

Saving Grace – Sovereign Grace

SET FORTH IN

TWO SERMONS

Preached at the Merchant's Hall

By SAMUEL PIKE

"For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Romans 9:15-16.

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SERMON I.

EXODUS 33:19

"And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy."

This remarkable chapter presents us with several circumstances that are very instructing and deeply affecting. We have here the Lord represented as provoked in the highest degree with his people Israel, because of their sin {recorded in the former chapter} of making and worshipping the golden calf. In the next place, we see Moses pleading with God for them in the most moving and earnest manner; and that not without happy success. In this affair, we find Moses admitted into the nearest and closest communion with God, for the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend, verse 11. In consequence of all this, Moses is emboldened to make one of the grandest requests to God that ever was made by a mortal man to the eternal Jehovah, verse 18, and he said, namely, to the Lord, I beseech thee, show me thy glory.

My text is the beginning of the answer made to this remarkable petition. God tells him indeed, verse 20, that it was impossible for this desire of his to be fully answered in his mortal state; but yet Jehovah condescends to satisfy his desire, as far as it could be proper in the present life. The text contains two things in answer. 1. "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." 2. "I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee," i.e., I will discover to thee my special love and my glorious name. And we can scarcely desire a greater favour on this side heaven, than what is contained in this promise to him. And what is this glorious name? The remaining clause of the text, which is what I fix upon, gives us one grand particular of it, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious," &c., God here is pleased to

mention his sovereignty first, and to place it foremost in the account he gives of himself, as if it were the highest attribute belonging to his nature, and the greatest glory of his name.

Here I cannot help remarking, how different God's thoughts are from our thoughts, and his ways from our ways! Many conceive this to be an attribute that should rather lie concealed, as thinking such absolute sovereignty would rather appear a deformity or blemish, than a beauty or glory. Yea, some have been for discarding it entirely, as conceiving the language of complete sovereignty to be the language of a tyrant, and not of a God. And no wonder, for this is that perfection of Deity which human nature in its present state most of all dislikes and rebels against, both doctrinally and practically. It is what mankind can scarcely relish or digest. But those who plead for and adore this peculiar perfection of Godhead, may well be kept in countenance against all the oppositions and reflections of fellow mortals; since it is clear that the Lord himself glories in that which the pride of man cannot endure! It is very remarkable that Jesus Christ, who was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, all the days of his flesh, and that to such a degree that we never find him rejoicing but once, had his spirit elevated to joy and praise, upon this particular account and occasion, Luke 10:21, "at that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

A person who is in any tolerable measure acquainted with his Bible cannot be ignorant that the text I have now taken is quoted by the apostle Paul, Romans 9:14-15, and applied in order to prove, explain, and vindicate the righteousness and sovereignty of God in the affair of eternal salvation. But this circumstance shall be more distinctly attended to in the sequel. In the meantime, without any further introduction, I would lay down this brief but comprehensive doctrine, as derived

from and founded upon the text, that Saving Grace is Sovereign Grace.

By saving grace, I mean that grace of God which effectually brings sinners to complete salvation. But if any desire to know what I mean by sovereign grace, I profess myself incapable to explain it in clearer terms or language than what my text uses, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious; and I will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." In which words two ideas are plainly intimated - grace and mercy. Grace regards its object as utterly unworthy, and mercy regards its object as truly miserable, and thus our thoughts are plainly led to the state into which the Fall has brought all mankind; namely, a state of sin and misery. God, in being gracious, respects men as sinful, guilty, and unworthy. And God, in being merciful, respects men as miserable and undone. I will take liberty then to state, explain, prove and illustrate this doctrine of sovereign grace; setting forth both its nature and its use. In doing this, I am persuaded that I am entering upon a subject that lies at the foundation of all that which we plead for, when we are contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and I trust it will appear no way disagreeable to those who know themselves, and know the grace of God in truth. Here I shall {1} prove the doctrine {2} confirm and illustrate it {3} defend it, and {4} apply and improve it.

I. As for the proof of this point, that saving grace is sovereign grace; I have a variety of arguments to produce in favour of it, drawn {1} from express scripture {2} from scripture consequences {3} from the analogy of faith {4} from the real condition of fallen man, and {5} from experience and observation.

1. That saving grace is sovereign grace, appears from express scripture language. Not to enlarge any further upon the text, which gives the idea of sovereignty in the clearest terms, let us turn to that noted passage, Romans 9:11-23. Let me here entreat the reader, before he proceeds, to peruse this paragraph of his Bible distinctly and carefully; and he will soon perceive it to be that special passage in the word which

the proud reason of man has continually been objecting to, and striving to invalidate. And because this place is at first view so offensive to carnal reason, therefore all possible pains have been taken to explain it different from its obvious meaning; and after all, I do not doubt but many persons do heartily wish that this paragraph, and indeed this whole chapter, had never been in the Bible. So great is the aversion of man to the sovereignty of God, I am very sensible that various methods have been taken to explain away the sovereignty expressed so fully in this passage, by attempting to apply the whole to temporal and not spiritual blessings, or to nations and not to individuals. And was this application just, yet surely we may well suppose that God should be as sovereign in bestowing spiritual as temporal blessings; and in his dealings with particular persons, as with nations and communities. But the apostle's expressions, in verse 22-23, are so strong and distinct, that one would think it impossible to suppose he has not his eye upon the eternal condition of particular persons.

But further, it is very remarkable that the apostle in these verses not only asserts and proves, but vindicates, the doctrine of sovereignty, by starting and answering those very objections which have been in every age advanced against it. Is it objected, that such absolute sovereignty would be unjust and unrighteous? This objection is mentioned and refuted, verse 14 & 15, "what shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid," i.e., far be it, "for he saith unto Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," &c. Again, it is objected that such absolute sovereignty carries the idea of cruelty in it? This is likewise mentioned, verse 19, and repelled in the following verses with abhorrence. The objection is conceived in these terms, "thou wilt say then unto me, why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" The strongest argument that ever was invented or produced against this doctrine. I shall leave the apostle to give the reply, while I take the liberty to make the following use of the apostle's strain of argument. That since the apostle starts and removes the very same objections

which have been continually urged against the doctrine, nothing is more evident than that he had and maintained the very same idea of the divine sovereignty which we now maintain; since it is apparently liable to the very same objections from the pride and vain reasonings of man.

I might next turn you to that passage in Luke 10:21, where Christ expresses and rejoices in the special sovereignty of God; but this has been hinted at already, so I would therefore proceed to mention some other proofs.

John 1:13, where it is said, "that those who believe on Christ are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." From hence it appears, that those who are regenerated are born, not of blood, i.e., not by natural generation; nor of the will of the flesh, i.e., not by means of any inclinations or desires which are in us naturally; nor of the will of man, i.e., not by virtue of any persuasive influence one person may be supposed to have over another; but of God, of him absolutely, and of him alone. We may here with great safety affirm that when these three negatives are laid aside, there is no room left for anything but sovereign grace to appear in deciding the point.

Again, Ephesians 8-9, "for by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." If works are not here entirely excluded, and the whole honour given to absolutely free grace, there is no dependence to be placed upon scripture language.

Again, Romans 8:28-30, where we have set before us the glorious chain of salvation; which reaches from an eternity past to an eternity to come; the first link whereof is sovereign grace, or the absolute purpose of God; and the last link is eternal glorification.

Once more, Romans 11:5-6, where we read of a "remnant according to the election of grace." Where the apostle takes occasion to explain in what a high and absolute sense he uses the word grace in this subject of election. "And if by grace, then it is no more of works;

otherwise grace is no more grace, but if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." Here the apostle will not allow election to be of grace, if it be in any degree or in any sense of works, whether done or foreseen. The obvious inference, then, must be that election to salvation must be resolved entirely into sovereign grace.

2. That saving grace is sovereign grace, appears from scripture consequences. Here we may bring in all those assertions of sacred writ which ascribe the turning point of man's salvation entirely to the power and grace of God, or which attribute the first turn of the heart and will unto a divine agency and efficacy. Is it true, that those only are in a state of salvation who have so learned the gospel as to come to Christ? Let us see then how it comes to pass that any souls come to Christ. Is it of their own free natural choice? Is it by means of any endeavours they have used, or any duties they have performed, previous thereunto? No, no; for Christ was not ashamed or afraid to say even before the carnal Jews, John 6: 44, "no man can come unto me, except the Father which sent me draw him." And this drawing is by divine teaching; as it is written, "and they shall be all taught of God." And again, verse 65, "no man can come unto me except it were given to him of my Father." And the next words tells us, verse 66, "from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." They could not relish or bear such soul-humbling doctrine. No wonder, then, if the declaration of the same truth should have a similar effect in our times.

Many other passages may be produced to the same purpose; such as John 10:16, "other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice." Titus 2:5, "not by works of righteousness which we have done," &c., Ephesians 2:4-5, "but God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he has loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace ye are saved." All which texts, with several others, conspire to evince that the turning point of a man's salvation does not lie either in his will or power, but in

the free purpose, sovereign love, and almighty power of God. So that we may conclude this head of argument with those pointed interrogations, which one would think were sufficient to demolish all thoughts of ascribing the turning point, in any sense, or in any degree, to the creature. First Corinthians 4:7, "for who maketh thee to differ? Or what hast thou which thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?"

3. That saving Grace is sovereign Grace may be made to appear from the analogy of Faith. A phrase used by the Apostle, Romans 12:6, translated, the "proportion of faith," by which I perceive that he meant something like what I now intend by it; namely, that central or fundamental Truth of the Gospel; by and according to which all our Doctrines and Exhortations ought to be regulated, in dispensing the Gospel; that Truth from whence all the lines of Gospel doctrine are extracted and in which they terminate and center, namely, that Jesus is the Christ, the only and perfect Saviour of sinners as such; the only and sure Foundation of faith and hope towards God. This is the maxim of the Gospel, that there is Salvation in no other, and that in him all fullness dwells, and that in him alone God is well pleased. This is the Truth which every real Christian is persuaded of; for the explaining, illustrating and improving of which the whole Bible seems chiefly to be written. Now if we understand this Truth clearly, we shall easily perceive from it, the sovereignty of Grace in the affair of Salvation; for if Jesus Christ be the only Saviour, then the sinner himself cannot be supposed to be his own saviour in any degree. Is Christ the perfect Saviour? Then the whole of a sinner's Salvation is comprised in his Purchase and Fullness. Oh my brethren, this is the grand fundamental Truth of the Gospel; and it is its peculiar glory. Now, can a person clearly believe this, and yet imagine, that anything found in him, or done by him, contributes towards his Salvation from wrath or towards his title to eternal glory? Surely, he that apprehends and believes this truth, must look upon his entire Hope and Salvation to be contained in Christ

alone. From whence it follows that his Salvation is of absolutely Free Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Here is no room left for requisites, conditions or qualifications on the sinner's part; and if so, nothing else but free and sovereign Grace must take place. If we then look upon the whole of Salvation as purchased by Christ, for sinners, for sinners as such, and even for the worst of sinners, we must naturally infer from hence, that the Grace which saves must be sovereign. But if we allow that there is anything in the creature's will or power that gives the turning point, we practically deny that Christ is the only and perfect Saviour of sinners. But it is evident, that persons are justified freely by God's Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Romans 3:24.

However, I am far from being so strict in this matter as to imagine, that no person is or can be saved, unless he apprehends and professes this doctrine of sovereign grace with entire clearness. {See Robert Sandeman's objection to this statement, and paragraph, in his letter to Pike, attached to the conclusion of this discourse.} There are many whose minds are clouded, and perhaps are so drawn aside by the popular outcry against this doctrine, so hated by the world, as to express a dislike to this truth; and yet these very persons will freely acknowledge for themselves, that they never did nor could contribute anything towards their own state of Salvation; for they know that their whole Salvation is in Christ; they dare not lay the least stress of their hope upon any but him; they know and own, that it is the Spirit alone that hath convinced them of sin and righteousness; that they themselves could have no hope if Christ were not a complete Saviour in all respects; and that they themselves would never have known and embraced this hope, had they not been led by the Word and Spirit of God into this blessed Truth, and unto this only sure Foundation. So then, I may venture to affirm, that every true believer does in his heart believe what comprehends this doctrine, or what plainly supposes it; however he may be so clouded and confused as not to see that it does, or however unwilling

he may be to admit it, because of the odium that is cast upon it, and the frightful colors in which it is dressed up by many. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." If then we rightly attend to the import and extent of this fundamental, central truth, that Christ is the only and complete Saviour of sinners, we shall see that this proves and comprises in it the doctrine now pleaded for.

4. That saving grace is sovereign grace, further appears from the real condition of fallen man. The text in mentioning both grace and mercy plainly intimates that the objects thereof are both unworthy and undone, both guilty and miserable. And in fact, such is the condition of all mankind, that by nature we are both unable and unwilling to do anything aright. We are unable, for the scripture assures us, that we are naturally dead in trespasses and sins. Ephesians 1:1-5. And we are entirely unwilling, "because the carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; so then, they that are in the flesh, cannot please God." By this short and plain view of the case, it is evident that nothing short of perfect, sovereign grace, can suit his condition. It is because mankind do not in their hearts apprehend this, that they are prone to reject and oppose it. And it is not at all to be wondered at, that those should dislike it who imagine there is some room left for them to do something, whereby they may more or less ingratiate themselves into the divine favour. While those who believe in their very consciences for themselves that their condition in itself is thus lost and desperate, may well be pleased with sovereign grace, because they know and see that only such sort of grace and mercy can reach to them.

But let us now put the case both ways, and see what would be the consequence. If Grace were not absolutely free and sovereign, it would follow that some conditions are to be performed, some endeavours to be aimed at with this view, in order to entitle ourselves to the Divine favour some way or other. Now this plan would vastly suit the natural sentiments and desires of mankind; as it would set them about a round of self-

righteous duties and devotions, in order to come up to the required terms and conditions, that they might lay some claim to the favour of God upon that account; but while a person is upon this plan of thought and duty, it is easy to make it appear that instead of bringing himself nearer to God, he is in every act and endeavour running counter to the spirit of the Gospel, is setting about to establish his own righteousness, is running back to a Law of works, is gratifying his natural pride; and so instead of being found able or willing to do anything aright, he is only found able and willing to fulfil one of the lusts of the flesh, and that lust which is as opposite to the Spirit of God and of the Gospel as any other. I might add, that upon this plan, a person could never come to a solid peace in his own conscience, because he may still have occasion to doubt, whether he had properly come up to the terms required; and if he had any peace, it would not be founded upon the Blood and Righteousness of Christ, but upon his own duties and qualifications. Oh; how would this detract from the honour of Christ! How would this swell the pride of the creature, making him think himself something, when in all respects he is nothing.

On the other hand, if saving grace be sovereign grace; this doctrine tells the sinner his condemned and lost state, and immediately reaches his case for his relief and hope, as it sets before him the freeness of grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Now his soul is truly humbled, now he is prostrate at the foot of mercy, looking upon and admiring of sovereign grace, as knowing that nothing but this kind of grace could be serviceable to him. Now he is set forward in a way of love and obedience upon principles entirely new, that are truly honourable and acceptable to God. But more of this in the sequel.

Let me, then, freely proclaim to every individual, that you are naturally in such a case, as a fallen creature, that you can do nothing acceptable to God, and no grace but this can really suit you. And while you think otherwise in your hearts, all your endeavours will be built upon a wrong plan; being so many acts of

opposition to the righteousness of Christ as the only and complete ground of hope for a sinner.

5. That saving grace is sovereign grace, appears further from experience and observation. As to experience, surely I may address myself to the children of God with freedom, by asking such questions as these. Did you make yourselves to differ from others? Have you ever contributed anything towards your being in a state of salvation? Does your hope arise from anything found in or done by yourselves? To all questions of this kind you will answer in the negative; disclaiming and abominating the thought of attributing anything to yourselves. And thus the experience of every true christian is a standing proof of the sovereignty and freedom of grace. So, that we may make the appeal which the apostle doth to the Galatians, 3:2, "received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith," by any duties you performed, or by the report of free and complete grace in Christ? And to those that dispute the doctrine, we may say, as Eliphaz did to Job in another case, Job 5:1, "call now, if there be any that will answer thee, and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?" Where will you find a truly serious person who will venture to say, concerning himself, that he made himself to differ, or that he gave the turning point to his own hope and salvation?

As to observation, the apostle Paul takes this method to prove the point, by relating what appeared in his time. He observes, Romans 9:30-31, "that the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. While Israel which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness." What possible account can be given for this fact without admitting the doctrine of absolutely free grace? And indeed this is the account the apostle himself gives, verse 32, "wherefore," or how came this to pass? "Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." This appearance of discriminating grace was prophesied of under the Old Testament; which the apostle quotes in a very striking way, Romans

10:20, "but Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." A bold saying indeed, levelled directly at the pride of human nature, and a gospel minister had need be very bold to stand resolute and firm to this truth of sovereign grace in his declaring and defending the Gospel. Further, if we descend to make observations upon the appearances of things even in this day, we shall find the same sovereignty displayed. Is it not apparent that many times the wise and prudent are left to their own carnal proud reasonings, while the weak and ignorant are brought to the saving knowledge of the truth? Persons of a sober and moral behaviour are left to trust in their own righteousness, while some of the most abandoned and profligate are laid hold of by the grace of God. Those of the most agreeable tempers found destitute of the true grace of God, while those of the contrary disposition are called effectually by the Gospel. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence." I Corinthians 1:26-29.

Having thus offered the plain proof of this doctrine from various mediums, I shall now proceed to the illustration and defence of it. But before we go any further, it might be proper to give an answer to this question, what is the use of this doctrine? What practical purposes can it answer? Is it not rather a forbidding and discouraging sentiment? Can it be of any service to any to be taught and not to believe this doctrine?

I shall in this present discourse only make one remark in general; leaving the more copious improvement to the following discourse, and it is this, that this doctrine rightly understood and believed, evidently demolishes two things, which stand in the way

of the sinner's salvation, and of the believer's consolation and holiness.

1. It demolishes all those arguments and reasons which a person naturally offers for his hope towards God. He that says in his heart, that his case is not so bad, but it may be easily cured; that his sins are not so great, but they may be easily pardoned; he conceives a hope within himself, founded upon the smallness of his guilt, and the weakness of his corruption, and so is deceiving himself, and going away from the only foundation of hope which God has laid in Zion. He thinks that because his sins are not so abominable, nor his heart as corrupt as another's, therefore he has more reason to hope that God will show mercy to him. Or he says, if God can show mercy to the vilest, surely much more to me. It is upon some such principles as these, that the generality of mankind build their hope, and quiet their consciences. All which are as foreign from the gospel as darkness is opposite to light. Those who have slight thoughts of the sinfulness of their own sins, and the corruption of their hearts, and who fondly imagine they have some good dispositions, with some capacity to amend themselves, can repose themselves with some degree of satisfaction and contentment upon their notions of conditional Grace; for they lower the terms of Grace to what they imagine is in their own power, or enlarge their apprehensions of their own ability to come up to the supposed terms; and thus they are in the most explicit manner seeking Justification as it were by the works of the Law. Now while persons are of this spirit, the doctrine of sovereign Grace must indeed be very distasteful to them. What a rebuke, what a disappointment must be felt by such, when they are told from the Divine Word that after all they can offer in their own favour, yet still it is a Truth that, "the Lord hath mercy on whom he will have mercy." Not everyone that knows the nature of Gospel Faith and Conversion must see that all such reasonings in our own favour are the grand obstacle in the way of a sinner's prizing the pure Gospel and loving the Lord Jesus under the character of a perfect Saviour. That doctrine therefore which

overturns all such self-righteous arguments and thoughts cannot be esteemed a useless one. Now let a person be once brought to believe the sovereignty of Grace upon its proper evidence as applicable to his own case, and all these false presumptuous hopes are demolished, and he is become dead unto the Law, that he might be married to Christ; for if Grace be really sovereign, then all these thoughts, hopes and reasonings are shown to be false and groundless. But oh; how difficult is it to persuade sinners who are really lost and undone in themselves, to believe in their consciences, that all these imaginations of theirs are but mere delusions. We are all so naturally prone to warm ourselves with sparks of our own kindling, while God will have the freeness and perfection of his Grace displayed; that, under the influence of his Word and Spirit, sinners may be convinced and humbled in themselves and brought to take all their peace and hope from this Grace in Christ Jesus alone.

2. The doctrine of sovereign grace demolishes all those arguments and reasons which a sinner naturally offers against his hope towards God. A person that is under some rousing convictions of the guilt of his sin, and the misery of his condition, is ready to reason thus, "were I not so great a sinner, were not my case bad to such a degree, I might then have had some hope concerning myself. I would be very willing to reform and amend if that could gain me any share in the divine favour; but as my case now stands I cannot think that God can or will be gracious and merciful to me; unless I could procure or produce something to make some alteration for the better. I am beyond the reach of mercy, my corruptions are so strong, my guilt so heinous, my misery so great, my heart so defiled, and my case is attended with such peculiar circumstances of guilt and wretchedness, that I cannot believe God ever can, consistent with his perfections, show saving love to my soul; I have not the least prospect of it." And thus the convinced sinner urges against himself his guilt and misery to deprive himself of all hope. And if this conviction be not sufficiently deep, he is in danger of

setting about to rectify and amend himself, to bring himself within the reach of mercy. Which he no sooner attempts with this view, but he runs into self-righteous endeavours. But if all such hopes are precluded by his conviction, then the doctrine of sovereign grace is the only suitable remedy against despair. No sooner is this truth apprehended in the conscience, but it demolishes all these legal fears, and overturns all this legal despair. The language of which doctrine is this, "don't despair, O helpless, hopeless sinner, God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, his grace is so sovereign and perfect as to reach the worst case, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. God can, and that in a way of justice too, through Christ, extend his grace to you as fully and readily as to any other." If then the despairing sinner hears and believes this voice, his conscience receives an answer to all these distracting fears; and he will find it a considerable refreshment to be able to think, that though his case is desperate in itself, yet it is not so before God, who can as easily pardon and save him as any other of the human race.

Upon the whole then we see, that if this doctrine of Sovereign Grace be rightly understood and cordially believed, it detects and demolishes both the legal hopes and the desponding fears of the sinner; it destroys both a self-righteous presumption and a legal despair; and accordingly removes every obstacle in the way of a sinner's application to Christ upon the pure and true principles of the Gospel.

This puts me strongly in mind of the account we have of the leper's faith in behalf of himself, recorded in Matthew 8:1-4, and of the centurion's faith in behalf of his servant, recorded in the following verses of the same chapter, verses 5-10. These two instances of faith are very advantageously put together to confirm and illustrate each other. Upon which I would descend a little, at the conclusion of this sermon. As to the poor leper, he knew in himself that he could do nothing towards his own cure; he knew how inveterate and incurable the disease was; he did not pretend to bring any purchase in his hand, or any arguments in his

mouth; but being persuaded that Christ was perfectly able to perform the cure, he knew that it rested entirely in his will, and accordingly addresses himself to him. Under this persuasion, he came to him, and worshipped him, and spoke these submissive words, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." In the same manner and with the same spirit came the centurion in the behalf of his servant, expressing the danger and misery of the case, verse 6, acknowledging his utter unworthiness, verse 8, declaring his sense of the power of Christ, verse 9, and then resolving the whole into the authority and will of Christ, verse 8, "but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed."

Now in the leper's case, these sentiments of his mind were esteemed faith in Christ's account, and called great faith in the centurion, verse 10. We may safely apply these remarks upon a miraculous faith to a saving faith. Many are apt to think it a very easy matter, and a very common thing for persons to believe the ability of Christ to save them if he pleases. But upon a proper inquiry it will be found just the contrary. For while a person thinks in his heart that he can do something towards his pardon or cure, or while he imagines there is anything more promising and hopeful in his case than in another's, he does and will bring in this, as a part of the reason of his hope, and so of course has not his dependence purely upon the power and grace of Christ; and on the contrary, when a person sees himself in such a condition as to be stripped of every other hope, he is then for sinking into despair, questioning the ability and freeness of Christ's grace. But when he is stripped of every other hope and dependence, and sees a door opened only in the power and grace of God, then he with his whole heart comes to Christ and worships him, saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Whereas the workings of our thoughts and the motions of our hearts are of a very different and contrary nature, till we come to see matters in this soul humbling and Christ glorifying point of light. And when we do this in reality, then faith will work in a proper manner; it will produce a set of hopes, desires, and experiences,

entirely new, and utterly contrary to all the experiences we feel or desire to feel by nature, and these will by degrees evidence themselves to be the true and genuine marks of the new creature; being attended by the concurring witness of the Spirit, testifying to the soul that this is the true grace of God wherein we stand. And this is the grace that effectually teaches us "to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil world."

SERMON II.

EXODUS 33:19

"And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy."

NOTHING can be greater evidence, that the carnal mind is enmity against God, than this, that those doctrines which bring the greatest glory to God, are such as are most displeasing to man. This is so generally true, that it looks as if mankind envied the Lord his peculiar glories and dignities, and were utterly averse to give him the glory due to his name. A remarkable instance of this lies before us in our present text and subject. Moses desires the Lord to show him his glory, and the Lord mentions this as one eminent branch of it; that "he would be gracious to whom he would be gracious," &c., which words contain a sentiment, that is very disgusting to human nature in its present proud, deceived and depraved state. The doctrine raised from these words is this, that saving grace is sovereign grace. This I have attempted to prove in the former discourse, from scripture, from scripture consequences, from the analogy of faith, from the real condition of fallen man, and from general observation and experience. I proceed

now to illustrate, confirm, defend and improve it. As for the confirmation and illustration of it, I think it will be sufficient, if it be made to appear. 1. That this doctrine brings the greatest glory to God, and on the one hand. 2. That it may be of signal service to man, on the other.

1. This doctrine, I say, brings the greatest glory to God. For it gives us the highest and most exalted idea we can receive of the great Creator and disposer of all things. It is absurd to suppose anything greater than Deity; it is impossible to imagine anything greater than God, or to have too elevated notions of him. And I apprehend that we have but a very lame and defective view of him, if we cast aside the attribute of sovereignty. The apostle Paul closes his remarks on this subject in the grandest and most sublime manner. He had been hinting at it, and dwelling upon it, throughout the 8th, 9th, 10th & 11th chapters of his epistle to the Romans. In the 8th chapter he plainly supposes it, verse 28-29. In the 9th chapter he dwells upon it throughout, asserting, explaining, and illustrating it, taking particular pains to state and answer the most formidable objections against it. In the 10th chapter, verse 20, he sets it forth as requiring peculiar boldness to assert and maintain it, "but Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me," &c. In the 11th chapter throughout, he insists at large upon the subject, in relation to the Jews and Gentiles, until he comes, verses 33-35, to wind up the whole argument, by expressing himself as one impressed by it, with the deepest reverence of the divine majesty. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out," &c. But mark especially his last words, verse 36, "for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen." Were I to attempt a more concise and more exalted description of the grandeur of Deity, I should find myself obliged to exceed the bounds of all language and conception. For here the apostle exalts the idea to the highest by three words, "of him, through him, and to him are all things."

All things are of him, as the great Creator of all things, and the absolute Disposer of all events; all things are through him, as it is by his perpetual sustentation, concurrence and management, that all things subsist, and every event is conducted; all things are to him, as they are to the praise of his glory, and for the honour of all his perfections. And as the apostle introduces these grand thoughts, on occasion of his having treated upon the subject of divine sovereignty, let us see to it, that we, in our thoughts, connect the idea of sovereignty with all his perfections and attributes, if we desire to speak and think in the language and spirit of the inspired apostle. And if our thoughts are rightly conducted, we shall perceive that sovereignty is a general attribute, which belongs to, and is the special glory of all the other divine perfections; whether we regard his infinite wisdom, power, holiness, justice, or goodness.

His wisdom is distinguishingly glorious, because it is sovereign. For though he does, and will perform everything in infinite wisdom, yet he is not thereby confined or limited, to take the methods he has actually taken in the formation and disposal of his creatures; for he might have displayed the infinity of his wisdom and knowledge in very different ways than he has; in ways utterly unknown to us, and inconceivable by us. And should we attempt to limit him in this respect, we should deny him the special glory of his unsearchable wisdom and prudence.

His power likewise is peculiarly glorious, because it is sovereign; such as could be exerted every possible way according to his sovereign pleasure. This is what Jehovah glories in before his creatures, Deuteronomy 32:39, "see now, that I, even I am he, and there is no god with me, I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." And God himself, speaking of the sovereignty of his power in his operations towards Pharaoh, says Romans 9:17, "even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth."

But what is more especially to be regarded at present is to see how divine holiness and justice are exalted by this attribute of sovereignty. Now both these perfections are so necessary to the divine nature, that one would think that there were no room for sovereignty to appear, because perfect holiness requires the utmost abhorrence of all sin, and perfect justice requires that it should be punished to its utmost desert. Both which being necessary, one would conceive that there could be no way open for mercy towards sinners. But divine, infinite wisdom has found out a way for God to be sovereign in the display of his holiness, and in the exertion of his justice. For having found out a sufficient surety for sinners, he can in any case, according to his mere good pleasure, inflict the penalty due for sin either upon the sinner or the surety. Yea, so unlimited is this sovereignty, that he can execute deserved vengeance for the least sin, and upon the smallest sinner; or can transfer the guilt of the greatest sins, and the punishment due to the greatest sinners, upon the Surety.

From hence it appears that his goodness and saving love is likewise sovereign. This is so express in the text, that there needs no farther proof; neither is he confined to any rule of equity in the distribution of his saving mercy. It is this kind of sovereignty, that gives {as I may say} a latitude to the Divine Being, whereby he can be both perfectly just and perfectly gracious at once. Accordingly, he is so perfectly just, as to inflict deserved penalty for the least crimes, and so perfectly gracious, as to show mercy to the greatest sinners. Were he to be under any limitation in this case, he could be only half merciful or half just; half merciful, in sparing and pardoning only lesser sinners, and half just in executing vengeance only upon the greater sinners. But now sovereignty adds a glory and perfection to both these attributes. He is both perfectly just in executing vengeance for sin, and perfectly gracious in showing favour to the most guilty and wretched. Thus it may be easily seen how these most interesting attributes of Deity receive a peculiar glory from his sovereignty,

whereas without this, they would be under such restrictions, as would sink the character of God, and make him almost, if not altogether such an one as ourselves, which is indeed the general sentiment of mankind concerning him. So that we see an unspeakable grandeur, and exact propriety in those words, Isaiah 55:8-9, "for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

2. This doctrine not only brings the greatest honour to God, but may likewise be of signal service to man. Some persons who believe this truth, conceive it more proper to have it kept out of sight in some measure; thinking it better not to have it much insisted upon in public discourses. Their reasons for it are such as these. They imagine it to be a doctrine of no great importance, that for the most part it is rather stumbling than serviceable, that it has a tendency to discourage, terrify and perplex the minds of many; and that the enemy of souls frequently makes a handle of it to promote despair in some, and presumption in others. But I must profess myself to be of a very different mind; because I find Christ himself was. For he speaks freely of it before the carnal Jews, in such sentences as these. "No man can come unto me except it be given him of my Father," "ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep," "other sheep I have which are not of this fold," &c. However, the doctrine stands clear and open in the Bible for everyone to read it; so that it is vain to attempt a concealment of it from any, let their state, frames, or circumstances, be what they will. Neither do I see any sufficient reason, why it should upon any occasion be industriously withheld or secreted. The doctrine lays before my mind in such a point of light, as makes it appear very amiable, suitable and useful; I would attempt, therefore, to lay it forth in such a way, as to make it appear neither discouraging nor perplexing; but just the contrary. In order to do this, I must state it as it stands connected with the doctrine of free justification,

by the imputed righteousness of Christ, for it is in this connection that the apostle considers it in his epistle to the Romans. Let us then take a serious view of the light in which divine mercy and grace consider all mankind. For surely, it is highly desirable we should know and see ourselves in some measure, as God sees us. I must here beg your special attention. The Lord, we are told, looks down from heaven upon the children of men; he is represented in a condescending way, as taking his observations of the human race. And what's the result of the inquiry? It appears, Psalm 14:2-3, "the LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." This is the real case of every one, whether he knows it or not. And the Lord knows that nothing else but grace absolutely free, will suit our condition.

Jehovah does not address mankind in his gospel; according to the false view they have of themselves; but according to the light in which he himself sees them. He does not provide that sort of grace and salvation which they think they want, but such sort of grace and salvation as he sees they need. We naturally think abundantly better of our state and condition than it really is, and accordingly no grace is needful in some person's eyes; but little grace is necessary in the view of others, and most persons think, that some sort of conditional grace will serve their purpose. But the Lord knows and declares otherwise; he views us all as naturally in a condition quite lost, ruined and condemned. He therefore proclaims sovereign grace, proclaims it as such to all. Let us now hearken to this voice, a voice which plainly intimates and clearly demonstrates, that our condition is thus low and wretched, a voice that at the same time tells us, that there is such a thing as absolutely free grace; that this is displayed through the righteousness, atonement and purchase of Christ, that there is a Saviour appointed and provided; that he is the only one; that he is a perfect one, having purchased all salvation, in every part and

branch of it, leaving nothing for the sinner to do for this end, as it is certain that he can do nothing. Now if we know ourselves, and understand this voice, we may be well pleased and delighted with it, as that which gives the only and the first glimpse of hope to a wretched, helpless and condemned sinner.

Now, I say, this voice heard and understood, is serviceable for various important purposes; as, 1. To awaken the attention. It is as a light shining in a dark place, or like the appearance of Jehovah to Moses in the burning bush, which has the strongest tendency, and under the enlightening of the Spirit, the most effectual influence, to make the sinner say, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight." Exodus 3:3. Moreover this voice is directed immediately to mankind sinners as such; saying, "be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." This voice comes so close to every individual, as to tell him, "thou art a sinner; thou art therefore in a condemned state, in a lost, helpless, condition; but here is grace that exactly suits thy condition, that is alone sufficient to save thee, wretched as thou art." And what can be more suited to draw the attention than this? He that hears this voice, and says in his heart I don't need, I don't like this grace, he refuses it. He on the other hand, that hears this voice, but says in his heart, I cannot believe that this will reach my case as I am, because I am so vile and sinful a creature, does not understand it or believe it. But he that takes in the truth presented, of his absolutely lost condition, and the truth declared of the all-sufficiency and perfection of this sovereign grace, beholding it pointed towards him in these circumstances, has not only his attention awakened, but his hope encouraged. Which brings me to observe.

2. That this voice of sovereign Grace serves to direct the hope; to tell the sinner where his only hope lies, to shut him up unto it, and to guard him against every other hope. This voice heard, understood and believed will not permit the soul to be seeking after any other refuge; or to rest himself upon any other prop;

but on the contrary will fix the attention here; and as this truth appears more fully to view, the condemned sinner sees here a door of hope opened, that is perfectly consistent with all the perfections of the Godhead; he sees here offended justice satisfied, provoked wrath appeased, the broken Law fulfilled, by the perfect atonement and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Here then he sees enough to satisfy his disquieted guilty conscience. Here therefore the soul fixes; being assured from the word of God, that this and this only is the foundation for a poor helpless sinner; and here he is encouraged to trust and rest, because the same word assures him that this is a most safe and sure foundation, separate from everything else.

3. This voice likewise serves to give a turn to the whole soul; as it reaches to and operates upon every faculty of the mind. Under the influences of the Spirit it turns the understanding from darkness to light, giving the believer quite a different view both of himself and of the Lord from what he had before. It likewise turns the will; so that he who before was rebelling against the light of the Gospel through the pride of his heart, or who was wanting something for the foundation of his hope, besides or along with Christ, through the unbelief and discouragement of his heart, is now brought cheerfully to submit to the Righteousness of Christ, and thus he is made willing in the day of Divine power. This voice of absolute free Grace, likewise exceedingly suits to attract and engage the affections, to set them on work towards God in Christ in a way of love and delight.

4. This voice likewise serves to ennoble our conceptions. We no longer delight or desire to consider God as altogether such a one as ourselves; to frame a deity according to our own inclinations and imaginations; but we are led to behold more and more of his infinite dignity and majesty. We do not want him to be less holy, less just, or less sovereign than he is; but desire more and more to rejoice in his holiness, to submit to his authority, to revere his justice, and to adore his sovereignty. Till God reveals himself to our souls by the voice of free sovereign grace, these

perfections of his nature are terrors to the mind; and in order to have a little ease, we must divert our thoughts from such disagreeable subjects, or else frame in our own minds some lower, debasing thoughts of these glories of his nature, but now we can dare to think of him, and enlarge our conceptions of him, without fear of being hurt, but in hopes of being benefited by such views of his infinite greatness. Once more.

5. This voice serves to excite our endeavours, to make us willing and desirous to be and act to the praise of his glory, to love him with all our hearts, and serve him with all our strength; and that upon such principles and motives as are the most inclined towards him.

Thus have I endeavoured to illustrate and confirm this doctrine, by showing how well it is suited to advance the honour of God, and promote the benefit of man. But after all, there will be objections made against it, and some through an improper or partial view of it, will be ready to pervert it, abuse it, or to be stumbled at it. I must therefore proceed to do all I can in a few words, to defend it against objections, and to guard it against abuses; though I cannot pretend to do it effectually; for this is the work of God alone. However it will be found, that the chief objections started and propagated against it, are founded upon some false views of the doctrine itself; or some proud self-righteous sentiments dwelling in the mind, and indulged in the heart. In this part of my subject I would therefore as much as possible avoid the air of controversy, and rather choose to address the conscience. Does your reason object that this kind of sovereignty is destitute of all justice and equity? Reflect again, and ask; but is not death, everlasting death, the wages and just desert of sin; and if so, then it would have been no act of injustice if God had determined to execute this vengeance upon every individual of the sinful race of man; if therefore your hearts charge God with injustice in the present case, this plainly intimates that you do not in your minds see, nor in your consciences believe, the infinite demerit of sin.

If your minds still recriminate, saying, there is no equity in such arbitrary sovereign procedure, in having mercy absolutely on whom he will; remember again, that the Divine Being is not limited or confined to those rules of equity, that we may think proper to plan out for him, he is not obliged to give an account of any of his matters. But let it here be specially remarked, that if God were to act upon those rules of equity, which we should naturally lay before him, we should all be condemned without exception upon that rule; because we are both unable and unwilling to come up to any proper terms or conditions with him. And there is no person but does and must stand condemned before God, by that law or rule of equity, that he has framed to himself, as the condition of his acceptance with God; or in other words, if God were to deal with us upon any plan that we should esteem equitable, we should even then be all found sinners before him. A person therefore that complains of the way of the Lord as unequal, proclaims himself a stranger to his own heart, and to have a proud conceit of himself; as if he had done or could do something, which should make it meet that God should accept him on that account.

Again, should any in their hearts complain or assert that God is unrighteous in taking vengeance for sin, because all the sins of mankind are over-ruled by his sovereign will for his own glory, the short apostolic reply should by every christian be deemed sufficient, Romans 3:5-6, where the objection is stated in this very form, and answered with detestation, "God forbid, for how then shall God judge the world?"

Or should this plea be still urged in another form. Why should God find fault with sinners for their sins; since none can resist his sovereign will, which over-rules the sinful conduct of men? This plea likewise is mentioned in its full force, Romans 9:19, and rejected with a most solemn abhorrence, verse 20, "nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and

another unto dishonour," &c., which one would think should be sufficient to confound, and curb the perverse reasonings of every one that professes a reverence for the word of God.

But I apprehend, that the root of all these objections is this. Men do not see how absolute sovereignty in God is consistent with the freedom of man's will; they think the former overturns the latter. They cannot raise their thoughts so high as to see how a person can be praise and blame worthy in his actions, if God over-rules his conduct. Whereas it is beyond all doubt, that the great Jehovah manages or ascertains the actions of his creatures in such a manner, as no way enters into their consideration to be a motive for influencing their conduct. There is no occasion then for a christian to disturb or perplex himself, by the disputes among philosophers about the freedom of man's will. For notwithstanding all that must be owned concerning the secret purposes, and absolute sovereignty of God, yet it is still true that every person acts freely, and judges of himself according to the sentiments of his own mind and heart. So that we may without any reserve appeal to every man's conscience in the sight of God, whether he does not act with sufficient freedom to render him accountable for his actions. Yea, we may go so far as to apply this to the very case in hand. For a person either believes this doctrine of the sovereignty of divine grace, or denies and dislikes it. He that believes it, as seeing his natural condition, and knowing that nothing but such grace can suit his case, he acts freely upon this plan in a way of dependence, love and obedience, while on the other hand, he that disowns and rejects this doctrine, he acts as freely upon the conditional or self-righteous plan; and must take the consequences according to the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every one according to his works.

So then a man who believes the doctrine, may say to the opposer of it, "I act freely, according to my own sentiments and choice, while I regard the plan of free grace, and am moved by it, to love, adore and

submit to the sovereign Lord of salvation; whereas you in your mind act as freely in opposing this plan, and placing your hopes, and forming your endeavours upon like better. What I am, I know myself to be by the free grace of God, and desire to act accordingly; what you are, you are according to your own wish and choice; so it is apparent that neither your will, nor mine, is in the least imposed upon. And both of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive the things done in the body, according to that we have done, whether it be good or bad."

Further, should any say in their hearts, that this doctrine promotes despair, it is easy to reply, that the very making of this objection supposes the person who insists upon it, to have no idea of, or no relish for any other, but a self-righteous hope; and that he thinks he ought to despair, unless he can find something in or about himself to produce or support his hope, for if he saw a reason for hope entirely out of himself, the doctrine of absolutely free grace, would be far from being liable to this objection in his account. Once more.

Should it be said, that this doctrine discourages and overturns all pious and assiduous endeavours; it is easy to say, that it does discourage all self-righteous and self-sufficient endeavours indeed; and he that urges the objection in this form, plainly discovers that he hath little or no notion of those endeavours which flow from humility and love; whereas these are the only ones that are acceptable to God, and encouraged by the gospel, and its promises. But it is now time to come to the application of this important and useful subject, by seeing what it says to various sorts of sinners.

1. To those who are careless about and regardless of the salvation of their precious, immortal souls, I profess, that this doctrine must be accounted very strange to persons of this temper and character, for they make light of salvation itself; or they do not think they have any need of salvation; or if they do, still they look upon it as an easy matter to save themselves; they see but little need of grace in the matter, and therefore to talk to such that saving grace is sovereign,

must be bringing strange things to their ears. But if it actually appears from the currency of the word of God, that saving grace is sovereign grace; then it is clearly evident, that persons of this disposition must be exceedingly wrong in their apprehensions both concerning God and themselves.

Did you really believe that your condition is so lost and undone, as that nothing but sovereign grace could save you, surely you would not, you could not be so indifferent and careless as you are; but, alas, you think in your hearts, that salvation is a small matter, or that it is an easy thing to be accomplished; you see no such necessity that a perfect atonement should be made, and a perfect righteousness wrought out, or that such free grace should be displayed to give you any hope towards God. If you did, you could not go on from day to day, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; indulging yourselves in sin, and taking your rest in the world, or pleasing yourselves with carnal gratifications. But perhaps, you do not pretend to avow this doctrine, but, rather, dislike it, and are afraid to embrace it; and imagine yourselves justified herein; because you have, as you think, a greater concern for the interests of virtue and piety, than to adopt such a doctrine, which looks with such an unfavourable aspect hereon; and so you applaud yourselves in this, that you have in your minds more zeal for duty, than this amounts to. But methinks, it seems somewhat strange, that careless and worldly-minded persons should have so much zeal for the honour of God, and the practice of duty. There is abundant reason to think, that the piety and virtue, which persons of this temper profess a zeal for the honour of, must be something very different from true holiness, it must at best be only some general concern for the honour of self-righteous devotion, piety and virtue. But on the other hand, do any say in themselves this is a very agreeable doctrine, I will embrace it in hopes of having a latitude given to sin without fear or remorse, remember, the very moment you adopt this sentiment with this view, thou wilt betray thyself an utter stranger to the nature of God, to thine

own condition, and to the tendency and design of sovereign grace. If thou knowest thyself to be what thou really art, a lost helpless creature, and didst see that nothing but sovereign grace could give thee any true hope; this would give thee such a love to God's grace, and such a fear of his name, as would make thee abhor and detest such an abuse of his Gospel. O remember God's absolute justice, remember that thou art a sinner, and so condemned to all intents and purposes, and consider the strictness and purity of the divine law; and then see whether anything short of sovereign grace will be adapted to thy condition. Search the scriptures, examine thine own heart and ways, and see whether there will not be enough discovered from thence, to blast all thy fond hopes, and make thee discern something of the necessity of sovereign grace; and if thou art led by the word and the Spirit into such views, thou wilt neither despise nor abuse such grace made known in the Gospel.

2. To convinced, awakened and concerned souls. You begin to be under a sense of sin, a dread of divine wrath; and to be concerned about the salvation of your souls; and therefore are crying out, "what shall we do to be saved?" Accordingly perhaps, you are setting about some serious endeavours to amend your ways, and obtain the favour of God, and an interest in Christ, having a notion or thought in your own minds, that something must now be done by you in order to gain what you are seeking after. Under these concerns, struggles and labours, the doctrine of sovereign grace presents itself before you, and you are stumbled at it, are terrified by it, and perplexed with it. But what is the reason of this? Is it not because thou art entertaining, or art desirous to entertain some self-righteous hope? And does not this perplexity arise from this quarter, that this doctrine tends to overturn such kind of desires, hopes and endeavours? If so, remember it is necessary that all such legal attempts should be curbed; for thou art, in a covert manner, seeking justification as it were by the works of the law; thou art striving to have, or willing thou hadst something that should turn the point in thy

favour, instead of absolutely owning thyself a lost creature, and submitting to the righteousness of God. Thou art not yet placed at the footstool of divine sovereignty, so as to have nothing to plead upon, or hope upon but this, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." If thou wert, the sovereignty of grace would rather be a pleasure, than a terror; rather a relief, than a perplexity, and thus thou wouldst be led to place thy hope alone upon the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; and that is the right, the only hope for a wretched sinner. But this leads me to address myself to persons in another view.

3. Is there a person, who after all this concern and strivings, and notwithstanding all his endeavours, is convinced in his heart and conscience, that nothing else but sovereign grace will suit him? Hear the voice of the gospel; behold this sovereign grace is proclaimed before you in the gospel; it is proclaimed to you, and points at you, in that very light in which you see yourselves. I don't ask for and enquire after any preparations or qualifications. Are you absolutely lost sinners? Where are the souls that can heartily subscribe themselves the chief of sinners; behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy, "Christ came to seek and save that which was lost." This is the hope of the gospel; this is the truth, which continually stands firm as a rock, for the relief and help of the otherwise wretched and desperate. You need not, you should not, entertain the least suspicion about the firmness and solidity of this foundation, when separated from every other consideration. This singly viewed, is the firm and the immediate foundation of a sinner's hope as such. Now all the great and grand things recorded in the gospel concerning the person, the atonement, the righteousness and purchase of Jesus Christ, arise clear to view in their majestic simplicity, for the refreshment and consolation of those, who cannot, who dare not entertain any hope in and from themselves, or from any other quarter. Now Christ alone appears in the gospel, as the stable foundation upon which the worthless and helpless sinner may rest with the utmost confidence. They that rest their whole

salvation here, shall never be put to confusion; and "he that believeth will not make haste."

4. To believers, who accredit this doctrine of absolutely free grace, see the necessity of it for themselves, and the suitableness and fulness of it to their own conditions, and accordingly take a pleasure in it. Surely you are led to rest upon it, are made desirous to love and adore, to serve and honour the sovereign Lord upon this account. If so, then the grand end of this truth is answered upon you; then it has reached your very hearts, and taken possession of your souls. You find this free grace in Christ working upon you to produce and promote a submission to the divine righteousness, a reverence of the divine majesty, a love of his name, and a delight in his ways. You cannot but look upon every self-righteous endeavour, as an affront to the freeness of this grace, and every act of iniquity as the highest ingratitude to the riches of this grace. You dare not seek after pleasure by any criminal indulgences, because this is a turning the back upon the love of God in Christ, which is the believer's chief delight. You dare not give way to a light indifference of spirit in the love and service of the Lord, because that would be a contempt upon his matchless love. Neither dare you seek rest to your souls from anything else, because this would be going off from the true foundation, and placing your hope upon that which cannot secure you from the wrath of God due for sin. Let me now advise you, to keep close to the Lord; and continually remember, that it is by this free grace alone you are saved, and wherein you stand. May we never forget that distinguishing grace which has led you to this hope, and fixed you upon this foundation, as knowing that you never should have found it out, but by the special teachings of the word and Spirit, and knowing that you are still prone to depart from it. May we love the Lord Jesus continually and ardently; because he is become your salvation; love the gospel because it reveals this Jesus to you; may we love the Father who laid this foundation in Zion. Honour the divine Spirit of truth and grace, who alone has shown Christ by the

gospel to your souls. May we rejoice in the firmness of the foundation upon which your hope is placed! Behold how this free sovereign grace has, as it were, connected two eternities together; an eternity past, with an eternity to come; how God has chosen you from everlasting to partake of a salvation that will extend to everlasting. Trace the footsteps of this grace from one eternity to another; in order to inflame your love, confirm your joy in the Lord; and to animate you to a perpetual readiness to do or suffer anything for his sake, and still remember, that the design of all this grace, purposed and purchased for you, revealed and applied to you is, that you may be to the praise of God's glory.

FINIS

Note: Interestingly, these two sermons served, {as it were,} as a catalyst to exclude Mr. Pike from the Lectureship at Pinners' Hall, a short summary of which is set forth in Wilson's, History of Dissenting Churches, Volume II, 1808, from which we extract the following: "About this time, {September, 1758,} a rumor was spread abroad, that Mr. Pike had departed from the faith; and it was strengthened by some discreditable reports, which, however, were absolute falsehoods. Some sermons he delivered in his turn at the Pinners' Hall Lecture, during the course of this year, gave great offence. Two of these, entitled, "Saving Grace, Sovereign Grace," he published. But they were far from adding to his reputation in the eyes of his brethren; and, in short, the tide ran so high against him, that, ultimately, he was excluded from the lecture. This hasty step confirmed the popular odium against him, and very probably laid the foundation of much of the uneasiness he afterwards experienced, &c., the character of Mr. Pike, after his exclusion from the Pinners' Hall Lecture, sunk considerably in the estimation of the religious

world; but this is not at all surprising, when we consider the influence of prejudice, and how much it predominates over the minds of those whom we would charitably hope to be good men. Though a man of learning and piety, and a considerable biblical scholar, yet the fact of his yielding to the powerful reasoning of Sandeman, was sufficient to fix upon him the stigma of heresy, and exclude him the society of his former friends and acquaintance, &c., from the opposition he experienced, a stranger would readily imagine that nothing less than some dreadful charge of heresy, or immorality, had been brought against him. But no such thing appears; nor, indeed, any direct or private accusation whatever. This he accounts for in the following way: 'The reason why they have not specified any article against me is, because they are conscious I should give a direct denial to it. They have, indeed, asserted abroad, that I deny the work of the Spirit, the saints' perseverance, and all Christian experience; these are all the charges that have come to my ears, which have any relation to the doctrines of the lecture, and all are utterly false.' His soundness in the doctrines of the gospel he established, in the following confession of his faith: 'I am fully persuaded {says he} of the doctrines of the ever blessed Trinity, the true divinity and humanity in the person of Christ; the perfection and vicariousness of his righteousness and atonement, as a substitute for sinners; the doctrines of particular election, and particular redemption; of original sin imputed, and the universal corruption of human nature; the entire necessity, the absolute sovereignty, and uncontrollable efficacy of the Holy Spirit's work in the conversion of a sinner; together with the doctrine of the saint's perseverance.' — If these sentiments are not sufficient to screen a man from the charge of heresy, it is not easy to say what will? Mr. Pike, doubtless, had his failings, but they were not such as to tarnish the lustre of his character, either as a theologian, a philosopher, or a Christian."

POSTSCRIPT

EPISTOLARY CORRESPONDENCE OR A FAITHFUL ADMONITION

BY Robert Sandeman

As communicated to Samuel Pike in a private letter, responding to Pike's 'Sovereign-Grace' sermon; and reproduced in its entirety – dated, March 24, 1759.

Sir, it was not on supposing you agreed with me in my views of particular men or books, but on apprehending you to be a hearty friend to Sovereign Grace, that my friendly regard for you commenced. I thought, what could move a man to describe it so clearly, to appear so singular in his doctrine about it, and that so publicly, not only from the pulpit but also from the press, as one disposed to risk his whole reputation upon it, if he did not heartily love it. And if he loved it, he behooved to hold it most sacred, so as to consider none as godly, but those who at least professed to love it also. Therefore, in remarking on your discourses, I thought it enough to signify, in the gentlest manner, how unsuitable it was to your leading scope, to suppose, that anyone, who loved the true God, could be found joining in the common odium shown against Sovereign Grace. For let it be called Absolute Predestination or by any other name, still it must remain impossible, to describe it in words, that can sound harder to the pride of men, than these of Paul, "therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

I thought it enough, I say, to hint my dislike of your tenth page¹; for as I considered you, as having but lately obtained bolder views of the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty in the matter of Justification, I supposed you might have inadvertently retained somewhat of your former way of thinking and speaking, concerning the opposers of that doctrine, not reflecting how inconsistent it was with those bolder views. But when I found you still inclining to think that true believers might be found "among those who are carried away by the popular odious cry against Absolute Predestination," I was not a little shocked. You could not have alarmed me on a more sacred point. I wonder how you could be at a loss to know what I dare say to you on that point, if you have read page 166 or 347 of my printed letters, or what I have said on charity from page 452 to 480. Must I be still put to the question, after all that I have said, whether I be yet talking for amusement about the Christian doctrine, or in good earnest. True believers taking a side against Sovereign Grace! Impossible! It never was, never can be in the nature of the thing. The first dawn of the Gospel upon any man's heart teaches him to fear God and reverence his Sovereignty in the most absolute view it can be conceived in. And all that fear God, from the least to the greatest, will agree without hesitation in saying, "thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

But then it will be said, that some who dislike the explicit doctrine of Absolute Sovereignty, may yet, by implication, be concluded friends at bottom to that Sovereignty. Yet nothing can be more foreign to the

¹ This is a direct reference to a remark, made by Pike in his Sermon, {above,} entitled, "Saving Grace-Sovereign Grace," which begins with these words, "however, I am far from being so strict in this matter as to imagine, that no person is or can be saved, unless he apprehends and professes this doctrine of sovereign grace with entire clearness. There are many whose minds are clouded, and perhaps are so drawn aside by the popular outcry against this doctrine, so hated by the world, as to express a dislike to this truth, &c.,"

Scripture than such reasoning. The Scripture indeed leads us to think of men having the form of godliness without the power, but it nowhere gives us the least ground to think, that the power can possibly take place where the very form is disliked. It leads us to think that men may someway hold the form of sound words without Faith and Love; but that Faith and Love can be where that form is disallowed, is quite foreign to every notion taught us by the Scripture. If such reasoning by implication be allowed, then we may find true believers amongst those who dislike the declaration of Imputed Righteousness and Vicarious Substitution, among those who dislike the declaration of the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, and so in course everything that is most sacred. Yea, thus we may find true believers amongst the worshipers of Mohammed. For if Mohammed signifies a prophet, intercessor or mediator, and if some mean as much by the word Mohammed as others by the word Christ, who would contend for a word, while there was no material difference of meaning?

Jesus Christ, praying for his people, said; "this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." How then can any who disallow the declaration of that knowledge, either that of Divine Sovereignty, Justice, or Mercy be said to have any part in life eternal! If we have any ear to give to the Scripture, we must rank all such among those that "know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; and who {if they be not given Repentance to the acknowledgment of the Truth} shall be punished with everlasting destruction." And if we have any true benevolent concern for such, it will lead us boldly to declare to them their real danger, however harsh or ridiculous it may sound in their ears at present. Though all the clergy in the world should agree in a charitable opinion of any who disallow the declaration of that knowledge, I find myself fully authorized from the Scripture to declare such charity to be the very breath and spirit of the grand destroyer.

Jesus Christ declares that by their words men shall be justified, and by their words they shall be

condemned; and in his view lightly or readily to speak evil of Him is the same thing as to be against Him or to be his enemy. Well then may we say, that everyone who deliberately opens his mouth against the Divine Sovereignty, even in the most absolute view of it given in Scripture, thereby shows himself to be an enemy of God. Besides, to talk of Divine Sovereignty or Predestination not absolute, is a downright absurdity; even as every atheistical scheme is. How great was Paul's temptation to mince the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, when his heart was swelled with sorrow at the apprehension of his kinsmen being rejected! Yet on that occasion he is so far from mincing it, that he displays it in the boldest view, even in that view, which has for many ages given the greatest umbrage to thousands, who by their opposition to it show, that in calling themselves Christians they atheistically profane the Christian name, and the name of the true God. So the question has at last come to this between us, is there a God or not? For a God without Sovereignty is no God at all.

What satisfaction can a man find in his conscience, in maintaining Saving Grace to be Sovereign Grace, if at the same time he thinks that a man may be a true believer, so as enjoy the Divine favor, who opposes that Grace? Or what delight can a man take in the character of the true God, who thinks that his neighbour may be truly pious and happy in worshiping another god? In my view, the more a man knows of the character of the true God, and is yet capable of holding it in such a profane manner, he is thereby only so much the more eminently fitted to be an agent of Satan in undermining it. I fondly presumed that our friendship had commenced upon a sacred foundation, even Sovereign Grace; but if we must have the same friendship for those who oppose that Grace, or who join in the opposition to it; then it is evident, there can be nothing more sacred in our friendship than in the mutual courtesy that takes place amongst infidels. Have we then been all this while employed only like two

philosophers striving as to who shall get freest of inconsistencies in their manner of talking!

Any attempt to revive the Christian profession with you must be the idealist thing in the world, unless it be founded in the fear of God. When Jacob was to swear by his most awful view of the Divine Majesty, he chose to swear by the fear of his father Isaac; even that Sovereignty at which Isaac trembled with a great trembling, when he beheld his favored first-born son rejected, and his younger son chosen. Were a few with you united only by the fear of God, they would find themselves concerned to regard the noisy cry of all England against them, no more than the falling of a cascade or the humming of so many bees.

Paul lays down the following rule as a first principle to be attended to, by all who would profitably study the will of God revealed in the Scripture, "be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." No sooner does a man begin to be over-awed by the cry of the religious world, then, like Peter seeing the wind boisterous, he begins to sink, and the majesty of the Truth is eclipsed from his view. And until your mind undergo some change in this respect, I am afraid that the continuance of our correspondence will only serve to raise fresh doubts in your mind, and that you will never be able to take my meaning rightly, or at least will still doubt, if I can be in earnest in what I say.

You gently move me to withdraw some expressions of resentment against those who corrupt the Gospel, in my second letter, section three, in reply to your third query; where, after discoursing of the glorious evidence of the Truth, I proceed in these words, "can one enter for a few moments, &c." The expressions of resentment there uttered, though no particular persons are pointed at, you seem to think not very suitable to the gravity of the rest of my language in that passage, and therefore wish to have the sentence dropped. Now as I am sensible that it was never left to me to write any appendix to the Bible, I have no reason to be very

anxious whether any sentence in my letters be dropped or retained; yet as I am far from approving the tempter of mind which hints a dislike of the sentence now pointed at, I am not disposed to comply with that temper.

You have in the course of our correspondence sufficiently cleared yourself from the imputation of approving that temper and language in my printed letters, which is most offensive to the religious world. With this you ought to have been contended without soliciting me to entertain a more favorable view of the world; especially, as I was willing to bear with you in that, wherein I thought you deficient, till on a proper trial your own experience should more fully show you how the religious world stood affected to the Gospel. Now my bias cannot appear more censurable to you than yours does to me. For unless the Gospel be held forth in its proper opposition to the taste of the world, I must consider all that's said about it, as little other than so much religious canting to acquire a reputation for piety. And the nearer one comes to the true Gospel, while at the same time a reserve is made for softening or averting the hatred of the world, such reputation is often established to the better advantage. But I must consider those as keeping but a very slack hold of the Gospel, who cannot heartily approve of Paul denouncing his repeated anathema against all, be they men or angels, who go about however slyly, to undermine the doctrine of Divine Grace which he preached.

Besides, I must differ from you as to the gravity and propriety of the sentence above pointed out in my second letter. I find it was Paul's manner, when his heart was warmest about the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, to point his keenest resentment against those who defaced that knowledge. Yea, this was a topic he frequently insisted on, as appears by many passages of his epistles; of which at present I shall only produce one for a sample. While he is reminding the Philippians of his view of the Gospel, the effect it had upon him, and calling upon them to follow him; he adds, "for many walk, of whom I have told you

often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, &c." And how can we be said to hold the Truth in the fear of God, unless we are persuaded that destruction attends every departure from it both in ourselves and others? Unless we are so persuaded, our zeal about the Gospel will amount to no more than an idol emulation about orthodoxy. And it may be held for a sure maxim, that however zealous we may be to hold a sounder set of principles than our neighbors, we can never greatly condemn ourselves for any deviation from the Truth that we think consistent with the Christian character in others. It ought likewise to be considered, that as the unsociable temper of my book was chiefly attacked; it was my business, so long as I approved that temper, to take every proper occasion of showing that I had not relented, and that I was neither to be wheedled nor frowned out of it; and that temper I hope I shall approve while I breathe.

If ever the profession of the Faith begin to purpose with you, it will begin with raising foundations, with hearty convictions of guilt for holding the Truth in unrighteousness, and with trembling at the words of James, "ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." I know no character a Christian ought to detest more than that of Balaam, who preached the soundest doctrine, saying, "the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations," and who knowing that the happiness of Israel lay in being so situate, nevertheless practiced secretly to mingle them with the heathen, by negotiating an alliance between them and the Moabites. Mr. Baxter, noted for piety in the last age, slackened a point of the Christian doctrine, and you see what has been the consequence among the Dissenters! I must add here, that as the love of the world and self-righteousness always go hand-in-hand together, I cannot wonder greatly at you scrupling to admit, that returning backsliders can draw no encouragement from past experiences. Yet the voice of

God runs thus, "if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." When the conscience of an apostate is awakened to hear this voice, he can by no means conclude, from any past experiences, that God has any pleasure in him more than in the most ignorant and profane. He can infer nothing from past experiences but peculiar aggravations of his guilt; and when such are heartily awakened, they commonly find their objections against the doctrine of forgiveness stronger than at the first. Therefore, it is in some respects a greater miracle to see an apostate fairly recovered, than to see one at first brought to the knowledge of the Truth.

The four addresses at the close of your two sermons appear to me to have in general a tendency to adapt the soundest doctrine to the common train of self-righteous exercise. The first makes use of the doctrine to carry forward the careless to the rank of serious exercised persons. The second serves to set the awkward to work in curbing their legal attempts, and be concerned to get themselves placed at the footstool of sovereignty, or to be brought to a proper posture so as to be led to place their hope alone upon the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ. The next addresses a third sort of persons as being, in distinction from the former two, in a proper posture to find mercy. The last congratulates the orthodox, presuming them possessed of the best dispositions. I think it needless to enlarge on these heads, as from what you have already seen of my mind, you may easily judge what I would further say. You may likewise judge that I must either drop all mention of your two sermons, or in some general manner signify my exception against page 10th, and the application. They have likewise a little dash of the clergyman, though modest, in comparison of what is commonly allowed to be decent, as, "let me proclaim," and, "behold I bring you glad tidings."

When I received your last letter, as I first read the beginning and end before I took leisure to consider the particulars relating to our correspondence, I was greatly refreshed. It was to me like the cool of a fever, or as life from the dead. But when I found you seeking

to damp my confidence about Divine Sovereignty, and soliciting me to hold it, as if I held it not; I was greatly shocked. I thought, if you believed, it behooved to be like those chief rulers who believed, "but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Yet in my view, one has put a poor pretense even to the character of a Pharisee, who opposes the common Calvinistic doctrine of Predestination. Besides, how can one avoid being grieved to find that after all he is able to write, even on the most sacred matters, it is still doubted if he be in jest or in earnest?

I am obliged then to say, that if you would correspond any further with me, you must refrain from every attempt to damp my confidence about that knowledge wherein eternal life lies, even the knowledge of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. For I must consider every such attempt in no other light, than as a solicitation to go and serve other gods; which I am bound to resent in the strongest manner against my nearest friend. I must likewise repeat my warning to you to be cautious, and count the cost well before you risk anything on your connection with me. {Note: Pike was actually expelled from the lectureship at Pinner's Hall in that same year – 1759 – by forty-four votes to one, without any just reason given for their dissatisfaction with his ministry, apart from his connection with Sandeman.} And do not imagine that {unless I be forsaken of God} I can never be broken or softened as to the spirit of opposition to the religious world, which runs through my letters. You may see, that if I should write ever so much I have nothing new to say; and I have the satisfaction to think, I have not disappointed or deceived you. For I can take to witness my printed letters by which you first knew me, that I make a point of nothing with you now, but what I insisted on there in the most explicit and determinate manner. I stand by the theme of our agreement, Saving Grace, Sovereign Grace. If you depart from that, and a breach of friendship ensue, the breach does not lie at

my door. So much from him, who is still willing to be, on the former terms, Dear Sir, your Affectionate Friend and Servant, Robert Sandeman, March 24, 1759.

FINIS