

~Other Speakers S-Z: David Smithers:

"It is not how long you live, but how you live that counts." Robert Murray M'Cheyne was a living example of this often neglected truth. At twenty-three years old he was ordained and inducted into the church of St. Peters at Dundee. At thirty years old he finished his course, dying in the spring of 1843. Like John the Baptist and the Savior Himself, M'Cheyne ushered in Christ's kingdom in just a few short years. It was during his brief public ministry that Scotland experienced one of its greatest revivals. From 1839-1842 much of Scotland was turned upside down through the Spirit-filled labors of W. C. Burns and Robert Murray M'Cheyne.

For every time M'Cheyne directed men to look at their sins he pointed them ten times to look on Jesus. This was the key to his tender and passionate preaching. To him Christ was not just one of many theological concepts in a message, Christ Jesus was the message! M'Cheyne's power in the pulpit was the result of his intimate knowledge of Jesus. He could boldly say, "I am better acquainted with Jesus Christ than I am with any man in the world." Often as he preached the entire congregation was brought to tears. M'Cheyne's diary and letters describe for us some of these precious meetings. He wrote, "It was like a pent-up flood breaking forth; tears were streaming from the eyes of many, and some fell on the ground groaning and weeping and crying for mercy." At other times men and women were so overcome with grief and conviction that they literally had to be carried out of the church - "In some areas whole congregations were frequently moved as one man, and the voice of the minister was drowned out by the cries of anxious souls." M'Cheyne's voice, eyes and gestures spoke of the tenderness of Christ. It was not Robert Murray M'Cheyne the people saw, it was Jesus. M'Cheyne declared, "A man cannot be a faithful minister, until he preaches Christ for Christ's sake - until he gives up striving to attract people to himself and seeks only to attract them to Christ."

Perhaps more powerful than M'Cheyne's preaching was his praying. To him the prayer closet was a refuge of fellowship, holiness and intercession. M'Cheyne's diary and letters are replete with examples of his prayerful life. He wrote, "I rose early to seek God, and found Him whom my soul loveth. Who would not rise early to meet such company?" "King Jesus is a Good Master. I have had some sweet seasons of communion with the unseen God which I would not give up for thousands worth of gold and silver." Only a few months before his death M'Cheyne drew up some considerations concerning "Reformation in Secret Prayer". "I ought", said M'Cheyne, "to spend the best hours of the day in communion with God. It is my noblest and most fruitful employment." It is said that Robert Murray M'Cheyne had a special place in his church where he would pour over the names on the church role and weep with groans of intercession. Though only a young man, M'Cheyne possessed that rarest of jewels; a TRUE shepherd's heart. M'Cheyne fervently labored among the people of Dundee, as if he somehow knew he would soon die. He was a man motivated by eternity. He wrote, "As I was walking in the fields, the thought came over me with almost overwhelming power, that every one of my flock must soon be in heaven or hell. Oh how I wished that I had a tongue like thunder, that I might make all hear; or that I had a frame like iron, that I might visit every one and say, 'Escape for thy life! Ah sinner! You little know how I fear that you will lay the blame of your damnation at my door.'"

To love Jesus is to love holiness. Many professing Christians shrink from the message of purity and thus draw back from the Savior they claim to love. Robert Murray M'Cheyne understood the necessity of a holy life. He wrote, "Study holiness of life. Your whole usefulness depends on this, for your sermons last but an hour or two; your life preaches all the week. If Satan can only make a covetous minister, a lover of praise, and pleasure, he has ruined your ministry. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God. A word spoken by you when your conscience is clear, and your heart is full of God's Spirit is worth ten thousand words spoken in unbelief and sin." Lying upon his deathbed with a raging fever, M'Cheyne lifted his hands in prayer, he exclaimed, "This parish Lord, this people, this whole place." Robert Murray M'Cheyne ended his life like he lived it, full of fervent prayer.