

# Notes (From the January 1889 Sword and Trowel)

by C.H. Spurgeon

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*C.H. Spurgeon's sermon critiques modern Evangelicalism while affirming the importance of doctrinal clarity and the biblical doctrine of election.*

**Scripture:** Romans 11:5

**Topics:** "Election and Grace", "Theological Integrity"

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## Description

C.H. Spurgeon critiques the state of contemporary evangelical preaching, arguing that it has deviated from the doctrinal standards upheld by earlier generations. He expresses concern over the rise of a latitudinarian approach to faith, where diverse beliefs are accepted under the banner of Evangelicalism without a clear doctrinal foundation. Spurgeon calls for a return to honest and outspoken evangelicals who will confront this decline and uphold the truth of Scripture. He references John Bunyan's clear stance on election, emphasizing that true election is rooted in God's grace and purpose, not in human works. Spurgeon's message serves as a rallying cry for the church to remain steadfast in its beliefs amidst growing theological ambiguity.

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## Transcript

THE CHRISTIAN WORLD, in its review of the nondescript Conference on "Evangelical" Preaching, which was held in the month of November, very accurately says of it: "It started from nothing, and it ends nowhere." This may serve as a very fair description of much of the less pronounced theology of the period. We view matters from a point of view which is precisely the opposite of The Christian World; but we come to the same conclusion as it has done, namely, that what is sought to be palmed off upon the public by many as Evangelicalism, "on its intellectual side, lies neither here nor there, but is consistent with the most widespread differences of belief." You may believe anything, everything, or nothing, and yet be enrolled in the "Evangelical" army--so they say. Will there arise no honest, out-spoken evangelicals among Dissenters to expose and repudiate this latitudinarianism? Are all the watchmen asleep? Are all the churches indifferent? We quote, however, from our antagonistic cotemporary that we may reproduce its testimony to our correctness of judgment. It cannot be supposed to be a witness biased in our favor, but it says, "It is now established by abundant signs that Mr. Spurgeon is well within the mark in asserting that among Nonconformist preachers there is a very marked defection from the doctrinal standard maintained by their fathers, and still upheld by him; and every day that defection is becoming more visible." We do not

now need this testimony, for ministers who at first denied our impeachment have passed far beyond that stage, and admitting the truth of what we objected to, are glorying in the defection as a happy advance, a laudable piece of progress, a matter not needing defense, but deserving to be carried still further. Is it not so? If it be so, upon whose heads will rest the guilt of this evil hour? The "Evangelical" leaders of the day, who are dallying with the grossest heresies must answer for it in the day of the Lord's appearing.

As John Bunyan has, by a thousand-horse power engine, been dragged into the Down-Grade controversy, as though he was, or would have been, opposed to our protest, we thought we would look into his works, to see if he had ever been opposed to a creed; and, as our readers will have guessed, we soon found that he had one of his own, exceedingly full and clear. It seems like a joke, that the most reckless of our opponents should attempt to put Honest John on the wrong side; and, in no spirit of jest, but in downright earnest, we suggest to any who are inclined to repeat the clumsy experiment, that they should first study Bunyan's own Confession of Faith. As we are half afraid that they will decline the task, we make them a present of his belief upon the Doctrine of Election. If they should not take delight in reading it, there may be others who will. At any rate, the Scriptural teaching which he sets forth in his homely way deserves consideration. Thus wrote the author of "The Pilgrim's Progress":-

#### OF ELECTION.

"1. I believe that election is free and permanent, being founded in grace and the unchangeable will of God. 'Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: other-wise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work' (Romans 11:5, 6). 'Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his' (2 Timothy 2:19).

'In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will' (Ephesians 1:11). "2. I believe that this decree, choice, or election, was before the foundation of the world; and so before the elect themselves had being in themselves; for, 'God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were' (Romans 4:17), stays not for the being of things to determine his eternal purpose by; but having all things present to him, in his wisdom, he made his choice before the world was.

Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9. "3. I believe that the decree of election is so far off from making works in us foreseen, the ground or cause of the choice, that it containeth in the bowels of it, not only the persons but the graces that accompany their salvation. And hence it is, that it is said, we are predestinated 'to be conformed to the image of his Son' (Romans 8:29), not because we are, but 'that we SHOULD BE holy and without blame before him in love' (Ephesians 1:4). 'For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them' (Ephesians 2:10).

He blessed us according as he chose us in Christ. And hence it is again that the salvation and calling of which we are now made partakers, is no other than what was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; according to his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Ephesians 3:8-11; 2 Timothy 1:9; Romans 8:29. "4. I believe that Christ Jesus is he in whom the elect are always considered, and that without him there is neither election, grace, nor salvation.

'Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches

of his grace . . . that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him' (Ephesians 1:5- 7, 10).

'Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved' (Acts 4:12). "5. I believe that there is not any impediment attending the election of God that can hinder their conversion and eternal salvation. 'Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? . . .

Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?' etc. (Romans 8:30, 31; 33-35). 'What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded' (Romans 11:7). 'For Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the Lord of hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel' (Jeremiah 51:5). When Ananias made intercession against Paul, saying, 'Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name,' what said God unto him?

'Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel' (Acts 9:13-15). "6. I believe that no man can know his election, but by his calling. The vessels of mercy, which God afore prepared unto glory, do thus claim a share therein: 'Even us (say they), whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. As he saith also in Osee [Hosea 2:23], I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not 'beloved' (Romans 9:24, 25).

"7. I believe, therefore, that election doth not forestall or prevent the means which are of God appointed to bring us to Christ, to grace and glory; but rather putteth a necessity upon the use and effect thereof; because they are chosen to be brought to heaven that way; that is, by the faith of Jesus Christ, which is the end of effectual calling. 'Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.' 2 Peter 1:10; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:12."

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