

Pride Catechized

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon passionately argues that God's plan of salvation is perfect and sovereign, and no human objections or preferences can alter its divine design.

Scripture: Job 34:33, John 3:3, Romans 3:25, John 3:16, Romans 5:1, John 3:18, Romans 9:15, Matthew 11:28

Topics: "Sovereignty of God", "Salvation by Faith"

Description

In 'Pride Catechized,' C.H. Spurgeon confronts the objections and quarrels that sinners raise against God's sovereign plan of salvation. He passionately defends the doctrines of substitutionary atonement, justification by faith, and the necessity of being born again, emphasizing that God's way is perfect and unalterable. Spurgeon calls listeners to humble acceptance and warns of the eternal consequences of rejecting God's merciful provision. This sermon is a powerful reminder of God's sovereignty and the sufficiency of Christ's work for salvation.

Transcript

"Should it be according to your mind? He will recompense it whether you refuse, or whether you choose; and not I: therefore speak what you know." Job 34:33.

DEAR FRIENDS, it is never wise to dispute with God. Let a man strive with his fellow, but not with his Maker. If we must discuss any point, let it be with imperfect beings like ourselves, but not with the Infallible and Infinitely wise God, for, in most of our discussions, these questions will come back to us, "Should it be according to your mind? Are you master? Is everyone to be subordinate to you?"

I am going to speak, this evening, to those who have a quarrel with God concerning the way of salvation. They are very unwise not to take salvation just as God brings it to them, but they do not. They have some difficulty or other, so they raise a dispute and they have been, perhaps for years, quibbling at the Savior whose Infinite goodness has provided a way of salvation exactly adapted to their needs. I am going to use Elihu's words and apply them to their case.

I. To begin at the beginning, here is, first, A QUESTION—"Should it be according to your mind?" You say that you are willing to find mercy, and that you are very teachable; but you object to the plan of salvation as it is revealed in the Scriptures.

First, then, what is it to which you object? Do you object to the very basis of the plan, namely, that God will forgive sin through the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His Son? I know that some do object to this—they cannot bear to hear about Atonement by blood, or justification by imputed righteousness. Others, who will not say that they object to Atonement, spirit away the very meaning of it! They cannot endure that glorious Doctrine of Substitution which is such a joy to us. Christ standing in the sinner's place and the sinner then standing in the place of Christ—Christ taking the sinner's sin and the sinner wearing Christ's righteousness—all this they absolutely reject! "No doubt Christ did something for sinners," they say, but they cannot define what He did and, as for the sin of any man being actually put away by Christ being punished in the place of the ungodly sinner, they will not believe it!

Yet, that is God's plan of salvation, and some of us know, in our inmost hearts, that we never had peace until we accepted that plan of salvation, and that now, if it should be taken away from us, we would lose all the joy of existence and go back to the despair which, at one time, was so heavy upon us that we could sympathize with Job when he said, "My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life." We could better afford that the sun should be quenched, that the moon should be darkened, that all springs should be dried, that the very air itself should disappear—we could better afford to die and rot in our graves than that we should lose our Savior and His atoning blood and justifying righteousness! Whatever you, Mr. Objector, may say about it, we say to you, "Should it be according to your mind?" Would you have Christ to die and yet not really secure salvation by His death? Could you invent a better plan, or even one half as good—

"So just to God, so safe for man"—

so consolatory to a wounded conscience, so constraining to gratitude when that conscience has been pacified? Would you, could you, propose anything one thousandth as good as God's plan of salvation? Even if you could, "should it be according to your mind?" Who are you, a guilty sinner, to despise the Savior's blood? If you had your just deserts, you

would years ago have been in the lowest pit of Hell! Will you set aside the Cross of Christ and seek to put something else in the place of the crucified Redeemer?

But, possibly, you do not object to the Doctrine of Substitution, but your objection is to the way of salvation by faith "I don't like that Doctrine of Justification by Faith," says one, "for I am sure that when it is preached, people will begin to think that there is no virtue in good works and that they may live as they like." I have often heard such a remark as yours, my Friend, but experience is dead against you! Whenever justification by faith has been uppermost in the preaching, the morals of the people have been purest and their spirituality has been brightest! But whenever the preachers have extolled the works and ceremonies of the Law, or the Arminianism which brings in something of trust in works, or human power, it is most certain that there has been a declension in point of morals, while religion itself has seemed almost ready to expire! You may go to those who preach up salvation by works to hear them talk, but you had better not go to see how they live—whereas those who preach justification by faith can boldly point to the multitudes who have accepted this Truth of God and whose godly lives prove the sanctifying power of the Doctrine!

But if you object to this Doctrine, how would you like to have it altered? "Oh, well, I would like to have some good feelings put in with faith." And how, then, would any man be saved? Can he command his own feelings? Those feelings come naturally enough after faith, but, if they are demanded without faith, how

will they ever be presented to God? Besides, feelings would claim some credit if they were thus joined with faith. A man would be able to boast that he had felt his way to Heaven and he would have the same self-congratulatory spirit which we see in those who trust in works and ceremonies—and thus Christ would be robbed of His Glory as the sinner's Savior. Man would put his dirty hands upon the crown and place it upon his own head—but that must never be the case! You shall be saved if you trust the Savior, but if you do not like that way of salvation, you can never be saved! Why should the plan of salvation be changed for you? Is God to be tied down to act only as you please? Is He to alter His Gospel to suit the fancies of rebellious men? That must not be! There is no mistake about this matter—"He that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him." And our Lord, Himself, said, "He that believes not shall be damned." That is the only message for him if he continues in his unbelief—and it shall not be altered to suit the mind of any man that lives!

"Oh, but," some say, "we object to the requirements of the Gospel, especially to that verse where Christ says, 'You must be born again.' Where is the need of that? We were christened when we were children! We were confirmed as we grew older! We have taken the sacrament! We do not agree with that hard saying, 'You must be born again.'" They will not walk with Christ if He insists upon that condition. Moreover, He requires the giving up of all known sin, the hating of all sin—and the objector says, "But may I not retain my one darling sin? May I not keep my pet evil? I will give up all else, but that one I must have." And when men are told that wherever Christ comes, He makes a radical change—He casts out Satan and all his imps, drives them out by force and takes complete possession of the soul—they bar the door of their heart against the Savior, for they do not want such strong measures as His in their case.

Well, Sirs, as you say that Christ's requirements are not according to your mind, what would you like them to be? Do you wish to be allowed to continue taking what you call your little drop, which is powerful enough to make you reel across the street? Then there is somebody over yonder who would like to keep his adulteries. And another who would like to keep his petty thefts. And another who would like to keep on with his swearing and another who would like to retain his covetousness so that he could still grind the poor to powder and make money by crushing them! What sin is there, in the whole world, that would be put to death if men were left to pick and choose the Agag which each one wished to save? No! Christ came to save His people from their sins—not in them—and it is essential to salvation that sin should be repented of and, being repented of, should be renounced and that, by the help of God, we should lead a new life, under a new Master, serving from a new motive because the Grace of God has renewed our spirit!

"Should it be according to your mind?" No, certainly not, for, putting all reasons into one, it is not the slightest use for you to make any objection to the Gospel, for you will be lost if you do not accept it just as it is revealed in the Scriptures! Christ will never alter the Gospel one jot or tittle—not the cross of a "t" or the dot of an "i"—to please the biggest man that lives! "Oh, but, really, I am a man of education! Am I to be saved in the same way as the man who does not know A from B?" Precisely! There is no other way of salvation for you. There is not one gate for Doctors of Divinity and another for the poor and ignorant. "But I am a person of good character, a matronly woman. Am I to be saved just in the same way as a Magdalene?" Precisely the same! There is no other Savior for you than the one in whom Mary Magdalene

delighted and trusted. "But, Sir, you do not surely mean to say that all these street Arabs are to go to Heaven in the same way as a man who has kept shop and been respectable all his life?" Yes, I do! All must go in exactly the same road. Queens and chimney sweeps must enter Heaven by the same gate, or not enter at all. There is but one name given among men whereby we must be saved! There is no other

Savior but Christ Jesus the Lord! He suits every class of persons—big sinners and little ones, if there are any little sinners anywhere—all must come to Christ and at His feet confess their sin, for God's plan cannot be altered for anyone. My dear Sir, we are not going to have any enlargement, or rather, any mystification, of the plan of salvation to suit your profound mind! There will be no golden handles put to the doors of Heaven to suit you, my lord, with all your wealth and pride! No, no, no! Come to Christ, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and He will give you rest! But there is no other way of obtaining rest of heart and conscience.

I have thus tried to mention a few of the objections which men make to God's plan of salvation. Now let me ask two or three questions. First, should not God have His way? Is it not intolerable that you and I should raise objections at all when the mercy of God, if it ever comes to us, is a pure gift of charity? God may well say to us, "Shall I not do as I will with My own?" There is no man living who has any absolute right to receive anything from God except destruction. That terrible doom we have all merited, but nothing beyond that. If we were shut up in prison and fed only dry bread, so long as we were out of Hell we would still be under obligation to God. If the Lord should choose to show mercy to only one man in the world, He has a perfect right to do so. If He chooses to give it to a few, or if He chooses to give it to all, He has the right to do so. He is absolutely Sovereign and these are the words that He would have everyone of us hear and heed—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

The crown rights of the King of Kings must never be assailed! For us beggars to turn choosers and to dictate to God what He shall give to us—for us condemned criminals to begin to make bargains with God as to how He shall preserve our lives, if He chooses to do so—oh, this will never do! You know, dear Friends, that when we give even a trifling charity, we like to do it in our own way. I remember that one Christmastime a certain gentleman had given away a quantity of meat to many poor people. He had been so generous that he had given away all he had. The next morning a woman came to him, bringing back the piece of meat which she had received, which was meant for boiling—she said she wanted to have a piece for roasting. There was none left for changing, so she had to take what had been given to her or go without any at all. You are quite sure that the next year, that woman's name was put down among the first to have a Christmas gift, are you not? On the contrary, the gentleman said, "She will not be troubled next year, either with a boiling piece or a roasting piece from me. I will take good care of that." I think it was quite natural that he should say so, for our common proverb regards it as ingratitude when we "look a gift horse in the mouth." When anything comes to us entirely as a gift, it is not for us to quibble at it, but to accept it!

And this is specially true of God's great gift of salvation. O Lord, if You will but save me, save me Your way! If I may be delivered from this accursed sin of mine and made pure and holy, do it, Lord, after Your own gracious fashion! It is not for me to suggest any plan to You, but to leave myself entirely in Your hands and to let it be according to Your mind.

Further, is not God's way the best. The mind of God is so Infinitely great, good and wise, that it cannot be supposed that even if He left the plan of salvation to our option, we could choose anything half as good as what He decrees and appoints! Should He, for a single moment, hold His Sovereignty in abeyance and allow us to be kings and princes on our own account, what follies we would perpetrate! We would choose a way of salvation that would not honor God, nor destroy evil, nor even be good for our own selves! Some people would like a Heaven into which they could enter without being born again, but what kind of Heaven would that be? Some would like to have joy and peace without believing in Christ. Some would like to

have eternal happiness, but still indulge their lusts. This would be an evil of the most awful kind! It is better that sin should bring to man infinite sorrow than that it should be linked with eternal enjoyment! The mischief of it is that it does get linked with enjoyment for a while by foolish men who forget what must come afterwards—but God has never joined these two things together—it is only wicked men who have pretended to celebrate this unholy marriage! God proclaims a perpetual separation between sin and happiness and it is well that it should be so.

Now, to conclude this first part of our subject, suppose the plan of salvation should be according to any human mind, whose mind is to decide what it shall be Yours? No, mine! And another says, "No, mine!" Our proverb rightly says, "Many men, many minds," and if we were to have salvation arranged according to the mind of each one of us, there

would be a pretty quarrel before we left this place. You say, Friend, that it is to be according to your mind. But why not according to your neighbor's mind? If man's mind were to decide it, what should we have? Why, you would all contradict each other and there would be no plan of salvation at all if God did not settle it once and for all!

Then, besides, should it be according to your mind today? "Yes," you say, "I have made up my mind." But you will take your mind to pieces tomorrow—what little there is of it—and then you will put it together again the next day, and say, "I have made up my mind. I am a man of mind, you know." Ah, yes, we know you, Sir. There is a certain tribe of people about, nowadays, who call themselves "men of culture" and they sneer at everybody who does not go in for that kind of boasting. If they were really men of mind, they would never talk like that, for the man who has the most culture generally has enough to be a little modest and not to brag about what he is. Well, then, if salvation is to be according to man's mind, whose mind is to decide it, and on what day, and at what hour of the day is the verdict of that man's mind to be taken? It is vacillating, changing like the moon, never twice in the same mood on the same day—so salvation cannot be according to our mind—for it would be chaos! It would be destruction if that were the case.

II. Now, secondly, here is A WARNING. "He will recompense it, whether you refuse, or whether you choose."

By this I understand that, whatever our will may be, God will carry out His own purpose. As surely as God is God, He will never be defeated in anything. He who is Omniscient and, therefore, sees the end from the beginning, is also Omnipotent and, therefore, can work His own will exactly as He chooses—He will never be baffled by the will of men. I believe in the free agency of man as much as anyone who lives, but I equally believe in the eternal purpose of God. If you ask, "How do you reconcile those beliefs?" I answer, "They have never yet been at variance, so there is no need to attempt to reconcile them. They are like two parallel lines which will run side by side forever—man responsible because he does what he wills, and God infinitely glorious, achieving His own purposes, not only in the world of dead, inert matter, but also through those who are free agents—without changing them in the least degree, leaving them just as free as they ever were, He yet, in every jot and tittle, performs the eternal purpose of His will."

I would also remind you that though you quibble at God's way of salvation, God will punish sin just the same. There is many a man who has said, "I will never believe that God will send men to Hell"—but he has gone there—and then he has changed his mind in a very remarkable and terrible fashion when it is too late! There are many who say, "It should be this, or it should not be that," but they do not ask, "What says the Scripture?" Yet that is the all-important point, for, whatever you may say as to what it should be

or should not be, makes no difference to God! He will take less notice of you and your opinion than you do of a gnat or a fly that buzzes about you on a summer's evening. He is so infinitely great and good that any opposition you and I may think that we can raise against Him shall be less than nothing and vanity! Shall twigs contend with fire, or wax with the flame? Shall nothing oppose itself to Omnipotence? Shall the creature of a day, that is and is not, attempt to wrestle with the Eternal? No, this cannot be! Therefore, God will have His way and He will punish sin!

And, further, my Friends, though you may object to God's way of salvation, others will be saved by it. Christ did not die in vain. He will rejoice in everyone whom He purchased with His blood. He will not lose one of the jewels that are to deck His crown forever. You may strive against His Kingdom, but that Kingdom will come when He pleases. The King eternal, immortal, invisible, shall surely reign forever and ever! And if your voice is not heard in the great Hallelujah chorus of Heaven, yet not one of its notes will be missing! Christ shall be glorified to the highest possible degree, whoever may oppose Him. It is well that those who object to God's plan of salvation should know these facts. That is how Christ treated objectors when He was upon the earth. When they murmured at what He told them, He did not tone down the unpalatable Truth. He did not say to them, "You are robbing me of My honor and glory, and I shall never prosper." He said, "No man can come to Me unless the Father, which has sent Me, draw him." On another occasion, He said, "You believe not because you are not of My sheep, as I said unto you." He did not humble Himself to them, but again proclaimed His own Truth in all its majesty and sublimity, that they might bow before Him and His message.

Just once more upon this point, let me say that God will certainly magnify His own name, whoever may oppose Him—"Whether you refuse, or whether you choose," shall make no difference to Him! His Grace comes like the dew, which tarries not for man, neither waits for the sons of men. Oftentimes, He is found of them that seek Him not and, to those who were not His people, He says, "You are My people," thus magnifying His own amazing Grace. Whoever may stand out against Him, He shall lack none of His honor and glory, world without end.

III. This brings us to the third part of our subject, on which I desire to say exactly what Elihu said, "and not I." We cannot be absolutely sure what these three words mean, but, if they mean what I think they do, they teach us a lesson which I have called A PROTEST.

Whenever you find anyone opposing God, say to yourself, "and not I." When there is any wrong thing being done, and it comes under your notice, say, "and not I." Take care that you go not with a multitude to do evil! Do not take upon your tongue just what others may be saying, but bear your individual protest against the evil. Even if you stand alone, say, "and not I."

What Elihu meant, I think, was this. Whoever opposes God should know that he is not dealing with a man like himself. If you hear a preacher make a statement, and you feel, "That is not the Word of the Lord," pray God to forgive him for his sin in saying it. But if he speaks with the sound of his Master's feet behind him and what he says is the Word of God, then do not trifle with it. If it is clearly a revealed Truth of God, it may grate against your feelings and set your teeth on edge, but what of that? You had better get your teeth and your feelings put right, for the Truth of God cannot be altered in order to please you! Someone says, "I cannot believe that statement, because it seems too shocking." That is just why I do believe it, for it does me good by shocking me. And if it is in God's Word, I am bound to accept it. "Oh," you say, "but something within me revolts against it." It is only natural it should do so, for "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"—and it naturally cries out against the thing that is most surely true. The supreme

majesty of God's Word is that before which we have to bow, and not the insignificant usurpers of our inward feelings, fancies and whims. "Let God be true and every man a liar."

Elihu also means, I think, "I will not be responsible for the man who refuses God's Word. I will not stand in his place, or take the blame which is due him. He shall be recompensed, and not I, for I have spoken the Truth. I will not bear the responsibility of it. If men choose to refuse it, they must take the consequences—to the Lord alone they must stand or

fall."

And, once more, Elihu means, "If you refuse God's Word, it is not I. I will not share in your rebellion against Him." Ah, my dear Hearers, there are some of you who think yourselves very intelligent, wise and thoughtful. And you imagine that you know a great deal more than I do and, therefore, you refuse to receive God's Word. Well, if you do so, I will not! I am determined about this matter and I say, with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah." And, mark you, by, "Jehovah," I mean the old Testament God! I have never seen Him superseded in His own Word, though some men profess that it is so. According to them, the God of the Hebrews was not the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, though Jesus never said so, but quite the reverse! The God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob is He whom we worship this day—and His Character, as it is written out in full in the Old and New Testament—is that which we admire and delight

in!

Others may have new gods, newly come up, which our fathers knew not, but not I. He who made the heavens and the earth. He who led forth His people out of Egypt and divided the sea, even the Red Sea. He whose mercy endures forever. The God who shines forth all along as the God of a covenanted people to whom He did reveal Himself, "this God is our God forever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death." Learned men may dispute as much as they like about Him, but we bow humbly at His feet. We question nothing that He does! We believe it to be right even when we do not understand it and it is our hope that others will do the same. But if they will not, it will not affect our own decision.

IV. Our last head is, A CHALLENGE AND AN INVITATION.

If there are any who refuse the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ for any reason known only to themselves, we venture to ask them to say what it is—"Therefore speak what you know." It was not in Elihu's mind to tell Job to be silent and never open his mouth again. Speech is the glory of man, and freedom of speech, as far as concerns his fellow creatures, is the right of every man! It is far better that when there is a difficulty or an objection, it should be fairly stated, than that it should lie smothered up within the soul to breed untold mischief. Therefore, if you have an objection to God's Word, write it out and look at it. Or, if you care not to do that, state it, if not to your friend—if you prefer privacy—state it to yourself! Only bring it out and let it be known! But, at the same time, when you are speaking, "speak what you know."

Now, what do you really know of God? Little enough do the most of us know, but, still, I think we know enough to know that He is not the god of modern times whom some preach. One single night of frost will destroy millions upon millions of creatures that were happy and enjoyed life—and this is done by that God of whom we are often assured that

He cannot possibly punish sin, or put men to pain. But He does it. Hear the cry of the poor seamen, when the storm tosses the great boat and drives it on the rocks. See how, everywhere, the Lord is a great God and terrible. Even though He condescends to be a Father to those of us who trust in Jesus Christ, His Son, and is gentle as a nurse to us, yet is He the God of thunder and of fire, the great and almighty God, the King who will not be questioned by His subjects and who will not alter His arrangements to please their fancies!

It is well for us to speak of God as we have found Him. He has dealt kindly and graciously with us—"He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities"—else had we been cast away forever. We long that others may be able to speak of God in the same way—not saying what they would have Him to be, but what He has revealed Himself to be in nature, in Providence and especially in Grace. Let us all come humbly to His feet! He bids us look to His dear Son and so find peace and salvation. If we will not do so, there is nothing for us but to be driven from His Presence and from the glory of His power, world without end.

Will we dare to defy Him? Have we the impiety to do so? O God, humble us! Beneath the terror of Your majesty, the glory of Your righteousness and the supreme splendor of Your love, bow us down to accept Your Grace and to become Yours forever and ever! God grant that it may be so, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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