

“IT PLEASED GOD”
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“It pleased God.”
Galatians 1:15.

WE will read the whole verse from which our text is taken—“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by His Grace.” You will perceive, I think, in these words, that the Divine plan of salvation is very clearly laid down. It begins, you see, in the will and pleasure of God—“when it pleased God.” The foundation of salvation is not laid in the will of man. “It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.” It does not begin with man’s obedience and then proceed onward to the purpose of God—but here is its commencement, here the fountainhead from which the Living Waters flow—“It pleased God.” Next to the Sovereign will and good pleasure of God comes the act of separation, commonly known by the name of *election*. This act is said, in the text, to take place even in the mother’s womb, by which we are taught that it took place before our birth when as yet we could have done nothing whatever to win it or to merit it! God separated us from the earliest part and time of our being! And, indeed, long before that, when as yet the mountains and hills were not piled and the oceans were not formed by His creative power, He had, in His eternal purpose, set us apart for Himself. Then, after this act of separation came the effectual calling—“and called me by His Grace.” The calling does not cause the election—the election, springing from the Divine purpose, causes the calling! The calling comes as a *consequence* of the Divine purpose and the Divine separation, and you will note how the obedience follows the calling. The Apostle does not begin to be a preacher, according to the purpose and will of God, until first of all the Spirit of God has called him out of his state of nature into a state of Grace. So the whole process runs thus—first the sacred, Sovereign purpose of God, then the distinct and definite election or separation, then the effectual and irresistible calling and then afterwards, the obedience unto life, and the sweet fruits of the Spirit which spring from there. They err, not knowing the Scriptures, who put any of these processes before the others, out of the Scriptural order. They who put man’s will first, know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm, for it is not of the will of man, says the Apostle in the most peremptory and positive manner—the salvation of any soul is a display of the eternal purpose and Sovereign will of God!

And, Beloved, by this test may we know the certainty of our election, if we have obediently yielded to the call of God. If the Divine calling has produced in us the fruit of obedience, then we may assuredly believe that we were separated unto God before time began, and that this separation was according to the eternal purpose and will of God! Like golden links of a chain, any one of these will draw on the others. Am I justified? Then I was called by God’s Grace. Am I called? Then I was predestined to be called and, on the other hand, if I was predestined, then I shall be called, being called, I shall be justified, being justified, I shall be glorified! I think I have used this illustration before. On that bank of the great river of time is the massive pillar of Divine Foreknowledge and Predestination, and on the other side of the river is the equally massive pillar of Glorification. How are we to bridge these two? Both of these pillars are in the mists and clouds of eternity, but these stupendous chains stretch right across the intervening chasm—“Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. 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.” If I want to know what my relation is to Predestination way over yonder in the past, I think of my calling, for I have been called, and so I am linked with the past! And if I want to know whether I shall be glorified, I know that, also, by the fact that I am today justified. So, as I stand here, I am linked with both the past and the future—

linked so perfectly that neither time, nor life, nor death, nor Hell shall ever be able to break the bonds that bind me equally to the Predestination in the past and the Glorification in the future! You see then, dear Friends, that from this verse, as a whole, we learn the Divine plan of salvation! And by it we may judge as to our own interest in it. But now, leaving the rest of the verse, let us consider the three words that form our text. “It pleased God.”

I. First, we have here THE FOUNDATION OF DIVINE GRACE.

The reason why Paul was saved was this—“It pleased God.” And the only reason why you or I will ever enter Heaven must be this—“It pleased God.” You can clearly perceive, in the Apostle’s case, that *there could be no other reason*. It could not be because of any merit of his that he was saved, for what was he? A blasphemer, he says, and a persecutor—so thirsty for the blood of saints that even in his younger days, he guarded the clothes of the murderers who stoned Stephen. Afterwards, he hated men and women, and committed them to prison, and compelled them to blaspheme, “and being”—to use his own expressive words—“exceedingly mad against them,” he “persecuted them even unto strange cities.” There could be nothing in that persecuting Jew, whose very breath was full of threats, and whose heart was like a furnace of fury against the saints—there could be nothing in him which could be a reason why God should save him! If saved, it must be because “it pleased God.”

And, most decidedly, *there was no co-action of the Apostle’s will tending to his conversion*. You remember the scene. I see him there, upon his proud charger, riding onward toward Damascus. He has in his possession letters which he treasures more than gold, for they give him the permission of the high priest to seize the saints at Damascus and carry them bound to Jerusalem. He rides on proudly, yonder is the city glittering in the sun, and he is meditating upon the deeds of blood and fury he will perform there—who can stop that man? But at midday God arrests him! “A light from Heaven, above the brightness of the sun,” shines upon him. The men that are with him see the light, but they know not what it is. He falls to the ground and a Voice cries to him from Heaven, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” He enquires, “Who are You, Lord?” The answer comes, “I am Jesus whom you persecute: it is hard for you to kick against the pricks,” like an ox kicking against the sharp goad. He rises blind, yet seeing more than he ever saw before! He goes into Damascus, not to hunt Christ’s disciples, but to learn from Ananias the Good News that Christ’s pardon may be given even to him! In three days’ time, he is converted, baptized into the name of Christ, comes forth to tell the little Church at Damascus what God has done for his soul and in the synagogues preaches that Christ is the Son of God! What reason can there be why this persecutor of the saints should have been saved but this—“It pleased God”?

Do not imagine that this is an exceptional experience. On the contrary, such cases occur every day! Many come into this place of worship as skeptics and go out sincere Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Some have I known who have come here only to laugh and scoff, but they have remained to pray. No thought was further from their mind than that they should ever become the followers of the Lamb—but the Divine power, which was not necessarily connected with the preacher—carried the Word into their hearts, arrested them on the spot, changed their natures, made them new creatures in Christ Jesus and sent them on their way rejoicing in their newly-found Savior! And I am sure that all such persons will bear their willing witness that they can see no reason but for the Grace which was bestowed on them but this—“It pleased God.”

There are some whose lives have proved how sinful their nature was, for their sin has taken the form of open and gross vice. They are like that woman in the city who was a sinner. And as they resemble her in their sin, I trust that they will also resemble her in their love and be ready to wash the Savior’s feet with their tears, and wipe them with the hairs of their heads! There may be some who are now truly converted, who have sinned as deeply as even Saul of Tarsus did. Then let them acknowledge, as he did, that their conversion was due to the undeserved favor of God! John Bradford’s saying has often been quoted, but it will bear repeating again and again. He lived in a house past which people used to be taken on the way to Tyburn to be hanged. And in those cruel times there were many poor wretches thus hurried out of existence—some of them for crimes which are far more leniently punished now. As the honest preacher saw them pass his house, he said, “There goes John Bradford but for the Grace of God.” He felt that he was, by nature, capable of doing just what they had done, and that only Divine Grace had made him to differ from them. And when I hear or read of some atrocious sinner, I say to myself, “That man is what I might have been if God had left me to take my own course, for by nature I am no better than he is. I might not have fallen into his special form of sin, for the bent of my constitution may not be in that particular direction, but I might have committed some other sin which would have been quite as bad as

his.” One vessel may leak at the bow and another may leak at the stern, but it does not much matter where the leak is—in either case the vessel will sink.

And those of you who have been converted as the result of a regular attendance at the House of Prayer, when you come to remember how many others who are still unregenerate, who have been sitting side by side with you, you can only say, as you think who caused you to differ from them—“It pleased God.” How often one is taken and the other left! Two women come up to worship at the same time and sit under the sound of the same message—one retires impenitent, the other’s heart is broken. As we note the contrast between them, we can only stand and, holding up our hands in wonder, say, “What is the reason for this difference, Lord? There can be none except that so it seemed good in Your sight.”

I know that there are many who the moment they hear this Doctrine proclaimed, begin to quibble at it and quarrel with it. They do not think that God should thus do as He pleases in the work of salvation! But let me tell them that it is because they care not for God that they feel as they do in this matter. Opposition to Divine Sovereignty is essentially atheism. Men have no objection to a god who is really no God! I mean by this, a god who shall be the subject of their fancy, who shall be a lackey to their will, who shall be under their control—they have no objection to such a being as that! But a God who speaks and it is done! Who commands and it stands fast! A God who has no respect for their persons, but does as He wills among the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower world—such a God as this they cannot endure! And yet, is it not essential to the very Being of God that He should be absolute and supreme? Certainly, to the Scriptural conception of God, Sovereignty is an absolute necessity!

Let me say, then, to those who quarrel with the Lord for doing as He pleases in the conversion of sinners that first, He has the right to do so through His own inherent Sovereignty. He made men and He has the right to do with them just as He pleases. “Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?” If any man says to God, “Why have You made me thus?” The only answer is, “No, but, O man, who are you that replies against God?” Dread, mysterious and profound as the Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty is, yet it certainly must be acknowledged that He who is God has an absolute and inherent right to do as He wills with all those whom He has, Himself, created—

***“Mortals, be dumb! What creature dares
Dispute His awful will?
Ask no account of His affairs,
But tremble and be still.”***

But some of your animosity to this Doctrine may perhaps be melted if you recollect that God’s Sovereignty is never displayed apart from His righteousness! To entrust a man with absolute power would be most dangerous, for he is fallible. But to entrust absolute Holiness and Righteousness with absolute power is the safest way of governing the whole universe. God cannot do an unrighteous thing, therefore let Him do whatever He wills! Who would wish to limit One whose acts must be from the very Character that is essential to His Being, just and true? No man who is lost will ever be able to blame God’s Sovereignty for it. The man that perishes shall justly perish because of his sins. And in Hell, this shall be to him the pang of pangs—that he cannot reproach God, but that his damnation lies at his own door since he incensed the Justice of God, which must punish him for his sin. And in like manner, the saints in Heaven, though saved as the result of Divine Sovereignty, may boast that that Sovereignty never violated Justice, for, before God would bring one of them to Heaven, He gave His Son to bleed and die that the demands of Justice might be fully met before the sinner was saved!

I will venture to go even further than this and to say that the Sovereignty of God is never exercised apart from His mercy and His benevolence. We know that “God is Love,” and who would limit love? As “God is Love,” let Him be absolute, for He will assuredly do that which, on the whole, is the best for all His creatures, as well as most for the Glory of His own perfect Character. Then, as this is the case, how ought we to delight to think that God is free and bound by no law but His own will, which is the fountain of all law, and constrained by no necessity but the carrying out of His own eternal purpose of love and mercy!

I feel sure that much of the opposition to the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty springs from a misunderstanding of God. I know that some misrepresent this Truth of God as though God were an almighty tyrant, but Scripture gives no warrant for such a caricature. And I again enter, as I have already often entered, my earnest protest against such an insult

to my God! When any man perishes, lay not his blood at God’s door. If any man is lost, his ruin is caused by himself and not to be laid to the charge of our ever-gracious God. Yet remember, at the same time, that if any are *saved*, the glory of their salvation must be ascribed to God! I am often asked, “How do you make those two statements consistent with one another?” But that question does not perplex me, for I do not see how they are inconsistent with each other. Someone says, “But I do not understand this Doctrine.” Perhaps not, but remember that while we are bound to tell you the Truths of God, we are not bound to give you the power to understand them. And besides, this is not a subject for understanding—it is a matter for *believing* because it is revealed in the Word of God! It is one of the axioms of theology that if a man is lost, God must not be blamed for it. And it is also an axiom of theology that if a man is saved, God must have all the glory of it. That “salvation is of the Lord” is as plainly revealed in Scripture as anything that we see in nature! And that destruction is of man, is equally plain, both from the nature of things and from the teaching of Scripture! Hold the two Truths of God—do not try to run to the extreme, either of the Hyper-Calvinist or of the ultra-Arminian. There is some truth in Calvinism and some in Arminianism, and he who would hold the whole Truth of God must neither be cramped by the one system nor bound by the other, but take Truth wherever he can find it in the Bible—and leave it to the God of Truth to show him, when he gets into another world, anything that is beyond his comprehension now. At all events, I have laid this down very plainly and I think every converted person must agree with it, that if any of us are saved, the explanation of our conversion is the same as the explanation of Paul’s—“It pleased God.”

II. Now, secondly, I shall use the text in another way. We have, here, GROUNDS FOR HUMILITY.

Paul was a preacher, but why was he a preacher? Because “it pleased God.” You are a deacon, or you are an elder, or you are a minister—is there any ground for boasting here? Who made you what you are? “It pleased God.” That is the only possible explanation! Had God willed it, you might have been sweeping a crossing. You might have been at this moment in some tavern groveling in drunkenness. You might have been a miserable wretch in prison. Any honorable office that you hold in the Church is the result, not of your meriting it, but of God’s graciousness towards you in having put you where you are. The angels in Heaven are humble because they remember who made them and kept them angels, for they would have been devils in Hell if God had not preserved them in their first estate. In like manner, office in the Church is a ground for humility, not for boasting! If we are thus favored, it is because “it pleased God.” The Apostle was also a great laborer. He could truthfully say, “I labored more abundantly than they all.” What then? Was that a reason for boasting? By no means, for he added, “yet not I, but the Grace of God which was with me.” Are you passionately zealous for the conversion of men? Do you labor both by night and by day to propagate the Truth of God and to bring sinners to the Cross of Christ? Then continue in your noble employment, but do not plume yourself upon this as though you deserved some praise from God for it! Remember that every virtue you possess, everything about you that is pure, and lovely, and of good report, has come to you because “it pleased God.”

Paul was, moreover, a most successful preacher. Thousands acknowledged him as their spiritual father. Through a great part of Asia, through Greece and Italy, probably onward through Spain and, perhaps, even in Great Britain, there were found traces of the victorious march of this great soldier of the Cross! Wherever he went, he confounded the reasoner, put to silence the boaster, made the heathen feel that one had come among them who would hurl their idols from their pedestals! He came like John the Baptist, casting down the high hills and filling up the valleys to make straight a highway for his God, yet I never find him boasting of all this, but, laying all his honors at Jehovah’s feet, he said, “By the Grace of God I am what I am,” or, in the words of our text, “It pleased God.”

There are some people in the world who are constantly warning some of us against pride and we are duly thankful for their warnings—they are, no doubt, greatly needed—and it is very generous on their part to bestow them upon us, especially as some of them sorely need the warnings themselves! I remember some time ago receiving a warning against pride from a Christian woman who told me that she would pray that I might be kept humble. I thanked her and told her that I should do the same for her, whereupon she said that she did not require it, for she had no temptation to be proud, she had nothing to be proud of and, therefore, she was quite sure she would never be proud. Then I told her gently but decidedly, that I thought she was already proud, or else she would not have uttered such a speech as that! I added that God had His own way of keeping humble those whom He calls to stand in conspicuous places—and His usual way was by chastening them in private when their people knew nothing about it. And I also said that it was quite as easy to be proud and to do nothing as to be proud and to do much. Oh, dear, the lay ministers that I have seen who seemed to have had

their backs made of cast iron—idle preachers who would scarcely bring one soul to Christ in a century! Yet they were so dignified and maintained “the dignity of their profession” with such vigor that there seemed to be every reason to expect that they would die of dignity one of these days, like the Spanish monarch who perished because his chair was too near the fire! It was not according to court etiquette that he should move it, himself, or that he should ring the bell for anybody else to do it and, therefore, he sat still till he brought on a fever by which he afterwards lost his life. If we have nothing, we should be humble because of our poverty—and if we have much, we ought to be humble because we are so much in debt to God! A man who owes £10,000 has no cause to crow over his fellow debtor who owes far less than he does. He would be foolish if he said, “I have more to be proud of than you have, for I owe £10,000, but you only owe £100.” Why, that would be the reason why he should hang his head down still lower! And so should it be with the man whom God greatly honors. This should be the reason for keeping himself very humble because he knows—and God will make him remember it, too—that if there is any difference between him and other men, it is only because “it pleased God.”

III. Now I am going to use our text in a third way as A REASON FOR COURAGE.

I should like to see more of this virtue than we see nowadays. We live in an age which needs to have a large infusion of the heroic martyr spirit which enabled our forefathers to go boldly to the block or to the stake for Christ’s sake. We may well blush as we see how many professors are ashamed of the religion which they are supposed to have received. If they are called to do some work for Christ, how often do they stop and parley, and question, and hesitate and, at last, when they have summoned up enough courage to come forward, it is only with an apology upon their lips for daring to do something for Jesus! I heard one say of a certain preacher, “I greatly admired him, for he commenced his sermon by saying, ‘Permit a young man to address you.’” I said, “That is not the way God’s servants ought to talk. If God has given them anything to say for Him, they have not to ask anybody’s permission to say it, nor should they apologize to anybody for saying it as God enables them to say it.” Apologies are out of place in the pulpit! The man whom God sends to speak for Him is God’s ambassador—he has no right to apologize for delivering his Lord’s message! He who professes to be sent of God either is or is not God’s ambassador. If he is not, let him at once take himself off the pulpit! If he is his Master’s accredited representative, he needs no excuse and should make none.

I think it will make us courageous and help us to do exploits for God if we can feel that we do our work because it pleases God. I have never approved of the warfare of the old Commonwealth days. I do not believe that, after all, England gained much by fighting. Under Cromwell, she gained liberty for a time, but it was soon lost again, as liberty always must be if it is only won by the sword. But mark you, I must say this—that which made Cromwell so mighty was the firm conviction that “it pleased God” to make him the leader of the Ironsides! And that which made his soldiers victorious on so many hard-fought fields was that they also felt that “it pleased God.” To them it was not a question as to whether it was lawful to fight—they had made up their minds about that matter. Taking out their little soldiers’ Bible, they read some fiery Psalm. And having read it, their blood boiled and, as the old Crusaders cried, “Deus vult,”—“God wills it”—they shouted their battle cry, “The Lord of Hosts,” and dashed into the fight! And they were victorious because they felt that “it pleased God.” And now, today, battling inch by inch, and contending hour by hour against the leaguered hosts of sin, you and I can never be mighty if we only stand in our own strength and question our call to be soldiers of the Cross! But if we felt that each blow that we strike pleases God—and if in every advance we make into the enemy’s territory we can say, “It pleases God,” and if our war cry as we dash to the conflict is, “It pleases God”—then we shall feel the earth shake again beneath the tramp of the heroes’ feet and we shall see the Church of God as she should be—“fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.” Why, even the power of the Crusaders arose from the fact that they thought the Crusaders “pleased God.”

Brothers and Sisters, we must get back this old enthusiasm if ever our land is to be swept clear of Popery! If ever Europe is to become free with God’s freedom, if ever Africa is to have the light of the Truth of God driving away her dense darkness, if ever Asia, America and Australia are to be won for the Lord Jesus Christ, they whom God has called to the conflict must fight because it pleases God! Surely none of you who profess to be Christ’s will be content unless you do something to help toward this great end because it pleases God! As you come to the Communion Table, realize that God is within you, making your body His Throne and enabling you to carry out your great life purpose of glorifying God in your body and in your spirit which are His. Do all that you do because it pleases God! If His Spirit shall help you to feel and act thus, blessed shall it be both for the Church and for the world!

My time has gone, yet I am not nearly done, so I must give you the rest in brief. Here is AN ARGUMENT FOR PATIENCE. “It pleased God.” The cup is bitter, the knife is sharp, the bit is hard, the bereavement is sore, but as it pleases God, we kiss the rod and patiently bow to our Father’s will.

Then, next, we have here A SUGGESTION FOR HOPE. If it pleased God to save Saul of Tarsus—and if the only reason why He should save him was because He pleased to do it—then why cannot He save you? Have you been a drunkard? Have you dived into the foul slough of lust? Have you defiled yourself by dishonesty? Still, if it pleases God, He can save you! Now I know it pleases God to save everyone who trusts in Christ. Then if you trust in Christ, you are saved! Awake, O man! Awake, O woman and let this be your language—“I am the chief of sinners, but it pleased God to save another who called himself the chief of sinners, so—

*‘I’ll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter pardon gives.
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives.’”*

If you will thus cast yourself upon the Sovereign mercy of God in Christ Jesus, it will please God and you shall be saved!

And then, last of all, our text is A MOTIVE FOR HOLINESS AND ZEAL. If “it pleased God” and, therefore, He saved me when there was no reason in me why I should be saved. If He loved me when I was filthy—now that I have been washed I would be filthy no more—and in holiness I will seek to show my gratitude to Him! If He loved me when I was dead, now that He has made me alive I will not be lifeless and cold, but full of zeal and fire for Him! I do not know how to press this last point unless I get back to the one I was urging upon you just now. If you feel that God has willed that you should be saved and that God wills that you should be the means of saving others—that God wills that you should become a spiritual father or mother in Israel—then I know that your heart will boil over with holy zeal and that you will go forth as a conqueror who has the certainty of victory already in his heart! God shall be with you and you shall go on conquering and to conquer! The Lord add His blessing for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *GALATIANS 1:11-24; 2.*

Galatians 1:11-17. *But I make known to you, brethren, that the Gospel that was preached by me is not after man. For I neither received it from man, neither was I taught it but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it: and profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in my own nation, being more exceedingly jealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by His Grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them who were Apostles before me; but I went up to Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.* Paul was intensely desirous that the Galatian Christians should understand that he was no mere repeater of other men’s doctrines, but that what he taught he had received directly from God by supernatural Revelation. They knew that he had been a most determined opposer of the Gospel. Indeed, he was a man of such great determination that whatever he did, he did with all his might! So, no sooner did God reveal Christ to him, so that he knew Jesus to be the Messiah, than he earnestly sought to learn yet more of the Truth of God, not by going up to the Apostles at Jerusalem, to borrow from them, but by getting alone in the waste places of Arabia! There, by thought and meditation upon the Word, and by communion with God, to learn yet more concerning the Divine mysteries.

18-24. *Then after three years I went to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But others of the Apostles I saw none, save James, the Lord’s brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; and was unknown by face unto the Churches of Judaea which were in Christ: but they had heard only that he which persecuted us in times past now preaches the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me.*

Galatians 2:1, 2. *Then fourteen years later, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation*—he was sent by the Church at Antioch, but the Church there was guided by Revelation, so that Paul is correct in saying, “I went up by revelation” —

2-4. *And communicated unto them that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. Yet not even Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privately to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.* There were always some among the Jewish converts who insisted that the Gentiles should come under the seal of the Old Covenant if they were to be partakers of the blessings of the Gospel. But to this Paul would never consent—

5. *To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you.* It is impossible for us to estimate how much we owe to the Apostle Paul! Of all who have ever lived, we who are Gentiles owe more to him than to any other man! See how he fought our battles for us. When our Jewish brethren would have excluded us because we were not of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, how bravely did he contend that if we were partakers of the same faith—Abraham is the father of all the faithful, that he was loved of God and the Covenant was made with him, not in circumcision, but before he was circumcised—then we are partakers of that Covenant!

6-10. *But of these who seemed to be something, (whatever they were, it makes no matter to me: God shows personal favoritism to no man) for they who seemed to be something added nothing to me: but on the contrary, when they saw that the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the Gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter, (for He worked effectually in Peter to the Apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty to me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the Grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen and they unto the circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.* [See Sermon #99, Volume 2—THE DUTY OF REMEMBERING THE POOR—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] One of the first things he did, when there was a famine in Judaea, was to make a collection for the saints in other places, that he might aid the poor Christians.

11-14. *But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed. For before certain men came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas, also, was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If you, being a Jew, live after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compel you the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?* It must have been very painful to Paul’s feelings to come into conflict with Peter, whom he greatly esteemed. But for the Truth’s sake, he knew no persons, and he had to withstand even a beloved Brother when he saw that he was likely to pervert the simplicity of the Gospel and rob the Gentiles of their Christian liberty! For this we ought to be very grateful to our gracious God who raised up this brave champion, this beloved Apostle of the Gentiles!

15, 16. *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the Law: for by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.* No mere man can keep the Law of God—no mere man has ever done so. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God! And as an absolutely perfect obedience is demanded by the Law, which knows nothing of mercy, we fly from the Law to obtain salvation by the Grace of God in Christ Jesus!

17. *But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid!* That would not be caused by the Gospel, but by our disregard of it.

18, 19. *For I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the Law am dead to the Law, that I might live unto God.* “Through my sight of the Law, which I have seen to be so stern that all it can do is to condemn me for my shortcomings, I am driven away from it and led to come and live in Christ Jesus under the rule of Grace—not under the law of Moses.”

20, 21. *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the Grace of God: for if righteousness comes by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain.* [See Sermons #781, Volume 13—CHRISTOS ET EGO; #2370, Volume 40—“CHRIST FIRST, ME LAST—NOTHING BETWEEN BUT LOVE”; #1534, Volume 26—SALVATION BY WORKS, A CRIMINAL DOCTRINE—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

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