

OUR MANIFESTO NO. 2185

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 25, 1891,
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AT AN ASSEMBLY OF MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL.

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*“But I make known to you, Brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man.”
Galatians 1:11.*

To me it is a pitiful sight to see Paul defending himself as an Apostle and, doing this, not against the gainsaying world, but against cold-hearted members of the Church! They said that he was not truly an Apostle, for he had not seen the Lord. And they uttered a great many other things derogatory to him. To maintain his claim to the Apostleship, he was driven to commence his Epistles with, “Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ,” though his work was a self-evident proof of his call. If, after God has blessed us to the conversion of many, some of these should raise a question as to our call to the ministry, we may count it a fiery trial—but we shall not conclude that a strange thing has happened to us. There is much more room to question *our* call to the ministry than to cast a doubt upon Paul’s Apostleship! This indignity, if it is put upon us, we can, by His Grace, cheerfully bear for our Master’s sake. We need not wonder, dear Brothers, if our ministry should be the subject of attack, because this has been the lot of those who have gone before us—and we should lack one great seal of our acceptance with God if we did not receive the unconscious homage of enmity which is always paid to the faithful by the ungodly world! When the devil is not troubled *by* us, he does not trouble *us*. If his kingdom is not shaken, he will not care about us or our work, but will let us enjoy inglorious ease. Be comforted by the experience of the Apostle of the Gentiles—he is peculiarly our Apostle—and we may regard his experience as a type of what we may expect while we labor among the Gentiles of our own day.

The treatment which has been given to eminent men while they have lived has been prophetic of the treatment of their reputations after death. This evil world is unchangeable in antagonism to true principles, whether their advocates are dead or living. They said, more than 1,800 years ago—“Paul, what of him?” They still say so. It is not unusual to hear dubious persons profess to differ from the Apostle and they even dare to say, “There, I do not agree with Paul.” I remember the first time that I heard this expression. I looked at the individual with astonishment. I was amazed that such a pigmy as he should say this of the great Apostle! Altogether apart from Paul’s Inspiration, it seemed like a cheese-mite differing from a cherub, or a handful of chaff discussing the verdict of the fire! The individual was so utterly beneath observation that I could not but marvel that his conceit should have been so outspokenly shameless. Notwithstanding this objection, even when supported by learned critics, we still agree with the Inspired servant of God. It is our firm conviction that to differ from Paul’s Epistles is to differ from the Holy Spirit—and to differ from the Lord Jesus Christ, whose mind Paul has fully expressed! It is remarkable that Paul’s writings should be so assailed! But this warns us that when we have gone to our reward, our names will not be free from aspersion, nor our teaching from opposition. The noblest of the departed are still slandered. Be not careful as to human judgment of yourself in death or in life, for what does it matter? Your real character, no man can injure but yourself, and if you are enabled to keep your garments clean, all else is not worth a thought.

To come more closely to our text. We do not claim to be able to use Paul’s words exactly in the full sense which he could throw into them, but there is a sense in which, I trust, we can each one say, “I make known to you, Brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man.” We may not only say this, but we ought to be able to say it with thorough truthfulness. The form of expression goes as far as Paul was known to go towards an oath when he says, “I

make known to you, brethren.” He means, I assure you most certainly—I would have you to be certain of it—“that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man.” On this point he would have all the brethren know past all doubt.

From the context we are sure that he meant, first of all, that *his Gospel was not received by him from men*. His reception of it, in his own mind, was not after men. And next, he meant, that *the Gospel itself was not invented by men*. If I can hammer out these two statements, we will then *draw practical conclusions from them*.

I. First, TO US THE GOSPEL IS NOT AFTER MEN AS TO THE MODE BY WHICH WE HAVE RECEIVED IT. In a certain sense we received it from men as to the outward part of the reception, for we were called by the Grace of God through parental influence, or through a Sunday school teacher, or by the ministry of the Word, or by the reading of a godly book, or by other agency. But in Paul’s case, none of these things were used! He was distinctly called by the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, speaking to him from Heaven and revealing Himself in His own light. It was necessary that Paul should not be indebted to Peter, or James, or John—even in the way in which many of us are indebted to instrumentality—so that he might truly say, “I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ.” Yet we also can say this in another sense. We, also, have received the Gospel in a way beyond the power of man to convey it to us—men brought it to our ears, but the Lord, Himself, applied it to our *heart*. The best of the saints could not have brought it home to our hearts, so as to regenerate, convert and sanctify us by it. There was a distinct act of God, the Holy Spirit, by which the instrumentality was made effectual and the truth was rendered operative upon our souls.

So I note that *not one among us has received the Gospel by birthright*. We may be the children of holy parents, but we are not, therefore, the children of God. To us it is clear that, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and nothing more. Only, “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Yet we hear of persons whose children do not *need* conversion. They are spoken of as being free from natural corruption and *born* children of God—having a Divine Grace within which only needs to be *developed*. I am sorry to say that my father did not find me such a child. He found out early in my life that I was born in sin, shaped in iniquity and that folly was bound up in my heart! Friends and teachers soon perceived in me a natural depravity and, assuredly, I have found it in myself! The sad discovery needed no minute research, for the effect of the evil stared me in the face in my character.

This tradition as to our being born with a holy nature is gaining foothold in the professing church, though contrary to Scripture—and even to the confessions of faith which are still avowedly maintained! Certain preachers hardly dare formulate it as a doctrine, but it is, with them, a kind of chaotic belief that there may be productions of the flesh which are very superior and will serve well enough *without* the new birth of the Spirit. This tacit belief will lead up to birthright membership and that is fatal to any Christian community, wherever it comes to be the rule! Without conversion, in certain fellowships, young people may drift into the church as a matter of course, but the church becomes only a part of the world—with the Christian name affixed to it!

May we never, in our Churches, sink into that condition! That religion which is a mere family appendage is of little worth! The true seed are “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” We have not received our faith by tradition from our parents—and yet, some of us, if true faith could be so received, would certainly have thus received it, for if we are not Hebrews of the Hebrews, but, according to our family tree, we are Puritans of the Puritans, descended throughout many generations of Believers. Of this we make small account before God, though we are not ashamed of it before men. We have no father in our spiritual life but the Lord, Himself, and we have not received that life, or the Gospel, by any carnal parentage, but of the Lord alone!

Brothers, we have not received the Gospel, nor do we now receive it, *because of the teaching of any man, or set of men*. Do you receive anything because *Calvin* taught it? If so, you had need look to your foundations. Do you believe a doctrine because *John Wesley* preached it? If so, you have reason to mind what you are doing. God’s way, by which we are to receive the Truth of God, is to receive it by the Holy Spirit! It is helpful to me to know what such-and-such a minister believed. The judgment of a holy, godly, clear-sighted, gifted Divine is not to be despised—it deserves to have due weight with us. He is as likely to be right as we are and we should differ from a Grace-taught man with some hesitancy. But it is a very different thing to say, “I believe it on this good man’s authority.”

In our raw state as young Christians, it may not be injurious to receive the Truth of God from pastors and parents, and so on, but if we are to become men in Christ Jesus, and teachers of others, we must quit the childish habit of depend-

ence on others and search for ourselves! We may now leave the egg and get rid of the pieces of shell as quickly as may be. It is our duty to search the Scriptures to see whether these things are so—and more—it is our wisdom to cry for Grace to appropriate each Truth and let it dwell in our inmost nature. It is time that we should be able to say, “This Truth of God is now as personally my own as if I had never heard it from lips of man! I receive it because it has been written on my own heart by the Lord, Himself. Its coming to me is not after men.”

There is an opinion current in certain circles that you must not receive anything unless it is taught you of men—the word, “men,” being swallowed up and hidden away, but being there, after all, under the term—“*the church*.” The church is set up as the great authority! If she has sanctioned it, you dare not question it! If she decrees, it is yours to obey! But this is to receive a gospel “after man” with a vengeance. And the process involved is a strange one. You must trace a dogma as coming through a continuous visible church and this will lead you through the *Cloaca Maxima* of old Rome. Though the Truth of God is manifestly clear and pure and proves itself to be the Water of Life to you, yet you must not accept it—you must take yourself to the muddied stream which can be traced through the foul channel of a continuous church, which for ages has apostatized!

My dear Brethren, a doctrine’s being believed by what may, in courtesy, be called “the church,” is no voucher for it! The most of us would almost regard it as being a question to be raised whether teaching can be true which has been vouched for by those great worldly corporations which have usurped the name of churches of Christ. Several sects claim Apostolic succession and if any possess it, the Baptists are the most likely, since they practice the ordinances as they were delivered. But we do not even care to trace our pedigree through the long line of martyrs and of men abhorred by ecclesiastics. If we could do this without a break, the result would be of no value in our eyes, for the rag of “Apostolic succession” is not worth warehouse-room! Those who contend for the fiction may monopolize it if they will. We do *not* receive the Revelation of God because it has been received by a succession of fathers, monks, abbots and bishops! We are right glad when we perceive that certain of them saw the Truth of God and taught it—but that fact does not make it the Truth of God to us. We would, each one, say, “I make known to you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man.” We never think of quoting the community of men called “the church” as the ultimate authority with conscience. “We have not so learned Christ.”

Furthermore, I hope I shall speak for all of you here when I say that *we have received the Truth of God personally by the revelation of it to our own souls by the Spirit of the Lord*. Albeit that in so large a company as this I fear there may be a Judas, and the, “Lord, is it I?” may well be passed round with holy self-suspicion, yet we can all say, unless fearfully deceived, that we have received the Truth of God which we preach by the inward teaching of the Holy Spirit. Let us turn to our diaries, though the dates are now far away in the long-ago. We remember when the Light of God broke in and revealed our lost estate and thus began the groundwork of our teaching. Ah, Friends, the darker doctrines which make up the foil of the priceless jewels of the Gospel—do you not remember when you received them with power? That I was guilty, I believed, for I was so taught—but then and there I *knew* in my soul that it was so! Oh, how I knew it! Guilty before God, “condemned already,” and lying under the present curse of a broken Law, I was sorely dismayed. I had heard the Law of God preached and I had trembled as I heard it, but now I felt an inward conviction of personal guilt of the most piercing character. I saw myself a *sinner*—and what a sight is that! Fearfulness took hold upon me and shame and dread. *Then* I saw how true was the doctrine of the sinfulness of sin—and what a punishment it must involve. That doctrine I no longer received of men!

The precious doctrine of peace through the precious blood of Jesus we also know by inward personal teaching. We used to hear and sing of the great Sacrifice and of the love of Him who bore our sins in His own body on the tree. But now we stood at the foot of the Cross—for ourselves we beheld that dear face and gazed into the eyes so full of pity—and saw the hands and feet that were fastened to the wood for our sakes. Oh, when we saw the Lord Jesus, as our Surety, smarting for our offense, *then* we received the Truths of Redemption and Atonement in a way that was “not after man”!

Yes, those gracious men who have gone to Heaven did preach the Gospel to us fully and earnestly—and they labored to make known Christ to us! But to reveal the Son of God in us was beyond their power! They could as easily have created a world as have made these Truths of God vital to us! We say, therefore, each one from his inmost soul, “I make known to you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man,” so far as the way by which we have come to know and feel it within our own souls!

Since our first days we have experienced a gradual opening up of the Gospel to our understanding, but in all that process, our real progress has been of *God*—not of men. Brethren, you read commentators—that is to say, if your own comments are worth hearing you read the books of godly men—that is to say, if you, yourselves, ever say anything worth reading, yet your spiritual learning, if it is true and real, is of the Lord's imparting. Do we learn anything, in the most emphatic sense of learning, unless we are taught of the Lord? Is it not essential that God the Spirit should lay home the Truth of God which has been spoken to you, even by the ablest instructor? You have continued to be students ever since you left College, but your Tutor has been the Holy Spirit. By no other method can our spirits learn the Truth of God but by the teaching of the Spirit of God. We can receive the shell and the outer form of theology, but the real Word of the Lord, itself, comes by the Holy Spirit who leads us into all Truth.

How sweetly the Spirit has taught us *in meditation*! Have you not often been surprised and overcome with delight as Holy Scripture has opened up as if the gates of the Golden City had been set back for you to enter? I am sure that you did not, then, gather your knowledge from men, because it was all fresh to you as you sat alone with no book before you but the Bible and yourself receptive, scarcely thinking out matters, but drinking them in as the Lord brought them to you! A few minutes' silent openness of soul before the Lord has brought us in more treasure of Truth than hours of learned research! The Truth of God is something like those stalactite caverns and grottoes of which we have heard, which you must enter and see for yourself if you would really know their wonders. If you should venture there without light or guide, you would run great risks, but with blazing torch and an instructed leader, your entrance is full of interest. Look! Your guide has taken you through a narrow winding passage where you have to creep, or go on bended knees! At last he has brought you out into a magnificent hall and when the torches are held aloft, the far-off roof sparkles and flashes back the light as from countless jewels of every hue!

You now behold Nature's architecture and cathedrals are, therefore, toys to you. As you stand in that vast pillared and jeweled palace, you feel how much you owe to your guide and to his flaming torch. Thus the Holy Spirit leads us into all Truth and sheds the Light of God on the eternal and the mysterious! This He does in certain cases very personally. Then He fills us with complete forgetfulness of all our immediate surroundings and we commune only with the Truth of God. I can well understand how philosophers, while working out an absorbing problem, have seemed lost and oblivious to all the world besides. Have you never felt a holy absorption in the Truth while the Spirit has filled you with its glorious vision? It has been so with many of the saints while taught of God. They are not likely to give up to popular clamor what they have thus received!

How often has the Lord taught His servants His own Truth *in the school of tribulation*! We speak well of meditation—it is as silver—but tribulation is as much fine gold! Tribulation not only works patience, but patience brings experience and, in experience, there is a deep and intimate knowledge of the things of God which comes by no other means. Do you know what it is to be in such pain that you could not bear one more turn of the screw? And have you, then, in faintness fallen back upon your pillow and felt that even then you could not be more happy unless you were caught up to the third Heaven? Then has it been verified to some of us that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. While lying in passive peace, it may be you have seen a Scripture come forth like a star between the clouds of a tempest, and it has shone with such luster as only the Lord God could have given to it. Depression of spirit and torture of body have been forgotten while the bright promise has made your soul full of light!

There is a place in the far-back desert which you can never forget. There grows a bush. A very unpromising object is a bush—but it is sacred to you—for there the Lord revealed Himself to you and the bush burned with fire, but was not consumed. You will never unlearn the lesson of the burning bush! Do we know any Truth of God till the Holy Spirit burns it into us—and engraves it on our soul as with an iron pen and with the point of a diamond? There are ways of learning for which we are very grateful, but the surest way of learning Divine Truth is by having the Word of God grafted so as to take living hold upon the soul! Then we do not only *believe* it—we give our *life* to it—it lives in us and, at the same time, we live upon it! Such Truth throbs in every pulse, for it lives in us and colors our being. The devil insinuates questions, but we are not accountable for what he pleases to do, and we care the less, because he now whispers into a deaf ear. When once the soul, itself, has received the Truth of God, and it has come to permeate the entire being, we are not accessible to those doubts which before pierced us like poisoned arrows!

I may add, concerning many of the Truths of God and the whole Gospel system, that we have learned the Truth, thereof, *in the field of sacrifice and service with our Lord*, so that to us it is not after man. If you do not believe in human depravity, accept a pastorate in this wicked London and if you are true to your commission, you will doubt no more! If you do not believe in the necessity of the Holy Spirit to regenerate, take charge over a cultured and polished congregation that will hear all your rhetoric, and will remain as worldly and as frivolous as it was before! If you do not believe in the power of the atoning blood, never go and see Believers die, for you will find that they trust in nothing else! A dying Christ is the last resort of the Believer—

*“When every earthly prop gives way,
He, then, is all my strength and stay.”*

If you do not believe in the election of Grace, live where multitudes of men come under your notice and persons most unlikely are called out from among them in surprising ways—and it will grow upon you! Here comes one who says, “I have neither father, mother, brother, sister, nor friend who ever enters a place of worship.” “How came *you* to believe?” “I heard a word in the street, Sir, quite by accident, that brought me to tremble before God.” Here is the election of Grace! Here comes another, dark in mind, troubled in soul and she is a member of a family—all of them members of your Church—all happy and rejoicing in the Lord. And yet this poor creature cannot lay hold upon Christ by faith. To your great joy, you set before her Christ in all His fullness of Grace and she becomes the brightest of the whole circle, for they never knew the darkness as she did, and they can never rejoice in the Light of God as she delights in it! To find a greatly-loving saint you must find one who has had much *forgiven*.

The woman that was a sinner is the only one that will wash Christ’s feet. There is raw material in a Publican which you seldom find in a Pharisee. A Pharisee may polish up into an ordinary Christian, but somehow there is a charming touch about the pardoned sinner which is lacking in the other. There is an election of Grace and you cannot help noticing, as you go about, how certain Believers enter into the inner circle, while others linger in the outer courts. The Lord is Sovereign in His gifts and does as He wills—and we are called to bow before His scepter within the Church as well as at its portal. The longer I live, the more sure I am that salvation is all of Grace and that the Lord gives that Grace according to His own will and purpose.

Once more, some of us have received the Gospel because of *the wonderful unction that has gone with it at times to our souls*. I hope that none of us will ever fall into the snare of following the guidance of impressions made upon us by texts which happen to come prominently before our minds. You have judgements and you must not lay them aside to be guided by impressions. But for all that and at the back of all that, there is not a man here that has led an eventful, useful life but must confess that certain of those acts of his life, upon which his whole history has hinged, are connected with influences upon his mind which were produced, as he believes, by supernatural agency! A passage of Holy Writ, which we have read a hundred times before, took us captive and became the master of every thought. We steered by it as men trust the polestar and we found that our voyage was made easy thereby. Certain texts are, to our memory, sweet as wafers made with honey, for we know what they once did for us and the recollection is refreshing. We have been revived from a fainting fit, nerved for a desperate effort, or fired for a sacrifice by a Scripture which became no longer a word in a book, but the very voice of God to our soul—even that voice of the Lord which is full of majesty!

Have you not noticed how a turn of a word in a text has made it seem all the more fitted for you? It looked a very small point, but it was essential to its effect, just as a small notch in a key may be the exact form which makes it fit the lock. How much may hang on what seems, to the unspiritual, to be nothing more than a slight verbal distinction, or an unimportant turn of expression! A thought of primary importance may turn upon the singular of plural of a word. If it is the Greek word, itself, the importance cannot be overestimated, but in an English word, in the translation, there may be well-near equal force according as the Word is true to the original. The many, who can only read our marvelous English Bible, come to prize its words because the Lord has blessed them to their souls. A simple Welsh friend believed that our Lord must have been a Welshman, because, he said, he always speaks *to me* in Welsh.

To me it has often seemed as if the Well-Beloved of my soul had been born in my native village, had gone to my school and had passed through all my personal experiences, for He knows me better than I know myself. Although I know He was of Bethlehem and Judea, yet He seems like one of London, or of Surrey. No, more—I see in Him more than manhood could have made Him—I discern in Him a Nature more than that of man, for He enters the inmost recesses of my

soul, He reads me like an open page, He comforts me as one brought up with me, He dives into my deepest griefs and attends me in my highest joys! I have secrets in my heart which only He knows. Would God His secret were with me as mine is with Him up to the measure of my capacity! It is because of that wonderful power which the Lord Jesus has over us through His sacred Word that we receive that Word from Him and receive it as not of man.

What is unction, my Brothers? I fear that no one can help me by a definition. Who can define it? But yet we know where it is and we certainly feel where it is not. When that unction perfumes the Word of God, it is its own interpreter, it is its own apologist, it is its own confirmation and proof to the regenerate mind. Then the Word of God deals with us as no word of man ever did or could! We have not received it, therefore, of men. Constantly receiving the Divine Word as we do, it comes to us with an energy always fresh and forcible. It comes to us, especially, with a sanctifying power which is the very best proof of its coming from the thrice-holy God. Philosophers' words may teach us what holiness is, but God's Word makes us holy! We hear our Brethren exhort us to aspire to high degrees of Grace, but God's Word lifts us up to them! The Word is not merely an instrument of good, but the Holy Spirit makes it an active energy within the soul to purge the heart from sin so that it can be said, "You are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you." When thus cleansed, you know that the Word is true. You are sure of it and you no longer need, even, the most powerful book of evidences. You have the witness in yourself, the evidence of things not seen, the seal of eternal verity.

I have taken all this time upon how we receive the Gospel and, therefore, I must be brief upon a further point.

II. TO US THE TRUTH ITSELF IS NOT AFTER MEN. I desire to assert this plainly. If any man thinks that the Gospel is only one of many religions, let him candidly compare the Scripture of God with other pretended revelations. Have you ever done so? I have made it a College exercise with our Brothers. I have said—We will read a chapter of the Koran. This is the Muslim's holy book. A man must have a strange mind who should mistake that rubbish for the utterances of Inspiration! If he is at all familiar with the Old and New Testaments, when he hears an extract from the Koran, he feels that he has met with a foreign author—the God who gave us the Pentateuch could have had no hand in many portions of the Koran!

One of the most modern pretenders to inspiration is the Book of Mormon. I could not blame you should you laugh outright while I read aloud a page from that conglomeration. Perhaps you are familiar with the apocryphal New Testament books. It would be an insult to the judgement of the least in the Kingdom of Heaven to suppose that he could mistake the language of these forgeries for the language of the Holy Spirit! I have had several pretended revelations submitted to me by their several authors, for we have more of the prophetic clan about than most people know of, but not one of them has ever left on my mind the slightest suspicion of his sharing the Inspiration of John, or Paul. There is no mistaking the Inspired Books if you have any spiritual discernment! Once let the Divine Light dawn in the soul and you perceive a coloring and a fashion in the product of Inspiration which are not possible to mere men. Would one who doubts this write us a fifth Gospel? Would anyone among our poets attempt to write a new Psalm which could be mistaken for a Psalm of David? I do not see *why* he could not, but I am sure he *cannot*. You can give us new psalmody, for it is an instinct of the Christian life to sing the praises of God, but you cannot match the glory of Divinely-inspired songs. Therefore we receive the Scripture and, consequently, the Gospel as not after man.

You say, perhaps, "You are comparing books and forgetting that your theme is the Gospel." But this is only in appearance. I do not care to waste your time by asking you to compare the gospels of men. There is not another gospel that I know of that is worth the comparison for a single minute. Oh, but, they say, there is a gospel that is much wider than yours. Yes, I know that it is much wider than mine, but to what does it lead? They say that what is nicknamed Calvinism has a very narrow door. There is a word in Scripture about a strait gate and a narrow way and, therefore, I am not alarmed by the accusation. But then there are rich pastures when you enter within and this renders it worth while to enter in by the strait gate! Certain other systems have very wide doors—but they lead you into small privileges—and those of a precarious tenure. I hear certain invitations which might run as follows—"Come you disconsolate! But if you come, you will still be disconsolate, for there will be no *eternal* life made sure to you and you must preserve your own souls, or perish after all." But I shall not enter into any comparisons, for they are odious in this case.

The Gospel, *our Gospel, is beyond the strain and reach of human thought.* When men have exercised themselves to the very highest in original conceptions, they have never yet thought out the true Gospel. If it is such a commonplace thing as the critics would have us believe, why did it not arise in the minds of the Egyptians or Chinese? Great minds often run

in the same grooves—why did not other great minds run in the same grooves as those of Moses, or Isaiah, or Paul? I think it is a fair thing to say that if it is such a commonplace form of teaching, it might have arisen among the Persians or Hindus, or, surely, we might have found something like it among the great teachers of Greece! Did any of these think out the doctrine of free and Sovereign Grace? Did they guess at the Incarnation and Sacrifice of the Son of God? No, even with the aid of our Inspired Book, no Muslim, to my knowledge, has taught a system of Grace in which God is glorified as to His justice, His love and His sovereignty. That sect has grasped a certain sort of predestination which it has defaced into blind faith, but even with that to help them, and the unity of the Godhead as a powerful light to aid them, they have never thought out a plan of salvation so just to God and so pacifying to the troubled conscience as the method of redemption by the substitution of our Lord Jesus!

I will give you another proof, which, to my mind, is conclusive that our Gospel is not after men, and it is this—that *it is immutable and nothing that man produces can be so called*. If man makes a gospel—and he is very fond of doing it, like children making toys—what does he do? He is very pleased with it for a few moments and then he pulls it to pieces and makes it up in another way—and this continually! The religions of modern thought are as changeable as the mists on the mountains! Look how often science has altered its very basis! Science is notorious for being most scientific in destruction of all the science that has gone before it! I have sometimes indulged myself, in leisure moments, in reading ancient natural history—and nothing can be more comic. Yet this is by no means an abstruse science. In 20 years' time, some of us may probably find great amusement in the serious scientific teaching of the present hour, even as we do now in the systems of the last century. It may happen that in a little time the doctrine of evolution will be the standing jest of schoolboys. The same is true of the modern divinity which bows its knee in blind idolatry of so-called science.

Now, we say, and do so with all our heart, that the Gospel which we preached 40 years ago, we will still preach in 40 years' time if we are alive. [Less than two years later, Brother Spurgeon began eternity in the Presence of his Master—EO.] And, what is more, that the Gospel which was taught of our Lord and His Apostles is the only Gospel now on the face of the earth! Ecclesiastics have altered the Gospel and if it had not been of God, it would have been stifled by falsehood long ago. But because the Lord has made it, it abides forever! Everything human is, before long, moon-struck, so that it shifts with every phase of the lunar orb. But the Word of the Lord is not after men, for it is the same yesterday, today and forever.

It cannot be after men, again, because *it is so opposed to human pride*. Other systems flatter men, but this speaks the Truth of God. Hear the dreamers of today cry up the dignity of human nature! How sublime is man! But point me to a single syllable in which the Word of God sets itself to the extolling of man. On the contrary, it lays him in the very dust and reveals his condemnation! Where is boasting, then? It is excluded—the door is shut in its face. The self-glorification of human nature is foreign to Scripture which has for its grand object the Glory of God! God is *everything* in the Gospel which I preach and I believe that He is All in All in your ministry, also. There *is* a gospel in which the work and the glory are divided between God and man—and salvation is not altogether of Grace—but in our Gospel, salvation is of the Lord! Man never could nor would have invented and devised a Gospel which would lay him low and secure to the Lord God all the honor and praise. This seems to me to be clear beyond all question and, therefore, our Gospel is not after men.

Again, it is not after men, because *it does not give sin any quarter*. I have heard that an Englishman has professed himself a Muslim because he is charmed by the polygamy which the Arabian Prophet allows his followers. No doubt the prospect of four wives would win converts who would not be attracted by spiritual considerations. If you preach a gospel which makes allowances for human nature and treats sin as if it were a mistake rather than a crime, you will find willing hearers. If you can provide absolution at small cost and can ease conscience by a little self-denial, it will not be amazing if your religion becomes fashionable. But our Gospel declares that the wages of sin is death and that we can only have eternal life as the *gift* of God—and that this gift always brings with it sorrow for sin, a hatred towards it and an avoidance of it!

Our Gospel tells a man that he must be born again and that without the new birth he will be eternally lost, while with it he will obtain everlasting salvation! Our Gospel offers no excuse or cloak for sin, but utterly condemns it. It presents no pardon except through the great Atonement and it will give that man no security who tries to harbor any sin in his bosom. Christ died for sin—and we must die *to* sin, or die eternally. If we preach the Gospel faithfully, we must

preach the Law of God. You cannot fully preach salvation by Christ without setting Sinai at the back of the picture and Calvary in the front! Men must be made to feel the evil of sin before they will prize the great Sacrifice which is the head and front of our Gospel. This is not to the taste of this or any other age and, therefore, I am sure man did not invent it.

We know that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is not of men because *our Gospel is so suitable for the poor and illiterate*. The poor, according to the usual fashion of men, are overlooked. Parliament has enclosed all the commons so that a poor man cannot keep a goose! I doubt not that, if it were likely to be effectual, we should soon hear of a bill for distributing freeholds of the stars among certain sky-lords! It is evident that a fine property in the celestial regions is, at the present time, unregistered in any of our courts. Well, they may sooner enclose and assign the sun, moon and stars than the Gospel of our Lord Jesus! This is the poor man's common. "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." Yet there are not a few, nowadays, who despise a Gospel which the common people can hear and understand! And we may be sure that a plain Gospel never came from *them*, for their taste does not lie in that direction. They want something abstruse, or, as they say, thoughtful. Do we not hear this sort of remark, "We are an intellectual people and need a cultured ministry. Those evangelistic preachers are all very well for popular assemblies, but we have always been select and require that preaching which is abreast of the times"?

Yes, yes, and their man will be one who will not preach the Gospel unless it is in a clouded manner, for if he does declare the Gospel of Jesus, the poor will be sure to intrude themselves and shock my lords and ladies! Brothers, our Gospel does not know anything about high and low, rich and poor, black and white, cultured and uncultured! If it makes any difference, it prefers the poor and down-trodden. The great Founder of it says, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes." We praise God that He has chosen the base things and things that are despised! I hear it boasted of a man's ministry, although it gradually diminishes the congregation, that it is doing a great work among thoughtful young men. I confess that I am not a believer in the existence of these thoughtful young men—those who mistake themselves for such I have generally found to be more conceited than thoughtful. Young men are all very well and so are young women, and old women, also, but I am sent to preach the Gospel to *every creature* and I cannot limit myself to thoughtful young men! I make known to you that the Gospel which I have preached is not after men, for it knows nothing of selection and exclusiveness, but it values the soul of a sweep or a dustman at the same price as that of the Lord Mayor, or her Majesty!

Lastly, we are sure that the Gospel we have preached is not after men, because *men do not take to it*. It is opposed, even to this day. If anything is hated bitterly, it is the out-and-out Gospel of the Grace of God, especially if that hateful word, *Sovereignty* is mentioned with it! Dare to say, "He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion," and furious critics will revile you without stint! The modern religionist not only hates the doctrine of Sovereign Grace, but he raves and rages at the mention of it! He would sooner hear you blaspheme than preach Election by the Father, Atonement by the Son, or Regeneration by the Spirit. If you want to see a man worked up till the Satanic is clearly uppermost, let some of the new divines hear you preach a Free-Grace sermon! A gospel which is after men will be welcomed by men—but it needs a Divine operation upon the heart and mind to make a man willing to receive into his utmost soul this distasteful Gospel of the Grace of God!

My dear Brothers, do not try to make it tasteful to carnal minds! Hide not the offense of the Cross lest you make it of no effect. The angles and corners of the Gospel are its *strength*—to pare them off is to deprive it of power! Toning down is not the increase of strength, but the death of it. Why, even among the sects, you must have noticed that their distinguishing points are the horns of their power—and when these are practically omitted, the sect is effete. Learn, then, that if you take Christ out of Christianity, Christianity is dead! If you remove Grace out of the Gospel, the Gospel is gone! If the people do not like the Doctrines of Grace, give them all the more of them! Whenever its enemies rail at a certain kind of gun, a wise military power will provide more of such artillery. A great general, going in before his king, stumbled over his own sword. "I see, said the king, your sword in is the way." The warrior answered, "Your Majesty's enemies have often felt the same." That our Gospel offends the King's enemies is no regret to us!

Dear Friends, if it is so that we have not received the Gospel from man, but from God, *let us continue to receive the Truth of God by the Divinely-appointed channel of faith*. Are you sure that you always will, to the fullest, *understand* the Truth of God? With most of us, the understanding is like a narrow rear gate to the city of Mansoul, and the great things of God cannot be so cut down as to be brought in by that entrance. The door is not wide enough! But our city has a great

gate called *faith*, through which even the infinite and eternal may be admitted. Give over the hopeless effort of dragging into the mind by efforts of reason, that which can so readily dwell in you by the Holy Spirit through faith! We that speak against rationalism are, ourselves, apt to reason too much—and there is nothing so unreasonable as to hope to receive the things of God by reasoning them out! Let us believe them upon the Divine testimony—and when they try us and even when they seem to grate upon the sensibilities of humanity—let us receive them, none the less, for all that. We are not to be judges of what God's Truth *ought* to be—we are to accept it as the Lord reveals it.

Next, let us, each one, expect opposition if he receives the Truth from the Lord, and especially opposition from one person who is both near and dear to him—namely, *himself*. There is a certain old man who is yet alive and he is no lover of the Truth of God, but, on the contrary, he is a partisan of falsehood. I heard a gracious policeman say that when he stood in Trafalgar Square and fellows of the baser sort kicked him and the other police, he felt a bone of the old man stirring within him. Ah, we have felt that bone, too often! The carnal nature opposes the Truth of God, for it is not reconciled to God, neither, indeed, can be! Let us pray the Lord to conquer our pride, that His Truth may dominate us, despite our evil hearts! As to the outside world opposing, we are not at all alarmed by *that* fact, for it is exactly what we were taught to expect. We are now unmoved by opposition. The captain of a ship minds not if a little spray breaks over him.

Remember that if you did not receive the Truth except through the power of the Spirit of God, you cannot expect others to do so. They will not believe your report unless the arm of the Lord is revealed to them. But then, if faith is the Holy Spirit's work, we need not fear that men can destroy it. Those who attempt to change our belief may well be a little dubious as to their success in the task they have undertaken. If faith is a Divine work within our souls, we may defy all sophistries, flatteries, temptations and threats. We shall be divinely obstinate—those who would pervert us will have to give us up! Possibly they will call us bigots, or hard-shells, or even idiots—but this, too, also signifies little if our names are written in Heaven!

Let us also conclude from our subject that *if these things come to us from God, we can safely rest our all upon them.* If they came to us of men, they would probably fail us in a crisis. Did you ever trust men and not rue the day before the sun was down? Did you ever rely on an arm of flesh without discovering that the best of men are men at the best? But if these things come of God, they are eternal and all sufficient! We can both live and die upon the everlasting Gospel! Let us deal more and more with God and with Him, only. If we have obtained Light from Him, there is more of blessing to be had. Let us go to that same Teacher, that we may learn more of the deep things of God. Let us bravely believe in the success of the Gospel which we have received. We believe *in* it—let us believe *for* it. We will not despair though the whole visible Church should apostatize!

When invaders had surrounded Rome and all the country lay at their mercy, a piece of land was to be sold and a Roman bought it at a fair value. The enemy was there, but he would not be dislodged. The enemy might destroy the Roman State. Let him try it! Be you of the same mind! The God of Jacob is our Refuge and none can stand against His eternal power and Godhead. The everlasting Gospel is our banner and, with Jehovah to maintain it, our standard never shall be lowered! In the power of the Holy Spirit, the Truth of God is invincible! Come on, you hosts of Hell and armies of the aliens! Let craft and criticism, rationalism and priestcraft do their best! The Word of the Lord endures forever—even that Word which, by the Gospel, is preached unto men!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Corinthians 4.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

[Please note this letter is inserted in Volume 37, 1891. The sermon was preached in 1890.—EOD]

TO MY READERS AND FRIENDS—If you accept the great Truths set forth in this “Manifesto,” please circulate it widely. I could not make the sermon shorter, so as to bring it into a single number, or I should have had to leave out some important point. It is a common saying with the opponents of the old faith, that Mr. Spurgeon is a “pessimist,” and takes gloomy views of things. Nothing can be more untrue—and this sermon may help to show that I am full of hope and confidence. The days are evil, but the Lord is good. Men forsake the faith, but God is still faithful!

I hope soon to be lifting up my voice again. Refreshed and rested, I look up to the Lord, who can nerve my arm for the conflict, which every day demands more faith and decision. “The Church of the Future,” vainly so called, threatens to

overthrow the Church of the living God! It is to run a theater and a public-house and include atheists in its membership. It is well to know where the age is driving. With its theater and public-house, it carries on its back two of the greatest instruments of evil yet known.

We have no weapon against this monster, with the double tower on its back, but the Gospel of the Grace of God! It is a sharp sword with two edges, if it is preached as it was delivered at the first. Advices to adapt it to the age are temptations to destroy its forge—and to these we can have no respect. Should I conceal those parts of Divine Truth which are obnoxious to the carnal mind, I should be unfaithful to God, untrue to my calling and guilty of the blood of souls!

Brethren, pray for me and all who are faithful to the Truth of God, that we may be upheld in our steadfastness! The Truth will conquer, for God makes it His banner—and His holy arm upholds it! And the end is not yet, unless, indeed, our Lord should suddenly appear!

Yours in waiting hope,

C. H. Spurgeon.

Mentone, Jan. 15, 1891.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307