

The Story of God's Mighty Acts

by C. H. Spurgeon

And have you never heard of the mighty things which God did by preachers some hundreds of years from that date? Has it not been told you concerning Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed, how, whenever he preached, the church was thronged with attentive hearers? And there, standing and lifting up holy hands, he spoke with majesty unparalleled, the Word of God in truth and righteousness! The people were listening, hanging forward to catch every word and, now and then, breaking the silence with the clapping of their hands and the stamping of their feet. Then, silent again for a while, spell-bound by the mighty orator, and again carried away with enthusiasm, springing to their feet, clapping their hands and shouting for joy again! Numberless were the conversions in his day. God was exceedingly magnified, for sinners were abundantly saved! And have your fathers never told you of the wondrous things that were done afterwards, when the black darkness of superstition covered the earth—when Popery sat upon her throne, and stretched her iron rod across the nations, and shut the windows of heaven, and quenched the very stars of God, and made thick darkness cover the people? Have you never heard how Martin Luther arose and preached the gospel of the grace of God, and how the nations trembled and the world heard the voice of God and lived? Have you not heard of Zwingli among the Swiss, and of Calvin in the city of Geneva, and of the mighty works that God did by them? Now, as Britons, have you forgotten the mighty preacher of the truth of God—have your ears ceased to tingle with the wondrous tale of the preachers who Wickliffe sent forth into every market town and every hamlet of England, preaching the gospel of God? Oh, does not history tell us that these men were like firebrands in the midst of the dry stubble? That their voice was as the roaring of a lion and their going forth like the springing of a young lion? Their glory was as the firstling of a bullock! They did push the nation before them and as for the enemies, they said, “Destroy them.” None could stand before them for the Lord, their God, had girded them with might! To come down a little nearer to our own times, truly our fathers have told us the wondrous things which God did in the days of Wesley and of Whitefield. The churches were all asleep. Irreligion was the rule of the day. The very streets seemed to run with iniquity and the gutters were filled full with the iniquity of sin. Up rose Whitefield and Wesley—men whose hearts the Lord had touched – and they dared to preach the gospel of the grace of God! Suddenly, as in a moment, there was heard the rush as of wings and the church said – “Who are these who fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?” They come! They come! – numberless as the birds of heaven, with a rushing like mighty winds that are not to be withstood. Within a few years, from the preaching of these two men, England was permeated with the evangelical truth of God! The Word of God was known in every town and there was scarcely a hamlet into which the Methodists had not penetrated—even in those days of the slow coach. Today, while business runs on steam, religion often creeps along with its belly on the earth – we are astonished at these tales and we think them wonders! Yet let us believe them; they come to us as substantial matters of history. And the wondrous things which God did in the olden times, by His grace, He will yet do again! He who is mighty has done great things, and holy is His name.

There is a special feature to which I would call your attention with regard to the works of God in the olden times. They derive increasing interest and wonder from the fact that they were all sudden things. The old stagers in our churches believe that things must grow gently, by degrees. We must go step by step onward – concentrated action and continued labour, they say, will ultimately bring success. But the marvel is all God's works have been sudden! When Peter stood up to preach, it did not take six weeks to convert the three thousand! They were converted at once, and baptized that very day. They were that hour turned to God, and become as truly disciples of Christ as they could have been if their conversion had taken seventy years! So was it in the day of Martin Luther – it did not take Luther centuries to break through the thick darkness of Rome. God lit the candle, and the candle burned, and there was the light of God in an instant – God works suddenly! If anyone could have stood in Württemberg and have said – “Can Popery be made to quake; can the Vatican be made to shake?” The answer would have been – “No. It will take at least a thousand years to do it. Popery, the great serpent, has so twisted itself about the nations and bound them so fast in its coil that they cannot be delivered except by a long process.” “Not so,” however, did God say! He smote the dragon sorely, and the nations went free. He cut the gates of brass and broke in sunder the bars of iron, and the people were delivered in an hour! Freedom came not in the course of years, but in an instant! The people who walked in darkness saw a great light and even upon them who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death did the light shine! So was it in Whitefield's day. The rebuking of a slumbering church was not the work of ages; it was done at once! Have you never heard of the great revival under Whitefield? Take as an instance that at Cambuslang. He was preaching in the church yard to a great congregation who could not get into any edifice. And while preaching, the power of God came upon the people, and they, one after another, fell down as if they were smitten; and it was estimated that not less than 3,000 persons were crying out at one time under the conviction of sin! He preached on, now thundering like Boanerges and then comforting like Barnabas, and the work spread, and no tongue can tell the great things that God did under that one sermon of Whitefield! Not even the sermon of Peter, on the day of Pentecost, was equal to it!

So has it been in all revivals – God's work has been done suddenly – as with a clap of thunder has God descended from on high! Not slowly, but on cherubim right royally does He ride – on the wings of the mighty wind does He fly! Sudden has been the work. Men could scarcely believe it true it was done in so short a space of time.

Excerpt from Sermon 263. Delivered on Sunday Morning, July 17, 1859, By Pastor C. H. Spurgeon, At The Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.