

Solomon's Choice.

BY S. D. PHELPS.

Fair Gideon's summit broadly rounded
Upheld an altar-shrine,
Where free burnt offerings abounded,
As worship's act divine.

Here Solomon the king slept, dreaming,
After his vows were given,
When came the Lord in glory gleaming,
As from the gate of heaven.

"Ask me," proposed the voice supernal,
"What I to thee shall give."
Then prayed the king to the Eternal,
For wisdom how to live.

"Thy mercy to my father showing
Was bounteous and great;
And kindness still thou art bestowing,
As I before thee wait.

Called as the king of this vast nation,
And but a child am I;
I cannot fill this mighty station,
Only as thou art nigh.

O give thy servant understanding,—
A wise, discerning heart,
That he, whatever the task's demanding,
May act the noblest part."

A choice that met Jehovah's pleasure.
A prayer that blessings brought
Of wisdom, wealth, gifts without measure,
Far more than all he sought.

O help me, gracious, blessed Father,
E'er thus to pray and live,
Choosing the heavenly wisdom, rather
Than what this world can give.

—Christian Secretary.

Visitor Pulpit.

HOW TO MEET THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

A Sermon by Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.

"But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me."—MATTHEW 15: 24, 25.

Our Lord Jesus virtually discouraged the Syrophenician woman with the doctrine of election. I grant you that there is a difference between the election of the nation of Israel and the election of individuals; but into that we are not going to-night. The point is this: it was the doctrine of election which the Saviour threw in this poor woman's way. He said to her, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This was

ENOUGH TO DAMP HER SPIRIT, surely, and yet the Saviour put it before her there and then.

Why? I think He did so, first, at that time, that it might come from Him rather than from the disciples. If you feel it needful that a person should be somewhat sharply rebuked, you conclude to do it yourself. You say to yourself, "If I send that message by the best friend I have he will inflict more pain than I intended; therefore, I will communicate the unacceptable statement myself." The Saviour knew that by and by this woman would hear that the mission of the Christ was only to Israel; and she might hear it in such a way as would much more depress her spirit than if He personally told it to her himself. So He Himself said to her, "I am not sent to Tyre and Sidon. I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This is to say, Christ's mission as a prophet while He was here in the flesh was to Israel; and to Israel He usually restricted His labors throughout His life. He told her that Himself, I think, lest she should hear it at second hand.

I. First, then, THE DISCOURAGED WORD that came to this woman. It was, as I have said, a certain form of the doctrine of election; the unquestioned truth that God designed to bless the seed of Israel by the personal labors and testimonies of His Son Jesus, and that these blessings were not at that time sent to the people of Tyre and Sidon.

The doctrine of election has been made into a great bugbear by its unscrupulous opponents and its injudicious friends. I have read some very wonderful sermons against this doctrine, in which the first thing that was evident was that the person speaking was totally ignorant of his subject.

Nobody ever believed the doctrine of election as I have heard it stated by Arminian controversialists. I venture to say that nobody out of Bedlam ever did believe that which has been imputed to us. Is it re-

markable that we are as eager to denounce the dogmas imputed to us as ever our opponents can be? Why do they earnestly set themselves to confute what no one defends? They might as well spare themselves the trouble. Our friends abhor the doctrine as it is stated by themselves, and we are much of their mind; though the doctrine itself, as we would state it, is dear to us as life itself. They suppose that we never preach the Gospel freely to sinners, which thing we never fail to do with a freeness which none can excel. If we will keep simply to what the Word of God says, we shall find in it

TRUTHS APPARENTLY IN CONFLICT, but always in agreement. On every subject there is a truth which is set over against another truth; the one is as true as the other; the one does not take away from the other, nor raise a question upon the other; but the one ought to be stated as well as the other, and the two set side by side.

Did a sinner really know the doctrine of the choice of grace he would not run away from it, but he would be inclined to run into its arms. Yet to many it does seem to be as that black side of the cloud which the Lord turned upon the Egyptians; and therefore I am going to notice the discouragement as Christ put it before this woman. He said to her, first, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." "I am sent," he seemed to say, "to the Jews. I am sent to the house of Israel, but I am not sent to you." Jesus lets her know this hard truth at once, so that it may not worry her afterward. When she did obtain the cure of her daughter, he would have her know that it was given openly and above-board, and not by a blunder of pity, or an oversight of charity. She was to be once for all assured that the Lord Jesus had not forgotten Himself—that He knew all about the limitation of His commission during His mortal life, and that in overstepping it He

KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING, and had not been wafted beyond Himself by the impetuosity of His spirit.

Now, there is such a thing as the choice of God. The Lord has a people who are redeemed from among men. The Lord Jesus has a people of whom He has said, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me. Some are ordained unto eternal life, and therefore believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Does this fact discourage you? I do not see why it should. Why should not you be among that number? But suppose that I am not?" says one. Why do you not suppose that you are? You do not know anything about it; therefore why suppose at all? The Lord has chosen a people to be saved, and I feel glad to think that He has done so, for none can prove that I am not of the number. If there are some whom God will save, then I know also who they are, for He tells me that they are such as repent of sin, confess it, forsake it, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. These same things would my soul desire to do, and when I do so, I know that I am of the chosen number, and shall be saved. What is there in this to discourage a soul? Yet it does discourage some. When people are in the dark they are afraid of anything, everything! nothing!

Our Lord put before this woman something worse than the positive fact of the choice of Israel. He declared the negative side of the sacred choice. He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It is very little that you and I who are ministers of the Gospel have to do with preaching about what Christ is not sent to do. Poor penitent hearts, there is nothing in the divine decree to shut out one of you from hope. "The Lord hath not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; He hath not said unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain." Nevertheless, the Saviour did distinctly turn the blackest side of the doctrine to the woman, and say, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

What was worse in her case was that she knew that this election, as far as Christ had stated it, must ex-

clude her; for He told her that He was not sent save to the house of Israel, and she well knew that she did not belong to that house. The poor Canaanitish woman might very logically have ended her pleadings, saying, "What more can be done? I cannot go against the word from Christ's own lip." Yet she did not so; but like a true heroine she pressed her suit even to the joyful end. You see her cause for discouragement was much

WORSE THAN YOURS

can ever be, for you do not know that you are shut out; there is nothing in your race or city which excludes you. Moreover, Christ has never told you that you are shut out. I do not think that any minister has ever told you so; and if you have ever gathered from any ministry under heaven that there is no hope for you, you have no right to come to such a conclusion. But if you have copied out bitter words, and have come to wretched conclusions, then I would urge you to be as sensible and as brave as this woman was, who, when she had not gathered it from ministers, but had received it from Christ Himself that He was not sent to such as she was, yet nevertheless persevered, and pressed forward, and came to Him and worshipped Him saying, "Lord, help me."

Some may say to me—"Why talk about this difficulty at all?" I talk about it because it exists.

IT FRETTS AND WORRIES

many minds. Many are troubled, and the servants of God must deal with their trouble. Gladly enough would I let these fears alone if they would let my people alone. The stern fact of predestination meets most men somewhere or other: even in the paths of philosophy it is not escaped; and when it comes darkly over truly gracious souls, much of its power for mischief will lie in the ignorance of the person assailed. If we were better instructed we should probably find no mystery where all is mystery now. Men forget that the ordination of God deals with everything; not only with the spiritual, but quite as certainly with the natural world. Yet they never allow it to interfere with their labor for bread, their struggle for wealth, or their race for fame. They cannot understand that divine plan which interferes with no will of man, and yet secures the will of God; nor can they see how everything proceeds by the free agency of the creatures as much as if there were no God, and yet God ruleth over all.

I wish that this subject did not vex men, but it is idle to wish. It has vexed them from the beginning, and will vex them even to the end. As we cannot alter facts we must deal with them. Dear troubled souls, Jesus would have you come to Him without fear. He invites you to trust in Him; yea, more, He commands you to believe on His name. Nothing he has thought, or ordained, or purposed, or predestinated has any tendency to drive you from him. Whatever predestination may or may not be, this one thing is sure—"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Everything beckons toward His cross, and Himself. Come, and let nothing hinder you even for a single hour.

II. Now, observe

THE COMMENDABLE ACT

of this woman. In considering what she did, we shall come to the practical part of the subject. And I notice that she did not attempt for a single moment to deny what Jesus had said. She did not assert, as some have shamelessly done, that God should deal with one as with another, or else He would be a respecter of persons. All that kind of thing, which we have heard so often, was far from her mind. She was silent and submissive as to the Saviour's speech. She did not argue at all. She left the truth, which to her was dark, in the keeping of Him whose name is light. She sees the black cloud, but she passes through it, feeling that it cannot be anything more than a cloud, and so she comes to the Saviour's feet, and cries "Lord, help me. I do not understand this. I am all in a fog, and all in a muddle. Lord, help me. Lord, I do not ask to understand, but I do cry for help. Enable me to believe, and to receive the blessing, let the dark truth say what it may."

SHE CAME TO JESUS,

and did not go round about. She came not to Peter, or James, or John, but she came to Jesus. She did not stand still and cry, as she had done before from a distance, crying unto Him; but she came to Jesus, drew nigh to Him, grasped Him, I do not doubt fell at His feet as though she would have held Him. She came to Jesus. Now, from everything beneath the heavens, poor soul, fly you to the living, personal Christ. In Him your hope lies. "Which way shall I go?" say you. If it were a matter of physical coming, I know that if the road were long and dreary, you would start upon it to-night without delay. But it is a mental coming. You are to come to Jesus, not with feet and legs, but with mind and heart. Remember that there is such a Person. Consider Him. Think of Him. Believe Him. Reverence Him, for He is the Son of the Highest. Trust Him, for He is "mighty to save." This is coming to Him.

The woman came to Jesus immediately that He uttered this word of discouragement. We read in the text, "Then came she." "Then came she and worshipped Him." What then? When He seemed to drive her away? Then? Why, He had just told her that He was not sent to her. "Then came she." He had just uttered a most mysterious and discouraging truth, but "Then came she." Our poor friend who was buffeted by our Lord's Word, was secretly upheld by the sight of His person. What can a word be compared with a person—compared with such a person as that of Jesus, the Sinner's Friend? She believes Him rather than His way of speaking. He says that He is not sent, but there He is. He says that He is not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and yet there He is. He has come here where there are none of the house of Israel. She seems to say to herself, "Whether He was sent or not, here He is. I am sure that He has all power given to Him to heal my daughter; and here He is. I do not know about His commission, but I do know Himself, and I shall still plead with Him." So she came to Jesus there and then, and why should not you?

But now notice

HOW SHE CAME.

"Then came she and worshipped Him." I wish I could picture the scene. She did not stop to work out the difficult question with which He posed her; but she looked at Him, and she came to Him, and when she got near to Him she did the best thing she could—she worshipped Him. Down she went on her face before Him, and when she did look up it was with a look of reverent awe and childlike confidence. Blessed be His name, if we cannot understand Him we can worship Him.

Now, you have been thinking about yourself, and the more you will do this the more you will despond and despair. No possible comfort can come to you by that road. If I were you, I would give up that task, and now begin to think about Jesus, the Son of God, the Saviour of men. "Oh, but I am such a sinner!" Yes, and He is such a Saviour. "Sir, I am so black!" But He is able to make us whiter than snow. Behold Him then upon the cross removing human sin, and see if you cannot copy the woman's example—"Then came she and worshipped Him."

Then, notice

HER PRAYER.

"Lord," she says, "help me." My dear hearer, do that, and do it now. No doctrine will trouble you long: I am sure it will not. On the contrary, you will inquire why you did ever let it trouble you. Do you ever let predestination trouble you in the matter of your daily business? Tomorrow you hope to make a few shillings at your daily calling, but it may be that you will not, you may lose it. Why do you not say to yourself, "It may be that the providence of God has arranged that I shall not earn anything to-morrow; therefore I shall stop at home and do nothing?" Why, you are not such a fool. Let the providence of God do what it may, your business is to do what you can. So it is with a poor

seeking soul; that soul's business is to do what He wills, but meanwhile to cry "Lord, help me." Wholly submissive, but heartily adoring, lie at Jesus' feet and believe that this divine Saviour must and will save every soul that hangs upon Him. This is the way of wisdom; follow it. God help you to do so, and to do so at once.

I do not think that I need to say anything more by way of comforting you, for that may well suffice if the Lord shall incline your heart to seek His face at once. Remember this, however, that there never was a soul yet that came to Christ and Christ did cast it away. Remember, again, that there never can be such a soul, for He has said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Remember, again, that every soul that did come to Christ came because the Father drew him, and that every soul that came found out afterward that there was an election of grace that encompassed Him, and that He was in it. Even this poor woman turned out to be one that Christ was sent to bless.

Although, as a general matter of fact, in His lifetime He came to the seed of Israel, just as the prophets came to Israel, yet there always appeared an exception about the prophets, and therefore it was no marvel that there should be exceptions in the case of their Lord. Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, but unto none of them was the prophet sent save to a woman of Sarepta, who belonged to the very city out of which this woman came. Many lepers were in Israel in the days of Elisha; yet none of them were healed save Naaman the Syrian. Naaman did not belong to the favored race at all, but was a far-off stranger, and yet he received the blessing from the Lord God of Israel. The election of God as to these temporal things did seem to exclude all but the seed of Israel, but it was only in seeming; there were always some

STRANGERS IN THE CHOSEN LINE;

and so that particular form of election which consisted in our Lord's personal ministry being only to the Jews did not cause the exclusion of this poor believing woman. To her Jesus Christ had manifestly come in the chosen line, for there He was! He was outside His own boundary! He had come to her! Now, at this moment, whatever you may think about this doctrine or that, Jesus Christ has come to you. I have preached to you His truth, and you have heard it. Ay, and you have felt something of its power. Yield to it, I beseech you. If you yield to it, and come to Him and trust Him, then rejoice that the lines of electing love have encompassed you. You are His. You could not and would not have come to Him in prayer and simple faith, if it had not been so. Your coming to Him proves that His eternal love of old went after you. Go home, O woman of a sorrowful spirit, and be no more sad. The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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