveals what we must do. (2) Even according to the decretive will God does not delight in sin, and, even according to the preceptive will He does not will the salvation of every man individually.<sup>72</sup>

He goes on to explain in more detail, flatly contradicting Spurgeon on his "all":

The usual objection advanced against the decretive (secret) will and the preceptive (revealed) will, namely, that they are in conflict with each other, is not justifiable, for, the preceptive will is really not God's will but His precept for our conduct; by means of it God does not reveal to us what He will do ; it is not a law for His conduct, but it tells us what we must do; it is a rule for our conduct. Deut. 29:29. It is called God's will in a metaphorical sense ... Even according to the decretive will God takes no pleasure in sin; it is not an object of His delight, neither does He afflict willingly. And, even according to the preceptive will, God does not will the salvation of every individual. History plainly gives the lie to the idea that God wills the same to every individual. **The word "all" in 1 Tim. 2:4 ("who would have all men to be saved") is given a**

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<sup>70</sup>Hodge, Outlines, 151.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 151.

<sup>72</sup>Bavinck, Doctrine of God, 238.

**restricted meaning by every interpreter.** God's revealed will, instead of being opposed by the secret will, is the means whereby the latter is carried out; by means of warnings, admonitions, prohibitions and threatenings, conditions and commandments, God's counsel is accomplished; while, because of the decretive will, man, when he transgresses God's commandment, does not for a moment become independent of God but, in the very act of transgressing serves, and becomes an instrument (however unwillingly) of God's glory.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, John Owen in his characteristic style, shows the result of Spurgeon's false exegesis. After examining the subject of God's revealed and secret will in some detail, he applies this teaching to the realm of salvation. He first takes the example of Judas and then goes on to state, with reference to the Arminians:

Or be it the salvation of men, they say, they are certain that God intendeth that for many which never obtain it; that end he cannot compass.

And here, methinks, they place God in a most unhappy condition, by affirming that they are often damned whom he would hope to be saved, though he desires their salvation with a most vehement desire and natural affection, -- such, I think, as the crows have to the good of their young ones. For that there are in him such desires as are never fulfilled, because not regulated by wisdom and justice, they plainly affirm; for, although by his infinite power, perhaps, he might accomplish them, yet it would not become him so to do.

Now let any good-natured man, ... drop one tear for the restrained condition of the God of heaven, who when he would have all and every man in the world to come to heaven, to escape the torments of hell, and that with a serious purpose and intention that it shall be so, yet, being not in himself alone able to save one, must be forced to lose his desire, lay down his affection, change his purpose, and see the greatest part of them to perish everlastingly, yea, notwithstanding that he has provided a sufficient means for them all to escape with a purpose and intention that they should so do.<sup>74</sup>

In summary let me repeat Spurgeon's words that I quoted in the introduction to Part 2. He clearly stated that:

... I have my own private opinion that there is no such a thing as preaching Christ and him crucified, unless you preach what now-a-days is called Calvinism. I have my own ideas, and those I always state boldly. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else.

What exactly he meant by these words we cannot know for certain. I have endeavored to give some level of facts, in his own words, to get closer to that meaning. He carefully chose those words to describe what he calls the gospel. He clearly rejected the Calvinism that went before. He used his own

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 240-241.

<sup>74</sup> John Owen, *The Works of John Owen* Ed. William H. Goold, 16 vols (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), vol 10: 50-51. Originally pub. by Johnstone and Hunter, 1850 - 53

personal ideas to define what inspiration was even pitting that against orthodox teaching. He said God desired that which he did not accomplish. Before concluding this essay in Part Six, I would like to briefly examine his conception of Christ in his preaching the gospel.

## **Part Five** Spurgeon's use of Christ for gaining conversions.

An early and vitally important sermon, if we are to understand Spurgeon, is "Sovereign Grace and Man's Responsibility"<sup>75</sup> As was his consistent method he preaches both Calvinism and Arminianism, those being part I and part II of this sermon. He freely admits this (not is those terms but with that meaning) when he says referring to part II the "Responsibility of Man":

This doctrine is as much God's Word as the other. You ask me to reconcile the two. I answer, they do not want any reconciliation; I never tried to reconcile them to myself, because **I could never see a discrepancy**. If you begin to put fifty or sixty quibbles to me, I cannot give any answer. Both are true; no two truths can be inconsistent with each other; and what you have to do is to believe them both.

Before looking in more detail at his Arminian side it's important to get some idea of his other side in Part I of this sermon and his introduction. In the brief introduction he clearly states the pre-existing logic he plans to use then and continues to use throughout his ministry. In the second of three brief paragraphs he states:

The system of truth is not one straight line, but two. **No man will ever get a right view of the gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once** I am taught in one book to believe that what I sow, I shall reap: I am taught in another place, that "it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." I see in one place, God presiding over all in providence; and yet I see, and I cannot help seeing, that man acts as he pleases, and that God has left his actions to his own will, in a great measure. Now, if I were to declare that man was so free to act, that there was no presidency of God over his actions, I should be driven very near to Atheism; and if, on the other hand, I declare that God so overrules all things, as that man is not free enough to be responsible, I am driven at once into Antinomianism or fatalism. That God predestines, and that man is responsible, are two things that few can see. **They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory; but they are not.** It is just the fault of our weak judgment. Two truths cannot be contradictory to each other. If then, I find taught in one place that everything is fore-ordained, that is true; and if I find in another place that man is responsible for all his actions, that is true; and it is my folly that leads me to imagine that two truths can ever contradict each other. These two truths, I do not believe, can ever be welded into one upon any human anvil, but one they shall be in eternity: they are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the mind that shall pursue them farthest, will never discover that they converge; but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring.

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<sup>75</sup> No. 207 Delivered on Sabbath Morning, August 1, 1858, by the REV. C. H. Spurgeon at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

The logic of fallen sinful man is used to replace the perfect glory of God. Paul's answer in Romans 9:19-24 is rejected out of hand as inadequate. Man must have his place no matter what.

You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

Here is a fair sample of how he presents the Sovereignty of God in Part I:

**Again, the grace of God is sovereign. By that word we mean that God has the absolute right to give that grace where he chooses, and to withhold it when he pleases.** He is not bound to give it to any man, much less to all men, and if he chooses to give it to one man and not to another, his answer is, "Is thine eye evil because mine eye is good? Can I not do as I will with mine own? I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Now, I want you to notice the sovereignty of Divine grace as illustrated in the text: "I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest to them that asked not after me." You would imagine that if God gave his grace to any he would wait until he found them earnestly seeking him. You would imagine that God in the highest heavens would say, "I have mercies, but I will leave men alone, and when they feel their need of these mercies and seek me diligently with their whole heart, day and night, with tears, and vows, and supplications, then will I bless them, but not before." But beloved, God saith no such thing. It is true he doth bless them that cry unto him but he blesses them before they cry, for their cries are not their own cries, but cries he has put into their lips; their desires are not of their own growth, but desires which he has cast like good seed into the soil of their hearts. God saves the men that do not seek him. Oh, wonder of wonders! It is mercy indeed when God saves a seeker, but how much greater mercy when he seeks the lost himself!

Fatally, but by design, Spurgeon gives only a partial definition of the sovereignty of God. Robert Haldane, in his commentary on the book of Romans, goes right to the heart of the matter when he states:

Whatever difficulties are found in the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, and in the truth that He ordains for His own glory whatever comes to pass, yet this, it is clear, is the doctrine of Scripture from beginning to end. **Every part of it represents God as ordering and directing all events; and without this, and were anything left to depend or be regulated by the will of His creatures, He would cease to be the supreme Ruler. Many things might occur which He greatly desired might never have taken place--an idea altogether incompatible with that which we are taught in His word to form**

**of the almighty Ruler of the universe. If we lose sight of sovereignty, we lose sight of God.<sup>76</sup>**

Simply put there are no two parallel lines as Spurgeon says, God's word knows no such sacrilege. Man is frankly and absolutely commanded to obey the light and understanding he has, be that a little or a large amount. God is never unjust. Demanding something of man that he has no power to do is unjust. Demanding that a woman or man acts according to the understanding they do have is just. Sodom and Gomorrah were not condemned because they did not believe in Jesus as their savior but because of their evil actions which they knew were evil.

What then is this second part? Why would Spurgeon be so afraid that people would see an obvious contradiction? The answer is clear! The god he portrays in this second part is the same god that the Arminians believe in. A helpless god holding out his hands waiting for the sinner to come to him. Here and in so many sermons he preaches a free will gospel that is no gospel at all. A god that is not the God of the Bible.

II. Now then for the second point. "There now," says my ultra-friend, "he is going to contradict himself." No, my friend, I am not, I am only going to contradict you. The second point is MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY. "But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Now, these people whom God had cast away had been wooed, had been sought, had been entreated to be saved; but they would not, and inasmuch as they were not saved, it was the effect of their disobedience and their gainsaying. That lies clearly enough in the text. When God sent the prophets to Israel, and stretched forth his hands, what was it for? What did he wish, them to come to him for? Why, to be saved. "No," says one, "it was for temporal mercies." Not so, my friend; the verse before is concerning spiritual mercies, and so is this one, for they refer to the same thing. Now, was God sincere in his offer? God forgive the man that dares to say he was not. God is undoubtedly sincere in every act he did. He sent his prophets, he entreated the people of Israel to lay hold on spiritual things, but they would not, and though he stretched out his hands all the day long, yet they were "a disobedient and gainsaying people," and would not have his love; and on their head rests their blood.

Now let me notice **the wooing of God and of what sort it is**. First, **it was the most affectionate wooing in the world. Lost sinners who sit under the sound of the gospel are not lost for the want of the most affectionate invitation**. God says he stretched out his hands. You know what that means. You have seen the child who is disobedient and will not come to his father. The father puts out his hands, and says, "Come, my child, come; I am ready to forgive you." The tear is in his eye, and his bowels move with compassion, and he says, "Come, come." God says this is what he did—"he stretched out his hands." That is what he has done to some of you. You that are not saved to-day are without excuse, for God stretched out his hands to you, and he said, "Come, come." Long have you sat beneath the sound of the ministry, and it has been a faithful one, I trust, and a weeping one. Your minister has not forgotten to pray

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<sup>76</sup>Robert Haldane, An Exposition of Romans (Mac Donald Publishing Company: Distributed by Evangelical Press, Grand Rapids) 498. (Paperback edition with no copy right date)

for your souls in secret or to weep over you when no eye saw him, and he has endeavored to persuade you as an ambassador from God. **God is my witness, I have sometimes stood in this pulpit, and I could not have pleaded harder for my own life than I have pleaded with you. In Christ's name, I have cried, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."** I have wept over you as the Saviour did, and used his words on his behalf, **"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."** And you know that your conscience has often been touched; you have often been moved; you could not resist it. God was so kind to you; he invited you so affectionately by the Word; he dealt so gently with you by his providence; his hands were stretched out, and you could hear his voice speaking in your ears, "Come unto me, come: come now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow." You have heard him cry, "Ho everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." You have heard him say with all the affection of a father's heart, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Oh! God does plead with men that they would be saved, and this day he says to every one of you, "Repent, and be converted for the remission of your sins. Turn ye unto me. Thus, saith the Lord of hosts; consider your ways." **And with love divine he woos you as a father woos his child, putting out his hands and crying, "Come unto me, come unto me."** "No," says one strong-doctrine man, **"God never invites all men to himself; he invites none but certain characters."** **Stop, sir, that is all you know about it.** Did you ever read that parable where it is said, My oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage." And they that were bidden would not come. And did you never read that they all began to make excuse, and that they were punished because they did not accept the invitations. Now, if the invitation is not to be made to anybody, but to the man who will accept it, how can that parable be true? The fact is, the oxen and fatlings are killed; the wedding feast is ready, and the trumpet sounds, "Ho everyone that thirsteth, come and eat, come and drink." Here are the provisions spread, here is an all-sufficiency; the invitation is free; it is a great invitation. "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." And that invitation is couched in tender words, "Come to me, my child, come to me." "All day long I have stretched forth my hands."

And note again, this invitation was very frequent. The words, "all the day long," may be translated "daily"—"Daily have I stretched forth my hands." Sinner, God has not called you once to come, and then let you alone, but every day has he been at you; every day has conscience spoken to you; every day has providence warned you, and every Sabbath has the Word of God wooed you. Oh! how much some of you will have to account for at God's great bar! I cannot now read your characters, but I know there are some of you who will have a terrible account at last. **All the day long has God been wooing you. From the first dawn of your life, he wooed you through your mother,** and she used to put your little hands together, and teach you to say,

"Gentle Jesus meek and mild,

Look upon a little child,  
Pity my simplicity;  
Suffer me to come to thee.”

And in your boyhood God was still stretching out his hands after you. How your Sunday-school teacher endeavored to bring you to the Saviour! How often your youthful heart was affected; but you put all that away, and you are still untouched by it. How often did your mother speak to you, and your father warn you; and you have forgotten the prayer in that bed-room when you were sick, when your mother kissed your burning forehead, knelt down and prayed to God to spare your life, and then added that prayer, “Lord, save my boy's soul!” And you recollect the Bible she gave you, when you first went out apprentice, and the prayer she wrote on that yellow front leaf. When she gave it, you did not perhaps know, but you may now; how earnestly she longed after you, that you might be formed anew in Christ Jesus; how she followed you with her prayers, and how she entreated with her God for you. And you have not yet surely forgotten how many Sabbaths you have spent, and how many times you have been warned. Why you have had wagon-loads of sermons wasted on you. A hundred and four sermons you have heard every year, and some of you more, and yet you are still just what you were.

The question here is not what he preached about conversion as this was covered above, but why? Why preach in a manner that without question is antagonistic to what you profess to believe? The answer is simple: he thought this was the best way possible to save souls and that was his primary goal. The goal above all goals.

John Wesley, in his point 11 of his “Twelve rules for Preachers” said something pertinent.

**11. You have nothing to do but to save souls.** Therefore, spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those that want you, but to those that want you most.

Observe: It is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society; but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance, and with all your power to build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord. ...

“To save as many souls as you can”. That sums up Spurgeon’s basic motivation. This was so important and fundamental that even scripture itself was made subservient as I have shown. That I am correct in these assumptions is borne out repeatedly in what he taught and preached. Before looking at one other sermon “Jesus Calling” (number 2781) I will briefly refer to his “Lectures to My Students” In Volume One, Lecture 5 “Sermons - Their Matter” he says:

Let your teachings grow and advance; let them deepen with your experience and rise with your soul-progress. I do not mean preach new truths; for, on the contrary, I hold that man happy who is so well taught from the first that, after fifty years of ministry, he has never had to recant a doctrine or to mourn an important omission; but I mean,

let our depth and insight continually increase, and where there is spiritual advance, it will be so.

To my knowledge he never recanted a doctrine, especially not anything regarding the salvation of souls. He changed his views on end time prophesy, but he was overall very consistent throughout his long ministry.

In this section, part 3, I quoted from another lecture from his “To My Students”. That lecture is titled “On Conversion as our aim” This is one of relatively few places in these lectures where he devotes some time to doctrinal or theological importance. These however are not the main trust of his lectures so that is not surprising. He explains in his introduction that this was not his main purpose as the students were hearing him at the end of a long day of such teaching. After this detail on doctrine, he goes on to speak of the importance of conversions and how to gain converts. I would ask the reader to please call to mind that Spurgeon professed strongly in believing the scripture doctrine of Total Depravity, that all are by nature not only dead but that we hate the truth:

His aim in this initial section on doctrine is very much about how doctrine relates to saving souls and not to building up the saints. This can be seen in the first sentence below where he sums up what he spoke of before.

All these truths and others which complete the evangelical system are calculated to lead men to faith; therefore, make them the staple of your teaching.

Secondly, if we are **intensely anxious** to have souls saved we must not only preach the truths **which are likely to lead up to this end, but we must use modes of handling those truths which are likely to conduce thereto.**

Do you enquire, what are they? First, you must do a great deal by way of instruction. Sinners are not saved in darkness but from it; “that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good.” Men must be taught concerning themselves, their sin, and their fall; their Savior, redemption, regeneration, and so on. **Many awakened souls would gladly accept God’s way of salvation if they did but know it;** they are akin to those of whom the apostle said, “And now, brethren, I would that through ignorance ye did it.” **If you will instruct them God will save them:** is it not written, “the entrance of thy word giveth light”? If the Holy Spirit blesses your teaching, they will see how wrong they have been, and they will be led to repentance and faith.! do not believe in that preaching which lies mainly in shouting, “Believe! believe! believe!” In common justice you are bound to tell the poor people what they are to believe. There must be instruction, otherwise the exhortation to believe is manifestly ridiculous, and must in practice be abortive. ...

Two comments are necessary here: Many years ago, as a young Christian I went to a Keswick convention in Cape Town at the invitation of a close friend. The speaker was a persuasive Arminian Evangelist. At one point he gave an illustration of a surgeon and a dying man. He said that the surgeon cried out “My instruments, my instruments, if only I had my instruments!” His point was that God was powerless because Christians were not being obedient to God and God was therefore helpless, the

sinner therefore could not be saved. Can a soul truly be “awakened” and God not find some way to save that soul? 2. Spurgeon says that soul would “gladly accept God’s way of salvation” which puts the sinner squarely in the driver’s seat with God waiting. I’m not rejecting sound instruction! Preachers are to preach the word being instant in season and out of season. That is their calling. My reader, did you ever consider the fact, for it is a fact, about all the letters of the New Testament. What fact? Why the fact that they are written exclusively to saved Christians! They are not “for” the lost, they are written first and foremost for the saved church of God, his bride. Spurgeon, Arminians and the like misuse verse after verse to push for conversions and to give a false view of God. Look at the introductions to the letters! Read the word with care! Spurgeon continues then:

While giving instruction it is wise to appeal to the understanding. **True religion is as logical as if it were not emotional.** I am not an admirer of the peculiar views of Mr. Finney, but I have no doubt that he was useful to many; and his power lay in his use of clear arguments. Many who knew his fame were greatly disappointed at first hearing him, because he used few beauties of speech and was as calm and dry as a book of Euclid; but he was exactly adapted to a certain order of minds, and they were convinced and convicted by his forcible reasoning. Should not persons of an argumentative cast of mind be provided for? We are to be all things to all men, and to these men we must become argumentative and push them into a corner with plain deductions and necessary inferences. Of carnal reasoning we would have none, but of fair, honest pondering, considering, judging, and arguing the more the better.

The statement bolded above is astonishing! **“True religion is as logical as if it were not emotional.”** As I have clearly shown in the preceding pages Spurgeon gloried in inconsistencies, in unsolvable mysteries, in teaching two opposing doctrines in one sermon as if both were equally true. There is no logic in the way he approaches conversion and the cross of Christ. All this preaching up the physical suffering of Christ is to draw out the emotions of his hearers while getting away from the fact of Christ dying for his elect alone. The statement is a contradiction of his own preaching. He goes on shortly after to state this clearly! Suddenly in the space of a few sentences’ true religion (getting people saved) becomes hyper emotional. Not just emotional but sentimental, as we saw above Christ holding out his arms, waiting and pleading.

The class requiring logical argument is small compared with the number of those who need to be **pleaded with, by way of emotional persuasion. They require not so much reasoning as heart-argument — which is logic set on fire.** You must argue with them as a mother pleads with her boy that he will not grieve her, or as a fond sister entreats a brother to return to their father’s home and seek reconciliation: argument must be quickened into persuasion by the living warmth of love. Cold logic has its force, but when made red hot with affection the power of tender argument is inconceivable. The power which one mind can gain over others is enormous, but it is often best developed when the leading mind has ceased to have power over itself. **When passionate zeal has carried the man himself away his speech becomes an irresistible torrent, sweeping all before it. A man known to be godly and devout, and felt to be large-hearted and self-sacrificing, has a power in his very person, and his advice and recommendation carry weight because of his character; but when he comes to plead and to persuade, even to tears, his influence is**

**wonderful, and God the Holy Spirit yokes it into his service.** Brethren, we must plead. Entreaties and beseeching's must blend with our instructions. **Any and every appeal which will reach the conscience and move men to fly to Jesus we must perpetually employ, if by any means we may save some.**

There are other things here to notice before we come to the last quotation from this lecture. Here Spurgeon is speaking autobiographically, speaking of himself and his personal ministry. In my opinion this is the source of his title "The prince of preachers". The heart of his fame. Not so much what he preached, that is often overlooked or grossly misunderstood, but how he preached. In other words, sentimental emotionalism coupled with an exemplary personal life was the real source of his fame. This is what he, himself says above: it sweeps all before it. In this context anything goes: "Any and every appeal", "if by any means we may save some." Here the passion of his heart is exposed to view for all to see. Clearly revealed as well is how he believes that God needs help in order to save. All this emotion and tears and reasoning first and then "... and God the Holy Spirit yokes it into his service." He continues:

Sometimes, too, we must change our tone. Instead of instructing, reasoning, and persuading, we must come to threatening, and declare the wrath of God upon impenitent souls. We must lift the curtain and let them see the future. Show them their danger and warn them to escape from the wrath to come. This done, we must return to invitation, and set before **the awakened mind** the rich provisions of infinite grace which are freely presented to the sons of men. **In our Master's name we must give the invitation**, crying, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

By "the awakened mind" he means something far different than the so called "ultra-Calvinistic theologians" he attacks after the quote above, (which I give below). Notice he says, "awakened **mind**" and not heart. He considers anyone who has sat under his or a similar ministry as awakened. This is an exceptionally important matter to understand and appreciate. He does not mean a sinner who God has regenerated and given a new heart. He does not even always mean someone who has a real and deep sense of their personal sinfulness who truly hungers and longs for salvation. He simply means anyone who has been brought under what he considers to be the gospel. To him, this awakened **mind** has the knowledge, it just needs the Holy Spirit's help and the preachers' tears and speech to push it into a decision. Notice also in this preaching, in these sermons he is speaking about we do not hear about a sovereign Lord commanding. No, we hear rather of an Arminian Christ pleading and inviting. This is the Christ he preached and taught others to preach, at least most of the time. I deal with these aspects and his attack on hyper-Calvinism in the last part below.

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."<sup>77, 78</sup> What does the Lord Jesus Christ himself say? I refer here again to Mark chapter 4. Please remember what I said above about the background to the chapter and its parables. Christ in Mark 4:26-29 in parable form says:

And He was saying, "**The kingdom of God** is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—

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<sup>77</sup> Isaiah 8:20 KJV

<sup>78</sup> I owe most of what I saying here to the preaching of Peter L. Meney

how, he himself does not know. The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

The man here is first, the disciples and after that all the faithful preachers up to and including those of today. Preaching, God’s chosen method of saving souls (1 Corinthians 1:21, “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”<sup>79</sup>) In the clearest possible language, to those who are saved, who have ears to hear, Christ is telling us that it is God and God alone who brings about all aspects of salvation. That is from regeneration to faith to believe, to the first blade of Christian growth to final glorification. He is in fact telling us NOT to look for conversions, not to force people into some act by the use of human means. The preacher is to do one thing to the saved and the unsaved: Preach the exact same gospel to both. Needless to say, however it needs to be emphasized, this is in exact opposition to what Spurgeon taught, preached and believed with regard to conversions and the gospel.

The “kingdom of God” is simply his church, all the elect called out from the rest of mankind. Christ in Luke 17:20 and 21 has this to say about his church:

Now He was questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, and He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs that can be observed; nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or, ‘There it is!’ For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.”

The fact of conversions or the number of conversions should be to the preacher of little concern, that is if and only if the preacher is preaching the true and only Gospel that “Salvation is of the Lord.” It is NOT the preacher’s task to save anyone, that is God’s work and God’s alone. It is not the preacher’s task to see as many conversions as possible no matter what the cost. God and God alone saves anyone. I am in no way whatsoever minimizing the importance of conversions or the extreme joy and blessedness it brings to those who are used for the true conversion of souls. It is God’s chosen means to add souls to his church. We must not, however follow Spurgeon’s example in this matter.

## **Part Six Spurgeon’s false attack on ‘Hyper-Calvinism’ and the conversion of souls**

By and large whenever hyper-Calvinism is attacked it is the legendary “Straw Man”<sup>80</sup> that is attacked and not the real thing. Phil Johnson is a classic modern example of this. On his webpage “A Primer on Hyper Calvinism”<sup>81</sup> he has a drawing of his straw man, the ‘dreaded’ hyper. It’s something from someone’s nightmare, a shriveled up old man holding a bible. The very image repels, never mind the false representation he presents in his text. Another gross misrepresentation is that of Peter Toon’s book “The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity, 1689-1765”. I have already referred to Iain Murray’s travesty where he uses Spurgeon to refute his fake version pitting him against James Wells. There are of course many other examples, but they are well beyond the scope of this document. For my purpose here I will look momentarily at what Spurgeon taught and then refute that

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<sup>79</sup> KJV

<sup>80</sup> in other words a false antagonist who does not exist.

<sup>81</sup> <http://www.romans45.org/articles/hypercal.htm>

by looking briefly at James Wells. Spurgeon goes on in his lecture 10 to say in reference to putting conversions first:

Do not be deterred from this, my brethren, by those ultra-Calvinistic theologians who say, "You may instruct and warn the ungodly, but you must not invite or entreat them." And why not? "Because they are dead sinners, and it is therefore absurd to invite them, since they cannot come." Wherefore then may we warn or instruct them? The argument is so strong, if it be strong at all, that it sweeps away all modes of appeal to sinners, and they alone are **logical** who, after they have preached to the saints, sit down and say, "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." **On what ground are we to address the ungodly at all? If we are only to bid them do such things as they are capable of doing without the Spirit of God, we are reduced to mere moralists.** If it be absurd to bid the dead sinner believe and live, it is equally vain to bid him consider his state and reflect upon his future doom. Indeed, it would be idle altogether were it not that **true preaching is an act of faith** and is owned by the Holy Spirit as the means of working spiritual miracles. If we were by ourselves, and did not expect divine interpositions, we should be wise to keep within the bounds of reason and persuade men to do only what we see in them the ability to do. We should then bid the living live, urge the seeing to see, and persuade the willing to will. The task would be so easy that it might even seem to be superfluous; certainly no special call of the Holy Ghost would be needed for so very simple an undertaking. But, brethren, where is the mighty power and the victory of faith if our ministry is this and nothing more?

Who among the sons of men would think it a great vocation to be sent into a synagogue to say to a perfectly vigorous man, "Rise up and walk," or to the possessor of sound limbs, "Stretch out thine hand." He is a poor Ezekiel whose greatest achievement is to cry, "Ye living souls, live." **Let; the two methods be set side by side as to practical result, and it will be seen that those who never exhort sinners are seldom winners of souls to any great extent, but they maintain their churches by converts from other systems.** I have even heard them say, "Oh, yes, the Methodists and Revivalists are beating the hedges, but we shall catch many of the birds." If I harbored such a mean thought I should be ashamed to express it. **A system which cannot touch the outside world, but must leave arousing and converting work to others, whom it judges to be unsound, writes its own condemnation.**

Here again we find Spurgeon calling on "logic". He seems to even pit logic against faith. His delight in the illogical comes to the fore again. It's his way, his gospel or no gospel. Spurgeon took a leap of faith in preaching the gospel consisting of goading the unsaved to action. Wells based his preaching on facts knowing that God would for a certainty save some. In other words, Spurgeon based his universal invitations on God's so-called wish that all mankind would be saved. That just as he wished, cried, pleaded, and used virtually any means to bring sinners to a decision, Christ had those same feelings and desires, it was just as if Christ was doing the pleading. Indeed, Iain Murray says,

It was Spurgeon's own persuasion of the love of Christ for the souls of men that lies at the heart of his weekly evangelistic preaching in London for thirty-seven years. He

had no hesitation in concluding sermons with such words as “Cast yourself on the Savior’s love and you shall go down to your house justified.”<sup>82</sup>

He then immediately gives a brief quote from Spurgeon’s sermon “Apostolic Exhortation” to back this up. I prefer to give a fuller quote. Spurgeon says:

Christ then, by faith in him, is able to do for you **all that you want**. **If you will** trust Jesus today, all your iniquities shall be blotted out; the past shall not be remembered; the present shall be rendered safe, and the future blessed. **If thou trustest** in Christ, there is no sin which he will not forgive thee, no evil habit the power of which he will not break, no foul propensity the weight of which he cannot remove. Believing in him, he can make thee blessed beyond a dream. And is not this cause for repentance, that thou shouldst have slighted one who can do thee so much good? **With hands loaded with love he stands outside the door of your heart. Is not this good reason for opening the door and letting the heavenly stranger in**, when he can bless you to such a vast extent of benediction? What, will you reject your own mercies? Will you despise the heaven which shall be yours **if you will** have my Master? **Will you** choose the doom from which none but he can rescue you, and let go the glory to which none but he can admit you? When I think of the usefulness of Christ to perishing sinners, there is indeed abundant cause for repentance **that you should** not have closed with him long ago and accepted him to be your all in all. Thus, you see the apostle argued with them by that word “Therefore.”<sup>83</sup>

This is plain, simple, clear, unadulterated ‘Free Will’ Arminianism! Spurgeon, using his false views of the atonement, Christ’s physical suffering somehow appeasing God, two horizontal lines of truth etc. as the basics for this universal invitation. As well as all that has gone before this can be seen in a sermon titled ‘Who is This?’ from 1887

**Jesus has done the work already**. There is nothing to be endured by him in order to save you from your sins: **the expiation is made, the redemption is paid**, the righteousness is wrought out. **Of this salvation our Lord said, at the moment when he won the victory, “It is finished”**; and finished it is forever. Without seam, and woven from the top throughout, was the garb the Savior’s body wore, and now he presents a garment like to it **to every naked sinner who trusts him**, and he says, “Put it on.” It is freely given though it was dearly wrought. It cost our Lord his life to weave it, his blood to dye it; but to the sinner it is a free gift, and **if he will but have it**, he also shall be glorious in his apparel, and Jesus will strengthen him till he also shall travel in the greatness of his strength. Oh that you would believe in Jesus Christ this morning!

It is a sad wonder that men do not believe in Jesus. It is a mournful wonder that you, who have been hearing the gospel for so many years, do not believe in him. What are you at? Why, if somebody were to preach to you any other gospel than what I

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<sup>82</sup> His reference is: the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit volume 33 Pg. 120 Quoted from Murray Spurgeon and Hyper Calvinism, pg. 84

<sup>83</sup> Apostolic Exhortation, Number 804 April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1868 At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

have delivered, you would grow angry, you would not hear it. Why is it that you delight to hear the gospel, and yet will not accept it to your own salvation? Many of you have a great admiration of my Lord, after a fashion, and you love to hear me praise him; but what is it to you? What can he be to you **unless you trust him?** “Oh, but I don’t feel my sins.” **Have I not told you many times that salvation does not lie in your feelings?**” Oh, but I am not — **“Have I not told you over and over again that it is not what you are, but what Jesus is?** Hearken unto me. Cease from self and come to Jesus just as you are.<sup>84</sup>

Look at precisely what he tells all sinners: “Have I not told you **many times** that **salvation does not lie in your feelings?**” In other word there is no need for conviction, no need for a prior work of the Holy Spirit. No need for law work. No need to be burdened and heavy laden. All you need to do is to give in and open the door so Jesus can come in! This is not of course, to say that Jesus cannot save in any way that he pleases! He is not however, waiting on the women or man to decide first.

Look again at the criticism Spurgeon leveled at his false view of hyper-Calvinism.

If we were by ourselves, and did not expect divine interpositions, we should be wise to keep within the bounds of reason and persuade men to do only what we see in them the ability to do. We should then bid the living live, urge the seeing to see, and persuade the willing to will. The task would be so easy that it might even seem to be superfluous; certainly, no special call of the Holy Ghost would be needed for So very simple an undertaking. But, brethren, where is the mighty power and the victory of faith if our ministry is this and nothing more?

The deceitfulness of using straw men instead of the real is that, like Spurgeon, you can make them say and be anything you want! It does not have to be true; it just must seem plausible. This is exactly what Spurgeon is doing here.

In reference to another sermon Iain Murray makes this statement about Spurgeon’s invitations: “Spurgeon regarded an emphasis on man’s free agency as absolutely essential to true evangelism.<sup>85</sup>

Is he giving a true picture of the hypers? What better example to use that that which Iain Murray used in his book on Spurgeon and Hyper-Calvinism: Mr. James Wells of the Surrey Tabernacle<sup>86</sup>.

Wells preached to vast numbers, regularly over 1,000 and at times 10,000. His personal converts numbered at least 600 or 700. Rules for church membership were very rigid. A clear testimony of true conversion and a godly life were required. Members came from all walks of life, not just the poor classes. As with any congregation some came from other churches, but this did not “maintain” the numbers. Unlike Spurgeon’s practice, when a new building was needed the people in the church gave with very little help from outside<sup>87</sup>. Secular means were not used. This is another topic that would be

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<sup>84</sup> Who is This? Number 1947 February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1887 At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

<sup>85</sup> See Murray Spurgeon Pg. 74

<sup>86</sup> For detailed information on James Wells please see my website: [www.surreytabernaclepuplit.com](http://www.surreytabernaclepuplit.com)

<sup>87</sup> Spurgeon’s use of secular and other means to raise money is well documented. Likewise Wells refusal to accept such means is also well documented.

of benefit to pursue. What then of Well's preaching to the unconverted? Is Spurgeon correct? Is his way the only way? Wells in an 1858 sermon in aid of the Funds of The Christian Blind Relief Society, before many thousands of people said in part:

I shall try (1.) to describe to you how that mercy is obtained and frees us from condemnation. I shall (2.) describe to you the character which shall have judgment without mercy; and (3.) the triumph of mercy over everything antagonistic to it: "Mercy rejoices against judgment."

First, then, some shall obtain mercy without judgment, without condemnation; that is, mercy which shall free them from condemnation; I shall lay several points before you, for I do like points, something definite and I shall tell you my first point at once; it is this, that **in order to obtain mercy, to be free from condemnation, you must be brought into the bond of God's covenant, a covenant sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ. No man was ever yet saved without being brought there, or ever will be.** Having made that assertion, I shall now come to the proof of it: **those for whom the Lord intends mercy; he causes to feel that they are guilty without Christ, without God; and he makes them what the Scriptures call "hunger and thirst after righteousness"** "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." The poor sinner feels himself destitute of righteousness, and he listens to the invitation "Ho! Everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money, come you, buy and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price." **Some people think that this is a universal invitation, that it belongs to everybody, but do not let us dispute about that, let us ask a better question than that; the best question you can ask, is, "whether you thirst for the waters of eternal life?" As a poor sinner, do you feel encouragement from such passages as this?** When the woman of Samaria refused Jesus' water, he said unto her "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says unto you, give me to drink, you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living waters." What say you to this? Whether it belongs to all, or not, is a matter of doctrine; the question is does it belong to you? John saw "a river of water, as clear as crystal," expressive of the purity of God's truth, and everyone that thirsts; young and old, male and female, learned and unlearned; it matters not what their lives and characters have been, a Mary Magdalene, the thief upon the cross, God says, "every one that thirsts, and he that has no money" **Till you feel you are destitute, you will not see your need of spiritual things,** which, if they come at all, will come freely.

"Buy wine and milk, without money and without price." The wine signifies, spiritually, the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; and the "milk" means "the sincere milk of the word," as Peter expresses it.

We, who are in the presence of our Maker, here, this evening, must, in a very few years (all of us,) be in his eternal presence; and the question is, whether we are to be sharers in his mercy? Are we thirsting for his mercy? Are we looking to the God of mercy, or are we not? **The great point for us is, whether this mercy belongs to us, or not.**

“Wherefore spend you your money for that which is not bread; for that which satisfies not?” Why this wearing yourself out, to make yourself holy and righteous, whereas you are not able to do it? Come unto me, says Christ, you who are trying to make yourselves holy, and I will be your holiness, your righteousness, and your life.

And now what is the remedy? That which I just now suggested. How many are there here, who will sneer at this remedy? Who will have the daring, the blindness, the hardness, the ignorance inwardly to sneer at the remedy? What is the remedy? “Hearken diligently unto me, and your soul shall live; incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”

**Amidst all the preaching in this great Metropolis, how little is known of God's covenant! Yet, “the secret of the Lord, (that is, the counsel of the Lord,) is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant.”**

This, then, is the first step towards obtaining mercy. **Dream not of doing what is called “your part.” If you have been tested by God’s holy law, you will have felt that you can do nothing**, and that nothing but the blood of the everlasting covenant can take your sins away. These are they who shall have mercy without judgment that is, without condemnation, for “there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”

The second point to which you must be brought, is, that of **the certainty of God's truth.** “Let the wicked forsake his way.” The word “Let,” is God's imperative mood, and the meaning is, “the wicked SHALL forsake his way.” “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” You cannot get rid of your sins, as Samson broke his green withs; nor are your sins such a load that you can run away with them, as Samson did the gates of Gaza. No! When you feel their guilt and burden, you will then groan, and acknowledge that nothing but an Almighty Burden-bearer, can bear such a burden as yours. “My iniquities have gone over my head and they are too heavy for me to bear.” Ah, my friends, what a mercy it is that they were not too heavy for Christ, that his Almighty shoulders not only could but did bear them! He has put away our sins, by the sacrifice of himself, “for he will abundantly pardon.” This is what the poor sinner wants. Abundantly pardon, means three things: (1) freely pardon, (2) fully pardon, and (3) that he will proportion pardons, or, as the margin reads “multiply” pardon. Who can help loving such a God as this? We are subject daily to infirmities, and God multiplies pardons, till they become, in their accumulation, as numerous as the sands of the seashore; or, as the particles which compose the globe; or, as the stars which bespangle the firmament of heaven. In this way he glories in the greatness of his mercy. **Is it sure that I shall obtain this pardon? Yes! If you have a sense of your need of it, a heart to seek it, and a faith to believe the Lord’s word concerning it. Hear what the Lord has said: “As the heavens are high above the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts; for as the rain comes down, and as the snow**

**from heaven, and returns not thither, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the Sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.**” May God give you grace to try it, and you will find him true, as millions have found him true before, and as millions more, we trust, may find him true: “my word (he says, that is my word of mercy and of pardon,) shall not return unto me void.” **Point me out a single instance where God has sent his word, and it returned unto him void, without accomplishing the thing whereunto it was sent?** When he sent it into the valley of dry bones, there was a great shaking, and they came together without human assistance, bone to bone, then the sinews, then the Lord clothed them with flesh, and covered them with skin, and breathed into them, and they stood on their feet an exceeding great army. It is just possible, looking at the methods of interment in the East, that there were many other corpses in the same grave where Lazarus was, and if Christ had directed his words as much to others as he did to Lazarus, they would have come to life again, and enjoyed the sweet freedom; “Loose him and let him go!” This is the second point, without the certainty of this truth, do not dream that you can obtain mercy.<sup>88</sup>

Here, in this and many other sermons and teaching by James Wells we see the great divide between these two preachers, between these two different gospels. We also clearly see that Spurgeon lied, with regard to almost all the “ultra-Calvinistic theologians” he railed against. Wells is but one example of a multitude of theologians as well as a preacher who today are wrongly labeled hyper-Calvinists in the way Spurgeon portrayed. Wells was a leading hyper-Calvinist in the true Gospel and God glorifying manner. He still lives today by his writings. There is nothing of the fake hyper-Calvinist described by Spurgeon, Phil Johnson, Iain Murray, The Banner of Truth Trust, and many other false guides. There is however true gospel preaching that led and still leads to God glorifying conversions and strong faithful Christians.

Spurgeon, as quoted above said: “Let the two methods be set side by side as to practical result, and it will be seen that **those who never exhort sinners** are seldom winners of souls to any great extent, but they maintain their churches by converts from other systems.” In his lecture he also said: “Do not close a single sermon without addressing the ungodly, but at the same time set yourself seasons for a determined and continuous assault upon them and proceed with all your soul to the conflict.”

Wells based his preaching of the covenant of Grace before the world began. He knew that God’s chosen, elect, predestinated people would be called out by the Gospel call, or if you like invitation. Preaching was God’s primary means and the results to both the elect and the reprobate are certain: Salvation is of the Lord. Wells addressed all his words to all the thousands of souls in attendance (possibly 10,000 for that one sermon alone). Just like when the Lord Jesus Christ preached to the multitudes he said in effect. “Let him who has ears to hear.” Wells believed firmly in the total depravity of men and women. He knew that unless God has prepared the ground, like in the parable of the Sower his preaching would be fruitless. He knew and acted upon the fact it is God alone who can give life and that he will give life to his chosen elect. Look at the powerful expression of absolute faith in God.

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<sup>88</sup> THE RIGHT GOSPEL A Sermon Preached on Sunday Evening, December 5th, 1858  
By Mister JAMES WELLS, SAINT JAMES HALL, PICCADILLY

Look at the certainty of the true Gospel bearing fruit just by the act of preaching that truth: “Point me out a single instance where God has sent his word, and it returned unto him void, without accomplishing the thing whereunto it was sent?” Call it what you like. Rail against it all you can. Truth is truth and there is no such thing as unexplainable contradictions. The very evidence of such “contradictions” is a sure sign of a false gospel, of Satan at work.

In conclusion I hope if nothing else that I have allowed a little light to shine upon the vital subject of conversion and the atonement. I trust I have given the reader something to consider. It is impossible that both sides are true, the Scriptures know of only one way of salvation, one way of righteousness one way to live to the glory of God. No one is perfect but either James Well’s **OR** C. H. Spurgeon are true preachers and teachers on these subjects. May God give us all grace to know and act upon what is true.

**“We which have believed do enter into rest.” Heb. 4. 3**

*J. Swain 8.7.4.*

**1**

Come, ye souls, by sin afflicted,  
Bowed with fruitless sorrow down;  
By the broken law convicted,  
Through the cross behold the crown!  
Look to Jesus;  
Mercy flows through him alone.

**2**

Sweet as home to pilgrims weary,  
Light to newly-opened eyes,  
Flowing springs in deserts dreary,  
Is the rest the cross supplies;  
All who taste it  
Shall to rest immortal rise.

**3**

Blessèd are the eyes that see him;  
Blest the ears that hear his voice;  
Blessèd are the souls that trust him,  
And in him alone rejoice;  
His commandments  
Then become their happy choice.

**4**

But to sing the “Rest remaining,”  
Mortal tongues far short must fall;  
Heavenly tongues are ever aiming,  
But they cannot tell it all;  
Faith believes it – Hope expects it –  
But it overwhelms them all.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Number 1055 from “A Selection of Hymns for Public Worship”, by William Gadsby Gospel Standard Publications 1965