

“For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them; go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?” (Matt. 20:1-15.)

The Householder has put a fair question: Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Even so, the Great God of Heaven and Earth comforts His beloved children now and then by forcing an answer to this rhetorical question from them. They will soon wind up in the divinely comforting lap of Rom. 8:28; to-wit:

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Rom. 8:28)

We have been studying the work of our friend Charles Haddon Spurgeon and he hit the issue of Divine Sovereignty square on in a sermon delivered May 4, 1856, which we will use to expound the subject. My subject for today is Divine Sovereignty, and I am advancing my thoughts on the matter along five heads; to wit: 1.) That God, as a sovereign, gives Gifts Temporal unto His Elect; 2.) Gifts Saving unto His Elect; 3.) Gifts Honorable unto His Elect; 4.) Gifts Useful unto His Elect; and, 5.) Gifts Comfortable unto His Elect. Of all these we shall put the question:

“Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?” (Matt. 20:15)

There is no attribute of God more comforting to his children than the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe troubles, they believe that Sovereignty hath ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children of God ought more earnestly to contend than the dominion of their Master over all creation – the kinship of God over all the works of His own hands – the throne of God, and His right to sit upon that throne. On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldlings, no truth of which they have made such a football, as the great, stupendous, but yet most certain doctrine of the Sovereignty of the infinite Jehovah.

Sunday, November 11, 2012

Sermon Outline...page 2

Men will allow God to be everywhere except upon His throne. They will allow Him to be in His workshop to fashion worlds and to make stars. They will allow Him to be in His almshouse to dispense His alms and bestow His bounties. They will allow Him to sustain the earth to bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of Heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean; but when God ascends His throne, His creatures then gnash their teeth; and when we proclaim an enthroned God, and His right to do as He wills with His own, to dispose of His creatures as He thinks well, without consulting them in the matter, then it is that we are hissed at and execrated, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us, for God on His throne is not the God they love. They love Him anywhere better than they do when He sits with His scepter in His hand and His crown upon His head. But it is God upon the throne that we love to preach. It is God upon His throne whom we trust; and it is God upon His throne of whom we shall speak in this discourse. I shall dwell only, however, upon one portion of God's Sovereignty, and that is God's Sovereignty in the distribution of His gifts. In this respect I believe He has a right to do as He wills with His own, and that He exercises that right.

We must assume, before we commence our discourse, one thing certain, namely, that all blessings are gifts and that we have no claim to them by our own merit. This I think every considerate mind will grant. And this being admitted, we shall endeavor to show that He has a right, seeing they are His own to do what He wills with them – to withhold them wholly if He pleaseth – to distribute them all if He chooseth – to give to some and not to others – to give to none or to give to all, just as seemed good in His sight. *"Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"*

We shall divide God's gifts into five classes. First, we shall have gifts temporal; second gifts saving; third, gifts honourable; fourth, gifts useful; and fifth, gifts comfortable. Of all these we shall say, *"Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"* In the first place then, we notice Gifts Temporal. It is an indisputable fact that God hath not, in temporal matters, given to every man alike; that He hath not distributed to all His creatures the same amount of happiness or the same standing in creation. There is a difference. Mark what a difference there is in men personally (for we shall consider men chiefly); one that is born like Saul, a head and shoulders taller than the rest – another shall live all his life a Zaccheus – a man short of stature. How many do we find whose eyes have never rejoiced in the sunlight, whose ears have never listened to the charms of music, and whose lips have never been moved to sounds intelligible or harmonious. Walk through the earth and you will find men superior to yourself in vigour, health, and fashion, and others who are your inferiors in the very same respects. Why hath God given to one man beauty and to another none? To one all his senses, and to another but a portion? Why, in some, hath He quickened the sense of apprehension, while others are obliged to bear about them a dull and stubborn body? We reply, let men say what they will, that no answer can be given except this, *"Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."*

The old Pharisees asked, *"Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?"* We know that there was neither sin in parents nor child, that he was born blind, or that others have suffered similar distresses, but that God has done as it has pleased Him in the distribution of his earthly benefits, and thus hath said to the world, *"Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"* Mark, also, in the distribution of mental gifts, what a difference exists. All men are not like Socrates; there are but few Platos; we can discover but here and there a Bacon; we shall but every now and then converse with a Sir Isaac Newton.

Some have stupendous intellects; others have but shallow minds. You may educate the educatable, but can never make them great. They have not genius, and you cannot impart it. Anybody may see that there is an inherent difference in men from their very birth. Some, with a little education do surpass those who have been elaborately trained. Why is this? Because God hath asserted His sovereignty over the intellect as well as the body. God hath not made us all alike, but diversified His gifts. One man is as eloquent as another stammers if he but speaks three words of his mother tongue. What makes these various differences between man and man? We answer, we must refer it all to the Sovereignty of God, who does as He wills with His own.

Note, again, what are the differences of men's conditions in this world. In other ways you will observe in passing through life how sovereignty displays itself. To one man God giveth a long life and uniform health, so that he scarcely knows what it is to have a day's sickness, while another totters through the world feeling a thousand deaths in fearing one. One man, even in extreme old age, like Moses, has his eye undimmed; and though his hair is grey, he stands as firmly on his feet as when a young man in his father's house. Whence, again, we ask, is this difference? And the only adequate answer is, it is the effect of Jehovah's Sovereignty. You find, too, that some men are cut off in the prime of their life—the very midst of their days—while others live beyond their threescore years and ten.

We must I conceive, necessarily trace the cause of all these differences in life to the fact of God's Sovereignty. He is Ruler and King, and shall He not do as He wills with His own? O thou who art gifted with a noble frame, and comely body, boast not thy self therein, for thy gifts come from God. O glory not, for if thou gloriest thou becomest uncomely in a moment. The flowers boast not of their beauty, nor do the birds sing of their plumage. Be ye not vain ye daughters of beauty, be not exalted ye sons of comeliness; and O ye men of might and intellect, remember, that all you have is bestowed by a Sovereign Lord; He did create; He can destroy. There are not many steps between the mightiest intellect and the helpless idiot—deep thought verges on insanity. Thy brain may at any moment, be smitten, and thou be doomed henceforth to live a madman. Boast not thyself of all that thou knowest, for even the little knowledge thou hast has been given thee.

Therefore, I say, exalt not thyself above measure, but use for God what God has given thee, for it is a royal gift, and thou shouldst not lay it aside. But if the Sovereign Lord has given thee one talent, and no more, lay it not up in a napkin, but use it well, and then it may be that He will give thee more. Bless God that thou hast more than others, and thank Him also that He has given thee less than others, for thou hast less to carry on thy shoulders; and the lighter thy burden the less cause wilt thou have to groan as thou travellest on towards the better land. Bless God then if thou possessest less than thy fellows, and see His goodness in withholding as well as in giving. So far most men probably have gone with us; but when we come to the second point, Gifts Saving, there will be a large number who will go from us because they cannot receive our doctrine. When we apply this truth regarding the Divine Sovereignty to man's salvation, then we find men standing up to defend their poor fellow creatures whom they conceive to be injured by God's predestination. But I never heard of men standing up for the Devil; and yet I think if any of God's creatures have a right to complain of His dealings it is the fallen angels. For their sin they were hurled from Heaven at once, and we read not that any message of mercy was ever sent to them.

Sunday, November 11, 2012

Sermon Outline...page 4

Once cast out their doom was sealed; while men were respited, redemption sent into their world, and a large number of them chosen to eternal life. Why not quarrel with Sovereignty in the one case as well as the other? We say that God has elected a people out of the human race, and His right to do this is denied. But I ask, why not equally dispute the fact that God has chosen men and not fallen angels, or His justice in such choice? If salvation be a matter of right, surely the angels had as much claim to mercy as men. Did they sin more? We think not. Admire then, Divine Sovereignty and love, that whereas the angels were broken into shivers, God hath raised an elect number of the race of men to set them among princes, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

So now, also, why is it that God hath sent His Word to us while a multitude of people are still without His Word? Why are we privileged to listen to the voice of the minister of Jesus, while other nations have not been visited thereby? Could not God have caused the light to shine in the darkness there as well as here? Could not He, if He had pleased, have sent forth messengers swift as the light to proclaim His gospel over the whole earth? He could have done it if He would. Since we know that He has not done it, we bow in meekness, confessing His right to do as He wills with His own. But let me drive the doctrine home once more.

Behold how God displays His Sovereignty in this fact, that out of the same congregation, those who hear the same minister, and listen to the same truth, the one is taken and the other left. Take a brother and sister, they have been nursed on the same knee, rocked in the same cradle, educated the same, hear the same minister—why is one to be saved and the other left? Far be it from us to weave any excuse for man who is damned; we know of none; also, far be it from us to take glory from God. We assert that God makes the difference – that the saved sister will not have to thank herself but her God. Take two men given to drunkenness. Some word spoken shall pierce one of them through, but the other shall sit unmoved. What is the reason? You must come back to the question, who made one accept and the other reject? You must admit in your conscience that it is God alone to whom this power belongs.

Those who dislike this doctrine are up in arms against us; saying, how can God justly make such a difference between the members of His family? Suppose a father should give one of his children all his favors, and consign the others to misery—should we not say that he is a very unkind and cruel father? I answer, yes. But you have NOT a father to deal with, but a judge. You say all men are God's children; I demand of you to prove that. I never read it in my Bible. I dare not say, "***Our father which art in heaven***" till I am regenerated. I cannot rejoice in the fatherhood of God towards me till I know that I am one with Him, and a joint heir with Christ. It is King and subject with unregenerate man; and not even so high a relation as that, for there is a claim between subject and King.

A creature—a sinful creature, can have no claim upon God; for that would be to make salvation for works and not of grace. If men merit salvation, then to save them is only the payment of a debt, and He gives them nothing more than He ought to give them. But we assert that grace must be distinguished if it be grace at all. Scripture saith grace is a spiritual gift of the saints and the saints only. Grace is something not which I improve, but which improves me, employs me, works on me; and let people talk as they will about universal grace, it is all nonsense, there is no such thing, nor can there be. "*The sovereign will of God alone Creates us heirs of grace; Born in the image of His son, A new-created race.*" I love you. Amen.