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The Gospel as Motivation for Santification in Sermons of Spurgeon

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THE GOSPEL AS MOTIVATION FOR SANCTIFICATION
IN SERMONS OF SPURGEON

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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June 1956

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SHORT TITLE

GOSPEL AND SANCTIFICATION

IN SPURGEON

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Reason for Study

This topic has significance because of two important facts. The first is that it deals with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the greatest power which can be exerted in the lives of men. The second is that it deals with sanctification, a holy life. This is significant because it involves the whole purpose of God's leaving the Christian to dwell on earth. The second cannot be accomplished without the first. With the first properly applied, there is no limit to the possibilities of the second.

No one will deny that we have much to learn in this connection. Some have failed to wield the word of God in the most effective way so that God's purposes could be most extensively accomplished. Many preachers have by improper preaching failed to get people to fulfill God's purposes for them in life. There is no better reason than this to turn to men who have been successful in preaching, and who therefore have much to teach us in applying the Word of God and the Gospel. It is for this reason that we look to Charles Haddon Spurgeon, one of the greatest preachers of all time. We want to learn the secret of his success. We shall try to observe his use of the Gospel as motivation for sanctification. We shall try to point up for our own instruction and inspiration his good example and sound technique, and

we shall try to learn from his mistakes.

We shall in this study bring in the broader factors which are necessary to give a true and well rounded picture of Spurgeon's technique. We shall try to know the man Spurgeon more closely through a short biographical sketch. We shall study specifically his concept of the Gospel, his idea of the sanctified Christian, and his application of the Gospel and of other factors as motivation for the true sanctified life.

Assumptions

In approaching a subject of this kind it is necessary to begin with certain assumptions, facts which we believe to be truly Scriptural doctrine. In approaching this topic we will hold as the true, Biblical, and Christian doctrine the fact that the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news of His redemptive work on the cross for all mankind, is the only true motivation for sanctification.

Sanctification in the wide sense, as the dogmaticians speak of it, consists of all that is done in us by the Holy Spirit—namely, the separating from sin, the new birth, the giving of faith, the state of being righteous before God, the adoption as children of God, the transformation of man's life and works to that which pleases God, the perserverance in the faith, and final renewal on Judgment Day. Passages in the epistles of St. Paul and St. Peter, for example seem to indicate that justification and all that it implies is included in sanctification, when in connection with sanctification they speak of

"belief in the truth," and "the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."¹

Sanctification is also used in a narrow sense in Scripture when it describes or designates the holiness of life in a believer, which follows upon justification. This is St. Paul's meaning when he says in his epistle to the Romans: "Now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness."² Again: "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."³ The Formula of Concord describes sanctification in the narrower sense when it describes it as follows:

In the same manner the order also between faith and good works must abide and be maintained, and likewise between justification and renewal, or sanctification. For good works do not precede faith, neither does sanctification precede justification. But first faith is kindled in us in conversion by the Holy Ghost from the hearing of the Gospel. This lays hold of God's grace in Christ, by which the person is justified. Then, when the person is justified, he is also renewed and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, from which renewal and sanctification the fruits of good works must then follow.⁴

It is this sanctification in the narrower sense with which we shall be primarily concerned in this paper.

The motivation to do good works, the strength to do good works is supplied solely by the Gospel of Christ. This was the only incentive for good works put forth by St. Paul. He admonished Christians

¹2 Thessalonians 2:13; I Peter 1:2. Sanctification in the wider sense.

²Romans 6:22. Sanctification in the narrower sense.

³Romans 6:18-19. Sanctification in the narrower sense.

⁴"Thorough Declaration," Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 929.

"by the mercies of God" to present their bodies a living sacrifice unto God.⁵ Only "because he first loved us" will the love of God and of people be created in the hearts of men.⁶ The Lutheran Confessions speak in like manner according to Scripture when they say:

The Law says indeed that it is God's will and command that we should walk in a new life, but it does not give the power and ability to begin and do it; but the Holy Ghost, who is given and received, not through the Law, but through the preaching of the Gospel, Gal. 3:14, renews the heart.⁷

We will therefore proceed on the premise that it is only the Gospel of Christ which can give the will and the power to follow God's command and to walk in the newness of life. We will consider as an adequate statement of Gospel, any preaching which points man to Christ's death and work of atonement as the means of his salvation. Causing men to look to Christ and in His atonement finding the reason and power for sanctification, will be considered adequate Gospel-motivation for sanctification.

Biographical Sketch

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born at Kelvedon, Essex County, England, on June 19, 1834.⁸ His father and grandfather were both congregational preachers, his father serving as a lay preacher. Both his father and grandfather had received a business education in their

⁵Romans 12:1; 2 Corinthians 8:9.

⁶I John 4:11, 19.

⁷"Thorough Declaration," Triglot Concordia, p. 965.

⁸Russell H. Conwell, Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon (Edgewood Publishing Company, 1892), p. 23.

early years. His father was engaged in business at Kelvedon. His father was poor, but his grandfather was a man of ample means.

Spurgeon was very much "his grandfather's boy." From a very early age, his parents sent him to live with his paternal grandparents at Stambourne in Essex. There he showed an interest in his grandfather's books. He read extensively in the Bible and writings of puritan theologians.⁹ His grandfather, a very instructive preacher, occupied the same pastorate and lived in the same house for fifty-four years. It was in this house of his grandparents that Spurgeon spent the most important years of his boyhood.¹⁰

The early years of his education find Spurgeon only an average student. One of his teachers described him as "rather dull, slow, but persistent, doing thoroughly whatever he had in mind." Spurgeon showed no special promise in his early school days of the greatness he later achieved. The education of his later youth was received at Stambourne while he was living with his grandparents, and from 1841 to 1844 he attended school at Colchester, while living with his parents.¹¹

Although Spurgeon had received an excellent moral and religious training at the hands of his grandparents, he still had his youthful doubts and anxieties, and was not deeply moved by religion until December 15, 1850, when he heard a sermon by a lay preacher in a Primitive

⁹F. R. Webber, A History of Preaching (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1952), p. 597.

¹⁰Conwell, op. cit., p. 29.

¹¹Ibid., p. 59.

Methodist chapel in Colchester.¹² Being convinced of the Baptist position on certain points of doctrine such as baptism, he joined the Baptist Church at Isleham, and was baptized by its pastor on May 3, 1851.¹³

Spurgeon's father wanted him to attend college, but he was determined not to do so, for he had read the writings of the rationalists and Biblical critics, and was convinced that the colleges were being influenced by liberalism.¹⁴ But to please his father Spurgeon decided to contact Dr. James Angus about entering Stepney College to prepare more fully for the ministry. It was seemingly by a twist of fate that Spurgeon's college plans did not develop. It was through a servant's error in ushering him into the wrong room that he failed to meet Dr. Angus at his home. When the appointment did not materialize, Spurgeon concluded it was not the will of God that he should attend college. In giving up college he did not, however, give up his intention to secure all the education which those obtain who go to college. To this end he devoted himself diligently to study in his spare hours.

Spurgeon preached his first sermon in 1851 at the age of seventeen. This experience took place in a cottage outside of Cambridge. His sermon was an extemporaneous attempt, since he did not know he would be called upon to preach. He was so successful that he was en-

¹²Edwin C. Dargan, A History of Preaching (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, George H. Doran Co., 1912) II, 535.

¹³Ibid., p. 535.

¹⁴Webber, op. cit., p. 597.

couraged to preach in other cottages in the area.¹⁵

The same year, Spurgeon became pastor of a Baptist congregation at Waterbeach, several miles from Cambridge. He occupied this pastorate for about three years.¹⁶

In 1854 Spurgeon was called as pastor to the New Park Street Chapel, after having served this congregation previously as supply pastor. It was not long before all London had heard of his preaching. The Sunday attendance began to rise. Soon the Chapel, which seated 1,200, could no longer accommodate the congregation. The chapel was enlarged to seat 1,800, but from the beginning it was too small. Next the congregation moved to Exeter Hall, on the Strand near Trafalgar Square. Soon even this larger building was outgrown, and the congregation moved to the Royal Music Hall in Surrey Gardens.¹⁷

It was at the Royal Music Hall that a severe disaster and panic took place. During the sermon several persons with evil intent disturbed the service with cries of "Fire! Fire!" The capacity crowd at once went into a panic, trampling many to death and injuring many in a fearful and excited rush to the doors.¹⁸

This sad event indirectly influenced the decision to build the Metropolitan Tabernacle. The accident increased the demand for a safer place to meet, a place that would accommodate the ever increasing multitudes. The building of the Metropolitan Tabernacle was begun in 1859

¹⁵Ibid., p. 596.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 597.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 599.

¹⁸Conwell, op. cit., p. 209.

and it was opened for use in 1861. Its seating capacity was 6,000. It had the appearance of a large Municipal Auditorium. Two Sunday services were conducted with an average attendance of 10,000 people. This Tabernacle was the scene of Spurgeon's preaching for the rest of his life.¹⁹

In January of 1856 Spurgeon married Susannah Thompson. She was a member of the New Park Street Chapel, a Christian lady of high character. Even though she became an invalid in later life, she nevertheless took an active part as a helper and co-worker in Spurgeon's work.²⁰ She lent a great deal of inspiration to Spurgeon's successful life. Two sons were born to Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon. Both followed their father into the ministry.

Spurgeon owed a great deal to the capable help of his brother James, who became his co-pastor in January, 1868, and worked with him to the end of his life.²¹

Spurgeon's ministry extended beyond the scope of his preaching. In the year 1855 he established his own pastor's college, teaching students first in his home, and later at the Tabernacle when it was opened in 1861. Later new buildings were completed and the college was given its own permanent home.²² He established the college mainly to provide an opportunity for men from all walks of life, and levels of

¹⁹Webber, op. cit., p. 599.

²⁰Dargan, op. cit., p. 536.

²¹Ibid.

²²Webber, op. cit., p. 599.

society to study for the ministry.

In 1867 Spurgeon founded Stockwell Orphanage.²³ Seeing the need, he felt that such an institution should be established. In an 1866 issue of his magazine The Sword and The Trowel he mentioned the need for an institution to care for neglected orphans. He received a response from a reader who provided \$100,000 for the establishment of the orphanage. It was with such funds gathered by a general appeal, by pointing up the need, that Spurgeon carried out much of his work with all the institutions and enterprises with which he was connected.

In addition to these enterprises, Spurgeon established an Old Ladies' Home in connection with the Tabernacle. This project too was financed by contributed funds.²⁴

Spurgeon has to his credit the establishment of a Bible Society that in time employed as many as ninety colporteurs.²⁵

One of the most successful Spurgeon enterprises was the Book Fund. The Book Fund was a project of Mrs. Spurgeon. Its purpose was to furnish the poor pastors of every Christian denomination with certain basic books necessary for a pastor's library. These were to be books "full of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ," books which would be a source of strength for their spiritual life and which would thus make it possible for them to preach with greater power.²⁶ This, like many of the other projects which the Spurgeons undertook was financed through free will

²³Ibid.

²⁴Corwell, op. cit., p. 440.

²⁵Webber, op. cit., p. 599.

²⁶Corwell, op. cit., p. 275.

gifts and donations. The Book Fund was a tremendous success, as is evident from the many words of thanks from the clergymen who received the benefit of these books.

Spurgeon died on January 31, 1892, at Mentone in southern France, at the age of fifty-seven. He had been afflicted with a serious disease for several years. He had become an invalid several months before his death. Most of the last year of his life he was absent from his pulpit. All England mourned his death, and over 100,000 people attended the various services at the Tabernacle on the occasion of his funeral.²⁷

Death, however, did not end Spurgeon's influence. The volumes of his writings that he left behind bear his influence down to the present day. Forty-nine volumes of his sermons entitled The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit were published between 1856 and 1904. Hundreds of other sermons were published individually. A commentary on the Psalter entitled The Treasury of David appeared in seven volumes between 1870 and 1875. A set of twenty volumes called the Memorial Library was published after his death. The set included nineteen volumes of sermons and a biography.²⁸

In reading Spurgeon's sermons it must be remembered that he preached from notes. His sermons were reported and revised, not being written out before they were preached.²⁹ The printed sermon will thus not at all times be an actual word for word recording of Spurgeon's actual preaching.

²⁷Webber, op. cit., p. 603.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 603-04.

²⁹Dargan, op. cit., p. 538.

CHAPTER II

THE GOSPEL

Spurgeon's Concept of The Gospel

Theologically Spurgeon is of the Calvinist persuasion. He is also a Baptist. This suggests several points of view which are at times found or alluded to in his preaching. Spurgeon teaches irresistible grace for the elect who are not yet in the faith.¹ He is convinced that certain elect individuals must be regenerated. It is just that the predestinated moment has not struck. But when it does come, they shall be converted because the Spirit of God cannot be withstood when He comes in His power, and they will of necessity become the willing servants of the living God. Other aspects of salvation may be brought about gradually, "but regeneration is the instantaneous work of God's sovereign, effectual, and irresistible grace."² In a sermon entitled "Christ Crucified" Spurgeon sums up his whole Calvinistic view of the Gospel as follows:

And I have my own private opinion, that there is no such 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 dis-

¹C. H. Spurgeon, "Nothing but Leaves," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company), VIII, 176.

²Spurgeon, "The New Heart," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, V, 93.

pensation of grace; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor, I think, can we 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 gain-sayers we reply, "We have not so learned Christ."³

Spurgeon falls into the Calvinist pit of irresistible grace together with the error that true Christians can never fall away. He also alludes to particular grace. The above statement: "redemption which Christ made for his elect and chosen people" seems to hint at particular grace. The following statement also sounds like limited grace:

When Christ was bound to the tree I see my own sin bound there; when he died every believer virtually died in him. . . . and when he was in the tomb, he was, as it were, God's hostage for all his church, for all that ever should believe in him.⁴

Note the emphasis on the death of Christ for the believer, and the designation as God's hostage for all His Church. This implies particular grace.

On the basis of more explicit evidence, however, Spurgeon seems to believe in universal grace, and appears to reject double predestination. This is inconsistent with true Calvinism, and is perhaps due to a fortunate inconsistency. Spurgeon says:

Whosoever believeth in him is not condemned. If, then, you believe on Jesus Christ, you are not condemned, election or no election. But let me tell you, if you believe in Christ you are one of his elect, and it is because he elected you that you come to believe

³Spurgeon, "Christ Crucified," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, I, 88-89.

⁴Spurgeon, "The Believer's Challenge," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, VI, 160.

in him; it is because he chose you that you are led to desire him and made to accept him.⁵

The "whosoever" in the first statement above implies universal grace.

The basing of salvation on faith in Christ regardless of election seems to indicate a rejection of double predestination.

Synergism is not found as part of Spurgeon's concept of the Gospel. For him it is not the power of man which brings him to God, but it is rather the work of God to bring men to grace.⁶

In spite of the heresies which accompany Spurgeon's concept of the Gospel, he is nevertheless quite clear and Scriptural in his actual understanding of the Gospel message. For him salvation depends upon a knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This is not merely the historical man, Jesus who walked on earth teaching moral concepts. This is the Jesus who came down from heaven, the Son of God incarnate, God in human form. For Spurgeon it is necessary to know the Christ born of the virgin Mary, the Christ who lived a life of sanctity and suffering, who wrestled with the powers of hell in the garden, who was nailed to a cross, who thus became obedient unto death on the cross. This must be the Christ who suffered the full chastisement of man's sin, who bore the iniquity of all men, who overcame it by His death and triumphed through His resurrection.⁷

⁵C. H. Spurgeon, "Ho! Ho!" Storm Signals (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers), p. 154.

⁶Spurgeon, "The Comer's Conflict with Satan," Sermons By C. H. Spurgeon of London, II, 300.

⁷Spurgeon, "A Caution for Sinsick Souls," Storm Signals, p. 173.

Spurgeon very systematically and concisely sums up his concept of the Gospel in a sermon titled "A Caution for Sin-sick Souls":

Now, if thou wouldst be saved, my friend, it is necessary that thou believe in him who was the Son of God and the Son of man, and that thou believe in thy heart these things of him:—First, that he is a divinely ordained Saviour, able to save those that come unto God through him. Thou must believe, likewise, that he is willing to save, and that he will save those that seek salvation, believing and trusting in his power. When thou hast believed this, thou hast gone a good part of the way toward that saving faith, which shall bring thee into a state of grace. It is by acting upon this belief, by casting thyself simply on the merits of his blood, and of his perfect righteousness, as the ground of thine acceptance before God, that thou shalt find peace. No man can be saved if he does not trust his soul in the hands of Christ. We must give up ourselves from our own keeping into Christ's keeping, saying, "Lord, take me, save me, make me what thou wouldst have me to be; and then, when thy Father shall require my soul at the last day, stand thou my surety, and bring me perfect and spotless into his presence."⁸

Point by point Spurgeon's concept of the Gospel can be summed up as follows:

1. Christ is the Son of God and the Son of man.
2. Christ is the divinely ordained Savior.
3. Christ is willing and able to save those who come to God through Him.
4. Christ will save those who trust in his power.
5. The ground of man's acceptance before God is his reliance upon the merits of Christ's blood and His perfect righteousness.

The above quotation and the summary in five points express quite a complete statement of Spurgeon's concept of the Gospel. In this instance it is stated in terms of man's believing, and upon the condition of man's believing, which could perhaps be construed to mean that man has a part in his salvation because of his faith, or by coming

⁸Ibid., p. 174.

to God perhaps of his own accord. This thought is foreign to Spurgeon's concept of the Gospel, and the above statements about man's believing and coming to God must be understood within the context of the Holy Spirit's work which will be discussed in more detail later in this paper. The above reference to faith in the power of God, of Christ to save, may be an echo of the Calvinistic emphasis on the power and the sovereignty of God connected to the salvation of man by election and irresistible grace. Rank Calvinism emphasizes the idea that man is saved not so much because of the death of Christ, but because he is elected.

Preaching of Explicit Gospel

Spurgeon is quite consistent in bringing statements of the Gospel into every sermon. At times it consists mainly in a reference to the word "Gospel" taking for granted that the word will provoke the conditioned thoughts of the hearer to think about the wider implications of the word. But in the majority of instances statements of explicit Gospel are made. This point is illustrated very well in a sermon entitled "Love Thy Neighbor."⁹ At the beginning of the sermon Spurgeon makes quite a point of saying that the Gospel need not be preached in every sermon. He makes this point on the basis of Jesus' example.

Our Saviour very often preached upon the moral precepts of the law. Many of the sermons of Christ—and what sermons shall compare with

⁹Spurgeon, "Love Thy Neighbor," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, IV, 428.

them—have not what is now currently called 'the Gospel' in them at all.¹⁰

This reference to the Savior's preaching alludes no doubt to the Sermon on the Mount, and contends that much of Jesus' preaching was concerned with the duties of human life, the fruits of the Spirit, instruction for the Christian's attitude one toward another. With this kind of introduction we would not expect any Gospel-preaching whatsoever in this sermon. Yet in spite of this he does bring the Gospel-message in to this sermon:

You are sinners this morning—you must feel it: my sermon, if blessed of God, must convince you all of guilt. Well, then, as sinners, let me preach to you the gospel. "Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus shall be saved." Though he hath hitherto broken this law God shall forgive him.¹¹

This factor is quite consistent in almost all of Spurgeon's sermons. In the examples studied, there is to a greater or lesser degree almost always a statement of Gospel.

Application of the Gospel to Hearers

Spurgeon's concept of the Gospel can perhaps be more fully illustrated by viewing his direct application of the Gospel to his hearers. A quite consistent pattern in Spurgeon's sermons is to follow the preaching of the Law with fitting statements of Gospel. To illustrate from one particular sermon, Spurgeon recounts to his congregation the story of his conversation with a waterman in his boat. While speaking of religious matters he asks the waterman if he had a good hope of heaven should he die. The waterman felt he did and when asked upon

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., p. 444.

what he based this, he immediately began to recount a number of good deeds he had done in his life, and expressed the hope that soon he would give up the boat and take to going to church. Spurgeon replied that this would never make him right with God, and asked the man if he had ever sinned. The man replied that he had, but was sorry for his sins and felt they were over because they didn't trouble him now. To this Spurgeon answered with an illustration from everyday life, asking if his grocer would forgive or overlook a debt merely because the debtor didn't intend to become indebted to him any more. Then he drives home the point—if the grocer will not do business in this way, certainly God cannot be expected to strike out the debts simply because the sinner does not intend to run into deeper debt.¹² After applying the Law in this manner Spurgeon speaks the word of Gospel as follows:

I told him how the Lord Jesus Christ had paid the debts of sinners; how those that reposed in him, and rested in his blood and righteousness should find peace and mercy, and the man was delighted, and he said he wished he had heard that years ago.¹³

There are many examples like this in Spurgeon's sermons. Another example of Gospel applied after preaching of the Law is found in his sermon entitled "Comfort Proclaimed," where he tells the hearer that he is guilty before God, that he will be punished for his sins. Then he comes and depicts the Gospel as the only means of escape. Christ is pictured to be man's substitute. There is only one alternative and one way of salvation: "Either thou must die, or Christ must die for thee. Thy only refuge is faith in Jesus Christ, whereby thou shalt be assured

¹²Spurgeon, "A Caution for Sin-Sick Souls," Storm Signals, pp. 170-72.

¹³Ibid., p. 172.

that Christ did really and actually shed his blood for thee."¹⁴

In another sermon entitled "The Believer's Challenge" he sums up his application of Gospel to a repentant sinner in one simple sentence: "If you are now led to repent of sin, if you will now cast yourself on the blood and righteousness of Christ, your eternal salvation shall be as sure as your present existence."¹⁵

Again, in dealing with people afflicted with their sin, with despairing souls without hope—even doubting God's mercy—Spurgeon leads them to Christ and his cross that they may receive pardon and salvation. He preaches the Law, disarming the sinner of any self-righteousness or merit of works, and then he takes the despairing sinner to receive forgiveness at the hand of Christ.

Not one, mark, not one, however high in station, however excellent in morality, however profound in learning, however lofty in fame, has ever been able to pass the threshold of heaven except through the atoning blood and meritorious righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁶

In further examining Spurgeon's application of Gospel we find that it is a Gospel applied very personally and intimately to men. Spurgeon pictures hope for men in the work of atonement which Christ performed. Christ's death was "for me." The same is true of His burial, His resurrection. Because He lives, man lives; in His deliverance man is delivered, because He is free, man is freed.¹⁷ Every aspect of His

¹⁴Spurgeon, "Comfort Proclaimed," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, V, 210.

¹⁵Spurgeon, "The Believer's Challenge," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, VI, 167.

¹⁶Spurgeon, "Sinner's Only Alternative," Storm Signals, p. 108.

¹⁷Spurgeon, "The Believer's Challenge," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, VI, 161.

suffering, death and resurrection was for men, and the resultant life and victory which resulted is also for men. Spurgeon cannot make it more personal. In His death and resurrection I die and rise. By His redemption I am saved. This intimate application of Gospel is depicted very beautifully in Spurgeon's own words:

He died for me. I cannot be punished for my sin. He rose again, I must rise, and though I die yet shall I live again. He sits at the right hand of God, and so must I. I must be crowned and reign with him for ever. He intercedes, and he must be heard. He beckons me, and I must be brought at length to see his face, and to be with him where he is.¹⁸

Pictures and Figures of the Atonement

To make the Gospel more explicit and more easily understood, Spurgeon depicts it at times in various figures or pictures. In the sermon entitled "The Believer's Challenge" Spurgeon pictures the atonement as four pillars of faith. The first pillar, or the first reason why the Christian will not be condemned is that Christ died.¹⁹ To the death of Christ is here ascribed the full penalty of the divine justice for all the sins of all believers. Divine wrath was visited upon Christ and was exhausted upon the cross. And because of this God no longer holds a single sin against any Christian. Nor is there any punishment awaiting any believer in Jesus. The believer's sin and due punishment were borne by Christ on the cross, and for this reason no Christian will ever be condemned. This is the first pillar of faith.

The second pillar is depicted as the resurrection. The second reason

¹⁸Ibid., p. 169.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 157.

why a believer will not be condemned is the fact that Christ has risen.²⁰ It is a powerful argument for man's salvation that Christ died. But a still more telling proof is the fact that He rose again. Christ's death was the actual payment of the debt, but the resurrection is the public acknowledgment of God that He has accepted the payment, that the debt is paid.

The elevation with Christ to a place of favor at God's right hand is the third pillar of faith.²¹ Christ is the representative of His people, He is their common head. And because He has been elevated to a place of dignity and favor, a place at the right hand of God, this means that His people, too, share in His glory, His elevation, His enshrinement in glory. Christ's sitting at the right hand of God in glory is to be looked upon, then, as the acceptance of the Christian's representative, and therefore also as the acceptance of the soul of the individual Christian.

The fourth pillar of faith is Christ's intercession for us.²² Christ intercedes for us, He presents His wounds, His rent body and flowing blood before God the Father, and with them pleads for His people. This then is proof that the Christian cannot be condemned, for the blood has not been shed in vain. It is rather on the mercy seat of God, it pleads before His throne—before His eyes and in His ears—and we cannot deny that it will prevail.

Another picture of the atonement sets forth Christ in His death as

²⁰Ibid., p. 159.

²¹Ibid., p. 163.

²²Ibid., p. 165.

the hostage of God's people. He is man's representative. When He was bound to the tree, our sins were bound there, when He died every believer died in Him, every believer was buried with Him. He was God's hostage for the whole church. As the fruit of the harvest of His suffering and death man then finds his salvation.²³

The atonement in another figure depicts "Christ's death . . . as it were the digging out of the gold of grace out of the deep mines of Jesus' sufferings."²⁴ The gold which Christ coined, so to speak, is the redemption of His children, and the resurrection was the minting of that gold stamped with the Father's approval, and which is now the current coin and exchange of the realm of heaven. In other words, Christ died on the cross in an expiating sacrifice for the sins of man, and the resurrection demonstrates God's acknowledgement and acceptance of Christ's death as satisfaction and payment for man, that he might be justified.²⁵ Such use of metaphors in Spurgeon's sermons is not uncommon.

Spurgeon pictures the resurrection of Christ as follows. Christ's death was the digging of the well of salvation. The labor was very difficult and toilsome, but Christ dug on through the rocks of suffering, and into the deepest caverns of misery. But the resurrection is the springing up of the water. In His death the well was dug to its very bottom, and the resurrection was the springing up of the water of salvation. For with His resurrection Christ brought forth life and salvation, pardon and peace for every soul.²⁶ This is another metaphorical

²³Ibid., pp. 160-61.

²⁴Ibid., p. 160.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

description of an aspect of the atonement.

Thus we see in Spurgeon, on the basis of his statements and pictures of the atonement, a concept of the Gospel which is basically Scriptural in spite of some of his doctrinal aberrations. This is a fortunate inconsistency. As a result we find Spurgeon operating with a concept of the Gospel which will bring new birth and new life to men. The Gospel element in his sermons when correctly applied puts into the hearer the potential to bring about a life of sanctification.

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, "Christ's People—Imitators of Him," *Expository* by C. H. Spurgeon of London (New York: Fisk and Wagonville Co.), 1, 100-101.

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIAN

Spurgeon's Concept of The Christian

We move over now to the area of the Christian himself, to try to determine what kind of individual Spurgeon's concept of a Christian should be. We shall try to picture what kind of person would fulfill Spurgeon's goal as he through his preaching attempts to bring his hearers into conformity with a certain ideal, pattern or model.

Spurgeon looks for his ideal, pattern, and model to Christ Himself. In his mind a Christian should be a striking likeness of Jesus Christ. "the best life of Christ," he says, "is his living biography, written out in the words and actions of his people."¹ In a sermon entitled "Christ's People—Imitators of Him," he elaborates a bit on what ways the Christian should be like Christ. The first characteristic of Christ which men should imitate is boldness. This means to have a faith, a religion which flourishes not only in good company, in, as it were, a hot-bed atmosphere, under only favorable conditions, but also under trying conditions. The Christian is to be bold and to be like Christ in living unto Him no matter what the consequences. Christ was bold in His teaching and living. He did not care for man's esteem. He did

¹C. H. Spurgeon, "Christ's People—Imitators of Him," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co.), I, 253-54.

not live and preach a religion which merely served the times or adapt it to conform to the ways of the day. Even so the Christian should stand up for his faith, never being ashamed of it or feeling disgraced because of it. He is to be bold for it, even as Christ made bold to proclaim it.²

The Christian is furthermore, to imitate Christ in his love. He is to have a loving disposition. "Let courage be the brass, let love be the gold," he says. Jesus lived a life of love. He showed love toward children and commanded that they be brought to Him. He did not live for Himself, but for others. The only motive of His labors was to accomplish the good of those who lived in the world. Christ not only acted in love, He is love as God is love. Therefore Christians ought to be loving also. Love should emanate from the Christian to all mankind. And this involves not only feeling, but deeds. Every Christian should use his opportunities to do for others what he can. He should operate in the realm of kind words and actions. The Christian should live out Christ, relive His life in the kindness of his own life. And this love and life is to be directed to all people.

If there is one virtue which most commends Christians, it is that of kindness; it is to love the people of God, to love the church, to love the world, to love all. . . . Imitate Christ in your loving spirits; speak kindly, act kindly, and do kindly, that men may say of you, "He has been with Jesus."³

Another feature in the life of Christ which Christians should imitate is His sincere humility. This does not imply inferiority, or

²Ibid., p. 257.

³Ibid., pp. 259-60.

a cringing sort of fear. Christians are people who have been made free by the truth of God. They are equal to all, inferior to none. Yet they are to be humble. This is a type of humility which keeps them from being too good for some. They must relate in good faith and in equality to all people no matter what their station or position in life. Demonstrated in the life of the Christian this humility is to show itself in the forgetting of caste, degree, and rank within and without the Church. The Christian must be like Christ who can stoop, but does not think of it as stooping. He must be humble as Christ was humble.⁴

The holiness of Christ is also to be imitated by His followers. By holiness Spurgeon has in mind general holiness of life, a godly life. It means to imitate Christ in doing good, to be self-denying even as He was, to be fervent in prayers, to submit to the Father's will, to be patient, to learn to endure, to forgive your enemies, to return good for evil; in all these things to do them even as Christ so well demonstrated them and lived them. The Christian is to be God-like in all ways, and by all means, so that all may know that he has been with Jesus.⁵

Spurgeon paints another picture of the Christian as a person who loves his Christian brother, as a man who loves the Church. If the Christian loves Christ it must necessarily follow that he love the Church which is the bride of Christ. And if he loves the Church he cannot help loving the children of the Church, the people of whom it is

⁴Ibid., pp. 260-61.

⁵Ibid., pp. 261-62.

made up. If this true love exists for the brother, then must follow also the evidence of that love, the fruit of service. "he does not withhold his heart, his hand, or his house from him . . ." ⁶

Perhaps Spurgeon's idea of a Christian can very well be summed up in his following statement:

Those who live godly and righteously in Christ Jesus, believing in him, are God's children: and though the godly sin, yet they do not love sin, nor remain without repenting of it. Holiness of life is the proof of regeneration, neither can we accept any other. "By their fruits ye shall know them" is a rule of universal application. ⁷

Stated briefly then, Spurgeon's idea of a Christian can be described in the following points:

1. A Christian is one who believes in Jesus Christ as his Savior.
2. A Christian is one who confesses his faith and his Savior.
3. A Christian is one who lives a life of love toward others.
4. A Christian is one who in his life is a likeness of Christ.

Specific Works Desired in The Christian

In several of his sermons Spurgeon becomes very specific in mentioning some of the works a Christian should be doing. He uses the picture of the Last Judgment in one sermon, and includes all the works of benevolence and love which the people on the right performed, as a necessary part of the works and acts of a Christian. They are to help the destitute and afflicted, they are to feed the hungry to give heed to the petition of the poor. And the Christian is to do this as if he

⁶Spurgeon, "Love," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, V, 330-31.

⁷Spurgeon, "Imitators of God," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, XIV, 238.

were doing it unto Christ, for it is truly doing it as unto Christ.⁸

These same thoughts are carried through in another sermon where Spurgeon describes the works as the fulfillments of what we pray, as the agreement of our life with our prayers. He says:

And after thou hast prayed that, rise up and act it. Say not "Our Father," and then look upon thy brethren with a sneer or a frown. I beseech thee, live like a brother, and act like a brother. Help the needy; cheer the sick; comfort the fainthearted; go about doing good; minister unto the suffering people of God, wherever thou findest them, and let the world take knowledge of thee, that thou art when on thy feet what thou art upon thy knees—that thou art a brotherhood of Christ; a brother born for adversity, like thy Master himself.⁹

Stated in one simple sentence, the Christian Spurgeon has in mind is the Christian who follows the exhortation of St. Paul, "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."¹⁰

⁸Spurgeon, "Love," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, V, 331.

⁹Spurgeon, "Fatherhood of God," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, V, 106.

¹⁰Galatians 6:10.

CHAPTER IV

THE GOSPEL AS THE MOTIVATING POWER FOR SANCTIFICATION

The Role of The Spirit

The Holy Spirit receives a great deal of emphasis in the sermons of Spurgeon. Very often he fails to develop how the Spirit operates in the lives of men, but emphasizes a great deal what the Spirit does. We can, however, with relative certainty say that in Spurgeon's thinking the Spirit uses as the medium of His activity the Word of God, the Gospel and the sacraments. That the Spirit uses the Gospel to exert His activity upon the lives of men is brought out in this statement from one of his sermons:

It is by the gospel of Jesus Christ that the Spirit of God works in the hearts of men. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God": the Holy Spirit uses the hearing of the word of God for the conviction, conversion, consolation, and sanctification of men.¹

Explicit statements like the above statement are quite rare in the sermons of Spurgeon. Seldom does he define the means of the Spirit's activity so clearly. This passage together with allusions found throughout his sermons indicate quite definitely that Spurgeon does not believe in an immediate operation of the Holy Spirit outside of the Word. An example of such an allusion might be found in the following statement of Spurgeon:

¹C. H. Spurgeon, "The Indwelling and Outflowing of the Holy Spirit," Twelve Sermons on The Holy Spirit (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co.), p. 306.

If the pastor can turn to his church and say, "See, here, what doctrines of grace can do! See in the lives of our church-members what the Spirit of God can produce;" then he will have an unanswerable argument wherewith to silence gainsayers.²

Notice that he attributes the good to doctrines of grace in which the Gospel is implied. And then he goes on to point out that the good is produced by the Spirit of God. By implication we can conclude that the Spirit is instrumental in bringing about good through the doctrines of grace.

The Holy Spirit, according to Spurgeon, exerts influence also through the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It is evident from his discussion of this subject that he does not believe in the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper.³ He speaks of the value of the sacraments only as the Spirit is associated and connected with them. The same is also true of the Word of God. However, due to the function of the Spirit the Word and the sacraments do have power. The grace of God does go with both sacraments for the confirming of the faith of those who receive them; they are even effective for the conversion of those who merely look upon the ceremony. This evident power in the sacraments indicates to Spurgeon the following:

There must be something, then, beyond the outward ceremony; there must, in fact, be the Spirit of God, witnessing through the water, witnessing through the wine, witnessing through the bread, or otherwise none of these things could be means of grace to our souls. They could not edify; they could not help us to commune with Christ; they could not tend to the conviction of sinners, or to the establishment of saints. There must, then, from these facts,

²C. H. Spurgeon, "Imitators of God," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company), XIV, 237.

³Spurgeon, "Necessity of the Spirit's Work," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, VI, 191-92.

be a higher, unseen, mysterious influence--the influence of the divine Spirit of God.⁴

Spurgeon holds the same view of the Word of God as he does of the sacraments. In his thinking the Word is of no avail until the Spirit brings to man the things of Christ and shows them to him. Christ's book means nothing to men until they have received the Spirit of grace. The record of Christ's death, His shed blood, His atonement is nothing but a tale to those who hear it unless the Spirit uses this record and leads men to the cross, opens their eyes, and enables them to see Christ crucified for them. It is only through the power and work of the Spirit that men will see power and redemption in his blood.⁵

It is then for Spurgeon the activity of the Holy Spirit which brings men to Christ, which converts them. It is the Holy Spirit which makes man feel the need for a Savior. It is also the Holy Spirit which leads men to say, "Thy wounds, O Jesus, shall be my hiding-place; thy blood shall be my washing; thy righteousness shall be my clothing; thou, and thou alone, shalt be my all in all."⁶

Spurgeon puts it another way when he says that the Holy Spirit perfects us in holiness. He is thinking of two kinds of perfection. The one is the perfection of justification, and the other is the perfection of sanctification. The perfection of Justification is the bringing of the man to faith, or, as was said in effect above, to bring

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 193.

⁶C. H. Spurgeon, "Sinner's Only Alternative," Storm Signals (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers), p. 110.

a man to Christ as Savior.⁷ This is sanctification in the wide sense. We can conclude then, that in the mind of Spurgeon the Holy Spirit is the cause of man's conversion, and that the Spirit accomplishes his purposes through the instrument of the Word of God, the Gospel and His witness through the sacraments.

The second kind of perfection is the perfection of sanctification. This is sanctification in the narrow sense. This is the sanctification with which we are primarily concerned in this paper. It is the sanctification which is still marred by the imperfections of the flesh, the evil lusts and imaginations, but which will be finally and completely fulfilled in the hereafter. This is also accomplished by the Holy Spirit.⁸ The fact that the Spirit brings about this sanctification in the narrow sense is a great emphasis in the sermons of Spurgeon. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that Christians are enabled to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.⁹ Spurgeon finds the Christian weak and powerless to do the acts of the Christian life, to consecrate himself to Christ, to pray, to minister to the necessities of the poor, to comfort the desponding, unless he is aided by the Spirit of God.¹⁰ And again, it is only by the aid of His divine Spirit that "we can

⁷Spurgeon, "The Power of the Holy Ghost," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, I, 127.

⁸Spurgeon, "The Power of the Holy Ghost," Twelve Sermons on The Holy Spirit, p. 234.

⁹Spurgeon, "Christ's People--Imitators of Him," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, I, 267.

¹⁰Spurgeon, "Necessity of the Spirit's Work," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, VI, 199.

copy our God in His justice, righteousness, holiness, purity, truth, and faithfulness."¹¹ We can assume from the above discussion regarding the means used by the Spirit for His work, that all this is accomplished by Him through the medium of the Gospel and sacraments.

Perhaps Spurgeon's idea of the activity of the Spirit can be more clearly defined by the following picture of the Spirit's work found in one of his sermons:

There hang the blessings on the nail—on the nail, Christ Jesus; but we are short of stature; we cannot reach them; the Spirit of God takes them down and gives them to us, and there they are; they are ours. It is like the manna in the skies, far out of mortal reach; but the Spirit of God opens the windows of heaven, brings down the bread, and puts it to our lips, and enables us to eat. Christ's blood and righteousness are like wine stored in the wine-vat: but we cannot get thereat. The Holy Spirit dips our vessel into this precious wine, and then we drink; but without the Spirit we must die and perish just as much, though the Father elect and the Son redeem, as though the Father never had elected, and though the Son never bought us with his blood. The Spirit is absolutely necessary. Without him neither the works of the Father, nor the Son, are of any avail to us.¹²

Correlation between Faith and Sanctification

Faith is for Spurgeon more than just knowledge of facts, or assent to the historicity of the record of Scripture. A man whose faith is defined within these categories does in Spurgeon's mind not yet possess the true faith. In the thinking of Spurgeon true faith is affiance or assent to the truth, not merely a believing, but a receiving of the truth by man as his own, and resting upon it for his salvation. Spurgeon's

¹¹Spurgeon, "Imitators of God," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, XIV, 236.

¹²Spurgeon, "Necessity of the Spirit's Work," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, VI, 194.

concept of faith is perhaps best and most concisely defined in the following statement from one of his sermons: "Now, true faith in its very essence rests in this—a leaning upon Christ. It will not save me to know that Christ is a Saviour; but it will save me to trust him to by my Saviour."¹³ This working of faith in the hearts of Christians is also a work of the Holy Spirit according to Spurgeon's description of the Spirit's activity in the area of sanctification in the wider sense. Just as the Spirit prepares a man for conversion and finally brings him to a knowledge and acceptance of Jesus Christ as his Savior, even so this faith by which a man receives the righteousness of Christ is also a work of the Holy Spirit.

The sermons of Spurgeon define a very close connection between faith and sanctification. Good works are the fruit of faith. Faith always precedes good works. If a man says he has faith and yet does not do good works, he is speaking a lie.¹⁴ Not only do faith and works of necessity exist together, they also grow together. "if we greatly grow in faith it will be the source of other growths; for as faith increases, love, patience, and every other virtue, will flourish."¹⁵ It is the measure of faith, then, that determines the level and measure of sanctification. We are now ready to see how the Gospel of Christ, which is the object of the faith which brings forth works is applied by Spurgeon in order to bring about growth in sanctification.

¹³Spurgeon, "Faith," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, III, 260.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 268.

¹⁵Spurgeon, "The Necessity of Growing Faith," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, XVI, 277.

The Gospel Applied as Means and Power for Sanctification

The Gospel as the power and motivation for the new life of sanctification is one of the foundation stones of Spurgeon's preaching. The fact that man must know Jesus Christ as Redeemer before he can follow His example and obey Him, is basic to Spurgeon's thinking.¹⁶ He is of the opinion that the Gospel produces the best morality and good works in the world.¹⁷ Sanctification is for him the very purpose of redemption and receives its impetus from the fact of redemption. "Why did Jesus Christ die?" Spurgeon asks. "'He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Why have we been called but that we should be called to be saints?"¹⁸ God's purpose for Christians in life is that they should be sanctified, that they should bring forth fruits that the Father might be glorified in them. Spurgeon makes this point in one of his sermons, and then goes on to point out that this was the very purpose of Jesus' agony, suffering, death and resurrection; that people might be made holy like Himself.¹⁹

Spurgeon describes this working of the Gospel in sanctification in its proper sequence and order as he describes God's way of working

¹⁶Spurgeon, "Christ's People—Imitators of Him," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, I, 270.

¹⁷Spurgeon, "Teaching Children," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, V, 356.

¹⁸Spurgeon, "Nothing But Leaves," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, VIII, 179.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 180.

with man on the basis of the story of the first Pentecost. He begins by looking at the Word which the people received. This Word of God was first of all the Law. Peter exhorted them to repentance and they did repent. They were pricked in their hearts. They had a Godly sorrow. They were then baptized. Having repented and believed they made confession of their faith. After their conversion there came as a result of the Spirit's work a great steadfastness as they continued in the apostles' doctrine. They also abounded in the worship of God, in breaking of bread, in prayer and fellowship. Following this there came a striking generosity, as the Christians gave all they had to a common fund. And following this there came also continual gladness which showed itself in praising God. This then, is the sequence: First a leading to repentance by the Law. Then the application of the Gospel of Christ's redemption. Next, continuing in the Word and worship, and use of the Gospel and sacraments. And the result is the evidence of faith, the doing of good works.²⁰

The above account of the story of the first Pentecost is in effect as Spurgeon presented it in his sermon. It will be noticed that the actual message of the Gospel was not spelled out in this account. This points up one very important observation in the Gospel-preaching and application of Spurgeon. This is the fact that in preaching Gospel Spurgeon sometimes does, and sometimes does not spell out the actual message and meaning of the Gospel in its application for sanctification.

He actually does at times apply the Gospel in very concrete and

²⁰Spurgeon, "Pentecostal Wind and Fire," Twelve Sermons on The Holy Spirit, pp. 530-32.

meaningful terms as he seeks to motivate his hearers to sanctification and good works. Spurgeon tells his hearers in one particular sermon why Christian men hold themselves bound to keep all God's precepts. He gives as the reason Christians do this, not that the Law is binding upon them as though they were obliged by the Law to do them. He gives as the real reason Christians do this the fact that the Gospel constrains them to do it. Then he goes on to elaborate on the Gospel by telling his hearers that by their very faith, knowing that they have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, having been purchased by Him, they are more bound to keep His commandments than they would be if they were under the Mosaic dispensation. And so it is not by force or compulsion, or through fear of punishment or legal bondage that they do these things; it is through pure love and gratitude to God that they apply themselves to His service and seek to be children who are obedient and pleasing to God.²¹

Christian love is one of the more important themes in Spurgeon's preaching. He is very emphatic in pointing out that the Christian loves God and others because Christ first loved him. "Where did your love spring from," he asks, "but from the foot of the cross."²² In this same sermon he elaborates on that love from which our love springs. He sees in Christ's passion the birthplace of divine love. He goes on in this sermon to recount briefly the narrative of Christ's passion and points to its various scenes as manifestations of divine love. And

²¹Spurgeon, "Christ's People—Imitators of Him," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, I, 254-55.

²²Spurgeon, "Love," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, V, 327.

then he directs his hearers to realize that it was when:

ye saw "love divine, all loves excelling" outdoing its own self; it was when you saw love in bondage to itself, dying by its own self; it was when you saw love in bondage to itself, dying by its own stroke, laying down its life, though it had power to retain it and to take it up again; it was there your love was born; and if you wish your love, when it is sick, to be recovered, take it to some of those sweet places; . . .²³

Here Spurgeon makes the love of Christ the sole source and inspiration for the love which the Christian is to show to God and others, and he points to the manifestation of love at the cross as the source to which to flee when the light of love grows dim. The above example illustrates a technique which Spurgeon uses with frequency. It is the method of presenting the Gospel and applying it by rehearsing the narrative of Christ's passion, going from one event to the other, all the while pointing out their significance for the hearer, thus taking the very raw, historic Gospel-message itself and making it applicable to a given situation.

Man's love is the result of God's love expressed in the death of Christ. At times Spurgeon seems to equate the Gospel with God's love for man. This point is illustrated in the following statement taken from his sermon entitled "Love."

But without disputing any longer, do we not all admit that our love to God is the sweet offspring of God's love to us? Ah! beloved, cold admiration every man may have; but the warmth of love can only be kindled by the fires of God's Spirit. Let each Christian speak for himself—we shall all hold this great and cardinal truth that the reason of our love to God is, the sweet influence of his grace.²⁴

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., p. 323.

He seems to equate these two following statements: "our love to God is the sweet offspring of God's love to us," and "the reason of our love to God is the sweet influence of his grace." Taking grace to be the grace in Christ Jesus, we can say that here Spurgeon does speak of the Gospel in terms of God's love for us.

This love of God, viewed in the context of grace is used by Spurgeon to build up the love of men. "Now, God," he says, "is both life, and light, and way, and to crown all, God is love. From this overflowing fountain of the infinite love of God, all our love to God must spring."²⁵ Spurgeon puts it this way too: "We can be tender-hearted, kind, forbearing, merciful, forgiving; in a word, we may walk in love as Christ also hath loved us."²⁶ Man's love then, is a result of God's loving man.

As Spurgeon applies this love as the motivation for sanctification, the consciousness of Gospel becomes rather remote. In the following statement he applies man's love, which is the result of God's love for him, as the motivating power for sanctification: "If we love God, love will constrain us to imitate him; but we shall not do so from any other force. We readily grow somewhat like that which we love."²⁷ Here then we find man's love to God in the general context of the message of the Gospel as the force which will lead men to imitate God, to do His will,—a curious distortion of 1 John 4:10.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 321-22.

²⁶Spurgeon, "Imitators of God," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, XIV, 236.

²⁷Ibid., p. 233.

In a sermon on the opening verses of Isaiah 55 Spurgeon defines the Gospel as the power which destroys the power of sin in Christians, and delivers them from the power of Satan. He then goes on to attribute to the Gospel the power and means by which Christians become a people zealous for good works. In this instance he defines the Gospel very simply by saying, "for Jesus died that he might destroy the power of sin in his people, and make them so free that they should not serve sin, but become a people zealous for good works."²⁸ Here is an example of his use of the simple technique of applying the Gospel by the simple statement: "Jesus died." This is very brief but yet it contains the essence of the Gospel message, and therefore brings the power of God to bear in the applied situation.

Another example of the application of the Gospel by means of a simple statement is the following excerpt from one of Spurgeon's sermons:

He has given himself for us, and through his precious blood we are forgiven our iniquities; let us, therefore, blend giving and forgiving into one God-like life, imitating our God. This is our Father's commandment, let it be our delight.²⁹

Here again the simple statement "He has given himself for us" together with a reference to "his precious blood" defines the Gospel in simple, brief, but adequate terms. His death, His shed blood and their significance is the essence of the Gospel message. In this instance the Gospel is applied as a remedy for the hearer's sins, and gives the incentive and reason for "imitating our God." This, then is another

²⁸Spurgeon, "Ho! Ho!" Storm Signals, p. 145.

²⁹Spurgeon, "Imitators of God," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, XIV, 228.

technique used by Spurgeon, namely, that of stating the Gospel very briefly in a few words always including the essential points.

In a sermon entitled "A Soul-Stirring Meditation" we find a very explicit example of the Gospel applied directly to bring about a definite goal in sanctification--namely that of a spirit of thankfulness. After a section of Law-preaching Spurgeon announces his goal of exciting his hearers to thankfulness for what God has done for them. His statement of Gospel reads as follows:

Then think what his blood has done for you. Take only one thing out of a thousand. It has put away your many, many sins. You were without Christ, and your sins stood like yonder mountain, whose black and rugged cliff threatens the very skies. There fell a drop of Jesus' blood upon it and it all vanished in a moment. The sins of all your days had gone in an instant by the application of the precious blood!³⁰

To this statement of Gospel he adds several other blessings of God's providence and then concludes with the statement that the possession of Christ is the true source of rejoicing and gladness. The technique of Gospel application employed here is a more extended reference to the sufferings of Christ and His work for mankind. It is more than a simple statement of Gospel, yet it is not a complete account or even a true reference to any specific event in the passion story.

Another example of this technique would be the following quotation:

My dear hearers (and especially you, the members of this church), if you have obtained mercy, I beseech you in the bowels of Christ, by the compassionate heart of your dying Redeemer, by that hope which you have that he will shortly come, be ye instant in season and out of season; preach the truth and teach it, knowing that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.³¹

³⁰Spurgeon, "A Soul Stirring Meditation," Storm Signals, pp. 280-82.

³¹Spurgeon, "Sinner's Only Alternative," Storm Signals, p. 122.

Another technique employed by Spurgeon in applying the Gospel is stating or referring to it in terms of divine grace, or in speaking of a reliance upon Christ, a going to Christ for help in a given situation. He reminds the hearer that grace can make him fruitful. This reference is found in his sermon "Nothing but Leaves." In this context he does mention a going to the wounds of Christ. But this is secondary. The emphasis is upon going to Christ, taking Him to be ours, and then seeking divine grace that we may work for God the rest of our lives. The significant characteristics of this technique consists in the specific references to Christ and to divine grace without specific and concrete references to the suffering and death of Christ, or the significance of divine grace.

This technique is applied in the following situation described by Spurgeon. He exhorts his hearers to give. They should imitate God who is the constant, generous Giver, who gave His own Son for men, and for His sake has forgiven them, has blotted out their transgressions, casting their sins away from His sight forever. Because God has done this the hearer ought also to freely forgive those who have wronged him, so that he might without hypocrisy pray that God might forgive him as he forgives others.³² In this situation the fruits of Christ's death are mentioned—the forgiveness of sin, but there is no concrete reference to Christ's suffering and death, the very act of redemption.

Another category of Spurgeon's Gospel application is his mere use of the word "Gospel." In one particular sermon he sets up the specific goal of endeavoring to show how the preaching of the Gospel of God can

³²Spurgeon, "Imitators of God," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, XIV, 227.

lead men to the noblest heights of virtue, even to ultimate perfection even though they are now completely destitute of any good in their lives.³³ Here it is merely the word "Gospel." No doubt it is intended to call to mind in the hearer the various implications of the word, which they have been conditioned and taught to know before.

The simple use of the word "Gospel" to imply the whole message of redemption is quite common in the sermons of Spurgeon. Another example is the following excerpt from a sermon entitled "Christ Crucified." In this instance there is an additional reference to the meaning of the Gospel in the reference to the cross of Christ.

The gospel, to the Christian, is a thing of power. What is it that makes the young man devote himself, as a missionary, to the cause of God, to leave father and mother, and go into distant lands? It is a thing of power that does it; it is the gospel. What is it that constrains yonder minister, in the midst of the cholera, to climb up that creaking staircase, and stand by the bed of some dying creature who has that dire disease? It must be a thing of power which leads him to venture his life; it is love of the cross of Christ which bids him do it.³⁴

Again, Spurgeon speaks of faith in Gospel verities which make people love one another, but he does not define the Gospel-verities, at least in terms of the suffering and death of our Lord. He looks to each doctrine of truth as an argument for love, but does not define the doctrine of truth as an argument for love. The content of Gospel-verities is implied in the general terms found in this statement:

If you believe in God as having chosen his people, you will love his elect; if you believe in Christ as having made atonement for his people, you will love his redeemed, and seek their peace. If

³³Spurgeon, "Love," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, V, 319.

³⁴Spurgeon, "Christ Crucified," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, I, 105.

you believe in the doctrine of regeneration, and know that we must be born again, you will love the regenerate. Whatever doctrine it is that is true, it ministereth toward the love of the heart. . . . If you are not filled with brother love, it must be because you are not firmly believing that truth which worketh toward love.³⁵

The very last statement above is very true, but from the context of that statement the truth which worketh toward love is not at all clearly defined. The closest reference to it would be the statement: "if you believe in Christ as having made atonement for His people, . . ." Yet this statement does not apply that atonement directly to the hearer in order to motivate him to love his brother; it is an unapplied reference to Gospel tending more to the realm of religious belief.

The above mentioned characteristic in Spurgeon's sermons, of preaching about the Gospel and its relation to sanctification, is quite common. The following quotation will illustrate this point:

No sooner does that secret get into the soul of man that it wants to burn its way out. . . . My dear sirs, if God has communicated to any man the secret of salvation by grace he cannot help telling it; and if the Lord has touched a man's tongue with a live coal, he will burn as well as the coal. If the new life has been given to him, it must find its way out, and be the means of conveying that life to others.³⁶

In the above quotation we see that he adequately describes what takes place in the Christian and what the result should be. But he does not actually apply the Gospel to the hearer so that the end result should be attained. He seems to be preaching about the Gospel rather than preaching the Gospel. Fortunately, in this particular sermon the above quotation is followed by a more concrete Gospel-motivation in which

³⁵Spurgeon, "The Necessity of Growing Faith," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, XVI, 290.

³⁶Spurgeon, "Sinner's Only Alternative," Storm Signals, pp. 119-20.

Spurgeon exhorts his hearers by the bowels of Christ, and by the compassionate heart of the dying Redeemer, that they be instant in laboring for the Lord.³⁷

The various techniques which Spurgeon uses in applying the Gospel to motivate sanctification may then be summed up as follows:

1. The recounting of the passion story with direct application for encouragement to sanctification.
2. Giving impetus to good works by simple application in a word or two of the death of Christ for men.
3. Equating the Gospel with love, and encouraging works of love to God and men to flow from His having first loved us.
4. Simply using the word "Gospel" in encouraging good works, taking for granted that the hearer will presuppose the wider connotation of the word.
5. Describing how the Gospel in relation to sanctification operates in the Christian, but not directly applying it; preaching about the Gospel, but not preaching the Gospel itself.

³⁷Ibid., p. 122.

CHAPTER V

OTHER MOTIVATION FOR SANCTIFICATION

The Law

In his preaching Spurgeon does not always employ the message of the Gospel in urging his hearers to perform good works. We could perhaps include his preaching of the Law as a factor bringing about sanctification. We do not usually find Spurgeon using the Law as a threat upon the Christians, as a coercive force which tries to compel the Christian to do good works for fear of punishment. This may be hinted at occasionally, but the main use to which he puts the Law is a threat upon those doing evil. In other words it is a kind of coercion to sanctification in reverse. The Law is used as a threat to those who do evil, who sin. And the aim of such preaching is to get the hearer to abandon the ways of sin, of course implying that fruits the opposite of sin ought to be the result. The following quotation may clarify this point:

Next notice that the saint has not only this barrier against sin, but many others. He has the whole of God's Word given him by way of warning; its pages he is accustomed to read; he reads there, that if he break the statutes and keep not the commandments of the Lord, his Father will visit his transgressions with a rod, and his iniquity with stripes.¹

We see here that there is a threat of punishment upon two different acts

¹C. H. Spurgeon, "God's Barrier Against Man's Sin," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co.), V, 187.

of men. He will be punished if he breaks the statutes of God—in other words, if he sins. But the threat also extends to his failure to keep the commandments of the Lord, and keeping the commandments of the Lord certainly implies sanctification. Perhaps in this instance we then can say that Spurgeon does use the Law to try to bring men to sanctification. Most generally, however, the Law is used to condemn acts of sin, thus making it an indirect power to induce fruits of sanctification—namely the refraining from sin, and the subsequent doing of good.

Moral Precepts

The precepts of God, the moral exhortations and instructions of the Bible are used by Spurgeon to give incentive to good works. Spurgeon considers God's command as a very important reason and motivation for doing good. For example, in discussing reasons for loving our neighbor he says, "The best reason in all the world is that with which we will begin. We are bound to love our neighbors because God commands it."² Spurgeon feels there is no argument so potent for the Christian as God's will. This should be the believer's law. Here Spurgeon makes God's will the supreme motive for doing good. No motivation of the Gospel for good works is brought into the picture here at all.

In another sermon Spurgeon describes meditation as something profitable, something that will be instructive, strengthening, comforting and inspiring to the Christian; and something which will cause the Christian to go and imitate the character of God. After the spiritual life of a Christian has budded and blossomed through devout meditation, it should

²Spurgeon, "Love Thy Neighbor," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, IV, 437.

then bring forth fruit in holy acts. Spurgeon does not explicitly say what should be meditated upon to bring about these results, but meditation upon the moral teachings of Jesus is implied in the following statement: "Sitting at the feet of Jesus must be succeeded by following in the footsteps of Jesus."³ Here again no Gospel is mentioned as motivation for the holy acts desired.

We have cited several examples above where Spurgeon used motivation of moral precepts rather than the Gospel in order to produce good works in his hearers. These observations can, however, be a bit misleading. For it is also evident that Spurgeon in preaching this kind of motivation was also conscious of the Gospel motivation. In the immediate context of the quotation from the sermon "Love Thy Neighbor," referred to above, it will be noted that there is no reference to the Gospel as the persuasive power which should effect good works in the hearer. But several pages later in this sermon Spurgeon does give the true motivation for good works, the Gospel, expressed in terms of what God in his love did for men. Here is Spurgeon's statement:

He loved you when there was nothing good in you. He loved you though you insulted him, though you despised him and rebelled against him. He has loved you right on and never ceased to love you. He has loved you in your backslidings and loved you out of them. He has loved you in your sins, in your wickedness and folly. His loving heart was still eternally the same, and he shed his heart's blood to prove his love for you. He has given you what you want on earth, and provided for you an habitation in heaven. Now Christian, your religion claims from you, that you should love as your master loved. How can you imitate him, unless you love too?⁴

³Spurgeon, "Imitators of God," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, XIV, 228.

⁴Spurgeon, "Love Thy Neighbor," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, IV, 443.

From the viewpoint of explicit Gospel this statement is not too good, since the shedding of Christ's blood is applied as proof of God's love for men, rather than pointing to it as the act of redemption for men. The passage does, however, come very close to explicit Gospel, which indicates that Spurgeon is still very conscious of the true Gospel motivation. Even though he does at times give other motivation than the correct one, he perhaps presupposes Gospel motivation when he presents the others.

Spurgeon sees in the Christian duty of obedience to God another motivation for good works. If man calls God father, he is not to rebel against His wishes. He is to reverently obey the Father's wishes. And this is not to be done out of dread or fear of God, but because the man loves God.⁵ Here again Spurgeon does bring in the love-motive which from the context of his other preaching implies the story of how God first loved us. Here he gives as the motive, Christian duty; but in back of it stands the motive of love to God.

Gratitude

Gratitude finds a place in the preaching of Spurgeon as motivation for the sanctified life. In a sermon on the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, he gives gratitude as the motivation for her serving those who were with her.⁶ He has this to say in another sermon where he speaks of gratitude:

⁵Spurgeon, "Fatherhood of God," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, V, 100.

⁶Spurgeon, "First Healing and Then Service," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, XVI, 24.

First, then, remember there is a restraint of gratitude which, to the lowly, regenerated heart, must necessarily form a very strong motive to obedience. I can conceive of nothing that ought so much to prompt me to obedience as the thought that I owe so much to God.⁷

Here Spurgeon says that man is impelled to do good works by his own spirit of thanksgiving and gratefulness for what God has done.

Although the above quotation gives no reference to the Gospel whatsoever, we are nevertheless led to believe that the Gospel is in the background of Spurgeon's concept of gratitude. This is indicated for example, in another sermon where the subject of gratitude is brought in. In this sermon gratitude is called the strength which impels people to activity. But Spurgeon says in the sentence immediately following:

How can a man be still when Christ has spoken for him and delivered Him.

Can you ever be silent for Christ now that the Lord Christ has redeemed you from the curse of the law and the penalty of sin? I tell you, if you can be quiet and do nothing for Christ, I am afraid you have never tasted of his love and grace.⁸

This brings in the Gospel—motivation of Christ's death very explicitly, and it is significant that it is brought in in connection with gratitude. This would seem to imply that this is gratitude which is borne of the reception of the Gospel message, and is motivated by it, and thus in turn brings good works into the lives of Christians.

This point is illustrated in another sermon where the statement is made that gratitude demands obedience. The immediate context of this statement finds Spurgeon speaking in terms of Gospel. In the preceding

⁷Spurgeon, "God's Barrier Against Man's Sin," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, V, 185.

⁸Spurgeon, "First Healing and Then Service," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, XVI, 28.

context he speaks quite explicitly of Christ's wounds, scars and blood urging the Christian to endeavor to be like Him. He then applies Peter's answer to Jesus' question, "thou knowest that I love thee," and Jesus' exhortation, "since thou lovest me, keep my commandments," to his hearers. Since his hearers love Jesus, they are to keep his commandments. Then he follows with the statement, "Be like Christ, since gratitude demands obedience; . . ."⁹ Here gratitude definitely is linked with the Christian's love for Christ which in the first place was born in him by the message of Christ's love and sacrifice for him.

Looking back over this chapter we see that in using the motivation of moral precepts or gratitude, Spurgeon has in mind a basic connection with the message of the Gospel. This is indicated by the fact that there is usually an element of Gospel in almost every one of Spurgeon's sermons. In some places the Gospel is linked with these other motivations, in other places it is not. The presence of the Gospel in the sermon, although not directly connected with the exhortation to sanctification or to these motivations does give them somewhat of a Gospel orientation which will perhaps make these motivations more effective than if there were no Gospel reference whatsoever.

⁹Spurgeon, "Christ's People--Imitators of Him," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London, I, 268-69.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Critique

Critics of Spurgeon's sermons are generally favorable in their comments, for Spurgeon was a very popular and successful preacher. His success is reflected in the phenomenal growth of his congregation during his long pastorate in London. Statistics show that his congregation grew from 3,569 members in 1861 to 5,152 members in 1877. This shows an average yearly gain of over 300 members.¹

By way of criticism it is generally conceded that Spurgeon's sermons were at times homiletically faulty, and at times exegetically inaccurate. Although he was widely read, his lack of academic training showed itself.² Due to his heavy schedule it was at times necessary to make hasty preparation which would at times be reflected in his sermons. It is said that in his later years Spurgeon depended more upon his general reading than upon a detailed study of his text. Spurgeon is quoted as saying to his students, "one must have a shelf within his head, and upon that shelf must be stored in an orderly manner the things which one learns daily by study." During his later years Spurgeon was able to rely quite heavily upon this store of knowledge which resulted from his extensive reading, and was able to prepare sermons on very short

¹E. C. Dargan, A History of Preaching (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, George H. Doran Company, 1912), II, 537.

²Ibid., p. 538.

notice. This was perhaps also a result of his homiletical technique. Rather than digging deeply into the text he would pick a text and then group other passages and facts around the text. This would enable him to draw heavily on his past reading.³

The power of Spurgeon's preaching, critics will say, lay more in his natural endowments.⁴ He was gifted with a voice which he could use with much expression, power, smoothness and sympathy. This factor is mentioned perhaps more than any other in regard to his preaching. He was also endowed with a very keen, alert, and clever intellect coupled with a vivid imagination and shrewd observation. The fact that he was mighty in prayer and very firm in his consecration to Christ dare not be minimized as a factor in his success.⁵

The present writer's own observation in reading seems to bear this out. Even on the printed page, the vocabulary used at times seems to express the earnestness of Spurgeon's feeling for his subject matter and for his hearers. The witness to his own faith in his preaching, directly or indirectly is an important factor in his success. At times Spurgeon witnesses directly to his faith in the first person.⁶ At other times intense feeling and conviction are expressed in this preaching, a true witness to the message of the Gospel in his own heart.⁷

³F. R. Webber, A History of Preaching (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1952), p. 602.

⁴Dargan, op. cit., p. 538.

⁵Ibid.

⁶C. H. Spurgeon, "A Jeremiad," Storm Signals (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers), pp. 130-31.

⁷Spurgeon, "Nothing But Leaves," Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon of London (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company), VIII, 179.

We shall turn now to a more concise critique of the material discussed in the preceding chapters. It cannot be denied that Spurgeon's preaching is Gospel and Christ-centered. He is rather faithful in his preaching of Law and Gospel, applying them in proper sequence. This is very important for sanctification. It is application of Law and Gospel which brings about sanctification in the wider sense. The preaching of Law followed by the sweet message of the Gospel of forgiveness is that which gives a man the new birth.

What kind of person this new-born man is to be, how he is to conduct himself, is however, not brought out as much in Spurgeon's sermons as it ought to be. Sanctification in the narrow sense is very often passed over. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Spurgeon emphasizes more the regeneration of man than the new life. It cannot be said that Spurgeon neglects the subject of sanctification in the narrow sense altogether. In fact some sermons may devote themselves almost exclusively to this subject. However, it seems to the present writer that in preaching to Christians as Spurgeon was doing, he should have preached more extensively on the Christian life. This impression is perhaps also gained from the fact that Spurgeon often is not too specific in preaching about good works, being content merely to mention the sanctified life by a simple reference or exhortation to do good.

In his actual preaching about sanctification, Spurgeon does quite extensively use Gospel-motivation. But as we noted before he does not always spell out this message of the Gospel, or apply it directly to the specific goal of good works. It is this writer's contention that he takes too much for granted in merely using the word "Gospel," think-

ing the people will fill in the actual message in their own minds. This is then perhaps the greatest and most serious deficiency in his Gospel preaching—namely, the inclination to fall short in preaching Gospel explicitly to the goal of good works.

Another fault which needs to be pointed up is Spurgeon's use of motivation other than the Gospel for sanctification. Basing motivation for good works upon motives other than the Gospel is not producing true good works at all. The seriousness of this is fortunately tempered by the fact that his use of gratitude and moral instruction as motivation is quite often found in a Gospel-context and therefore may still in many instances be regarded as motivation issuing from the message of the Gospel.

It must also be said that there is a misplacement of emphasis in Spurgeon's preaching on the role of the Holy Spirit in sanctification. Most generally the Spirit is depicted as the cause or instrument by which sanctification and good works are brought forth in the Christian. The Spirit brings the power and creates the will to do good works. This is of course true. But Spurgeon fails in too many instances to relate the instrument of the Spirit, the message of the Gospel, to the Spirit's work. Yet we know that he believes the Gospel to be the vehicle of the Spirit. In reality the Spirit need not be mentioned at all in relation to good works. If the Gospel is applied as the motivation for good works, the Spirit will use the message to effect sanctification even if He is not mentioned at all in that particular connection. This is not to say that the Spirit should never be mentioned as the power in sanctification. But on the other hand He should not be set forth as a power

to the exclusion of the preaching of that message without which He can work no good thing in the hearts of men.

Conclusion

This study has given the writer, and we hope the reader, an insight into the technique and work of a great preacher. This study has established in the mind of the writer perhaps the one most important factor which made Spurgeon great. This factor is the centrality of the Gospel-message not only in the sermons of Spurgeon, but in his heart. There is, we have seen, an abundance of true preaching of the Gospel in Spurgeon's sermons. But it is also evident in reading that there is the power of this message in the preacher's heart. This is expressed in the earnestness of Spurgeon's preaching. It is also expressed, I believe, in his devotion and faithfulness and industry born of love for Christ. He had intellectual talents, but it was the Gospel in the heart which caused those talents to be applied to the work of God. Spurgeon was a great preacher because he preached a great message, and because that message permeated his own life and work.

We have noted areas of weakness in Spurgeon's theology and in his preaching. No man has ever been without weakness and failures. Here we can best apply ourselves, not to malicious criticism, but to constructive observation, with the intent to learn by the mistakes others have made. This study has brought out points to imitate and mistakes to avoid. If the writer or reader, in applying the good examples and the mistakes to himself, finds that he is helped in preaching the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to man in every phase of his life more earnestly and devotedly than this study will have been well worth while.

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