

JACOB AND ESAU

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A SERMON
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“Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”
Romans 9:13

DO not imagine for an instant that I pretend to be able to thoroughly elucidate the great mysteries of predestination. There are some men who claim to know all about the matter. They twist it round their fingers as easily as if it were an everyday thing, but depend upon it, he who thinks he knows all about this mystery knows but very little. It is but the shallowness of his mind that permits him to see the bottom of his knowledge, he who dives deep finds that there is in the lowest depth to which he can attain a deeper depth still.

The fact is that the great questions about man’s responsibility, free will, and predestination, have been fought over, and over, and over again, and have been answered in ten thousand different ways, and the result has been that we know just as much about the matter as when we first began. The combatants have thrown dust into each other’s eyes, and have hindered each other from seeing, and then they have concluded that because they put other people’s eyes out, they could therefore see.

Now, it is one thing to refute another man’s doctrine, but a very different matter to establish my own views. It is very easy to knock over one man’s hypothesis concerning these truths, not quite so easy to make my own stand on a firm footing.

I shall try tonight, if I can, to go safely, if I do not go very fast, for I shall endeavor to keep simply to the letter of God’s Word. I think that if we kept more simply to the teachings of the Bible, we would be wiser than we are, for by turning from the heavenly light of revelation and trusting to the deceitful will-o’-the-wisps of our own imagination, we thrust ourselves into swamps and bogs where there is no sure footing and we begin to sink, and instead of making progress, we find ourselves sticking fast.

The truth is, neither you nor I have any right to want to know more about predestination than what God tells us. That is enough for us. If it were worthwhile for us to know more, God would have revealed more. What God has told us, we are to believe, but to the knowledge thus gained, we are too apt to add our own vague notions, and then we are sure to go wrong. It would be better if in all controversies, men had simply stood hard and fast by “Thus saith the Lord,” instead of having it said, “Thus and thus I think.”

I shall now endeavor, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to throw the light of God’s Word upon this great doctrine of divine sovereignty, and give you what I think to be a Scriptural statement of the fact that some men are chosen, other men are left—the great fact that is declared in this text—“Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”

It is a terrible text, and I will be honest with it if I can. One man says the word “hate” does not mean hate, it means “love less”—“Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I loved less.” It may be so, but I don’t believe it is. At any rate, it says “hate” here, and until you give me another version of the Bible, I shall keep to this one. I believe that the term is correctly and properly translated, that the word “hate” is not stronger than the original, but even if it be a little stronger, it is nearer the mark than the other translation which is offered to us in those meaningless words, “love less.” I like to take it and let it stand just as it is.

The fact is, God loved Jacob, and He did not love Esau, He did choose Jacob, but He did not choose Esau, He did bless Jacob, but He never blessed Esau, His mercy followed Jacob all the way of his life,

even to the last, but His mercy never followed Esau, He permitted him still to go on in his sins, and to prove that dreadful truth, “Esau have I hated.”

Others, in order to get rid of this ugly text, say it does not mean Esau and Jacob, it means the nation, it means Jacob’s children and Esau’s children, it means the children of Israel and Edom. I should like to know where the difference lies. Is the difficulty removed by extending it?

Some of the Wesleyan brethren say that there is a national election, God has chosen one nation and not another. They turn round and tell us it is unjust in God to choose one man and not another. Now, we ask them by everything reasonable, is it not equally unjust of God to choose one nation and leave another? The argument which they imagine overthrows us overthrows them also.

There never was a more foolish subterfuge than that of trying to bring out national election. What is the election of a nation but the election of so many *units*, of so many people? and it is tantamount to the same thing as the particular election of individuals. In thinking, men cannot see clearly that if—which we do not for a moment believe—that be any injustice in God choosing one man and not another, how much more must there be injustice in His choosing one nation and not another. No! the difficulty cannot be got rid of thus, but is greatly increased by this foolish wresting of God’s Word.

Besides, here is the proof that that is not correct, read the verse preceding it. It does not say anything at all about nations, it says, “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth: It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger”—referring to the children, not to the nations. Of course the threatening was afterwards fulfilled in the position of the two nations, Edom was made to serve Israel.

But this text means just what it says, it does not mean nations, but it means the persons mentioned. “Jacob”—that is the man whose name was Jacob—“Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” Take care, my dear friends, how any of you meddle with God’s Word. I have heard of folks altering passages they did not like. It will not do, you know, you cannot alter them, they are really just the same. Our only power with the Word of God is simply to let it stand as it is, and to endeavor by God’s grace to accommodate ourselves to that. We must never try to make the Bible bow to us, in fact we cannot, for the truths of divine revelation are as sure and fast as the throne of God.

If a man wants to enjoy a delightful prospect, and a mighty mountain lies in his path, does he commence cutting away at its base in the vain hope that ultimately it will become a level plain before him? No, on the contrary, he diligently uses it for the accomplishment of his purpose by ascending it, well knowing this to be the only means of obtaining the end in view.

So must we do, we cannot bring down the truths of God to our poor finite understandings, the mountain will never fall before us, but we can seek strength to rise higher and higher in our perception of divine things, and in this way only may we hope to obtain the blessing.

Now, I shall have two things to notice tonight. I have explained this text to mean just what it says, and I do not want it to be altered—“Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” To take off the edge of this difficult doctrine, that makes some people bite their lips so, I must just notice that *this is a fact*, and after that, I shall try to answer the question—*Why was it that God loved Jacob and hated Esau?*

I. First then, THIS IS A FACT.

Men say they do not like the doctrine of election. Verily, I do not want them to, but is it not a fact that God has elected some? Ask an Arminian about election, and at once his eye turns fiercely upon you and he begins to get angry, he can’t bear it, it is a horrible thing, like a war cry to him, and he begins to sharpen the knife of controversy at once.

But say to him, “Ah, brother! was it not divine grace that made you to differ? Was it not the Lord who called you out of your natural state, and made you what you are?” “Oh, yes,” he says, “I quite agree with you there.” Now, put this question to him, “What do you think is the reason why one man has been converted and not another?” “Oh,” he says, “the Spirit of God has been at work in this man.” Well

then, my brother, the fact is that God *does* treat one man better than another, and is there anything full of wonder in this fact? It is a fact we recognize every day.

There is a man up in the gallery there that works as hard as he likes, he cannot earn more than fifteen shillings a week, and here is another man that gets a thousand a year, what is the reason of this? One is born in the palaces of kings, while the other draws his first breath in a roofless hovel. What is the reason of this? God's providence.

He puts one man in one position and another man in another. Here is a man whose head cannot hold two thoughts together, do what you will with him; here is another who can sit down and write a book, and dive into the deepest of questions, what is the reason of it? God has done it.

Do you not see the fact that God does not treat every man alike? He has made some eagles and some worms, some he has made lions and some creeping lizards, He has made some men kings and some are born beggars. Some are born with gigantic minds and some verge on the idiot. Why is this? Do you murmur at God for it? No, you say it is a fact and there is no good in murmuring. What is the use of kicking against facts? It is only kicking against the pricks with naked feet, and you hurt yourself and not them.

Well then, election is a positive fact, it is as clear as daylight, that God does, in matters of religion, give to one man more than to another. He gives to me opportunities of hearing the Word which He does not give to the Khoikhoi. He gives to me, parents who, from infancy trained me in the fear of the Lord. He does not give that to many of you.

He places me afterwards in situations where I am restrained from sin. Other men are cast into places where their sinful passions are developed. He gives to one man a temper and disposition which keeps him back from some lust, and to another man he gives such impetuosity of spirit, and depravity turns that impetuosity so much aside, that the man runs headlong into sin.

Again, he brings one man under the sound of a powerful ministry, while another sits and listens to a preacher whose drowsiness is only exceeded by that of his hearers. And even when they are hearing the Gospel, the fact is God works in one heart when he does not in another.

Though, I believe to a degree, the Spirit works in the hearts of all who hear the Word, so that they are all without excuse, yet I am sure He works in some so powerfully, that they can no longer resist Him but are constrained by His grace to cast themselves at His feet, and confess Him Lord of all, while others resist the grace that comes into their hearts, and it does not act with the same irresistible force that it does in the other case, and they perish in their sins, deservedly and justly condemned.

Are not these things facts? Does any man deny them? *can* any man deny them? What is the use of kicking against facts? I always like to know when there is a discussion, what is the fact.

You have heard the story of King Charles the Second and the philosophers—King Charles asked one of them, "What is the reason why, if you had a pail of water and weighed it and then put a fish into it, that the weight would be the same?" They gave a great many elaborate reasons for this. At last one of them said, "Is it a fact?" And then they found out that the water did weigh more, just as much more as the fish put into it. So all their learned arguments fell to the ground.

So, when we are talking about election, the best thing is to say, "Put aside the doctrine for a moment, let us see what is the fact." We walk abroad, we open our eyes, we see, there is the fact. What, then, is the use of our discussing it any longer? We had better believe it since it is an undeniable truth. You may alter an opinion, but you cannot alter a fact. You may change a mere doctrine, but you cannot possibly change a thing which actually exists.

There it is—God does certainly deal with some men better than He does with others. I will not offer an apology for God, He can explain His own dealings, He needs no defense from me,

***"God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain;"***

but there stands the fact. Before you begin to argue upon the doctrine, just recollect that whatever you may think about it, you cannot alter it, and however much you may object to it, it is actually true that God did love Jacob, and did not love Esau.

For now, look at Jacob's life and read his history, you are compelled to say that from the first hour that he left his father's house, even to the last, God loved him. Why, he has not gone far from his father's house before he is weary, and he lies down with a stone for his pillow, and the hedges for his curtain, and the sky for his canopy, and he goes to sleep, and God comes and talks to him in his sleep, he sees a ladder whereof the top reaches to heaven, and a company of angels ascending and descending upon it, and he goes on his journey to Laban. Laban tries to cheat him, and as often as Laban tries to wrong him, God suffers it not, but multiplies the different cattle that Laban gives him.

Afterwards, you remember, when he fled unawares from Laban and was pursued, that God appears to Laban in a dream, and charges him not to speak to Jacob either good or bad. And more memorable still, when his sons, Levi and Simeon have committed murder in Shechem, and Jacob is afraid that he will be overtaken and destroyed by the inhabitants who were rising against him, God puts a fear upon the people and says to them, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophet no harm." And when a famine comes over the land, God has sent Joseph into Egypt to provide corn in Goshen for his brethren, that they should live and not die.

And see the happy end of Jacob—"I shall see my son Joseph before I die." Behold the tears streaming down his aged cheeks, as he clasps his own Joseph to his bosom! See how magnificently he goes into the presence of Pharaoh, and blesses him. It is said, "Jacob blessed Pharaoh." He had God's love so much in him, that he was free to bless the mightiest monarch of his times. At last, he gave up the ghost, and it was said at once, "This was a man that God loved." There is the fact that God did love Jacob.

On the other hand, there is the fact that God did not love Esau. He permitted Esau to become the father of princes, but he has not blessed his generation. Where is the house of Esau now? Edom has perished. She built her chambers in the rocks, and cut out her cities in the flinty rocks, but God has abandoned the inhabitants thereof and Edom is not to be found. They became the bond-slaves of Israel, and the kings of Edom had to furnish a yearly tribute of wool to Solomon and his successors, and now, the name of Esau is erased from the book of history.

Now, then, I must say again, that this ought to take off at least some of the bitterness of controversy when we recollect that it is a fact, let men say what they will, that God did love Jacob, and He did not love Esau.

II. But now, the second point of my subject is WHY IS THIS?

Why did God love Jacob? why did He hate Esau? I am not going to undertake too much at once. You say to me, "Why did God love Jacob? and why did He hate Esau?" We will take one question at a time, for the reason why some people get into a muddle in theology is because they try to give an answer to two questions. Now, I shall not do that, I will tell you one thing at a time.

I will tell you why God loved Jacob, and then, I will tell you why He hated Esau. But I cannot give you the same reason for two contradictory things. That is wherein a great many have failed. They have sat down and seen these facts, that God loved Jacob and hated Esau, that God has an elect people, and that there are others who are not elect. If then, they try to give the same reason for election and non-election, they make sad work of it, If they will pause and take one thing at a time, and look to God's Word, they will not go wrong.

The first question is *why did God love Jacob?* I am not at all puzzled to answer this, because when I turn to the Word of God, I read this text—"Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel." I am not at a loss to tell you that it could not be for any good thing in Jacob, that God loved him, because I am told that, "the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election might stand, not of works but of Him that calleth."

I can tell you the reason why God loved Jacob, *It is sovereign grace*. There was nothing in Jacob that could make God love him, there was everything about him that might have made God hate him, as much as He did Esau, and a great deal more. But it was because God was infinitely gracious, that He loved Jacob, and because He was sovereign in His dispensation of this grace, that He chose Jacob to be the objective of that love. I am not going to deal with Esau until I have answered the question on the side of Jacob.

I want you to notice this, that Jacob was loved of God simply on the footing of free grace. For, come now, let us look at Jacob's character, I have already said in the exposition what I think of him. I do think the very smallest things of Jacob's character. As a natural man, he was always a bargain maker.

I was struck the other day with that vision that Jacob had at Bethel, it seemed to me a most extraordinary development of Jacob's bargain making spirit. You know he lay down, and God was pleased to open the doors of heaven to him so that he saw God sitting at the top of the ladder, and the angels ascending and descending upon it.

What do you suppose he said as soon as he awoke? Well, he said, "Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Why, if Jacob had had faith, he would not have been afraid of God, on the contrary, he would have rejoiced that God had thus permitted him to hold fellowship with Him.

Now, hear Jacob's bargain. God had simply said to him, "I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed." He did not say anything about what Jacob was to do, God only said, 'I will do it'—"Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

Now, can you believe, that after God had spoken face to face with Jacob, that he would have had the impudence to try and make a bargain with God? But he did. He begins and says, "*If*." There now, the man has had a vision and an absolute promise from God, and yet he begins with an "*If*." That is bargain making with a vengeance! "*If* God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my Father's house in peace, *then*"—not without—mark, he is going to hold God to His bargain—"then shall the LORD be my God: and this stone which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." I marvel at this!

If I did not know something about my own nature, I should be utterly unable to understand it. What! a man who has talked with God, then begins to make a bargain with Him! that has seen the only way of access between heaven and earth, the ladder Christ Jesus, and has had a covenant made between himself and God, a covenant that is all on God's part—all a promise—and yet wants after that to hold God to a bargain, as if he were afraid God would break His promise! Oh, this was vile indeed!

Then notice his whole life. While he lived with Laban, what miserable work it was. He had got into the hands of a man of the world, and whenever a covetous Christian gets into such company, a terrible scene ensues! There are the two together, greedy and grasping. If an angel could look down upon them, how would he weep to see the man of God fallen from his high place, and become as bad as the other.

Then, the device that Jacob used when he endeavored to get his wages was most extraordinary. Why did he not leave it to God instead of adopting such systems as that? The whole way through we are ashamed of Jacob, we cannot help it. And then, there is that grand period in his life, the turning point, when we are told that, "Jacob wrestled with God, and prevailed." We will look at that—I have carefully studied the subject, and I do not think so much of him as I did.

I thought Jacob wrestled with God, but I find it is the contrary, he did not wrestle with God, God wrestled with him. I had always set Jacob up in my mind as the very model of a man wrestling in prayer, I do not think so now. He divided his family, and put a person in front to appease Esau. He did not go in front himself, with the holy trust that a patriarch should have felt. Guarded with all the omnipotence of

heaven, he might boldly have gone to meet his brother, but no! he did not feel certain that the latter would bow at his feet, although the promise said, “The elder shall serve the younger.” He did not rest on that promise. It was not big enough for him. Then he went at night to the brook Jabbok. I do not know what for, unless he went to pray, but I am afraid it was not so.

The text says, “And Jacob was left alone: and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.” There is a great deal of difference between a man wrestling with me, and my wrestling with him. When I strive with anyone, I want to gain something from him, and when a man wrestles with me, he wants to get something out of me. Therefore, I take it, when the man wrestled with Jacob, he wanted to get his cunning and deceit out of him, and prove what a poor sinful creature he was, but he could not do it.

Jacob’s craft was so strong, that he could not be overcome, at last the angel touched his thigh, and showed him his own hollowness. And Jacob turned round and said, “Thou hast taken away my strength, now I will wrestle with *thee*,” and when his thigh was out of joint, when he fully felt his own weakness, then, and not till then, is he brought to say, “I will not let *thee* go, except thou bless me.” He had had full confidence in his own strength, but God at last humbled him, and when all his boasted power was gone, then it was that Jacob became a prevailing prince.

But even after that, his life is not clear. Then you find him an unbelieving creature, and we have all been as bad. Though we are blaming Jacob, brethren, we should blame ourselves. We are hard with him, but we shall be harder with ourselves. Do you not remember the memorable speech of the patriarch when he said, “Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me”? Ah, Jacob, why cannot you believe the promise? All other promises have been fulfilled. But no! he could not think of the promise, he was always wanting to live by sight.

Now, I say if the character of Jacob be as I have described it, and I am sure it is—we have got it in God’s Word—there was, there could have been nothing in Jacob that made God love him, and the only reason why God loved him must have been because of His own grace, because “He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy.”

And rest assured, the only reason why any of us can hope to be saved is this, the sovereign grace of God. There is no reason why I should be saved, or why you should be saved, but God’s own merciful heart and God’s own omnipotent will. Now that is the doctrine, it is taught not only in this passage, but in multitudes of other passages of God’s Word. Dear friends, receive it, hold fast by it, and never let it go.

Now, the next question is a different one, *Why did God hate Esau?* I am not going to mix this question up with the other, they are entirely distinct and I intend to keep them so, one answer will not do for two questions, they must be taken separately and then can be answered satisfactorily. Why does God hate any man? I defy anyone to give any answer but this, because that man deserves it, no reply but that can ever be true.

There are some who answer, divine sovereignty, but I challenge them to look that doctrine in the face. Do you believe that God created man and arbitrarily, sovereignly—it is the same thing—created that man, with no other intention than that of damning him? Made him and yet, for no other reason than that of destroying him forever? Well, if you can believe it, I pity you, that is all I can say, you deserve pity that you should think so meanly of God, whose mercy endureth for ever.

You are quite right when you say the reason why God loves a man is because God does so, there is no reason in the man. But do not give the same answer as to why God hates a man. If God deals with any man severely, it is because that man deserves all he gets.

In hell, there will not be a solitary soul that will say to God, O Lord, Thou hast treated me worse than I deserve! But every lost spirit will be made to feel that he has got his deserts, that his destruction lies at his own door and not at the door of God, that God had nothing to do with his condemnation, except as the Judge condemns the criminal, but that he himself brought damnation upon his own head, as the result of his own evil works.

Justice is that which damns a man, it is mercy, it is free grace that saves, sovereignty holds the scale of love, it is justice holds the other scale. Who can put that into the hand of sovereignty? That were to libel God and to dishonor Him.

Now, let us look at Esau's character, says one, "Did he deserve that God should cast him away?" I answer, he did. What we know of Esau's character clearly proves it. Esau lost his birthright. Do not sit down and weep about that, and blame God. Esau sold it himself, he sold it for a mess of pottage. Oh, Esau, it is in vain for you to say, "I lost my birthright by decree." No, no. Jacob got it by decree, but you lost it because you sold it yourself—didn't you? Was it not your own bargain? Did you not take the mess of red pottage by your own voluntary will, in lieu of your birthright? Your destruction lies at your own door because you sold your own soul at your own bargain, and you did it yourself.

Did God influence Esau to do that? God forbid, God is not the author of sin. Esau voluntarily gave up his own birthright. And the doctrine is that every man who loses heaven gives it up himself. Every man who loses everlasting life rejects it himself. God denies it not to him—he will not come that he may have life. Why is it that a man remains ungodly and does not fear God? It is because he says, "I like this drink, I like this pleasure, I like this Sabbath-breaking better than I do the things of God." No man is saved by his own free will, but every man is damned by it that is damned. He does it of his own will, no one constrains him.

You know, sinner, that when you go away from here, and put down the cries of conscience, that you do it yourself. You know that, when after a sermon you say, "I do not care about believing in Christ," you say it yourself—you are quite conscious of it, and if not conscious of it, it is notwithstanding a dreadful fact that the reason why you are what you are, is because you *will* to be what you are. It is your own will that keeps you where you are, the blame lies at your own door, your being still in a state of sin is voluntary. You are a captive, but you are a voluntary captive. You will never be willing to get free until God makes you willing. But you are willing to be a bond slave.

There is no disguising the fact, that man loves sin, loves evil, and does not love God. You know, though heaven is preached to you through the blood of Christ, and though hell is threatened to you as the result of your sins, that still you cleave to your iniquities, you will not leave them, and will not fly to Christ.

And when you are cast away, at last it will be said of you, "You have lost your birthright." But you sold it yourself. You know that the ballroom suits you better than the house of God, you know that the ale house suits you better than the prayer meeting, you know you trust yourself rather than trust Christ, you know you prefer the joys of the present time to the joys of the future. It is your own choice—keep it. Your damnation is your own election, not God's, you richly deserve it.

"But," says one, "Esau repented." Yes, he did, but what sort of a repentance was it? Did you ever notice his repentance? Every man who repents and believes will be saved. But what sort of a repentance was his? As soon as he found that his brother had got the birthright, he sought it again with repentance, he sought it with tears, but he did not get it back. You know he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, and he thought he would buy it back by giving his father a mess of pottage. "There," he says, "I will go and hunt venison for my father. I have got over him with my savory meat, and he will readily give me my birthright again."

That is what sinners say, "I have lost heaven by my evil works, I will easily get it again by reforming. Did I not lose it by sin? I will get it back by giving up my sins." "I have been a drunkard," says one, "I will give up drinking and I will now be a teetotaler." Another says, "I have been an awful swearer, I am very sorry for it indeed, I will not swear any more." So all he gives to his father is a mess of pottage, the same as that for which he sold it.

No, sinner, you may sell heaven for a few carnal pleasures, but you cannot buy heaven by merely giving them up. You can get heaven only on another ground, viz., the ground of free grace. You lose your soul justly, but you cannot get it back by good works, or by the renunciation of your sins.

You think that Esau was a sincere penitent. Just let me tell you another thing. This blessed penitent, when he failed to get the blessing, what did he say? “The days of mourning for my father are at hand: then will I slay my brother Jacob.” There is a penitent for you. That is not the repentance that comes from God the Holy Spirit.

But there are some men like that. They say they are very sorry they should have been such sinners as that, very sorry that they had been brought into such a sad condition as that, and then they go and do the same that they did before. Their penitence does not bring them out of their sin, but it leaves them in it, and perhaps, plunges them still deeper into guilt.

Now, look at the character of Esau. The only redeeming trait in it was that he did begin with repentance, but that repentance was even an aggravation of his sin, because it was without the effects of evangelical repentance. And I say, if Esau sold his birthright he did deserve to lose it, and therefore, am I not right in saying, that if God hated Esau, it was because he deserved to be hated.

Do you observe how Scripture always guards this conclusion? Turn to the ninth chapter of Romans, where we have selected our text, see how careful the Holy Spirit is here, in the twenty-second verse. “What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.”

But it does not say anything about *fitting* men for destruction, they fitted themselves. *They* did that, God had nothing to do with it. But when men are saved, God fits them for that. All the glory to God in salvation, all the blame to men in damnation.

If any of you want to know what I preach every day, and any stranger should say, “Give me a summary of his doctrine,” say this, “He preaches salvation all of grace, and damnation all of sin. He gives God all the glory for every soul that is saved, but he won’t have it that God is to blame for any man that is damned.” That teaching I cannot understand. My soul revolts at the idea of a doctrine that lays the blood of man’s soul at God’s door. I cannot conceive how any human mind, at least any Christian mind, can hold any such blasphemy as that.

I delight to preach this blessed truth—salvation of God, from first to last—the Alpha and the Omega, but when I come to preach damnation, I say, damnation of man, not of God, if you perish, at your own hands must your blood be required. There is another passage. At the last great day, when all the world shall come before Jesus to be judged, have you noticed, when the righteous go on the right side, Jesus says, “Come, ye blessed of my Father”—(“of my Father,” mark)—“inherit the kingdom prepared”—(mark the next word)—“*for you*, from before the foundation of the world.”

What does he say to those on the left? “Depart, ye cursed.” He does not say, “ye cursed of my Father,” but “ye cursed.” And what else does He say? “into everlasting fire, prepared”—(*not for you*, but)—“for the devil and his angels.” Do you see how it is guarded. Here is the salvation side of the question. It is all of God. “Come, ye blessed of my Father.” It is a kingdom prepared for them. There you have election, free grace in all its length and breadth.

But on the other hand, you have nothing said about the Father—nothing about that at all. “Depart, ye cursed.” Even the flames are said not to be prepared for sinners, but for the devil and his angels. There is no language that I can possibly conceive that could more forcibly express this idea, supposing it to be the mind of the Holy Spirit, that the glory should be to God and that the blame should be laid at man’s door.

Now, have I not answered these two questions honestly? I have endeavored to give a scriptural reason for the dealings of God with man. He saves man by grace, and if men perish they perish justly by their own fault. “How,” says some one, “do you reconcile these two doctrines?” My dear brethren, I never reconcile two friends, never. These two doctrines are friends with one another, for they are both in God’s Word, and I shall not attempt to reconcile them. If you show me that they are enemies, then I will reconcile them. “But,” says one, “there is a great deal of difficulty about them.” Will you tell me what

truth there is that has not difficulty about it? “But,” he says, “I do not see it.” Well, I do not ask you to see *it*, I ask you to believe it.

There are many things in God’s Word that are difficult, and that I cannot see, but they are there, and I believe them. I cannot see how God can be omnipotent and man be free, but it is so, and I believe it. “Well,” says one, “I cannot understand it.” My answer is, I am bound to make it as plain as I can, but if you have not any understanding, I cannot give you any, there I must leave it.

But then again, it is not a matter of understanding, it is a matter of faith. These two things are true, I do not see that they at all differ. However, if they did, I should say, if they appear to contradict one another, they do not really do so, because God never contradicts Himself. And I should think in this I exhibited the power of my faith in God, that I could believe Him, even when His Word seemed to be contradictory. That is faith.

Did not Abraham believe in God even when God’s promise seemed to contradict His providence? Abraham was old, and Sarah was old, but God said Sarah should have a child. How can that be? said Abraham, for Sarah is old, and yet Abraham believed the promise, and Sarah had a son. There was a reconciliation between providence and promise, and if God can bring providence and promise together, He can bring doctrine and promise together. If I cannot do it, God can even in the world to come.

Now, let me just practically preach this for one minute. Oh, sinners, if you perish, on your own head must be your doom. Conscience tells you this, and the Word of God confirms it. You shall not be able to lay your condemnation at any man’s door but your own. If you perish, you perish by suicide. You are your own destroyers, because you reject Christ, because you despise the birthright and sell it for that miserable mess of pottage—the pleasures of the world.

It is a doctrine that thrills through me. Like a two-edged sword, I would make it pierce to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow. If you are damned it shall be your own fault. If you are found in hell, your blood shall be on your own head. You shall bring the kindling to your own burning, you shall dig the iron for your own chains, and on your own head will be your doom. But if you are saved, it cannot be by your merits, it must be by grace—free, sovereign grace. The Gospel is preached to you, it is this, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”

May grace now be given to you to bring you to yield to this glorious command. May you now believe in Him who came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Free grace, who shall tell thy glories? who shall narrate thy achievements, or write thy victories? You have carried the cunning Jacob into glory, and made him white as the angels of heaven, and you shall carry many a black sinner there also, and make him glorious as the glorified. May God prove this doctrine to be true in your own experience!

If there still remains any difficulty upon your minds about any of these points, search the Word of God, and seek the illumination of His Spirit to teach you. But recollect after all, these are not the most important points in Scripture. That which concerns you most, is to know whether you have an interest in the blood of Christ, whether you really believe in the Lord Jesus. I have only touched upon these because they cause a great many people a world of trouble, and I thought I might be the means of helping some of you to tread upon the neck of the dragon. May God grant that it may be so for Christ’s sake.

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.