

EXPOSITION OF THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE
NO. 385

THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 1861
THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON
TOOK THE CHAIR AT 3 O'CLOCK

THE proceedings were commenced by singing the 21st Hymn—

*Saved from the damning power of sin,
The law's tremendous curse,
We'll now the sacred song begin
Where God began with us.*

*We'll sing the vast unmeasured grace
Which, from the days of old,
Did all His chosen sons embrace,
As sheep within His fold.*

*The basis of eternal love
Shall mercy's frame sustain;
Earth, hell, or sin, the same to move
Shall all conspire in vain.*

*Sing, O ye sinners bought with blood,
Hail the Great Three in One;
Tell how secure the cov'nant stood
Ere time its race begun.*

*Ne'er had you felt the guilt of sin,
Nor sweets of pard'ning love,
Unless your worthless names had been
Enroll'd to life above.*

*O what a sweet exalted song
Shall rend the vaulted skies,
When, shouting grace, the blood-washed throng
Shall see the Top Stone rise.*

The Rev. GEORGE WYARD, of Deptford, offered prayer.

The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON in opening the proceedings said, We have met together beneath this roof already to set forth most of those truths in which consists the peculiarity of this church. Last evening, we endeavored to show to the world that we heartily recognized the essential union of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, this afternoon and evening, it is our intention, through the lips of our brethren, to set forth those things which are verily received among us, and especially those great points which have been so often attacked, but which are still upheld and maintained—truths which we have proved in our experience to be full of grace and truth.

My only business upon this occasion is to introduce the brethren who shall address you, and I shall do so as briefly as possible, making what I shall say a preface to their remarks.

The controversy which has been carried on between the Calvinist and the Arminian is exceedingly important, but it does not so involve the vital point of personal godliness as to make eternal life depend upon our holding either system of theology.

Between the Protestant and the Papist there is a controversy of such a character, that he who is saved on the one side by faith in Jesus, dare not allow that his opponent on the opposite side can be saved while depending on his own works. There the controversy is for life or death, because it hinges mainly upon the doctrine of justification by faith, which Luther so properly called the test doctrine, by which a church either stands or falls.

The controversy again between the believer in Christ and the Socinian is one which affects a vital point. If the Socinian be right, we are most frightfully in error. We are, in fact, idolaters, and how can eternal life dwell in us? And if we be right, our largest charity will not permit us to imagine that a man can enter heaven who does not believe the real divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are other controversies which thus cut at the very core and touch the very essence of the whole subject. But I think we are all free to admit, that while John Wesley, for instance, in modern times zealously defended Arminianism, and on the other hand, George Whitefield with equal fervor fought for Calvinism, we should not be prepared either of us, on either side of the question, to deny the vital godliness of either the one or the other.

We cannot shut our eyes to what we believe to be the gross mistakes of our opponents, and should think ourselves unworthy of the name of honest men if we could admit that they are right in all things, and ourselves right too. An honest man has an intellect which does not permit him to believe that “yes” and “no” can both subsist at the same hour and both be true.

I cannot say, “It is,” and my brother point-blank say, “It is not,” and yet both of us be right on that point. We are willing to admit—in fact we dare not do otherwise—that opinion upon this controversy does not determine the future or even the present state of any man.

But still, we think it to be so important, that in maintaining our views, we advance with all courage and fervency of spirit, believing that we are doing God’s work and upholding most important truths of God. It may happen this afternoon that the term “Calvinism,” may be frequently used. Let it not be misunderstood—we only use the term for shortness.

That doctrine which is called “Calvinism” did not spring from Calvin. We believe that it sprang from the great founder of all truth. Perhaps Calvin himself derived it mainly from the writings of Augustine. Augustine obtained his views, without doubt, through the Spirit of God, from the diligent study of the writings of Paul, and Paul received them of the Holy Ghost, from Jesus Christ, the great founder of the Christian dispensation.

We use the term then, not because we impute any extraordinary importance to Calvin’s having taught these doctrines. We would be just as willing to call them by any other name, if we could find one which would be better understood, and which on the whole would be as consistent with fact.

And then again, this afternoon, we shall have very likely to speak of Arminians, and by that, we would not for a moment insinuate that all who are in membership with the Arminian body hold those particular views. There are Calvinists in connection with Calvinistic churches, who are not Calvinistic, bearing the name but discarding the system.

There are, on the other hand, not a few in the Methodist churches, who in most points perfectly agree with us, and I believe that if the matter came to be thoroughly sifted, it would be found that we are more agreed in our private opinions than in our public confessions, and our devotional religion is more uniform than our theology.

For instance, Mr. Wesley’s hymnbook, which may be looked upon as being the standard of his divinity, has in it some topics of higher Calvinism than many books used by ourselves. I have been exceedingly struck with the very forcible expressions there used, some of which I might have hesitated to employ myself.

I shall ask your attention while I quote verses from the hymns of Mr. Wesley, which we can all endorse as fully and plainly in harmony with the doctrines of grace—far more so than the preaching of some modern Calvinists. I do this because our low-doctrine Baptists and Morisonians ought to be aware of the vast difference between themselves and the Evangelical Arminians.

HYMN 131, VERSES 1, 2, 3

*“Lord, I despair myself to heal:
I see my sin, but cannot feel;
I cannot, till Thy Spirit blow,
And bid the obedient waters flow.*

*“’Tis Thine a heart of flesh to give;
Thy gifts I only can receive:
Here, then, to Thee I all resign;
To draw, redeem, and seal—is Thine.*

*“With simple faith on Thee I call,
My Light, my Life, my Lord, my all:
I wait the moving of the pool;
I wait the word that speaks me whole.”*

HYMN 133, VERSE 4

*“Thy golden scepter from above
Reach forth; lo! my whole heart I bow;
Say to my soul, ‘Thou art My love;
My chosen ’midst ten thousand, thou.’”*

This is very like election.

HYMN 136, VERSES 8, 9, 10

*“I cannot rest, till in Thy blood
I full redemption have:
But Thou, through whom I come to God,
Canst to the utmost save.*

*“From sin, the guilt, the power, the pain,
Thou wilt redeem my soul:
Lord, I believe and not in vain;
My faith shall make me whole.*

*“I too, with Thee, shall walk in white;
With all Thy saints shall prove,
What is the length, and breadth, and height,
And depth of perfect love.”*

Brethren, is not this somewhat like final perseverance? And what is meant by the next quotation, if the people of God can perish after all?

HYMN 138, VERSES 6, 7

*“Who, who shall in Thy presence stand,
And match Omnipotence?
Ungrasp the hold of Thy right hand,
Or pluck the sinner thence?”*

*“Sworn to destroy, let earth assail;
Nearer to save Thou art:
Stronger than all the powers of hell,
And greater than my heart.”*

The following is remarkably strong, especially in the expression “*force.*” I give it in full——

HYMN 158

*“O my God, what must I do?
Thou alone the way canst show;
Thou canst save me in this hour;
I have neither will nor power:
God, if over all Thou art,
Greater than my sinful heart,
All Thy power on me be shown,
Take away the heart of stone.*

*“Take away my darling sin,
Make me willing to be clean;
Have me willing to receive
All Thy goodness waits to give.
Force me, Lord, with all to part;
Tear these idols from my heart;
Now Thy love almighty show,
Make even me a creature new.*

*“Jesus, mighty to renew,
Work in me to will and do;
Turn my nature’s rapid tide,
Stem the torrent of my pride;
Stop the whirlwind of my will;
Speak and bid the sun stand still;
Now Thy love almighty show,
Make even me a creature new.*

*“Arm of God, Thy strength put on;
Bow the heavens, and come down;
All my unbelief o’erthrow;
Lay th’ aspiring mountain low:
Conquer Thy worst foe in me,
Get Thyself the victory;
Save the vilest of the race;
Force me to be saved by grace.”*

HYMN 206, VERSES 1, 2

*“What am I, O Thou glorious God!
And what my father’s house to Thee,
That Thou such mercies have bestow’d
On me, the vilest reptile, me!
I take the blessing from above,
And wonder at Thy boundless love.*

*“Me in my blood Thy love pass’d by,
And stopp’d, my ruin to retrieve;
Wept o’er my soul Thy pitying eye;
Thy bowels yearn’d, and sounded, ‘Live!’
Dying, I heard the welcome sound,
And pardon in Thy mercy found.”*

Nor are these all, for such good things as these abound, and they constrain me to say, that in attacking Arminianism we have no hostility towards the men who bear the name rather than the nature of that error, and we are opposed not to any body of men, but to the notions which they have espoused.

And now, having made these remarks upon terms used, we must observe that there is nothing upon which men need to be more instructed than upon the question of what Calvinism really is. The most infamous allegations have been brought against us, and sometimes, I must fear, by men who knew them to be utterly untrue.

And to this day, there are many of our opponents, who, when they run short of matter, invent and make for themselves a man of straw—call that John Calvin—and then shoot all their arrows at it. We have not come here to defend your man of straw—shoot at it or burn it as you will, and if it suits your convenience, still oppose doctrines which were never taught, and rail at fictions which, save in your own brain, were never in existence.

We come here to state what our views really are, and we trust that any who do not agree with us will do us the justice of not misrepresenting us. If they can disprove our doctrines, let them state them fairly, and then overthrow them, but why should they first caricature our opinions, and then afterwards attempt to put them down?

Among the gross falsehoods which have been uttered against the Calvinists proper, is the wicked calumny that we hold *the damnation of little infants*. A baser lie was never uttered. There may have existed somewhere, in some corner of the earth, a miscreant who would dare to say that there were infants in hell, but I have never met with him, nor have I met with a man who ever saw such a person.

We say, with regard to infants, Scripture says but very little, and therefore, where Scripture is confessedly scant, it is for no man to determine dogmatically. But I think I speak for the entire body, or certainly with exceedingly few exceptions, and those unknown to me, when I say, we hold that all infants are elect of God, and are therefore saved, and we look to this as being the means by which Christ shall see of the travail of His soul to a great degree, and we do sometimes hope that thus the multitude of the saved shall be made to exceed the multitude of the *lost*.

Whatever views our friends may hold upon the point, they are not necessarily connected with Calvinistic doctrine. I believe that the Lord Jesus, who said, “Of such is the kingdom of heaven,” does daily and constantly receive into His loving arms those tender ones who are only shown and then snatched away to heaven.

Our hymns are no ill witness to our faith on this point, and one of them runs thus—

*“Millions of infant souls compose
The family above.”*

Toplady, one of the keenest of Calvinists, was of this number. “In my remarks,” says he, “on Dr. Nowell, I testified my firm belief that the souls of *all departed infants* are with God in glory. That in the decree of predestination to life, God has included all whom He decreed to take away in infancy, and that the decree of reprobation has nothing to do with them.”

Nay, he proceeds farther, and asks with reason, how the anti-Calvinistic system of conditional salvation and election, or good works foreseen, will suit with the salvation of infants? It is plain that Arminians and Pelagians must introduce a *new principle* of election, and in so far as the salvation of infants is concerned, become Calvinists.

Is it not an argument in behalf of Calvinism, that its principle is uniform throughout, and that no change is needed on the ground on which man is saved, whether young or old? John Newton, of London, the friend of Cowper, noted for his Calvinism, holds that the children in heaven exceed its adult inhabitants in all their multitudinous array.

Gill, a very champion of Calvinism, held the doctrine that all dying in infancy are saved. An intelligent modern writer, (Dr. Russell, of Dundee), also a Calvinist, maintains the same views. And when it is considered that nearly *one-half* of the human race die in early years, it is easy to see what a vast accession must be daily and hourly making to the blessed population of heaven.

A more common charge brought by more decent people—for I must say that the last charge is never brought, except by disreputable persons—a more common charge is that we hold clear *fatalism*. Now, there may be Calvinists who are fatalists, but Calvinism and fatalism are two distinct things.

Do not most Christians hold the doctrine of the providence of God? Do not all Christians, do not all believers in a God hold the doctrine of His foreknowledge? All the difficulties which are laid against the doctrine of predestination might, with equal force, be laid against that of divine foreknowledge. We believe that God has predestinated all things from the beginning, but there is a difference between the predestinations of an intelligent, all-wise, all-bounteous God, and that blind fatalism which simply says, “It is because it is to be.”

Between the *predestination* of Scripture and the *fate* of the Koran, every sensible man must perceive a difference of the most essential character. We do not deny that the thing is so ordained that it must be, but why is it to be, but that the Father, God, whose name is love, ordained it—not because of any necessity in circumstances that such and such a thing should take place. Though the wheels of providence revolve with rigid exactness, yet not without purpose and wisdom. The wheels are full of eyes, and everything ordained is so ordained that it shall conduce to the grandest of all ends, the glory of God, and next to that the good of His creatures.

But we are next met by some who tell us that we preach the wicked and horrible doctrine of *sovereign and unmerited reprobation*. “Oh,” say they, “you teach that men are damned because God made them to be damned, and that they go to hell, not because of sin, not because of unbelief, but because of some dark decree with which God has stamped their destiny.”

Brethren, this is an unfair charge again. Election does not involve reprobation. There may be some who hold unconditional reprobation—I stand not here as their defender—let them defend themselves as best they can. I hold God’s election, but I testify just as clearly that if any man be lost he is lost for sin. And this has been the uniform statement of Calvinistic ministers.

I might refer you to our standards, such as, “The Westminster Assembly’s Catechism,” and to all our Confessions, for they all distinctly state that man is lost for sin, and that there is no punishment put on any man except that which he richly and righteously deserves. If any of you have ever uttered that libel against us, do it not again, for we are as guiltless of that as you are yourselves.

I am speaking personally—and I think in this I would command the suffrages of my brethren—I do know that the appointment of God extends to all things, but I stand not in this pulpit, nor in any other, to lay the damnation of any man anywhere but upon himself. If he be lost, damnation is all of man. But if he be saved, still salvation is all of God.

To state this important point yet more clearly and explicitly, I shall quote at large from an able Presbyterian divine—

“The pious Methodist is taught that the Calvinist represents God as creating men in order to destroy them. He is taught that Calvinists hold that men are lost, not because they sin, but because they are non-elected. Believing this to be a true statement, it is not a wonder that the Methodist stops short, and declares himself, if not an Arminian, at least an Anti-Predestinarian? But no statement can be more scandalously untrue. It is the uniform teaching of Calvinism, that God creates all for His own glory, that He is infinitely righteous and benevolent, and that where men perish it is only for their sins.”

In speaking of suffering, whether in this world or in the world to come, whether it respects angels or men, the Westminster standards (which may be considered as the most authoritative modern statement of the system) invariably connect the punishment with previous sin, and sin only.

“As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God as a *righteous* judge FOR FORMER SINS doth blind and harden, from them He not only withholdeth His grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings and wrought upon in their hearts, but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had, and exposeth them to such objects as *their corruption* makes occasion of sin; and withal gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they *harden themselves* even under those means which God uses for the softening of others.”

The Larger Catechism, speaking of the unsaved among angels and men, says, “God according to His Sovereign power and the unsearchable counsel of His own will (whereby He extendeth or withholdeth favor as He pleaseth) hath passed by and fore-ordained the rest to dishonour and wrath, *to be for their sin inflicted*, to the praise of the glory of His justice.” Again, “The end of God appointing this day (of the last judgment) is for the manifestation of the glory of His mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect, and of His justice in the damnation of the reprobate *who are wicked and disobedient*.”

This is no more than what the Methodist and all other Evangelical bodies acknowledge—that where men perish, it is in consequence of their sin. If it be asked, why sin which destroys, is permitted to enter the world, that is a question which bears not only on the Calvinist, but equally on all other parties. They are as much concerned and bound to answer it as he—nay, the question is not confined to Christians.

All who believe in the existence of God—in His righteous character and perfect providence, are equally under obligation to answer it. Whatever may be the reply of others, that of the Calvinist may be regarded as given in the statement of the Confession of Faith, which declares that God’s providence extends itself even to the first fall, and other sins of angels and men, etc., “*Yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.*”

It is difficult to see what more could be said upon the subject—and if such be the undoubted sentiments of Calvinists, then what misrepresentation can be more gross than that which describes them as holding that sinners perish irrespective of their sin, or that God is the author of their sin? What is the declaration of Calvin? “*Every soul* departs (at death) to that place *which it has prepared for itself* while in this world.”

It is hard to be charged with holding as sacred truth what one abhors as horrid blasphemy, and yet this is the treatment which has been perseveringly meted out to Calvinists in spite of the most solemn and indignant disclaimers. Against nothing have they more stoutly protested than the thought that the infinitely holy, and righteous, and amiable JEHOVAH is the author of sin, and yet, how often do the supporters of rival systems charge them with this as an article of faith?

A yet further charge against us is that we *dare not preach the Gospel to the unregenerate*, that, in fact, our theology is so narrow and cramped that we cannot preach to sinners. Gentlemen, if you dare to say this, I would take you to any library in the world where the old Puritan fathers are stored up, and I would let you take down any one volume and tell me if you ever read more telling exhortations and addresses to sinners in any of your own books?

Did not Bunyan plead with sinners, and whoever classed him with any but the Calvinists? Did not Charnock, Goodwin, and Howe agonize for souls and what were they but Calvinists? Did not Jonathan Edwards preach to sinners, and who more clear and explicit on these doctrinal matters. The works of our innumerable divines teem with passionate appeals to the unconverted.

Oh, sirs, if I should begin the list, time would fail me. It is an indisputable fact that we have labored more than they all for the winning of souls. Was George Whitefield any the less seraphic? Did his eyes weep the fewer tears or his heart move with the less compassion because he believed in God's electing love and preached the sovereignty of the Most High? It is an unfounded calumny.

Our souls are not stony, our hearts are not withdrawn from the compassion which we ought to feel for our fellow men. We can hold all our views firmly, and yet can weep as Christ did over a Jerusalem which was certainly to be destroyed.

Again, I must say, I am not defending certain brethren who have exaggerated Calvinism. I speak of Calvinism proper, not that which has run to seed, and outgrown its beauty and verdure. I speak of it as I find it in *Calvin's Institutes*, and especially in his *Expositions*. I have read them carefully. I take not my views of Calvinism from common repute but from his books. Nor do I, in thus speaking, even vindicate Calvinism as if I cared for the name, but I mean that glorious system which teaches that salvation is of grace from first to last. And again, then, I say it is an utterly unfounded charge that we dare not preach to sinners.

And then further, that I may clear up these points and leave the less rubbish for my brethren to wheel away, we have sometimes heard it said, but those who say it ought to go to school to read the first book of history, that we who hold Calvinistic views are the enemies of revivals. Why, sirs, in the history of the church, with but few exceptions, you could not find a revival at all that was not produced by the orthodox faith.

What was that great work which was done by Augustine, when the church suddenly woke up from the pestiferous and deadly sleep into which Pelagian doctrine had cast it? What was the Reformation itself but the waking up of men's minds to those old truths? However far modern Lutherans may have turned aside from their ancient doctrines, and I must confess some of them would not agree with what I now say, yet at any rate, Luther and Calvin had no dispute about Predestination.

Their views were identical, and Luther's, *On the Bondage of the Will*, is as strong a book upon the free grace of God as Calvin himself could have written. Hear that great thunderer while he cries in that book, "Let the Christian reader know then, that God foresees nothing in a contingent manner; but that He foresees, proposes, and acts from His eternal and unchangeable will. This is the thunder stroke which breaks and overturns Free Will."

Need I mention to you better names than Huss, Jerome of Prague, Farel, John Knox, Wickliffe, Wishart, and Bradford? Need I do more than say that these held the same views, and that in their day anything like an Arminian revival was utterly unheard of and undreamed of.

And then, to come to more modern times, there is the great exception, that wondrous revival under Mr. Wesley, in which the Wesleyan Methodists had so large a share. But permit me to say, that the strength of the doctrine of Wesleyan Methodism lay in its Calvinism. The great body of the Methodists disclaimed Palagianism, in whole and in part.

They contended for man's entire depravity, the necessity of the direct agency of the Holy Spirit, and that the first step in the change proceeds not from the sinner, but from God. They denied at the time that they were Pelagians. Does not the Methodist hold as firmly as ever we do, that man is saved by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost only? And are not many of Mr. Wesley's sermons full of that great truth, that the Holy Ghost is necessary to regeneration?

Whatever mistakes he may have made, he continually preached the absolute necessity of the new birth by the Holy Ghost, and there are some other points of exceedingly close agreement. For instance, even that of human inability. It matters not how some may abuse us, when we say man could not of himself repent or believe, yet the old Arminian standards said the same. True, they affirm that God has

given grace to every man, but they do not dispute the fact that apart from that grace, there was no ability in man to do that which was good in his own salvation.

And then, let me say, if you turn to the continent of America, how gross the falsehood, that Calvinistic doctrine is unfavorable to revivals. Look at that wondrous shaking under Jonathan Edwards and others which we might quote. Or turn to Scotland—what shall we say of M'Cheyne? What shall we say of those renowned Calvinists, Dr. Chalmers, Dr. Wardlaw, and before them Livingstone, Haldane, Erskine, and the like?

What shall we say of the men of their school, but that, while they held and preached unflinchingly the great truths which we would propound today, yet God owned their word and multitudes were saved? And if it were not perhaps too much like boasting of one's own work under God, I might say, personally I have never found the preaching of these doctrines lull this church to sleep, but ever while they have loved to maintain these truths, they have agonized for the souls of men, and the sixteen hundred or more whom I have myself baptized, upon profession of their faith, are living testimonies that these old truths in modern times have not lost their power to promote a revival of religion.

I have thus cleared away these allegations at the outset. I shall now need a few minutes more to say, with regard to the Calvinistic system, that there are some things to be said in its favor, to which of course I attach but little comparative importance, but they ought not to be ignored. It is a fact that the system of doctrines called the Calvinistic, is so *exceedingly simple*, and so readily learned, that as a system of divinity, it is more easily taught and more easily grasped by unlettered minds than any other.

The poor have the Gospel preached to them in a style which assists their memories and commends itself to their judgments. It is a system which was practically acknowledged on high philosophic grounds by such as Bacon, Leibnitz, and Newton, and yet it can charm the soul of a child and expand the intellect of a peasant.

And then, it has another virtue. I take it that the last is no mean one, but it has another—that when it is preached there is a something in it which *excites thought*. A man may hear sermons upon the other theory which shall glance over him as the swallow's wing gently sweeps the brook, but these old doctrines either make a man so angry that he goes home and cannot sleep for very hatred, or else they bring him down into lowliness of thought, feeling the immensity of the things which he has heard.

Either way, it excites and stirs him up not temporarily, but in a most lasting manner. These doctrines haunt him, he kicks against the pricks, and full often the Word forces a way into his soul. And I think this is no small thing for any doctrine to do in an age given to slumber and with human hearts so indifferent to the truth of God.

I know that many men have gained more good by being made angry under a sermon than by being pleased by it, for being angry, they have turned the truth over and over again, and at last, the truth has burned its way right into their hearts. They have played with edge-tools, but they have cut themselves at last.

It has this singular virtue also—it is so *coherent in all its parts*. You cannot vanquish a Calvinist. You may think you can, but you cannot. The stones of the great doctrines so fit into each other, that the more pressure there is applied to remove them, the more strenuously do they adhere. And you may mark, that you cannot receive one of these doctrines without believing all.

Hold for instance that man is utterly depraved, and you draw the inference then that certainly if God has such a creature to deal with salvation must come from God alone, and if from Him, the offended one, to an offending creature, then He has a right to give or withhold His mercy as He wills. You are thus forced upon election, and when you have gotten that you have all—the others must follow.

Some by putting the strain upon their judgments may manage to hold two or three points, and not the rest, but sound logic, I take it, requires a man to hold the whole or reject the whole. The doctrines stand like soldiers in a square, presenting on every side a line of defense which it is hazardous to attack, but easy to maintain.

And mark you, in these times when error is so rife and neology strives to be so rampant, it is no little thing to put into the hands of a young man a weapon which can slay his foe, which he can easily learn to handle, which he may grasp tenaciously, wield readily, and carry without fatigue. A weapon, I may add, which no rust can corrode and no blows can break, trenchant, and well-annealed—a true Jerusalem blade of a temper fit for deeds of renown. The coherency of the parts, though it is of course but a trifle in comparison with other things, is not unimportant.

And then, I add—but this is the point my brethren will take up—it has this excellency, that it is Scriptural, and that it is consistent with the experience of believers. Men generally grow more Calvinistic as they advance in years. Is not that a sign that the doctrine is right? As they are growing riper for heaven, as they are getting nearer to the rest that remains for the people of God, the soul longs to feed on the finest of the wheat, and abhors chaff and husks.

And then I add—and in so doing, I would refute a slander that has sometimes been urged—this glorious truth has this excellency, that it produces the holiest of men. We can look back through all our annals, and say, to those who oppose us, you can mention no names of men more holy, more devoted, more loving, more generous than those which we can mention. The saints of our calendar, though uncannonized by Rome, rank first in the Book of Life.

The name of Puritan needs only to be heard to constrain our reverence. Holiness had reached a height among them which is rare indeed, and well it might, for they loved and lived the truth. And if you say that our doctrine is damaging to human liberty, we point you to Oliver Cromwell and to his brave Ironsides, Calvinists to a man.

If you say, it leads to inaction, we point you to the Pilgrim Fathers and the wildernesses they subdued. We can put our finger upon every spot of land, the wide world o'er, and say, “Here was something done by a man who believed in God’s decrees, and inasmuch as he did this, it is proof it did not make him inactive, it did not lull him to sloth.”

The better way, however, of proving this point is for each of us who hold these truths, to be more prayerful, more watchful, more holy, more active than we have ever been before, and by so doing, we shall put to silence the gainsaying of foolish men. A living argument is an argument which tells upon every man—we cannot deny what we see and feel.

Be it ours, if aspersed and calumniated, to disprove it by a blameless life, and it shall yet come to pass, that our church and its sentiments too shall come forth “Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.”

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.