

How to Meet the Doctrine of Election

A Sermon by Charles Spurgeon

"But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshiped him, saying, Lord, help me." Matthew 15:24,25.

The doctrine of election has been made into a great bugbear by its unscrupulous opponents and its injudicious friends. I have read some very wonderful sermons against this doctrine in which the first thing that was evident was that the person speaking was totally ignorant of his subject. The usual way of composing a sermon against the doctrine of grace is this: first exaggerate and belie the doctrine, and then argue against it. If you state the sublime truth as it is found in the Bible, why, you cannot say much against it. But if you collect a number of silly expressions from hot-headed partisans and denounce these, then your task will be easier. Nobody ever believed the doctrine of election as I have heard it stated by Arminian controversialists. I venture to say that nobody out of Bedlam ever did believe that which has been imputed to us. Is it surprising that we are as eager to denounce the dogmas imputed to us as ever our opponents can be? Why do they earnestly set themselves to confute what no one defends? Our friends abhor the doctrine as it is stated by themselves, and we are much of their mind, though the doctrine itself, as we would state it, is dear to us as life itself.

If we will keep simply to what the word of God says, we shall find in it truths apparently in conflict, but always in agreement. On every subject there is a truth which is set over against another truth: the one is as true as the other, the one does not take away from the other. The two relative truths make up the great road of practical truth, along which our Lord travels to bless the sons of men. Some like to run on one rail. I confess a partiality to the two, and I should not like to make an excursion tomorrow on a railway from which one of the rails had been taken.

It must be sorrowfully admitted that the doctrine of election has discouraged many who were seeking the Saviour, but the truth is that *it ought not to do so*. Viewed aright, it is a royal herald arrayed in silk and gold, freely announcing to the unworthy that the King receives sinners, according to the good pleasure of his will. How it has encouraged some of us! We feed upon it as upon a divine portion, which sustains, satisfies, and satiates the soul. The blessed doctrine of election is to my soul as wines on the lees well refined. It is a better, deeper, and more glorious fact of divine love that I ever hoped to realize. We asked for pardon, but he gave us justification; we asked for a little mercy, but the Lord gave us boundless grace, saying, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you." Did a sinner really know the doctrine of the choice of grace, he would not run away from it, but he would be inclined to run into its arms.

Yet to many it does seem to be as that black side of the cloud which the Lord turned upon the Egyptians, and therefore I am going to notice the discouragement as Christ put it before this woman. He said to her, first, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." "I am sent," he seemed to say, "to the Jews. I am sent to the house of Israel, but I am not sent to you." That great truth she would have been sure to find out sooner or later, and if she had found it out later, she might have feared that the cure of her daughter would be taken away from her because

it has been received contrary to the mission of the Messiah. Jesus lets her know this hard truth at once so that it may not worry her afterwards. When she did obtain the cure of her daughter, he would have her know that it was given openly and above-board, and not by a blunder of pity or an oversight of charity. She was to be once for all assured that the Lord Jesus had not forgotten himself, that he knew all about the limitation of his commission during his mortal life, and that in overstepping it he knew what he was doing and had not been wafted beyond himself by the impetuosity of his spirit.

Now, there is such a thing as *the choice of God*. The Lord has a people who are redeemed from among men. The Lord Jesus has a people of whom he has said, "Thine they were, and thou gave them to me." Some are ordained unto eternal life, and therefore believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Does this fact discourage you? I do not see why it should. Why shouldn't you be among that number? "But suppose I am not?" you ask. Why do you not suppose that you are? You do not know anything about it, therefore why suppose at all? To give up supposing would be a far more sensible thing than to brew for yourself a deadly potion of despair out of the worthless husks of mere supposition. I have enough to do to bear up under facts without overloading myself with conjectures. What God has not revealed, we are not bound to know. Indeed, it would seem better for us to be in ignorance where the Lord grants no information. The Lord has chosen a people to be saved, and I feel glad to think that he has done so, for none can prove that I am not of that number. If there are some whom God will save, then I know also who they are, for he tells me that they are such as repent of sin, confess it, forsake it, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. These same things would my soul desire to do, and when I do so, I know that I am of the chosen number and shall be saved. What is there in this to discourage a soul?

Yet it does discourage some. When people are in the dark they are afraid of anything and everything. "There were they in great fear, where no fear was." Once get a person into a low and nervous state, and the fall of a leaf suggests an avalanche. Alas, for these troubled ones, they feel that they cannot be saved because there is an Israel whom God has chosen to be saved!

Our Lord put before this woman something worse than the positive fact of the choice of Israel: he declared *the negative side of the sacred choice*. He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." What was worse in her case, was that she knew that this election, as far as Christ had stated it, *must exclude her*. She was a Canaanitish woman, a native of Tyre and Sidon, and therefore distinctly shut out; and *Jesus himself had told her so*. This poor Canaanitish woman might very logically have ended her pleadings, saying, "What more can be done? I cannot go against the word from Christ's own lips." Yet she did not do so, but like a true heroine she pressed her suit even to the joyful end. You see her cause for discouragement was much worse than yours can ever be, for you do not know that you are shut out. There is nothing in your race or city which excludes you. Moreover, Christ has never told you that you are shut out. I would urge you to be as sensible and brave as this woman was who, when she had received from Christ himself that he was not sent to such as she was, nevertheless persevered and pressed forward, and came to him and worshiped him, saying, "Lord, help me."

Men forget that the ordination of God deals with everything; not only with the spiritual, but quite as certainly with the natural world. Yet they never allow it to interfere with their labor

for bread, their struggle for wealth, or their race for fame. Why should they dissociate the matter of salvation from the ten thousand affairs which are encompassed in the same ring? Why will men act in other matters according to common sense, and upon this matter make molehills into mountains? They fancy that the will of God settles one or two matters, and leaves all the rest loose. They dream that it takes away free agency and responsibility and makes men into machines. They cannot understand the divine plan which interferes with no will of man and yet secures the will of God. Nor can they see how everything proceeds by the free agency of the creatures as much as if there were no God, and yet God rules over all. I wish that this subject did not vex men, but it is idle to wish. It has vexed them from the beginning and will vex them even to the end. Dear troubled souls, Jesus would have you come to him without fear. He invites you to trust in him. Even more, he commands you to believe on his name. Nothing he has thought, or ordained, or purposed, or predestinated has any tendency to drive you from him. Whatever predestination may or may not be, this one thing is sure--*"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."* Everything beckons toward his cross and himself. Come, and let nothing hinder you even for a single hour.

Now, observe the commendable act of this woman. She did not question anything which Jesus asserted; that would have been gross presumption on her part. She accepted what Jesus said without any argument whatever. She did not assert, as some have shamelessly done, that God should deal with one as with another, or else he would be a respecter of persons. All that kind of thing, which we have heard so often, was far from her mind. She did not even argue that surely, in her solitary instance, she might be permitted to break through the regulation. She left the truth, which to her was dark, in the keeping of him whose name is light. *"Then came she and worshiped him."* My heart greatly rejoices. I wish I could picture the scene. She did not stop to work out the difficult question, but she came to him and did the best thing she could--she worshiped him. Down she went on her face before him, and when she did look up it was with a look of reverent awe and childlike confidence.

Now you have been thinking about yourself, and the more you do this the more you will despond and despair. No possible comfort can come to you by that road. Begin now to think about Jesus, the Son of God, the Saviour of men. "Oh, but I am such a sinner!" Yes, and he is such a Saviour. "Sir, I am so black!" But he is able to make us whiter than snow. "Alas, I greatly deserve his curse!" Yes, but he was "made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree." By death the Lord has put that curse away. Behold him then upon the cross removing human sin, and see if you cannot copy the woman's example--*"Then came she and worshiped him."* This is a homage which a humble heart can render in acceptable style. Pride, self, and rebellion cannot worship, but humble hearts are happy in the deed. Oh, that you would now bow with me before the Lamb of God!

My dear reader, do that, and do it *now*. No doctrine will trouble you long. On the contrary, you will ask why you did ever let it trouble you. Do you ever let predestination trouble you in the matter of your daily business? Tomorrow you hope to make a few shillings at your daily calling, but it may be that you will not, or you may lose it. Why do you not say to yourself, "It may be that the providence of God has arranged that I shall not earn anything tomorrow; therefore I shall stay at home and do nothing?" Why, you are not such a fool. You will take down your shop shutters, display your goods, and do your best, or go out to your job and look for

your usual wage. Let the providence of God do what it may, your business is to do what you can.

So it is with a poor seeking soul. That soul's business is to let the Lord do what he wills, but meanwhile to cry, "Lord help me." Wholly submissive, but heartily adoring, lie at Jesus' feet and believe that this divine Saviour must and will save every soul that hangs upon him. Remember that every soul that ever did come to Christ came because the Father drew him, and that every soul that came found out afterwards that there was an election of grace that encompassed him, and that he was in it. Even this poor woman turned out to be one that Christ was sent to bless.

Just as the prophets came to Israel and yet there always appeared an exception, therefore it was no marvel that there should be exceptions in the case of their Lord. Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, but unto none of them was the prophet sent save to a woman of Sarepta, who belonged to the very city out of which this woman came. Many lepers were in Israel in the days of Elisha, yet none of them was healed except Naaman the Syrian. Naaman did not belong to the favored race at all, but was a far-off stranger. Yet he received the blessing of healing from the Lord God of Israel. The election of God as to these temporal things did seem to exclude all but the seed of Israel, but it was only in seeming. There were always some strangers in the chosen line, and so that particular form of election which consisted in our Lord's personal ministry being only to the Jews did not cause the exclusion of this poor believing woman. To her Jesus Christ had come, for there he was! He was outside his own boundary! He had come to her!

Now, at this moment, whatever you may think about this doctrine or that, *Jesus Christ has come to you*. I have preached to you his truth, and you have heard it. Yes, and you have felt something of its power. Yield to it, I beseech you. If you yield to it and come to him and trust him, then rejoice that the lines of electing love have encompassed you. You are his. You could not and would not have come to him in prayer and simple faith if it had not been so. Your coming to him proves that his eternal love of old went after you.

The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.