

Election no Discouragement to Seeking Souls

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that God's sovereign election is not a cause for discouragement but a profound assurance of mercy and grace for seeking souls.

Scripture: Exodus 33:19, Romans 9:15-16, Matthew 4:4, Romans 9:22-23, Ephesians 2:8-9, John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Isaiah 55:8-9

Topics: "Divine Sovereignty", "Election", "Grace"

Description

In this powerful sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the doctrine of divine election and God's sovereign mercy. He argues that God's sovereignty is not a cause for despair but a profound source of comfort and assurance for those seeking salvation. Using biblical examples and practical illustrations, Spurgeon encourages believers to trust in God's justice and grace rather than be hindered by doubts about election. This message challenges misconceptions and invites listeners to embrace the hope found in Christ.

Transcript

"I will be gracious upon whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy upon whom I will show mercy."—Exodus 33:19.

BECAUSE GOD IS THE MAKER, and creator, and sustainer of all things, he has a right to do as he wills with all his works. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" God's absolute supremacy and unlimited sovereignty naturally flow from his omnipotence, and if it were not so, the superlative excellence of the divine character would entitle him to absolute dominion. He should be chief who is best. He who cannot err, being perfect in wisdom; he who will not err, being as perfect in holiness; he who can do no wrong, being supremely just; he who must act in accordance with the principles of kindness, seeing he is essentially love, is the most fitting person to rule. Tell me not of the creatures ruling themselves: what a chaos were this! Talk not of a supposed republic of all created existences, controlling and guiding themselves. All the creatures put together, with their combined wisdom and goodness—if, indeed, it were not combined folly and wickedness—all these, I say, with all the excellencies of knowledge, judgment, and love, which the most fervid imagination can suppose them to possess, could not make the equal of that great God whose name is holiness, whose essence is love, to whom all power belongeth, and to whom alone wisdom is to be ascribed. Let him reign supreme, for he is infinitely superior to all other existences. Even if he did not actually reign, the suffrages of all wise men

would choose the Lord Jehovah to be absolute monarch of the universe; and if he were not already King of kings and Lord of lords, doing as he wills among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of this lower world, it were the path of wisdom to lift him up to that throne. Since men have sinned, there becomes a yet further reason, or, rather a wider scope for the display of sovereignty. The creature, as a creature, may be supposed to have some claim upon the Creator; at least, it may expect that he shall not make it intentionally and despotically to put it to pain; that he shall not arbitrarily and without cause or necessity, cause its existence to be one of misery. I will not venture to judge the Lord, but I do think it is altogether incompatible with his goodness that he should have made a creature, and, as a creature, have condemned it to misery. Justice seems to demand that there shall be no punishment where there is no sin. But man has lost all his rights as a creature. If he ever had any, he has sinned them away. Our first parents have sinned, and we, their children, have attained ourselves, by high treason against our liege lord and sovereign. All that a just God owes to any one of us on the footing of our own claim, is wrath and displeasure. If he should give to us our due, we should not longer remain on praying ground, breathing the air of mercy. The creature, before its Creator, must now be silent as to any demands upon him; it cannot require anything of him as a matter of right. If the Lord willeth to show mercy, it shall be so; but, if he withholds it, who can call him to account? "Can I not do as I will with mine own?" is a fit reply to all such arrogant enquiries; for man has sinned himself out of court, and there remains no right of appeal from the sentence of the Most High. Man is now in the position of a condemned criminal, whose only right is to be taken to the place of execution, and justly to suffer the due reward of his sins. Whatever difference of opinion, then, there might have been about the sovereignty of God as exercised upon creatures in the pure mass, there should be none, and there will be none, except in rebellious spirits, concerning the sovereignty of God over rebels who have sinned themselves into eternal ruin, and have lost all claim even to the mercy, much more the love of their offended Creator.

However, whether we all of us agree to the doctrine that God is sovereign or not, is a very little matter to him, for he is so. De jure, by right, he should be so; de facto, as matter of fact, he is so. It is a fact, concerning which you have only to open your eyes and see that God acts as a sovereign in the dispensation of his grace. Our Saviour, when he wished to quote instances of this, spake on this wise: many widows there were in Israel in the time of Elias the prophet, but unto none of these was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman who was a widow. Here was election! Elias is not sent to nourish and to be nourished by an Israelitish widow, but to a poor idolatress across the border, the blessing of the prophet's company is graciously granted. Again our Saviour says, "Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them were cleansed, save only Naaman the Syrian"—not an Israelite at all, but one who bowed in the house of Rimmon. See how distinguishing grace finds out strange objects! Although our Saviour only gave these two instances, and no more, because they sufficed for his purpose, there are thousands of such cases on record. Look at man and the fallen angels. How is it that fallen angels are condemned to endless fire, and reserved in chains of darkness unto the great day? There is no Saviour for angels; no precious blood was ever shed for Satan. Lucifer falls, and falls for ever, never to hope again. There is no dispensation of mercy to those nobler spirits; but man who was made lower than the angels, is selected to be the object of divine redemption. What a great deep is here! This is a most illustrious and indisputable instance of the exercise of the prerogatives of divine sovereignty. Look again at the nations of the earth. Why is the gospel preached today, to us Englishmen? We have committed as many offenses—I will even venture to say we have perpetrated as many political crimes as other nations. Our eye is always prejudiced toward everything which is English; but if we read our history fairly, we can discover in the past, and detect in the present, grave and serious faults which disgrace our national banner. To pass by as minor offenses the late barbarities in Japan, and our frequent

wars of extermination in New Zealand, and at the Cape, let it crimson the cheek of every inhabitant of the British Isles when we do but hint at the opium traffic with China. Yet to us the gospel is graciously sent, so that few nations enjoy it so fully as we do. It is true that Prussia and Holland hear the Word, and that Sweden and Denmark are comforted by the truth, but their candle burns but dimly; it is a poor flickering lamp which cheers their darkness, while in our own dear land, partly from the fact of our religious liberty, and yet more graciously through the late revival, the sun of the gospel shines brightly, and men rejoice in the light of day. Why this? Why no grace for the Japanese? Why no gospel preached to the inhabitants of Central Africa? Why was not the truth of God displayed in the Cathedral of Santiago, instead of the mummeries and follies which disgraced both dupes and deceivers, and were the incidental cause of the horrible burnings of that modern Tophet? Why today is not Rome, instead of being the seat of the beast, become the throne of Jesus Christ? I cannot tell you. But assuredly, divine sovereignty passing by many races of men, has been pleased to pitch upon the Anglo-Saxon family, that they may be as the Jews were aforetime, the custodians of divine truth, and the favorites of mighty grace.

We need not further speak upon national elections, for the principle is plainly carried out in individuals. See ye anything, my brethren, in that rich publican whose coffers are gorged with the results of his extortion, when he climbs the sycamore-tree, that his short stature may not prevent his seeing the Saviour—see ye anything in him why the Lord of glory should halt beneath that sycamore-tree and say, “Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house?” Can you find me a reason why yonder adulterous woman, who has had five husbands, and who is now living with a man who is not her husband, should constrain the Saviour to journey through Samaria that he might tell her of the water of life? If you can see anything, I cannot. Look at that bloodthirsty Pharisee, hurrying to Damascus with authority to hail men and women to prison, and shed their blood. The heat of midday cannot stop him, for his heart is hotter with religious rage than the sun with noontide rays. But see, he is arrested in his career, a brightness shines round about him; Jesus speaks from heaven the words of tender rebuke; and Saul of Tarsus becomes Paul, the apostle of God. Why? Wherefore? What answer can we give but this? “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Read the “Life of John Newton;” had he not ripened into the grossest of all villains? Turn to the history of John Bunyan, by his own confession the lowest of all blackguards, and tell me, can you find in either of these offenders any sort of reason why the Lord should have chosen them to be among the most distinguished heralds of the cross? No man in his senses will venture to assert that there was anything in Newton or Bunyan why they should engross the regard of the Most High. It was sovereignty, and nothing but sovereignty. Take your own case, dear friends, and that shall be the most convincing of all to you. If you know anything of your own heart, if you have formed a right estimate of your own character, if you have seriously considered your own position before the Most High, the reflection that God loveth you with an everlasting love, and that, therefore, with the bands of his kindness he has drawn you, will draw forth from you at once the exclamation, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for truth’s sake.” Brethren! the whole world is full of instances of divine sovereignty, for in every conversion some beam of the absolute dominion of God shines forth upon mankind.

When a sinner is anxiously disturbed about his soul’s affairs, his chief and main thought should not be upon this subject; when a man would escape from wrath and attain to heaven, his first, his last, his middle thought should be the cross of Christ. As an awakened sinner, I have vastly less to do with the secret purposes of God, than with his revealed commands. For a man to say, “Thou commandest all men to repent, yet will I not repent, because I do not know that I am chosen to eternal life,” is not only unreasonable, but exceedingly wicked. That it is unreasonable you will clearly see on a moment’s

reflection. I know that bread does not of itself nourish my body, "For man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It depends, therefore, upon God's decree whether that bread shall nourish my body or not; for if he has not purposed that it shall, it may even choke me, and so become rather the cause of my death than the staff of my life. Do I therefore, when I am hungry, thrust my hands into my pockets and stand still, and refuse to help myself from the well-loaded table, because I do not know whether God has decreed that the bread shall nourish me or not? If I did, I should be an idiot or madman; or if in my senses, I should starve myself on such a pretence, I should richly deserve the burial of a suicide. I am not absolutely sure that there will be a harvest upon my field next year: unless God has ordained that the corn shall spring up and shall ripen, all my husbandry will be labor lost. There are worms in the earth, frosts in the air, birds in the sky, mildews in the winds—all of which may destroy my corn, and I may lose every single grain of the handful which I throw into my furrows. Shall I, therefore, leave my farm to be one perpetual fallow, because I do not know whether God has decreed that there shall be a harvest or not next year? If I become a bankrupt—if I am unable to pay my rent—if the thorn and the thistle grow taller and higher, and if at last, my landlord thrusts me from my tenancy, all that men will say, will be, "It serves him right!"—because I was such a fool as to make the secret purposes of God a matter of paramount consideration, instead of performing my known duty. I am ill and sick: a physician comes to me with medicine. I am not clear that his medicine will heal me; it has healed a great many others, but if God has decreed that I shall die, I shall die, let me take any quantity of physic, or take none at all. My arm mortifies, but I will not have it cut off, because I do not know whether God has decreed that I shall die of mortification or not. Who but a crazed idiot, or raving maniac, would talk thus? When I put the case in that light, you all reply, "Nobody ever talks in that way; it is too absurd." Of course, nobody does. And the fact is, even in the things of God, nobody really does argue in that way. A man may say, "I will not believe in Christ, because I am afraid I am not elected;" but the thing is so stupid, so absurd, that I do not believe that any man, not absolutely demented, can be so grossly foolish as to believe in his own reasoning. I am far rather inclined to think that is a wicked and perverse method of endeavoring to stultify conscience, on the theory that a bad excuse is better than none, and that even a foolish argument is better than having one's mouth shut in speechless confusion.

But since men will everlastingly be getting to his point, and there are so many who are always giving this as a reason why they do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, because, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," I shall try, this morning, to talk with these people on their own ground; and I shall endeavor, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to show that the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, so far from discouraging anybody, has not in it, if regarded aright, any sort of discouragement whatever, for any souls believing in Jesus Christ.

For one moment let me detain you from my object, while I reply to a very common method of misrepresenting the doctrine. It may be as well to start with a clear idea of what the doctrine really is. Our opponents put the case thus: suppose a father should condemn some of his children to extreme misery, and make others supremely happy, out of his own arbitrary will, would it be right and just? Would it not be brutal and detestable? My answer is, of course, it would; it would be execrable in the highest degree, and far, very far be it from us to impute such a course of action to the Judge of all the earth. But the case stated is not at all the one under consideration, but one as opposite from it as light from darkness. Sinful man is not now in the position of a well-deserving or innocent child, neither does God occupy the place of a complacent parent. We will suppose another case far nearer the mark, indeed, it is no supposition, but an exact description of the whole matter. A number of criminals, guilty of the most aggravated and detestable crimes, are righteously condemned to die, and die they must, unless the king shall exercise the

prerogative vested in him, and give them a free pardon. If for good and sufficient reasons, known only to himself, the king chooses to forgive a certain number, and to leave the rest for execution, is there anything cruel or unrighteous here? If, by some wise means, the ends of justice can be even better answered by the sparing of the pardoned ones, than by their condemnation, while at the same time, the punishment of some tends to honor the justice of the lawgiver, who shall dare to find fault? None, I venture to say, but those who are the enemies of the state and of the king. And so may we well ask, "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" Who is he that shall impugn the mingled mercy and severity of heaven, or make the eternal God an offender, because "he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy?" Let us now proceed to our proper subject, and endeavor to clear this truth from the terrors supposed to cluster around it.

I. Let us begin with this assertion, which we are absolutely sure is correct: THIS DOCTRINE DOES NOT OPPOSE ANY COMFORT DERIVED FROM OTHER SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS.

This doctrine, stern as it may seem to be, does not oppose the consolation which may be rightly derived from any other truth of revelation. Those who hold the free-will theory, say that our doctrine, that salvation is of the Lord alone, and that he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, takes away from man the comfort derivable from God's goodness. God is good, infinitely good in his nature. God is love; he willeth not the death of any, but had rather that all should come to repentance. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." Our friends very properly insist upon it that God is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works; that the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy; let me assure them that we shall never quarrel on these points, for we also rejoice in the same facts. Some of you have listened to my voice for these ten years: I ask you whether you have heard me utter a single sentence which at all contradicts the doctrine of God's great goodness? You may have so construed it by mistake, but no such teaching has passed my lip. Do I not, again and again, assert the universal benevolence of God—the infinite and overflowing goodness of the heart of the Most High? If any man can preach upon the great text, "God is love," though I may not be able to preach with the same eloquence, I will venture to view with him in the decision, heartiness, delight, earnestness, and plainness, with which he may expound his theme, be he who he may, or what he may. There is not the slightest shadow of a conflict between God's sovereignty and God's goodness. He may be a sovereign, and yet it may be absolutely certain that he will always act in the way of goodness and love. It is true that he will do as he wills; and yet it is quite certain that he always wills to do that which, in the widest view of it, is good and gracious. If the sons of sorrow fetch any comfort from the goodness of God, the doctrine of election will never stand in their way. Only mark, it does with a two-edged sword cut to pieces that false confidence in God's goodness which sends so many souls to hell. We have heard dying men singing themselves into the bottomless pit with this lullaby, "Yes, sir, I am a sinner, but God is merciful; God is good." Ah! dear friends, let such remember that God is just as well as good, and that he will by no means spare the guilty, except through the great atonement of his Son Jesus Christ. The doctrine of election, in a most blessedly honest manner does come in, and breaks the neck, once for all, of all this false and groundless confidence in the uncovenanted mercy of God. Sinner, you have no right to trust to the goodness of God out of Christ. There is no word in the whole Book of Inspiration, which gives the shadow of a hope to the man who will not believe in Jesus Christ. It says of him, "He that believeth not shall be damned." It declares of you, who are resting upon such a poor

confidence as the unpromised favor of heaven, "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ the righteous." If this be an evil to rob you of a false refuge, the doctrine of election certainly does this; but from the comfort properly derivable from the largest view of God's bounteous goodness and unlimited love, election does not detract a single grain.

Much comfort, too, flows to a troubled conscience from the promise that God will hear prayer. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you, for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." If you ask anything of God in the name of Jesus Christ, you shall receive it. Now, there are some who imagine that they must not pray because they do not know whether they are God's chosen people. If you refuse to pray on the ground of such bad reasoning as this, you must do so at your own expense; but do mark our solemn assurance, for which we have God's warrant, that there is nothing in the sovereignty of God which at all militates against the great truth, that every sincerely seeking soul, craving divine grace by humble prayer through Jesus Christ, shall be a finder. There may be an Arminian brother here who would like to get into this pulpit and preach the cheering truth, that God hath not said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain. We not only accord him full liberty to preach this doctrine, but we will go as far as he can, and perhaps a little further, in the enunciation of that truth. We cannot perceive any discrepancy between personal election and the prevalence of prayer. Let those who can, vex their brains with the task of reconciling them; to us the wonder is how a man can believe the one without the other. Firmly must I believe that the Lord God will show mercy to whom he will show mercy, and have compassion on whom he will have compassion; but I know as assuredly that wherever there is a genuine prayer, God gave it; that wherever there is a seeker, God made him seek; consequently if God has made the man seek and made the man pray, there is evidence at once of divine election; and the fact stands true that none seek who shall not find.

Very much comfort also is supposed to be derived, and naturally so, from the free invitations of the gospel. "Ah," cries one, "what a sweet thing it is that the Saviour cried, 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' How delightful to read such a word as this, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price,' Sir, my heart is encouraged when I find it written, 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' But, sir, I dare not come because of the doctrine of election." My dear hearer, I would not say anything harshly to you, but I must express my conviction that this is nothing but an idle excuse for not doing what you have no mind to do; because invitations of the most general character, nay, invitations which shall be universal in their scope, are perfectly consistent with the election of God. I have preached here, you know it, invitations as free as those which proceeded from the lips of Master John Wesley. Van Armin himself, the founder of the Arminian school, could not more honestly have pleaded with the very vilest of the vile to come to Jesus than I have done. Have I therefore felt in my mind that there was a contradiction here? No, nothing of the kind; because I know it to be my duty to sow beside all waters, and like the sower in the parable, to scatter the seed upon the stony ground, as well as upon the good land, knowing that election does not narrow the gospel call which is universal, but only affects the effectual call, which is and must be from the Spirit of God. My business is to give the general call, the Holy Spirit will see to its application to the chosen. O my dear hearers, God's invitations are honest invitations to every one of you. He invites you; in the words of the parable he addresses, "All things are ready; come ye to the supper, my oxen and my fatlings are killed." Nay, he saith to his ministers, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in." Though he foreknows who will come in, and has before all worlds ordained who shall taste of that supper, yet the invitation in its widest possible

range, is a true and honest one; and if you accept it you shall find it so.

Furthermore, if we understand the gospel at all, the gospel lies in a nutshell. It is this:—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Or, to use Christ's words, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." This promise is the gospel. Now, the gospel is true, whatever else may be false. Whatever doctrine may or may not be of God, the gospel certainly is. The doctrine of sovereign grace is not contrary to the gospel, but perfectly consonant therewith. God has a people whom no man shall number, whom he hath ordained unto eternal life. This is, by no means, in conflict with the great declaration, "He that believeth on him is not condemned." If any man who ever lived, or ever shall live, believes in Jesus Christ, he hath eternal life. Election or no election, if you are resting upon the rock of ages you are saved. If you, as a guilty sinner, take the righteousness of Christ—if all black, and foul, and filthy, you come to wash in the fountain filled with blood, sovereignty or no sovereignty, rest assured of this, that you are redeemed from the wrath to come. O my dear friends, when you say, "I will not believe in Christ because of election," I can only say as Job did to his wife, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh." How dare you, because God reveals to you two things, which two things you cannot make square with one another—how dare you charge either the one or the other with being false? If I believe God, I am not only to believe what I can understand, but what I cannot understand; and if there were a revelation which I could comprehend and sum up as I may count five upon my fingers, I should be sure it did not come from God. But if it has some depths vastly too deep for me—some knots which I cannot untie—some mysteries which I cannot solve—I receive it with the greater confidence, because it now gives me swimming-room for my faith, and my soul bathes herself in the great sea of God's wisdom, praying, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Let it be said over and over again, that there shall be no doubt about this matter, that if there be any comfort derivable from the gospel; if there be any sweet consolation flowing from the free invitations and the universal commands of divine truth, all those may be received and enjoyed by you, while you hold this doctrine of divine sovereignty as much as if you did not hold it, and received some wider scheme. Methinks I hear one voice say, "Sir, the only comfort I can ever have lies in the infinite value of the precious blood of Christ; O sir, it seems to me such a sweet thing that there is no sinner so black that Christ cannot wash away his sins, and no sinner so old that the meritorious virtue of that atonement cannot meet his case—not one in any rank or in any condition whom that blood cannot cleanse from all sin. Now, sir, if that be true, how can the doctrine of election be true?" My dear friend, you know in your own heart that the two things are not opposed to each other at all. For what does the doctrine of election say? It says that God has chosen and has saved some of the greatest sinners who ever lived, has cleansed some of the foulest sins ever committed, and that he is doing and will do the same to the world's end. So that the two things exactly tally. And I will venture to say that if in the fulness of a man's heart he shall say, "There is no sin except the one excepted sin, which cannot be forgiven," if he boldly announce that "All manner of sin shall be forgiven unto men," and if he shall plead with power and earnestness that souls would now come to Christ and lay hold upon eternal life, he may go back to his Bible, and he may read every text teaching the sovereignty of God, and every passage upholding divine election; and he may feel that all these texts look him in the face, and say, "Well done, our spirit and your spirit are precisely the same; we have no conflict together; we are two great truths which came from the same God; we are alike the revelation of the Holy Ghost." But we leave that point. If there be any comfort, sinner, which you can truthfully and rightly get from any passage of Scripture, from any promise of God, from any invitation, from any open door of mercy, you may have it, for the doctrine of election does not rob you of one atom of the consolation which the truth of God can afford you.

II. But now will take another point for a moment. Our second head is, that THIS DOCTRINE HAS A MOST SALUTARY EFFECT UPON SINNERS. These may be divided into two classes: those who are awakened, and those who are hardened and incorrigible.

To the awakened sinner, next to the doctrine of the cross, the doctrine of distinguishing grace is perhaps the most fraught with blessings and comfort. In the first place, the doctrine of election, applied by the Holy Ghost, strikes dead for ever all the efforts of the flesh. It is the end of Arminian preaching to make men active, to excite them to do what they can; but the very end and object of gospel preaching is to make men feel that they have no power of their own, and to lay them as dead, at the foot of God's throne. We seek, under God, to make them feel that all their strength must lie in the Strong One who is mighty to save. If I can convince a man that, let him do what he may, he cannot save himself; if I can show him that his own prayers and tears can never save him apart from the Spirit of God; if I can convince him that he must be born again from above; if I lead him to see that all which is born of the flesh is flesh, and only that which is born of the spirit is spirit, brethren! three parts of the great battle are already won. "I kill and I make alive," saith God: "when a man is killed the work is half done." "I wound and I heal: when a man is wounded his salvation is commenced." What! am I to set a sinner industriously to labor after eternal life by his own works? Then, indeed, am I an ambassador of hell. Am I to teach him that there is a goodness in him which he is to evolve, to polish, and educate and perfect, and so to save himself? Then I am a teacher of the beggarly elements of the law and not the gospel of Christ. Are we to set forth man's prayers, repentings, and humblings as the way of salvation; if so, let us renounce the righteousness of Christ at once, for the two will never stand together! I am a mischief-maker if I excite the activities of the flesh instead of pointing to the arms of the Redeemer! But if the potent hammer of electing sovereignty dashes out the brains of all a man's works, merits, doings, and willings, while it pronounces over the dead carcass this sentence: "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy;" then, the best thing is done for a sinner that can be done as a stepping-stone to the act of faith. When a man is weaned from self, and totally delivered from looking to the flesh for help, there is hope for him: and this the doctrine of divine sovereignty does through the Holy Spirit's power.

Again, this doctrine gives the greatest hope to the really awakened sinner. You know how the case stands. We are all prisoners condemned to die. God, as sovereign, has a right to pardon whom he pleases. Now, imagine a number of us shut up in a condemned cell, all guilty. One of the murderers says within himself: "I know that I have no reason to expect to be delivered. I am not rich: if I had some rich relations, like George Townley, I might be found insane, and delivered. But I am very poor; I am not educated. If I had the education of some men I might expect some consideration. I am not a man of rank and position; I am a man without merit or influence, therefore I cannot expect that I should be selected as one to be saved." No, I believe that if the present authorities of our land were the persons to be taken into consideration, a man who was poor might have a very poor chance of expecting any gratuitous deliverance. But when God is the great sovereign the case is different. For then, we argue thus: "Here am I; my salvation depends entirely upon the will of God: is there a chance for me? We take down a list of those whom he has saved, and we find that he saves the poor, the illiterate, the wicked, the godless, and the worst of the worst, the base things, and things that are despised. Well, what do we say? Then, why may he not choose me? Why not save me? If I am to look for some reason in myself why I should be saved, I shall never find any, and consequently never shall have a hope. But if I am to be saved for no reason at all but that God wills to save me, ah! then there is hope for me. I will to the gracious King approach, I will do as he bids me, I will trust in his dear Son, and I shall be saved." So that this doctrine opens the door of hope to the worst of the worst, and the only persons it discourages are the Pharisees, who say: "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as

other men are”—those proud, haughty spirits who say: “No! if I am not to be saved for something good in myself, then I will be damned!” as damned they will be with a vengeance, too.

Moreover, do not you see, dear friends, how the doctrine of election comforts the sinner in the matter of power. His complaint is, “I find I have no power to believe; I have no spiritual power of any kind.” Election stoops down and whispers in his ear—“But if God wills to save you, he gives the power, gives the life, and gives the grace; and therefore since he has given that power and might to others as weak as you, why not to you? Have courage, look to the cross of Christ and live.” And oh! what emotions of gratitude, what throbbings of love does this doctrine cause in human hearts. “Why,” saith the man, “I am saved simply because God would save me, not because I deserved it, but because his loving heart would save me; then, I will love him, I will live to him, I will spend and be spent for him.” Such a man cannot be proud, I mean not consistently with the doctrine. He lies humbly at God’s feet. Other men may boast of what they are, and how they have own eternal life by their own goodness, but I cannot. If God had left me, I had been in hell with others; and if I go to heaven, I must cast my crown at the feet of the grace which brought me there. Such a man will become kind to others. He will hold his opinions, but he will not hold them savagely, nor teach them bitterly, because he will say, “If I have light, and others have not, my light was given me from God, therefore, I have no cause to plume myself upon it. I will try to spread that light, but not by anger and abuse. For why should I blame those who cannot see, for could I have seen if God had not opened my blind eyes?” Every virtue this doctrine fosters, and every vice it kills, when the Holy Spirit so uses it. Pride it treads under foot, and humble, trustful confidence in the mercy of God in Christ, it cherishes as a darling child.

My time is gone; but I wanted to have said a word as to the effect of this gospel upon incorrigible sinners. I will just say this: I know what the effect of it ought to be. What do you say who have made up your minds not to repent, you who care not for God? Why, you believe that any day you like you can turn to God, since God is merciful, and will save you; and therefore, you walk about the world as comfortably as possible, thinking it all depends upon you, and that you will get into heaven just at the eleventh hour. Ah! man, that is not your case. See where you are. Do you see that moth fluttering in my hand! Imagine it to be there. With this finger of mine I can crush it—in a moment. Whether it shall live or not depends absolutely upon whether I choose to crush it or let it go. That is precisely your position at the present moment. God can damn you now. Nay, let us say to you, “Yours is a worse position than that.” There are some seven persons now doomed for murder and piracy on the high seas. You can clearly say that their lives depend upon Her Majesty’s pleasure. If Her Majesty chooses to pardon them she can. If not, when the fatal morning comes, the bolt will be drawn and they will be launched into eternity. That is your case, sinner. You are condemned already. This world is but one huge condemned cell in which you are kept, until the execution morning comes. If you are ever to be pardoned, God must do it. You cannot escape from him by flight; you cannot bribe him by actions of your own. You are absolutely in the hand of God, and if he leaves you where you are and as you are, your eternal ruin is as certain as your existence. Now, does not this make some sort of trembling come upon you? Perhaps not; it makes you angry. Well, if it does, that will not frighten me, because there are some of you who will never be good for anything until you are angry. I believe it is no ill sign when some persons are angry with the truth. It shows that the truth has pierced them. If an arrow penetrates my flesh, I do not like the arrow, and if you kick and struggle against this truth, it will not alarm me; I shall have some hope that a wound is made. If this truth should provoke you to think, it will have done for some of you one of the greatest things in the world. It is not your perverse thinking which frightens me; it is the utterly thoughtless way in which you go on. If you had sense enough to consider these things and fight against them, I should then have some faint hope of you. But alas! many

of you have not sense enough, you say, "Yes, yes, it is all true," you accept it, but then it has no effect upon you. The gospel rolls over you, like oil adown a slab of marble, and produces no effect.

If you are at all right in heart, you will begin to see what your state is, and the next thing that will startle your mind will be the reflection: "Is it so? am I absolutely in God's hands? can he save me or damn me as he will? Then, I will cry to him, 'O God, save me from the wrath to come—from eternal torment—from banishment from thy presence. Save me, O God! What wouldst thou have me to do? Oh! what wouldst thou have me to do, that I may find thy favor and live?'" Then comes the answer to you:—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved;" for "whosoever believeth in him shall never perish, but shall have eternal life."

O that God might bless this divine doctrine to you. I have never preached this doctrine without conversions, and I believe I never shall. At this moment God will cause his truth to attract your hearts to Jesus, or to affright you to him. May you be drawn as the bird is drawn by the lure, or may you be driven as a dove is hunted by the hawk into the clefts of the rock. Only may you be sweetly compelled to come. May my Lord fulfill this desire of my heart. O that God may grant me your souls for my hire; and to him shall be the glory, world without end. Amen.

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