

Notes (From the July 1888 Sword and Trowel)

by C.H. Spurgeon

The sermon warns of the dangers of departing from the old-fashioned gospel and the consequences of remaining in fellowship with those who deny its principles.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:3

Topics: "Defending the Faith", "Spiritual Apathy"

Description

C.H. Spurgeon addresses the alarming state of the church, highlighting the dangers posed by ministers who undermine core Christian doctrines and the spiritual apathy that allows such errors to flourish. He reflects on his own recent afflictions and the grace that can be found even in trials, urging believers to recognize the serious threats to truth and to take a stand against ungodliness. Spurgeon emphasizes the need for courage and clarity in the face of doctrinal confusion, lamenting the loss of reverence for sacred truths and the consequences of complacency within the church. He calls for a return to the foundational teachings of the faith, warning that neglecting these truths could lead to spiritual decay and the loss of genuine fellowship among believers.

Transcript

A MAGAZINE is in some danger of death when the editor is so completely prostrate that his brain will not think, and his right hand cannot hold a pen. But it has so happened that our peculiarly heavy affliction came upon us this time in a sort of interval between one monthly number and the next, and we are, through restoring mercy, again able to set about our appointed task. There is always some circumstance of grace about the heaviest trial. The thorn-bush bears its rose. The Lord lets us see a bright light in the clouds even when they gather in grimmest fashion.

We have not done anything, nor scarcely even devised anything, as to the great conflict now raging between truth and error, for the one reason that we have been quite laid aside. On returning to the subject, we find many generous letters of sympathy, and not a few of painful information. A venerable Baptist brother says: "Dry rot is more extended than any of us thought. People and priest are infected by the disease. Yet the Ruler over all can overrule it for good. Many who are sound are timid, many confused as to what to do, and many too indolent to do anything; but the battle is the Lord's."

This witness is true; but surely there are some left who have eyes to see the great evil at once, and courageous consistency enough to shake themselves free of it. If they need reminding of their duty, it is to be feared that they are not the men who are worth reminding. Time was when for a hundredth part of the

foul evils now tolerated in religious Unions, servants of God would have lifted up the cry, "To your tents, O Israel!" Shall we be again called a pessimist if we say that the days when truth was everything are "with the years beyond the flood"?

Complaints as to sermons ridiculing answers to prayer, deriding early piety, speaking coarsely of the precious blood of Jesus, and denying the universal need of conversion, are common enough. We cannot spare space for instances, which would only give pain to faithful hearts. These are very sorrowful matters; for they betoken not so much doctrinal error as utter ungodliness. In some cases the man is more wrong in the heart than in the head, if we can judge by the general tone of his conversation.

Certain preachers seem to have taken out a license to speak contemptuously of holy things, and they do this under cover of decrying the worn-out ideas of old-fashioned orthodoxy. Of course, they can do so with impunity when once their churches have become sufficiently worldly and heterodox. Errors in creed are insignificant matters compared with the absence of spiritual life and the presence of irreligious scorn. One of our correspondents, by no means a bigot, says that, after hearing a sermon by a person of this school, he almost instinctively stood up to see what sort of people they were who would accept such talk as a part of public worship.

One does a little wonder what kind of Christians they must be. In one of our churches the doctrines of Purgatory and Future Restitution have, since the Baptist Union meeting, been so distinctly preached that many of the members have taken alarm, and are looking about them to know what is to be done. It is said that the famous compromise condemned these notions, but it appears that the holders of them do not think so, for they remain where they were, and are even more bold than before to teach their delusions.

How godly brethren can remain in fellowship with them is a question which rises continually to our lip. We would gladly contribute to union and harmony, but we have a conscience. There must be some few brethren left who possess the same sort of troublesome monitor; and, if so, they must have bad times when they come to think that their fellowship keeps the enemies of the gospel in countenance, and that the blood of innumerable souls will lie at their door. A working-man, who is an intelligent deacon and preacher, giving us his name, and the name of the minister referred to, speaks of the old-fashioned orthodox teaching being held up to contempt from the pulpit.

"The substitutionary sacrifice and the Trinity were quickly disposed of, and the penknife was set to work. Whole chapters were cut out of the Bible; we were told that certain books of it ought never to have been written. Verbal inspiration was utter rubbish, and ought never to be tolerated." As a consequence, the number of empty pews is appalling, and the people are told to console themselves with the fact that mere numbers are no test of prosperity. The prospect of the chapel being closed is by no means remote.

It is with the utmost pain that we mention such instances, but there are still some who are bold enough to deny that there are any departures from the faith, or so very few that they are not worth mentioning. Of course, in that case, all that we have said is either willful falsehood, or else the dark dream of a morbid mind. We assert that we are neither morbid nor untrue, but that around us there are influences at work which are directly antagonistic to Christianity, and that anyone may see them who chooses to do so.

The babyish game of shutting your eyes, and then crying, "I cannot see you," has been played at long enough: it is time that the most prejudiced should acknowledge that which everybody sees except themselves. A week or two ago, a minister had been to hear a Congregational divine, on a great occasion; and, as he came out of the chapel, he said to a brother minister, "There is truth after all in what Spurgeon

says: ministers do make infidels, and this sermon will make a great many; and yet there are ministers here who will be delighted with the sermon."

The subject had been the infallibility of the Scriptures, especially the historical portions of them. The whole foundation of inspired teaching was abandoned. Time and thought will, we trust, arouse godly men to a sense of their wrong-doing in remaining in fellowship with those who not only deny the old-fashioned gospel, but question the fundamentals of religion. It cannot always be so that the Bible shall be degraded from its preeminence as the revelation of God, and those who are guilty of the crime shall yet be had in esteem as Christian teachers. It is wonderful how things have come to be as they are; but that they should remain so, is incredible, seeing that God lives to vindicate his own Word.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ch-spurgeon/notes-from-the-july-1888-sword-and-trowel/>

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