The Form of Sound Words

by C.H. Spurgeon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of holding fast to the form of sound words, which is a system of faith that is perfectly scriptural, exalts God, and puts down man.

Duration: 49:49
Scripture: Acts 4:12, Romans 1:16, Romans 10:17, 1 Corinthians 16:13, Ephesians 4:14-15, 1 Thessalonians 5:21, 2 Timothy 1:13
Topics: "Gospel Truth", "Christian Doctrine"

Description

The sermon transcript emphasizes the importance of understanding and embracing the truth of the gospel. It encourages parents to provide sound instruction in the doctrines of Christ to their children. The speaker believes that the gospel should be presented in its pure and simple form, without any distortions or dilutions. The transcript also warns of two dangers: the temptation to give up the truth due to opposition and the need to be conservative in holding onto the truth. The sermon concludes by urging believers to pray themselves into a deeper understanding and adherence to the truth.

Transcript

The New Park Street Pulpit. The Form of Sound Words. A sermon delivered on Sabbath morning, May 11th, 1856, by the Reverend C.H. Spurgeon at New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

2 Timothy 1, verse 13. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. My incessant anxiety for you, dearly beloved, in the faith of Jesus Christ, is that I may be able, in the first place, to teach you what God's truth is, and then trusting that I have, to the best of my ability, taught you what I believe to be God's most holy gospel.

My next anxiety is that you should hold fast the form of sound words, that whatever may occur in the future, should death snatch away your pastor, or should anything occur which might put you in perilous circumstances, so that you were tempted to embrace any system of heresy, you might, every one of you, stand as firm and as unmoved as rocks, and as strong as mountains, be abiding in the faith which once was delivered unto the saints, whereof ye have heard, and which we have proclaimed unto you. If the gospel be worth hearing, and if it be a true gospel, it is worth your holding. And our anxiety is that you should be so established in the faith that you may hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering, for he is faithful that has promised.

The apostle most earnestly admonished Timothy to hold fast the form of sound words which he had heard of him in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. I do not suppose that by this it is intended that Paul ever wrote out for Timothy a list of doctrines, or that he gave him a small abstract of divinity to which he desired him to subscribe his name as the articles of the church over which he was made a pastor. If so, doubtless that document would have been preserved and enrolled in the canons of scripture as one of the writings of an inspired man.

I can scarce think such a creed would have been lost whilst other creeds had been preserved and handed down to us. I conceive that what the apostle meant was this. Timothy, when I have preached to you, you have heard certain grand outlines of truth.

You have heard from me the great system of faith in Jesus Christ in my writings and public speakings. You have heard me continually insist upon a certain pattern or form of faith. Now, I bid you, my dearly beloved son in the gospel, hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

This morning I shall first attempt to tell you what I conceive to be a form of sound words which we are to hold fast. In the second place, I shall endeavor to urge upon you the strong necessity of holding fast that form. In the third place, I shall warn you of some dangers to which you will be exposed, tempting you to give up the form of sound words.

Then, in the last place, I shall mention the two great hold fasts, faith and love in Christ Jesus, which are the great means of holding fast the form of sound words. What is a form of sound words? Ten thousand persons will call upon this. One will say, my creed is a form of sound words.

Another will declare that his creed also is sound, if not infallible. We will not, therefore, enter into all the minutiae which distinguish creeds from each other, but just simply say that no system can be a form of sound words unless it is perfectly scriptural. We receive no doctrines as the doctrines of men.

Whatever authority come to us which is not the authority of the Holy Spirit and inspired by God is no authority at all to us. We laugh to scorn all the dogmatism of men. We care for nothing, they assert, however strongly they declare it or however eloquently they plead for it.

We utterly reject and discard it. We hold it a sin to take for doctrines the commandments of men. We give no heed to the traditions that are handed down to us.

If our opponent cannot quote text or verse for anything he advances, we hold no argument with him. Scripture is the only weapon we can acknowledge. But since it is said that texts may be found to prove almost everything, we must remark that a form of sound words must be one that exalts God and puts down man.

We dare not for a moment think that any doctrine is sound, that does not put the crown upon the head of Jesus and does not exalt the Almighty. If we see a doctrine which exalts the creature, we do not care one fig about what arguments may be brought to support it. We know that it is a lie unless it lays the creature in the very dust of abasement and exalts the Creator.

If it does not do this, it is nothing but a rotten doctrine of pride. It may dazzle us with the brilliant malaria rising from its marshes, but it never can shed a true and helpful light into the soul. It is a rotten doctrine, not fit to be builded on the Gospel unless it exalts Jehovah Jesus, Jehovah the Father, and Jehovah the

Holy Spirit.

We think also that we may judge of the soundness of doctrine by its tendency. We can never think a doctrine sound when we see plainly upon its very surface that it has a tendency to create sin in men. Unless it be a doctrine according to godliness, we cannot conceive it to be a doctrine of God.

Unless the believer of it earnestly and truthfully believing it does give himself to virtue, unless that doctrine has in itself a natural tendency to promote in him a love to the right, we are at first sight suspicious of it. And if we find on examination that it is a licentious doctrine, it may have all the glitter and glare of nobility, but we cast it away as not being the doctrine of Christianity because it does not promote holiness in the soul. We shall perhaps be asked what we do regard as a form of sound words, and what those doctrines are which are scriptural, which at the same time are helpful to the spirit and exalting to God.

We answer, we believe a form of sound words must embrace, first of all, the doctrine of God's being and nature. We must have the trinity in unity and the unity in trinity. Any doctrine which hath not the Father, Son and Holy Ghost as equal persons in one undivided essence, we cast aside as being unsound, for we are sure that such doctrines must be derogatory to God's glory, and if they be so, it is enough for us.

If any man despise either Father, Son or Holy Ghost, we despise him and despise his teachings and cannot even say to him, I wish you Godspeed. Now we hold that a form of sound words must look upon man aright as well as upon God aright. It must teach that man is utterly fallen, that he is sinful and for his sin condemned and in himself altogether hopeless of salvation.

If it exalts man by giving him a character which is not a true one and clothing him with a spurious robe of righteousness woven by his own fingers, we reject and discard it utterly. And next, we think that a doctrine that is sound must have right views of salvation as being of the Lord alone. Unless we find in it everlasting, unchanging love, working out a salvation for a people who were not a people but were made a people by special grace, unless we find a discriminating love, others may say what they will, we will not consider such a creed to be a form of sound words unless we discern redeeming mercy openly and boldly taught.

Unless we see final perseverance and all those great and glorious truths which are the very bulwarks of our religion, others may embrace the doctrine as being a form of sound words but we cannot and we dare not. We love the old system of our forefathers. We love the old truths of scripture not because they are old but because we cannot consider anything to be truth which does not hold the scriptural view of salvation.

Methinks Paul himself in this very chapter gives us a form of sound words where he speaks of God who has saved us and called us with a holy calling not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. I need not stop this morning to prove to you that which I have briefly hinted at as a form of sound words because you believe it and believe it firmly. I am not about to urge you to receive it because I know you have already received it.

But what I have to say is hold fast, I beseech you, the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. Now let me show you the necessity of holding fast this form of sound words and keeping it for your own sake, for the church's sake and for the world's sake. First, for your own sake, hold it fast for thereby you will receive ten thousand blessings, you will receive the blessing of peace in your conscience.

I protest before God that if at any time I ever doubt one of the great things I receive from God, instantly there comes an aching void which the world can never fill and which I can never get filled until I receive that doctrine again and believe it with all my heart. When at any time I am cast down and rejected, I always find comfort in reading books which are strong on the doctrines of the faith of the gospel. If I turn to some of them that treat of God's eternal love revealed to His chosen people in the person of Christ and if I remember some of the exceeding great and precious promises made to the elect in their covenant head, my faith at once becomes strong and my soul with wings sublime mounts upward towards its God.

You cannot tell, beloved, if you have never tasted how sweet is the peace which the doctrines of grace will give to the soul. There is nothing like them. They are a sovereign balm for every wound, a cordial for our fears.

They are God's sweet lullaby wherewith He singeth His children to sleep even in storms. They are God's sheet anchors which are cast out into the sea to hold our little vessels fast in the midst of tempests. There is a peace of God which passeth all understanding, which accrues to a man who is a strong believer.

But you know, the tendency of the day is to give up old landmarks and to adopt new ones and to avow anything rather than the old-fashioned divinity. Well, my dear friends, if any of you like to try new doctrines, I warn you that you be the children of God, you will soon be sick enough of those new-fangled notions, those newly invented doctrines which are continually taught. You may for the first week be pleased enough with their novelty.

You may wonder at their transcendental spirituality or something else which entices you on, but you will not have lived on them long before you will say, Alas, alas, I have taken in my hands the apples of Sodom, they were fair to look upon, but they are ashes in my mouth. If you would be peaceful, keep fast to the truth, hold fast the form of sound words, so shall your peace be like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Hold fast the form of sound words again, let me say, because it will tend very much to your growth.

He who holds fast the truth will grow faster than he who is continually shifting from doctrine to doctrine. What a mighty number of spiritual weathercocks we have in this world now. We have men who in the morning hear a Calvinistic preacher and say, Oh, it is delightful.

In the evening they hear an Arminian and they say, Oh, it is just as good, and no doubt they are both true, though one contradicts the other. The glorious charity of the present day is such that it believes lies to be as good as truth, and lies and truth have met together and kissed each other, and he that telleth truth is called the bigot, and truth has ceased to be honorable in the world. Our beloved, we know better than to profess such unlimited but false charity.

The truth is we know how to hold fast the form of sound words which has been given to us because in this way we grow. Changeable people cannot grow much. If you have a tree in your garden and plant it in one place today, and tomorrow place it somewhere else, how much bigger will it be in six months? It will be dead very likely, or if it does not die it will not be very much grown.

It will be marvelously stunted. So it is with some of you. You plant yourselves there, then you are persuaded that you are not quite right, and you go and plant yourself somewhere else.

Why there are men who are anythingarians, who go dodging about from one denomination to another and cannot tell what they are, our opinion is of these people that they believe nothing and are good for nothing, and anybody may have them that likes. We do not consider men to be worth much unless they have settled principles and hold fast the form of sound words. You cannot grow unless you hold it fast.

How should I know any more of my faith in ten years' time if I allowed it to take ten forms in ten years? I should be but a smatterer in each and know nothing thoroughly of one, but he that hath one faith, and knoweth it to be the faith of God, and holdeth it fast, how strong he becomes in his faith. Each wind or tempest doth but confirm him as the fierce winds root the oaks and make them strong, standing firmly in their places. But if I shift and change, I am none the better, but rather the worse.

For your own peace' sake, then, and for your growth, hold fast the form of sound words. But my beloved, I would beseech you to hold it fast for your own sakes from a remembrance of the great evils which will follow the contrary course. If you do not hold fast the form of sound words, listen to me while I tell you what you will do.

In the first place, every deviation from truth is a sin. It is not simply a sin for me to do a wrong act, but it is a sin for me to believe a wrong doctrine. Lately, our ministers have absolved us all from obeying God in our judgments.

They have told us point-blank, many of them in their drawing-rooms, and some of them in the pulpit, that we shall never be asked in the day of judgment what we believed. We have been told that for our acts we shall be responsible, but for our faith we shall be irresponsible, or something very much like it. They have told us plainly that the God who made us, although He has authority over our hands, our feet, our eyes, and our lips, has but little authority over our judgments.

They have told us that if we make ever such blunders in divinity, they are no sin so long as we can live right lives. But is that true? No. The whole man is bound to serve God, and if God gives me a judgment, I am bound to employ that judgment in His service.

And if that judgment receive an untruth, it has received stolen goods, and I have sinned as much as if I put forth my hand to take my neighbor's goods. There may be degrees in the sin. If it be a sin of ignorance, it is nevertheless a sin.

But it is not so heinous as a sin of negligence, which I fear it is with many. I tell you, beloved, if, for instance, baptism be not by immersion, I commit a sin every time I practice it, and if it be my brother commits a sin who does not practice it. If election be true, I am committing a sin if I do not believe it, and if final perseverance be true, I am committing a sin before Almighty God if I do not receive it, and if it be not true, then I sin in embracing what is not scriptural.

Error in doctrine is as much a sin as error in practice. In everything we are bound to serve our God with all our might, exercising those powers of judging and believing which He has given unto us. And I warn you Christians not to think it is a little thing to hold faith with a feeble hand.

It is a sin every time you do aught which makes you waver in the faith of Jesus Christ. Remember too that error in doctrine is not only a sin, but a sin which has a great tendency to increase. When a man once in his life believes a wrong thing, it is marvelous how quickly he believes another wrong thing.

Once open the door to a false doctrine, Satan sees it is but a little one, eh? But he only puts the little one in like the small end of the wedge, and he means to drive in a larger one, and he will say, It is only a little more, and a little more, and a little more. The most damnable heretics who ever perverted the faith of God erred by littles and littles. Those who have gone the widest from truth have only gone so by degrees.

Whence came the church of Rome, that mass of abominations? Why, from gradual departures. It did not become abominable at first. It was not the mother of harlots all at once, but at first did deck itself in some ornaments, then in others, and by and by it went on to commit its fornications with the kings of the earth.

It fell by little and little, and in the same way it separated itself from the truth. For centuries it was a church of Christ, and it is difficult to say in looking at history when was the exact point in which it ceased to be numbered with Christian churches. Take care, Christians, if you commit one error, you cannot tell how many more you will commit.

Hold fast the form of sound words, because error in doctrine almost inevitably leads to error in practice. When a man believes wrongly, he will soon act wrongly. Faith has a great influence on our conduct.

As a man's faith, so is he. If you begin to imbibe erroneous doctrines, they soon have an effect on your practice. Keep fast to the bulwarks of your father's faith.

If you do not, the enemy will make sad havoc with you. Hold fast the form of sound words which was delivered unto you. And now, for the good of the church itself, I want you all to hold fast the form of sound words.

Would you wish to see the church prosperous? Would you wish to see it peaceful? Then hold fast the form of sound words. What is the cause of divisions, chisms, quarrels and bickerings amongst us? It is not the fault of the truth, it is the fault of errors. There would have been peace in the church, entire and perpetual peace, if there had been purity, entire and perpetual purity in the church.

Going down to Sheerness on Friday, I was told by someone on board that during the late gale several of the ships there had their anchors rent up and had gone dashing against the other ships and had done considerable damage. Now if their anchors had held fast and firm, no damage would have been done. Ask me the cause of the damage which has been done to our churches by the different denominations and I tell you it is because all their anchors did not hold fast.

If they had held fast by the truth, there would have been no disputing. Disputing comes from errors. If there be any ill feeling, you must not trace it to the truth, you must trace it to the error.

If the church had always kept firm to the faith and had always been united to the doctrines of the truth, there would have been no disputes. Keep firm to your belief and you will prevent discord in the church. Keep to your faith, I say again, for the church's sake, for so will you promote strength in the church.

I saw lying between Chatham and Sheerness a number of ships that I supposed to be old hulks and I thought how stupid government was to let them remain there and not chop them up for firewood or something else. But someone said to me, those ships can soon be fitted for service. They look old now but they only want a little paint and when the admiralty requires them they will be commissioned and made fit for use.

So we have heard some people say, there are those old doctrines, what good are they? Wait, there is not a doctrine in God's Bible that has not its use. Those ships that you may think are not wanted will be useful by and by. So it is with the doctrines of the Bible.

Do not say, break up those old doctrines, you can do without them. Nay, we want them and we must have them. Some people say, why do you preach against our minions? We have not much to fear from them now.

But I like to practice my men against the time comes for action. We are not going to burn our ships. They will be wanted by and by and when we sail out of harbor the men will say, whence came these old ships? Why we will reply, they are just the doctrines you thought good for nothing.

Now we bring them out and we will make good use of them. Nowadays we are having new and marvelous hymn books full of perfect nonsense. And we are having new theories and new systems and they say, why be so stringent, our Christian brethren may believe what they like on those points just now.

But as certain as there is a church in this land, they will want our old ships to fight their battles. They may do very well in times of peace, but they will not do in the time of war. They will then need our broadside to support the faith of the gospel, though now they laugh at us.

For the strength of the church, my brethren, I bid you hold fast the form of sound words. Well, says one, I think we ought to hold the truth firmly, but I do not see the necessity for holding the form of it. I think we might cut and trim a little and then our doctrines would be received better.

Suppose, my friends, we should have some valuable egg and someone would say, well now, the shell is good for nothing. There will never be a bird produced by the shell certainly, why not break the shell? I should simply smile in his face and say, my dear friend, I want the shell to take care of what is inside. I know the vital principle is the most important, but I want the shell to take care of the vital principle.

You say, hold fast the principle, but do not be so severe about the form. You are an old Puritan and want to be too strict in religion. Let us just alter a few things and make it a little palatable.

My dear friends, do not break the shell. You are doing far more damage than you think. We willingly admit the form is but little, but when men attack the form, what is their object? They do not hate the form, they hate the substance.

Keep the substance then and keep the form too. Not only hold the same doctrines, but hold them in the same shape, just as angular, rough and rugged as they were. For if you do not, it is difficult to change the form and yet to keep fast the substance.

Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me in faith and love which is in Jesus Christ. Again, I say, hold fast the form of sound words for the world's sake. Pardon me when I say that speaking after the manner of men, I believe that the progress of the gospel has been awfully impeded by the airs of its preachers.

I never wonder when I see a Jew, an unbeliever in Christianity for this reason, that the Jew very seldom sees Christianity in its beauty. For hundreds of years, what has the Jew thought Christianity to be? Why, pure idolatry. He has seen the Catholic bow down to blocks of wood and stone, he has seen him prostrating himself before the Virgin Mary and all saints, and the Jew has said, Oh, this is my watchword.

Here, O Israel, the Lord thy God is our Lord. I would not be a Christian for to worship one God is the essential part of my religion. So, the heathen, I believe, have been a false system of Christianity, and they have said, What, is that your Christianity? And they did not receive it.

But I believe that when the gospel is purged from all the rudiments of men, and all the chaff and dust have been winnowed from it, and it is presented in all its naked simplicity, it will be sure to win the day. And I say again, speaking as a man, the gospel might have made a ten thousand fold greater progress if it had been preached in all its simplicity, instead of that diluted or rather distorted form in which it is commonly proclaimed. If ye would see sinners saved, if ye would see God's elect gathered in, hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

And now, very briefly, in the third place, let me warn you of two dangers. One is that you will be very much tempted to give up the form of sound words that you hold on account of the opposition you will meet with. I do not prophesy that you will have corporal persecution, though I know there are some poor creatures here that have to endure that from ungodly husbands and such like.

But you will, all of you, in some measure, if you hold the truth, meet with the persecution of the tongue. You will be laughed at. Your doctrine will be held up to ridicule, exhibited in a grotesque manner.

You will be caricatured in all that you believe, and you will be sometimes tempted to say, No, I do not believe that, though all the while you do. For if you do not positively say it, you will at times be led to turn a little, because the laughter you cannot stand and the scoff of the worldly wise is rather too hard for you. O my beloved, let me warn you against being thus drawn aside.

Hold fast the form of sound words in the midst of all ridicule. But the greatest obstacle you will have is a sort of slight and cunning, trying to pervert you to the belief that your doctrine is the same with one which is just the very opposite. The enemy will try to persuade you that something he holds is quite harmless, though opposed to what you hold, and he will say, You do not want to be broaching these things.

That must bring forth controversy. There is a way of squaring your sentiments with mine. And you know we all like to be thought so liberal.

The greatest pride in the world now is to be thought liberal in sentiment, and some of us would run a hundred miles rather than be called a bigot or an antinomian. I beseech you, be not drawn aside by those who are so ready to subvert your faith, not by openly attacking it, but by insidiously undermining every doctrine, saying this does not signify and that does not signify, while all the while they are trying to pull down every castle and fortress wherewith God has guarded his truth and his church. And now, in the last place, I am to tell you of the great holdfast whereby you are to hold fast the truth of the gospel.

If I might be allowed to mention one or two before coming to those in the text, I should say in the first place, if you want to hold fast the truth, seek to get an understanding of it. A man cannot hold a thing fast unless he has a good understanding of it. I never want you to have the faith of a collier who was asked what he believed.

He said he believed what the church believed. Well, but what does the church believe? He said the church believed what he believed, and he believed what the church believed, and so it went all the way around. We do not want you to have that faith.

It may be a very pertinacious faith, a very obstinate faith, but it is a very foolish faith. We want you to understand things, to get a true knowledge of them. The reason why men forsake truth for error is that they have not really understood that truth.

In nine cases out of ten, they have not embraced it with enlightened minds. Let me exhort you parents, as much as lieth in you, to give your children sound instruction in the great doctrines of the gospel of Christ. I believe that what Irving once said is a great truth.

He said, in these modern times, you boast in glory, and you think yourselves to be in a high and noble condition because you have your Sabbath schools and British schools and all kinds of schools for teaching youth. I tell you, he said, that philanthropic and great as these are, they are the ensigns of your disgrace. They show that your land is not a land where parents teach their children at home.

They show you there is a want of parental instruction, and though they be blessed things, these Sabbath schools, they are indications of something wrong, for if we all taught our children there would be no need of strangers to say to our children, know the Lord. I trust you will never give up that excellent puritanical habit of catechizing your children at home. Any father or mother who entirely gives up a child to the teaching of another has made a mistake.

There is no teacher who wishes to absolve a parent from what he ought to do himself. He is an assistant, but he was never intended to be a substitute. Teach your children, bring up your old catechisms again, for they are, after all, blessed means of instruction, and the next generation shall outstrip those who have gone before it.

For the reason why many of you are weak in the faith is this, you did not receive instruction in your youth in the great things of the gospel of Christ. If you had, you would have been so grounded and settled and firm in the faith that nothing could by any means have moved you. I beseech you then, understand truth, and then you will be more likely to hold fast by it.

But then, Christian men, above all things, if you would hold fast the truth, pray yourselves right into it. The way to get a doctrine is to pray till you get it. An old divine says, I have lost many things I learned in the house of God, but I never lost anything I ever learned in the closet.

That which a man learns on his knees with his Bible open, he will never forget. Well, have you ever bowed your knees and said, Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law? If you have seen that wondrous thing, you will never forget it. He that prays himself into a truth will never be got out of it by the very devil himself, though he were to put on the garb of an angel of light.

Pray yourselves into the truth. But the two great hold fasts are here given faith and love. If ye would hold the truth fast, put your faith in Jesus Christ and have an ardent love towards him.

Believe the truth. Do not pretend to believe it, but believe it thoroughly. And he who does not believe it and fixes his faith first in Christ and then in all Christ says will not be likely to let it go.

Why we do not believe religion, most of us, we pretend to believe it, but we do not believe it with all our heart and all our soul and with all our might and all our strength, not with that faith which is in Christ Jesus. For if we did, come storms, come trials, like Luther of old, we should not flinch because of persecution, but stand fast in the evil day, having our faith fixed upon a rock. And then the second hold fast is love.

Love Christ and love Christ's truth because it is Christ's truth for Christ's sake and if you love the truth you will not let it go. It is very hard to turn a man away from the truth he loves. Oh, says one, I cannot argue with you about it, but I cannot give it up.

I love it and I cannot live without it. It is a part of myself woven into my very nature and though my opponent says that bread is not bread and I cannot prove that it is, yet I know I go and I eat it. It is wonderfully like it to me and it takes away my hunger.

He says that stream is not a pure stream. I cannot prove that it is, but I go and I drink of it and I find it the river of the water of life to my soul and he tells me that my gospel is not a true one. Well, it comforts me, it sustains me in my trials, it helps me to conquer sin and to keep down my evil passions and brings me near to God and if my gospel be not a true one, I wonder what sort of a thing a true one is.

Mine is wonderfully like it and I cannot suppose that a true gospel would produce better effects. That is the best thing to do, to believe the word, to have so full a belief in it that the enemy cannot pull you away. He may try to do it, but you will say amidst temptations sharp and long, my soul to the same refuge flies.

Faith is my anchor firm and strong when tempests blow or billows rise. Hold on then, Christian, to faith and love which are by Christ Jesus, to blessed holdfast wherewith we hold and grasp the truth. And now, brethren and sisters, I pray that my master will enable you to see the importance of what I have uttered.

Perhaps you may not think it so important now, especially those of you who are young, but there are some here, the fathers of this church, who will tell you that the older they grow and the longer they live, the more they find truth to be valuable. They may perhaps in their youth have had a little radicalism in them with regard to truth, but they are conservative in their views of it now and they feel it to be worth conserving. It would be well for us if, with regard to the truth, we began to be conservative as soon as we believed it and held it fast and never let it go.

I think the chief fault of the present day is that in seeking to be liberal we do not hold the truth firmly enough. I met some time ago with the case of an eminent minister in the gospel, a brother whom I respect in esteem, who preached a sermon from the text, Prove All Things. A young man was there who was professedly a believer in Christianity, but such was the style in which the subject was handled that after hearing that sermon he went home and bought some infidel works, and the consequence is that he has become entirely apostate even from virtue itself and has forsaken everything that he once held to be true.

I say, send your anchor right down, young Christian, and let whatever may come against you hold on still by that truth, and you may yet even then prove all things. But while you are doing it, remember to hold fast that which is good. Do not prove all things by giving up that which is good to do it.

Now, such of you as know not the Lord, if you ever are saved, let me tell you that the most likely place for you to meet with salvation is under a pure gospel ministry. Therefore there is a lesson for you. Attend where the gospel is preached.

Again, the most likely way for you ever to receive God's grace is to believe God's truths. Never kick against God's doctrines, but receive them. And I have one thing to say to thee this morning.

If in thy heart, poor sinner, thou canst say, I believe God's gospel to be a glorious gospel, thou art not far from something else. If thou canst say, I submit to all its demands, I believe God just if he destroys me, and if he saves me, it will be of his sovereign mercy only, then, sinner, there are good hopes of thee. Thou

hast proceeded some way on the road to heaven.

If thou canst but do one thing more and say, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him, and if thou canst come to the cross of Christ and say, Jesus, I love thy gospel and I love thy truth. If I perish, I will perish believing all thy truth. I will perish clasping thy cross.

If I die, I will die owning that thou art a just and a gracious God and still in my poor way holding fast the form of sound words. I tell thee, poor soul, God will never damn thee. If thou dost believe in Jesus Christ and holdest fast his words, he will look upon thee in love.

He will say, poor soul, though he does not know that these truths are his, yet he thinks them precious. Though he dares not hope that they belong to him, yet he will fight for them. Though he does not know that he is really a soldier of the cross chosen of me ere time began, yet see how valiantly he strives for them.

And the Lord will say, poor soul, thou lovest the things that thou thinkest are not thine own. I will make thee rejoice in them as thine own by my grace, thou lovest election. Though thou thinkest thou art not elect, that is an evidence that thou art mine.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized and thou shalt be saved. And now, my brethren, stand fast, I beseech you. If my tears, if my bended knees, if my cries, yea, if my blood could prevail with you to lay to heart what I have said this morning, here should be tears and cries and blood too if I could but make you all hold fast in these evil, perilous times.

Hold fast, oh, with the tenacity of the dying hand of the sinking mariner. Hold fast, I beseech you, the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

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