

THE CHURCH OF GOD AND THE TRUTH OF GOD

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A SERMON
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“The house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”
1 Timothy 3:15.

[This sermon was preached during “The Rivulet Controversy,” of which an account is given in Volume II of C. H. Spurgeon’s Autobiography, in the chapter entitled, “The ‘Down-Grade’ Controversy Foreshadowed.” It was a very long discourse—nearly one-third longer than the twelve pages here given—and although it was delivered more than half a century ago, its message is as timely, now, as it was then.]

WE live in very singular times just now. The professing church has been flattering itself that, notwithstanding all our divisions with regard to doctrine, we are all right in the main. A false and spurious liberality has been growing up which has covered us all, so that we have dreamed that all who bear the name of ministers are, indeed, God’s servants—that all who occupy pulpits, of whatever denomination they might be, are entitled to our respect as being stewards of the mystery of Christ. But, lately, the weeds upon the surface of the stagnant pool have been a little stirred and we have been enabled to look down into the depths. This is a day of strife—a day of division—a time of war and fighting between professing Christians! God be thanked for it! Far better that it should be so than that the false calm shall any longer exert its fatal spell over us! The day is come when we must know who are for the Lord and for His truth—and who are on the side of error! The time is now come when some men, once distinguished among us for the attractiveness of their preaching, must be ranked among those who are opponents of the truth of God! We did once imagine, in the blindness of our charity, that we all preached one gospel, but now the enmity of the carnal mind has appeared. Carnal churches have chosen to themselves cruel teachers who have begun to teach strange doctrines which they mystify by their words, garnish with their eloquence and try to support by deceptive logic apart from simple Scripture.

The time is coming when it shall be openly proved who is on the Lord’s side. At this very hour separations are taking place everywhere. We weep for the cause—we do not weep for the effect. We weep that there should have been such heresies growing up in the midst of the church, but we do not weep when we see those heresies brought out to the day and slaughtered with what some think remorseless cruelty, but what we believe unflinching justice! We desire that God may spare to us the men who are still faithful and who will never cease, at the risk of being called bigots, to drag out to the light those who lie against God’s gospel—to bring them publicly before the world as opponents of the faith which is in Christ Jesus, whereby we hope to be saved. May God give us courage to stand up for the right! It is with this view that I have selected my text—to urge upon you, at this time, the great duty of standing fast at your post for the truth of God and the equally great duty of endeavoring, wherever you are, to maintain them right. Be you not carried about by every wind of doctrine. Give not heed to every schismatic who would lead you aside. Hold fast by the oracles of the Most High! You know what you have been taught and where-unto you have been called—and you know the foundation whereupon you have been built up. “Be you steadfast, unmovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord.” Whatever may happen to denominations, whatever divisions we may live to see, let it still be known that for God and His truth we are prepared to hold our ground at any expense or at any risk!

Now, first, we have *two things mentioned in one text*. And then, secondly, we have *the relationship which exists between them*. The two things are “*the church of the living God*” and “*the truth*.” The

relationship that exists between them is that “*the church of the living God*” is “*the pillar and ground of the truth.*”

I. First, then, we have TWO THINGS MENTIONED IN OUR TEXT.

The first is “*the church of the living God.*” Note well its *unity*. It is not said *the churches* of the living God, but *the church*. God has not two churches, He has but one. We may be called by different names and, according to Scripture, we are to be separated, like sheep, into different folds, yet there is still only one flock and one Shepherd. The independence of Scripture is still to be practiced. Each church is to be separate, having its bishop and its elders governing in the fear of the Lord, without respect of persons and without being disturbed by the opinion of any other church. But though we are separate churches as to our organization, we are really but one church, under one head, the Lord and bishop of our souls. There are not two churches any more than there are two Gods. There are not two Lords. There, are not two faiths. There are not two baptisms—there is one Lord, there is one faith, there is one baptism—and there is one church holding the one Lord, the one faith and the one baptism. If any hold not the truth of God, we cannot allow that they belong to “the church of the living God.” It is not for us to adopt the meaningless phraseology of the present day and say that men may be of the church, and yet differ from the truth of God. No, by no means! They are either initiated by the Holy Spirit into God’s church, or they are not; if they are not one with Christ; if they are not washed with Jesus’ blood; if they have not received His Spirit; if they have not been humbled to know and believe Him to be King in the midst of His own assemblies; if they have not put their trust under the shadow of His wings—whatever they may profess or believe, or however they may stand before men—if they do not so stand before God, they do not belong to the one church! And not belonging to that, they cannot belong to Christ! Though our Lord Jesus Christ has only one church, a part of its members, I believe, may be found in every denomination—but they owe not their standing to the fellowship they hold with denominations. There is one great denomination, “the church of the living God,” to which every true believer must belong. Some persons allege that the children of God may act on different principles, may believe different doctrines, and may be the recipients of different kinds of divine grace and that their apprehensions of God and of Christ may be thoroughly diverse—we hold no such opinion! If there is not the vital principle in a man’s heart, teaching him the truth of God as it is in Jesus, he does not belong to the one “church of the living God.” Thus, there is but one church, however divided it may be.

You will further observe that the church is called “*the house of God.*” Why? Because, first, *it had God for its architect*—it is not built after man’s plan. The tabernacle in the wilderness was framed after the pattern which God gave to Moses in the mount and, verily, Christ’s church is built after God’s own model—it is not molded according to man’s idea, it is not shaped according to his option—the will of God and His will, alone, has been followed in the construction of His own house, which is the church. God has ordained every stone and He has marked where each is to be placed. He planned her walls and her pillars, her foundations and her pinnacles. He has not left anything in the church to the mere impulse of man, but He has comprised every tittle in His own statutes and decrees. He has not given a vague idea for man to develop, but He has made known His mind in His own words. There is no designer of the spiritual temple save the infinite Jehovah! There is no architect of the house of the living God save the living God Himself.

And not only is He its architect, but He is its *Builder*. He has not left it for us to dig the stones out of the quarry, or to lay them one upon another. He does the whole work Himself. The foundation upon which each living stone is based has been laid of old, Jesus Christ, Himself, being the chief cornerstone. In His obedience and His sacrifice no creature rendered help. Nor less, as “the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy temple,” is every portion of the structure the work of God and not the work of man. To the sacred Trinity we look for the gradual construction of the edifice. In Christ we “are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.” There is never a child of God brought into the church by man’s contrivance or man’s persuasions—each precious stone is brought there by God, and by God alone! No child of God is sanctified by man—he is sanctified by the living God. No heir of heaven is fitted into the church by man—God alone puts him into his proper position. Men at times try

to build with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble upon the one foundation, but God consumes them all, for He will have no building in His church but His own—

*“The vast materials all He forms,
Nor power nor love He spares.
He guards the building from all harms,
And all the glory bears.”*

I have often remarked that when men have been adopting a patent process of building up a church by the revivalist sermons of some crazy brained preachers, after the first excitement has subsided that church has become sickly and fallen into a very sad and grievous state. Those revivalists have often been like locusts in our churches, devouring every green thing! And the revivals they have stimulated have well near brought us to destruction! God will not have men usurp His prerogative in the building! And though they may with their own hands speedily pile up a mighty structure, yet, like the baseless fabric of a vision, it soon disappears and is gone. In His building, He allows no man to use tool or hammer—He will use men *for* trowels and hammers, but He will not allow them to make use of themselves or of others. His own hands shall perform it!

Again, it is God’s house because *God resides there*. Wherever the church is, there is God. God is pleased, in His mercy and condescension, to stoop from the highest heavens to dwell in this lower heaven—the heaven of His church. It is here, among the household of faith, He deigns—let me say it with sacred reverence—to unbend Himself and hold familiar fellowship with those round about Him whom He has adopted into His family. He may be a consuming fire abroad, but when He comes into His own house, He is all mercy, mildness and love. Abroad He does great works of power, but at home, in His own house, He does great works of grace. Into this house we have been brought—we trust we live there and He has manifested Himself unto us as He does not unto the world. A father will reveal himself to his children as he will not to his servants, or to those with whom he mingles in his business. So, in the church, God is pleased to manifest all the greatness of His love, all the marvelous depth of His compassion and show Himself to His people as He never did to angels—and as He never will to the unregenerate! It is the house of God because all who live there have access to their Father and because they can always find Him there—a very present help in time of trouble.

Again, the church is God’s house because *He provides for it*. The household of the church would be starved if God did not provide for it. Does the church need pastors? God gives us pastors after His own heart. Does it need teachers? Then the teachers shall be taught of God. Does it need supplies? He makes for it a feast of fat things, full of marrow. Are comforts and luxuries needed? There are the wines on the lees well refined and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which, He says, “I have laid up for you, O my Beloved.” God always provides for His church because He is the husband—the *house band* of it! Blessed be God, He never leaves the church to be provided for by man! We tell you that in dependence upon God we will seek to bring you a portion of meat in due season, but we never undertake to provide the meal. The Lord will provide! We are but His servants, to bring unto His people food for their spiritual sustenance. Beloved, the church is God’s own house and since His word has taught us that “if any provide not for his own and for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel,” we can never believe that God will leave His house destitute of supplies! No, while He is infinite in goodness, while heaven and earth cannot measure the riches of His estates, while He is the Lord of all flesh and the monarch of all worlds, we may rely upon it that His house will always be abundantly provided for and His table bountifully spread!

One more remark here, the church is God’s house because *therein God is honored, and therein He rules*. Among men it is justly said that “without hearts, there is no home.” In the circle of a man’s household, he expects to find those “eager to please,” and if he has children, surely the affection of the little prattlers shall call forth his fond paternal love. However he may be belied abroad, it is meet that he should be honored at home—that is the place where he deserves and commands obedience! There he is master and lord, and every beck of his should be obeyed. So, the church is God’s house, the abode of

His household and His family. Therefore, though the world may disobey Him, yet His church always welcomes His presence, rejoices to do His bidding and listens to His words. In the church, God must always be honored. Let Him speak and our ears shall at once give attention, and our feet shall run with swift obedience. “As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God,” to learn His mind and to do His bidding. May He grant unto you, beloved, this distinguishing sign that you belong to this church which is the house of God, because by your profession and your practice He is continually honored!

The second thing mentioned in the text is “*the truth*.” What do these words mean, “the truth”? Depend upon it, they mean nothing more or less than is wrapped up with the two covers of this Bible! What is the truth? I might tell you that it is the counsels of heaven revealed on earth, the mind of God made known to men, all the precepts, statutes, and testimonies of the Most High. I might point you to the person of Christ, His obedience to the law, His death, His resurrection and His ascension, and tell you that the gospel contained in the writings of the four evangelists is the truth of God! Or, once more, I might tell you of the witness of the Holy Spirit, those convictions He brings home to the believer’s heart and the teaching by which He trains up the heirs of glory from the moment of conversion till their final gathering into the heavenly garner—and say that all the witness of the Holy Spirit is “the truth.” But then you might ask me why we should call these the truth. What difference is there between their being true, and their being “*the truth*”? I answer, what God says is necessarily true. It is most certainly true because God has said it. It needs no evidence to establish it, no argument to prove it. Therefore it is so far above evidence and proof that it is really “the truth.” I have, as your minister, to assert it, illustrate it and preach it as dogmatically as possible, for there can be no appeal against “the truth.” You have, as disciples, to believe it, search it and explore its depths—but there is no room to doubt or reason how much or how little you ought to receive, seeing it is, *prima facie* [self-evident], “the truth.”

Note its *importance*. It is called *the truth*. There are many other truths in the world beside God’s truth. There is natural truth, the truth of science, the truth of history and the truth man constantly utters on the evidence of his senses which we unhesitatingly receive. Yet, though these may be important in some degree, they give way to the all-important truth of God. Now the definite article, “the,” is here put before the word, “truth,” to teach us that if everything else we believe to be true should prove true, the whole would sink into insignificance when compared with the importance of the truth of God! See, then, that you do not underrate the importance of God’s truth. I would have you particularly value it, for some think it a matter of comparative indifference and that although it is right for us to believe all things which God has revealed, yet it is not important that we should do so! They suppose that it is of little consequence what sentiments we hold—we may be half right and half wrong, and yet be quite as well off—it matters little, so long as the heart is right, what the head believes. Alas, sirs, this is a strange infatuation! The saints of old purified their souls “in obeying the truth through the Spirit.” I cannot understand how your hearts can be right while you oppose the truth of God! Were it only that God has revealed it, you might know that it is of divine importance. What He speaks, it is surely incumbent upon us to believe! What He has set forth, we ought to accept as essential to our wellbeing, our comfort and our happiness. You may turn a deaf ear to the words of our poets, our philosophers, or our historians. You may even be content to live in ignorance of the laws of your country, “but see that you refuse not Him that speaks” to you from heaven. This would be perilous, indeed!

Mark then well the importance of the truth of God, for in these days men are apt to set light by it and, for the sake of peace and quiet, to lead us to suppose that contrary things can also be true.

The truth is not only important, but *substantial in its character*. The gospel which God has revealed is so essentially THE truth there is nothing false, as there is nothing trifling in it. It is truth unalloyed. It is truth which ought to be undoubted. It is a vile sin to imagine that there can be any fallacy in the utterances of an infallible God! Let everything else we credit be a lie. Let all that man has asserted and proved be swept away—God’s words are *the truth*, substantially and really so!

The truth, moreover, is a thing of *unity*. It is not said “truths,” but “THE TRUTH.” God’s truth is only one. Have you ever noticed, in the great summary of doctrines, that as surely as you believe one,

you must believe the rest! One doctrine so leans upon the others that if you deny one, you must deny the rest. Some think that they can believe four out of the five points and reject the last. It is impossible! God's truths are all joined together like links in a chain. There is but one truth, and one system of the truth of God.

"Then," say some "tell us how to discern the truth." You may judge of it by three things—by God, by Christ and by man. That is, the truth which honors God, the truth which glorifies Christ, and the truth which humbles man. Unless a doctrine exalts God, unless it acknowledges Him monarch of creation and gives Him absolute power over His creatures—He the potter and ourselves the clay; *He* molding the vessels as seem good in His sight; *we* the vessels that are molded after His pleasure; God everything and ourselves nothing—that doctrine is not *the truth of God*. And unless a doctrine magnifies the atonement—if it asserts that the atonement may fail, that it was made for many who do not benefit by it, that God's purpose in redemption is in anywhere or anyhow frustrated—it is not of God, it is of Satan! If a doctrine teaches that man is possessed of good natural powers; that he is not so fallen as the Bible states; that he can do something to help himself; that his exertions can meet with God's grace half way; that he can assist a little in the work of salvation; or, at any rate, that he can preserve himself from falling and hold on his way with steadfastness, it is a man glorifying, God dishonoring doctrine! Cast it to the winds, for it never came from above. God never intended it to be preached otherwise than as the very foil of blackness against the brightness of His own truth!

II. Now I desire to address you very solemnly on THE RELATIONSHIP WHICH EXISTS BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE TRUTH: "The church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

There is a sense in which the truth is the pillar of the church, for the church is built on the truth. It is on the revealed doctrines of divine grace, such as eternal predestination, immutable affection, covenant security, the responsibility of Christ as the surety of His people—it is on such doctrines as these that the church is built—and in this sense the truth is the pillar and ground of the church. In another sense, the pillar and ground of the truth is God. He Himself maintains His own truth. It is not committed to the hands of mortals to maintain it apart from God. One of the best proofs of this is that the truth is still preserved in the original purity, after so many hypocritical preaching of it, and so much wresting of it to wrong purposes. While God lives, His truth can never die! There remains the sense in which the church is, as it were, delegated by God to maintain and support the truth. You must understand this, then, instrumentally—while God is the real pillar and ground of His truth, yet in this world He is pleased to make His children such. Really and effectively it is God who upholds the truth, but instrumentally it is the ministers and elders and members of the church who maintain the truth and hold it firm.

In reading this verse, I was pleased with two thoughts that occurred to me. The church is both the pillar and the ground of the truth. Sometimes it is the pillar of the truth when it preaches the word, when it administers the ordinances and publicly shows forth the gospel. But sometimes there have been seasons of persecution, when the disciples have not been able to go forth and testify to the world—and then the church becomes a kind of underlying foundation, the *ground* of the truth. In the days when Paul stood before Nero, he was like the pillar of the truth. At another time, when he was shut up in a dungeon and could not come forth, he was in his heart like the ground of the truth. When the church stands boldly out and preaches the word, it is the pillar of the truth! When it is hidden in the Roman catacombs and cannot proclaim the Savior's name to the world, there still lives the truth of God deep in the hearts of believers—and they are then the ground of the truth. We, beloved, who are of the house of God and of the church of God, are the maintainers and supporters, instrumentally, of God's truth on the earth. Come, then, let me stir you up to do your duty! Let me beg of you who love God's truth not to leave it to itself. Perhaps you imagine that God's truth, being mighty, must prevail without your assistance. It is true, it must and will, but then God has said that if you belong to His church, you are to be the pillar and ground of the truth. To leave God's truth to shift for itself is as bad as to leave your own children to provide for themselves. True, the great decrees of destiny shall be carried out and our Savior's kingdom

shall be established—but it shall be by means! God has honored you by choosing you to be the maintainers, the testifiers, the pillar and ground of the truth. I will endeavor to awaken you, then, by one or two exhortations, to be faithful to this, your solemn duty.

In the first place, *remember how your fathers, in times gone by, defended God's truth*—and blush, you cowards, who are afraid to maintain it! Remember that our Bible is a bloodstained book—the blood of martyrs is on the Bible, the blood of translators and confessors. The pool of holy baptism, in which many of you have been baptized, is a bloodstained pool—full many have had to die for the vindication of that baptism which is “the answer of a good conscience toward God.” The doctrines which we preach to you are doctrines that have been baptized in blood—swords have been drawn to slay the confessors of them! And there is not a truth which has not been sealed by them at the stake, or the block, or far away on the lofty mountains where they have been slain by the hundreds. It is but a little duty we have to discharge compared with theirs. They were called to maintain the truth when they had to die for it—you only have to maintain the truth when taunt and jeer, dishonorable names and contemptuous epithets are all you have to endure for it! What? Do you expect easy lives? While some have led through seas of blood and have fought to win the prize, are you wearied with a slight skirmish on dry land? What would you do if God should suffer persecuting days to overtake you? O cowardly spirits, you would flee and disown your profession! Be you the pillar and ground of the truth. Let the blood of martyrs; let the voices of confessors speak to you. Remember how they held fast the truth of God, how they preserved it and handed it down to us from generation to generation! And by their noble example, I beseech you, be steadfast and faithful, tread valiantly and firmly in their steps, acquit yourselves like men—like men of God, I implore you! Shall we not have some champions in these times who will deal sternly with heresies for the love of the truth—men who will stand like rocks in the center of the sea so that, when all others shake, they stand invulnerable and invincible? You who are tossed about by every wind of doctrine, farewell! I acknowledge you not till God shall give you grace to stand firm for His truth and not to be ashamed of Him nor of His words in this evil generation!

Think about it again, that you have the greatest reason to be the pillar and ground of the truth *from the fact that this truth has been of immeasurable service to you*. How often has it gladdened your hearts? You were once in darkness, but now are you light in the Lord! Once you had no clear view of that great mystery of godliness, but now God has been pleased to open your eyes, having touched them with spiritual eye salve, so that in His light you can see light. You are now brought to see that which is revealed and to believe the doctrines of grace. Have you not found these things comforting? How often have they supported you in the hour of peril? How often have they checked you when you would have sinned, and guarded you from despair when you were trodden underfoot by the enemy? How often have they nerved your arm for conflict, or moved your foot for journeying? How well furnished have you been since you believed these things, who were but poor defenseless creatures before! Will you not, then, maintain the truth and spread it abroad? Will you blush to acknowledge the word which has brought salvation to your souls, which has rescued you from the thralldom of sin and introduced you into the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free? No! I beseech you by the glorious panoply wherewith Christ has arrayed you, by His perfect love wherewith He has covered you, by the crown which He has promised you, by the heaven which He has prepared for you—be you faithful to the church of Christ, whereof you are members! Be you still the pillar and ground of the truth.

Reflect once more, as another weighty reason, that *you should ever have been led to know the truth at all*. Why, you know you did not deserve it! You believe that God has chosen you in His sovereignty, entirely irrespective of your character. You must regard yourself as being the last man in the world that you could ever have thought God would have chosen. Some of you were sinners against His love and against His law—great, open and apparent sinners! Others of you were secret transgressors—you sinned against God with a high hand and an outstretched arm, though men knew it not. Many of you were poor sinners involved in the darkness of deceitful doctrine—you had been led astray to believe yourselves saved, whereas you have since found that it was no work of the Spirit, but the mere excitement of your carnal feelings. And now that you, the chief of sinners, rescued by divine grace from death and hell, are

brought into His church, will you not, for gratitude's sake, considering what you owe your Master, defend and maintain His truth at all hazards, in the midst of a gainsaying generation?

Then, once more, you are bound to maintain this truth as you *consider the manifold blessings which it will confer upon your fellow creatures when it shall win the day*. The truth of God is always a blessing. Men may hate it, but it is a blessing and it brings a blessing to their door, though they welcome it not. They may think it curses them, but the truth is no curse unless men make it so to themselves. Nothing can benefit your generation, nothing can improve the morals of mankind, nothing can refine the earth, nothing can wash away its blood, nothing can cleanse its stains, nothing can purge its lusts, nothing can stop its wars and heal its feuds—nothing better, nothing nearly so well as the maintenance of the truth of God! Therefore, be very bold for it. It is the earth's one hope—take it away and that world's brightest star is quenched, and her central sun is dim. Maintain the truth, then, for the world's sake, I beseech you.

And if encouragement can stir you up to duty, let me remind you that the time is coming when truth shall be triumphant. Soldier of the cross, the hour is coming when the note of victory shall be proclaimed throughout the world! The battlements of the enemy must soon succumb. The swords of the mighty must soon be given up to the Lord of lords! What? Soldier of the cross, in the day of victory would you have it said that you did turn your back in the day of battle? Do you not wish to have a share in the conflict, that you may have a share in the victory? If you are even in the hottest part of the battle, will you flinch and flee? You shall have the brightest part of the victory if you are in the fiercest part of the conflict! Will you turn and lose your laurels? Will you throw away your sword? Shall it be with you as when a standard bearer faints? No, man, up to arms again, for the victory is certain! Though the conflict is severe, I beseech you, on to it again! On, on, you lionhearted men of God, to the battle once more, for you shall yet be crowned with immortal glory!

May God, then, grant unto us that we may always stand fast in the fight, as we would stand foremost among the conquerors! Mark those who have already overcome—they are pillars in the house of their God and they will “go no more out forever.” As you mark their white garments, their crowns, their palms, do you not pant to join the triumphant host? I know you do! Well then, wrestle hard as they did and, by divine grace, you, also, shall overcome and then shall you sit down with Jesus on His throne, even as He did overcome and is set down forever with His Father upon His throne!

But some will say, “If we go forth resolved to maintain this truth, we shall be called bigots and we shall get very much ill feeling from the world.” Well, if you are afraid of that, I have done with you! I call you not kith or kin with me if you are abashed at such trivial rebuffs. If you blush at that, sir, you will never do much for your Master's honor! If you do not know how to stand fast against the world, you will find the world will stand fast against you. Did they not call Luther a bigot? Did they not say he was a mere declaimer? Did they not charge him with lack of logic and say he was a man that hurled abuse? But did any of these things move him? No, he persevered and still spread abroad the savor of his Master's name in every place till he finished his course with joy as a conqueror! What sort of a character was John Knox in his day? Were not all manner of accusations heaped upon his head? But what did he say? “If I am God's servant and on God's side, I will not bow for anyone of you.” And now he has this for his epitaph, “Here lies a man who in his life never feared the face of man.” Such an epitaph, few of you would merit.

“But,” asks another, “how am I to know that it is THE TRUTH?” That question I answer in this way—if you do not know it is the truth of God; you cannot stand up for it. I am only speaking to men and women who do *know* that it is the truth. A true Christian cannot allow that he is in error, for he sees the truth positively written in God's word. But you tell me that I may err. No, but I cannot err when I have God's word in my lips. People will controvert and will go into endless arguments to show that we are wrong. We cannot be wrong, sirs! We cannot allow ourselves to be even *supposed* to be wrong when we hold fast by the Scriptures only—for that were to suppose that God's word could be wrong! Our inferences from Scripture may be wrong, but when we have the genuine Scripture, itself, we cannot

admit the possibility of our being in error! And unless you are most solemnly convinced that you have the infallible testimony of God in your own consciences and of the truthfulness of His inspired word, I do not ask you to be defenders of the truth—such defense would be childish, and I would be more childish to ask for it!

“But,” another says, “I don’t think it necessary to make a noise about doctrine—it does not concern souls much.” Does it not? I believe souls have been instrumentally damned by the thousands by false doctrine. I believe that the universal redemption scheme is doing immense mischief. As Joseph Irons said, “When men once believe that Jesus Christ died for His elect, they begin questioning, ‘Did He die for me?’ and that stirs them up to seek to know the truth of God. But when they hear that there is salvation for all, they say at once, ‘Then I may sit still and fold my arms!’ And so they are deluded into hell.” When men are told that they can do all things, and have power to save themselves, do you not think that is a soul deluding doctrine? They seek to do what they can and they do a great deal, resting content with a spurious conversion, instead of the conversion which is of God and not of the will of the creature! I do not believe in all the conversions we hear of as brought about by false doctrine. God forbid that I should! Men who preach false doctrine may be sometimes useful in conversion because they preach some true doctrine, but a false doctrine never converted a soul yet, unless it converted it into worse dangers and made it tenfold more the child of hell than before! It is foolish for you to cry out that doctrine does not matter! What would you do if it were not for doctrine? How could your soul be saved? How could you enter heaven but for the doctrine of redemption? Yes, and how could you get to glory but for the doctrine of election—the doctrine that you were chosen in Christ Jesus from before the foundation of the world? Say what you like, you will find doctrines far more essential than you ever dreamed!

Now, how many of my hearers have had any spiritual realization of the preciousness of these things? “Ah!” cries one, “I will defend the truth.” Stop, young man! Have you felt in your heart the great doctrine of God’s sovereignty? Have you been humbled in the dust to know that God has a right to do with you as He pleases? If not, you cannot defend the doctrine of divine sovereignty! Have you been brought to see the blood of Christ shed especially for you? If not, you cannot defend the doctrine of particular redemption, for you do not understand it. Have you ever felt your own depravity in all its desperate character? If not, you cannot defend the doctrine of original sin. Have you felt that God the Holy Spirit has called you out of darkness into marvelous light? If not, you cannot defend the doctrine of effectual calling. Do you feel in your soul that God has enabled you to persevere up to the moment and have you the solemn conviction that you shall hold on your way? If not, you cannot defend final perseverance. I beseech you examine yourselves and see whether you have these doctrines in your heart. If you have, I shall never be much afraid that you will not maintain them, though I think it right, sometimes, to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. And as there are too many who would guide your minds into “THE NON-DOCTRINE SCHEME” and feed you with that which is vague and visionary instead of that which is substantial and true, I would the more earnestly exhort you, as for your very lives, to “hold fast the form of sound words which you have received.” Stand fast, beloved! Be not moved in the evil day and, having done all, stand fast in the Lord! May God grant it for Jesus’ sake!

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