

What Should We Do with the Paradox?

I closed the previous chapter by asking what we should do with the paradox between God's decree to save his elect and his desire to save all. Here is my reply.

We must not dismiss the paradox, even though we cannot reconcile it

Speaking first of paradoxes in general: While the Bible tells us all we need to know about any paradox, it never fully explains it, it never unravels the knot; hence we have paradoxes! The Bible simply states both sides of a truth and leaves it there. Of course, to God there are no paradoxes; it is self-evident that he knows all things and is perfectly consistent. It is *we* who cannot understand; paradoxes arise in *our* poor finite minds. But on no account dare we question God: 'O man, who are you to reply against God?' (Rom. 9:20). 'Who can say to him, "What are you doing?"' (Job 9:12). In trying to cope with puzzles the Bible does not solve, we must not go beyond God's revelation (Deut. 29:29). Nor must we be arrogant: 'What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!' (Rom. 9:14). Rather, we should be humble: 'Can you search out the deep things of God?' (Job 11:7). Of course not! 'Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and his ways past finding out!' (Rom. 11:33).

All we can do, all we may do, all we must do, is examine Scripture to discover the revealed mind of God, and, accepting the limitations of our understanding, hold both sides of any paradox we find: 'What God has joined together, let not man separate' (Matt. 19:6). This is the 'tension' I was speaking about, which Ella derided.¹ If I had spoken of a tension in the Godhead, Ella would

¹ Ella: *The Free Offer* pp20-22. I hope I have finally dealt with Ella's

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

have been right to attack me,² but since I was speaking of a tension

attack upon me over the issue. I do not believe God the Father and God the Son quarrel over the salvation of sinners. Perish the thought! As John Brown said: ‘We are never to think of God the Father as indisposed to save man till prevailed on to do it by the labours, and sufferings, and prayers of his incarnate Son. The whole scheme originated in the will of the one God; and the mediatorial economy is nothing more than the means adopted by infinite wisdom to execute the purpose of infinite mercy, in consistency with the claims of infinite justice’ (Brown: *Galatians* p33). M’Cheyne: ‘When [Christ] wept over Jerusalem... there was much that was human in it. The feet were human that stood upon Mount Olivet. The eyes were human eyes that looked down upon the dazzling city. The tears were human tears that fell upon the ground. But oh, there was the tenderness of God beating beneath that mantle! Look and live, sinners. Look and live. Behold your God! He that has seen a weeping Christ has seen the Father. This is God manifest in the flesh. Some of you fear that the Father does not wish [desire] you to come to Christ and be saved. But see here, God is manifest in flesh. He that has seen Christ has seen the Father. See here the heart of the Father and the heart of the Son laid bare. Oh, why should you doubt? Every one of these tears trickles from the heart of God’ (Bonar: *M’Cheyne* p472). Spurgeon made the same point: ‘This is not and could not be the language of a mere man. It would be utterly absurd for any man to say that he would have gathered the inhabitants of a city together... Besides, the language implies that, for many centuries, by the sending of the prophets, and by many other warnings, God would often have gathered the children of Jerusalem... Now Christ could not have said that, throughout those ages, he would have gathered those people, if he had been only a man... but as the Son of God, ever loving the sons of men, ever desirous of the good of Israel, he could say that, in sending the prophets, even though they were stoned and killed, he had again and again shown his desire to bless his people till he could truly say, “How often would I have gathered your children together!” Some who have found difficulties in this lament, have said that it was the language of Christ as man [see, for instance, Gill: *Commentary* Vol.5 pp229-230]. I beg to put a very decided negative to that; it is, and it must be, the utterance of the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Christ in his complex person as human and divine’ (Spurgeon: *Metropolitan* Vol.40 p469). Spurgeon never tired of the theme: *New* Vol.4 pp65-69; Vol.6 pp125-126; *Metropolitan* Vol.9 pp171-172; Vol.19 pp426-427; Vol.22 pp20-22; Vol.31 pp387-390; Vol.32 pp391-393. See chapter 6.

² But what of Gill on God’s words in Hos. 11:8? ‘How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel?... My heart churns within me;

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

in the mind of the believer, his derision was sadly misplaced. Does Ella find no tension in his doctrinal understanding? Is everything in Scripture perfectly clear to his mind? Can he reconcile it all?

Edwards criticised those who ‘lay it down for a rule, to embrace no doctrine which they by their own reason cannot reconcile with the moral perfections of God’.³ Edwards rightly dismissed this as ‘unreasonable’. He pointed out the obvious: By such a rule, he noted, if something cannot be true because ‘our reason cannot see how it can be... it will follow that we must reject the doctrine of the trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, *etc.* The Scripture itself supposes that there are some things in the Scripture that men may not be able to reconcile with God’s moral perfections. See Romans 9:19... The apostle does not answer the

my sympathy is stirred’. ‘The words are generally understood as a debate in the divine mind, struggling within itself between justice and mercy; justice requiring the delivery of these persons unto it, and mercy being reluctant thereunto, pleading on their behalf; and which at last gets the victory, and rejoices against judgement. There is a truth in all this’. True, Gill did place another construction on the words, saying that God was showing with what severity he might have dealt with Israel, but even so, Gill did admit the truth of the first view. I myself would go only as far as to say that God was once again accommodating himself to his hearers and speaking as a man – *as though* he had a debate in his mind, when in fact, of course, there is no debate within the mind of God. The same goes for his actions. As Gill rightly went on to say, God, without ever changing ‘his mind and purposes’, ‘sometimes does what men do when they repent; he changes his outward conduct and behaviour in the dispensations of his providence, and acts the reverse of what he had done, or seemed to be about to do... So here, though he could, and seemed as if he would, go forth in a way of strict justice, yet [he] changes his course, and steers another way, without any change of his will. The phrase expresses the warmth and ardour of his affections to his people; how his heart burned with love to them; his bowels and inward parts were inflamed with it; from whence proceeded what is called repentance among men’ (Gill: *Commentary* Vol.4 pp621-622). And, reader, please remember that although Israel was in some sense ‘the people of God’, not all Israelites were elect (Rom. 9:6-29; 11:1-10,25). Bearing this in mind, this last quotation from Gill expresses exactly what I have been trying to say; God’s heart burns with desiring love to sinners, including the non-elect.

³ He had Arminians in mind, but his words apply to all, including hyper-Calvinists.

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

objection, by showing us how to reconcile it with the moral perfections of God, but by representing the arrogance of quarrelling with revealed doctrines under such a pretence, and not considering the infinite distance between God and us'.⁴ Now, however difficult we may find this, as Edwards said:

There is no inconsistency or contrariety between the decretive and [the] preceptive will of God... To conclude this discourse: I wish the reader to consider the unreasonableness of rejecting plain revelations, because they are puzzling to our reason... Though the doctrine of the decrees is mysterious, and attended with difficulties, yet the opposite doctrine is in itself more mysterious, and attended with greater difficulties, and with contradictions to reason more evident, to one who thoroughly considers things... Since the Scripture is so abundant in declaring it, the unreasonableness of rejecting it appears the more glaring.⁵

Dr Withington had it right: When I come across a paradox, he said, 'I must mingle these truths just as they are mingled in the Bible, and I have no right to make the one weaker than the other. I must leave the compound, with all its perplexities and divine contradictions'. Francis Wayland was of the same mind: 'I stand to whatever God has said; what men infer from it is merely human,

⁴ Edwards, after giving other scriptural examples, said: 'God's commanding a thing to be done, which he certainly knows at the time will not be done, is no evidence of insincerity in God in commanding'. In an earlier statement he had illustrated the point: 'For God to warn men to beware of damnation, though he has absolutely determined that they shall not be damned, is exactly parallel with his exhorting men to seek salvation, though he has actually determined that they shall not be saved'. God, of course, does both. In facing such issues, Edwards warned, 'there is a way of drawing consequences from Scripture, that begs the question'. He admitted, for example, 'there are many more texts plainly against election, than seem to be for it'; he was speaking of 'those texts that represent that general offers of salvation are made, as though it were left to men's choice whether they will be saved or not'. But Edwards dismissed the false deduction from this fact; namely, that man is the arbiter of his salvation. He did so by rightly saying it 'is begging the question. For the question very much consists in... whether an absolute decree be inconsistent with... a general offer of salvation'. And, as Edwards argued, there is no such inconsistency.

⁵ Edwards pp534-543.

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

and weighs with me just nothing'.⁶ Quite! There can be no inconsistency in God, so although we cannot explain how the two seemingly contradictory statements of any paradox fit together, we know they do, we hold both and preach both, without trying to reconcile them. William Jay, it has been said, 'never feared to give from the pulpit what he conceived to be the whole counsel of God. If he apparently met with difficulties in the subject he was at the time treating, he would mention the circumstances, and leave them, without an attempt to combine what was, in his opinion, far beyond man's finite powers'.⁷

Bavinck, in his treatise on the doctrine of God, declared:

The idea that the believer would be able to understand and comprehend intellectually the revealed mysteries is... unscriptural... The truth which God has revealed concerning himself in nature and in Scripture far surpasses human conception and comprehension... As soon as we take upon ourselves the task of speaking about God, the question at once arises: How can we? We are men, and he is the Lord our God... There is between him and us a distance as between the infinite and the finite, as between eternity and time... The history of the universe can never be made to fit into a little scheme of logic.⁸

Calvin, commenting on Ezekiel 18:23, spoke of God's desire as revealed in the prophet's words:

God desires nothing more earnestly than that those who were perishing and rushing to destruction should return into the way of safety. And for this reason not only is the gospel spread abroad in the world, but God wished to bear witness through all ages how inclined he is to pity... In the gospel we hear how familiarly he addresses us when he promises us pardon (Luke 1:78). And this is the knowledge of salvation, to embrace his mercy which he offers us in Christ... We hold, then, that God wills not the death of a sinner, since he calls all equally to repentance, and promises himself prepared to receive them if they only seriously repent.

But what now of God's decree? 'If anyone should object' to the above, said Calvin, by arguing that if 'God desires nothing more

⁶ Article in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 1861, quoted in Wayland Vol.1 pp124-126.

⁷ Jay p249. He used Judas as a case in point. See also Jay pp170-171.

⁸ Bavinck pp13-14,391. Hodge (p380) made the point from 'the unity of [Christ's] person [in] two spirits'.

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

earnestly than that those who were perishing and rushing to destruction should return into the way of safety’, and consequently he ‘calls all equally to repentance’, then it means that God’s decree has gone out of the window, and ‘there is no election of God, by which he has predestinated a fixed number to salvation’! In other words, both cannot be true. We can have either God’s desire or his decree, but not both. He either desires all men to be saved, or else he has decreed that his elect and no others shall be saved. We cannot have both. To this, Calvin replied:

The answer is at hand: the prophet does not here speak of God’s secret counsel, but only recalls miserable men from despair, that they may apprehend the hope of pardon, and repent and embrace the offered salvation. If anyone again objects – [that] this is making God act with duplicity, the answer is ready, that God always wishes the same thing, though by different ways, and in a manner inscrutable to us. Although, therefore, God’s will is simple [that is, it is a unity, it is one], yet a great variety is involved in it, as far as our senses are concerned. Besides, it is not surprising that our eyes should be blinded by intense light, so that we cannot certainly judge how God wishes all to be saved, and yet has devoted all the reprobate to eternal destruction, and wishes⁹ them to perish.

This is a difficulty, Calvin admitted. Of course it is! But he did not seek a solution by explaining it away. Indeed, he returned to it: ‘God is said “not to wish the death of a sinner”. How so? since he wishes all to be converted... [Now] since... repentance... is not in

⁹ Surely Calvin meant ‘will’ (‘intend’) here, not ‘desire’; the context clearly proves it. So why did he use ‘wish’? But did he, in fact, use ‘wish’? Does the confusion arise because the English version I am quoting is a translation ‘from the original Latin, and collated with the French version’? As I have explained, in the New Testament, two Greek words can both be translated as ‘will’ or ‘wish’. And in English, *Concise* has the word ‘desire’ in the definition of ‘will’. The context must decide. ‘God wishes [that is, desires] all to be saved, and yet has devoted all the reprobate to eternal destruction, and wishes [that is, decrees] them to perish’. This note also applies to the words which follow. I am not saying, of course, that there is any contradiction within God; he decrees and fulfils all his pleasure (Isa. 46:10). But, as I have shown, speaking as a man, God reveals that he desires the salvation of the reprobate even though he has decreed their damnation.

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

man's power... [but] is... in God's power... it follows that the reprobate are not converted, because God does not wish [that is, decree] their conversion; for if he wished [that is, decreed] it he could do it: and hence it appears that he does not wish [that is, decree] it'.¹⁰

But this is impossible, cries the objector: If your claim is true, then God *is* in two minds; worse, he deceives sinners; he tells them he desires their salvation but all the time he has never decreed it. Calvin gave this short shrift! 'But again they argue foolishly', he thundered, if they try to make out that 'since God does not wish [as above, decree] all to be converted, he himself is deceptive'. Nothing of the kind! But what of the difficulty? 'This knot is easily untied', said Calvin:

For he does not leave us in suspense when he says that he wishes all to be saved... God puts on a twofold character: for here he wishes to be taken at his word. As I have already said, the prophet does not here dispute with subtlety about [God's] incomprehensible plans, but wishes to keep our attention close to God's word. Now, what are the contents of this word? The law, the prophets and the gospel. Now all are called to repentance, and the hope of salvation is promised them when they repent... Meanwhile, this will of God which he sets forth in his word does not prevent him from decreeing before the world was created what he would do with every individual... God invites all who are in danger of perdition with extended arms, and promises them salvation if they heartily return to him.¹¹

Calvin offered what he called a 'small word of advice'; namely, 'that the revealed will of God ought to be reverently acquiesced in, [and so] we will receive, without disputation, those mysteries which offend either the proud, or such as would be over-careful to remove the difficulties, in which, according to their view, such mysteries seem to be involved'.¹² Again: 'The chief part of our wisdom lies in confining ourselves soberly within the limits of God's word'.¹³ 'I wish it to be received as a general rule, that the

¹⁰ See the previous note for the justification for reading the last three uses of 'wish' as 'decree'.

¹¹ Calvin: *Commentaries* Vol.12 Part 1 pp246-250; see also pp265-267.

¹² Calvin: *Commentaries* Vol.6 Part 1 p194.

¹³ Calvin: *Commentaries* Vol.17 Part 1 p153.

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

secret things of God are not to be scrutinised, and that those [things] which he has revealed are not to be overlooked¹⁴... Nor let us decline to submit our judgement to the boundless wisdom of God, so far as to confess its insufficiency to comprehend many of his secrets. Ignorance of things which we are not able, or which it is not lawful to know, is learning, while the desire to know them is a species of madness.¹⁵

In short, said Calvin, ‘the sum of my doctrine is this’:

That that will of God, which is set forth in his law [the Scriptures], clearly demonstrates that righteousness is his delight, and that iniquity is his hatred... This, however, by no means prevents God from willing, by his secret and inexplicable counsel, that those things should be done, in a certain sense and manner, which he yet wills [that is, desires – see above] not to be done, and which he forbids to be done. If you will here raise the objection, that I make God inconsistent with himself, I, in return, would ask you whether it belongs to you to prescribe a law or a bound for God, forbidding him to do anything that surpasses your judgement and comprehension?... Will you, therefore, deny God the right of doing anything but that, the reason of which you can fully comprehend and explain?... But as for you, you will not permit God to have any counsel to himself, but that which you can as plainly see as a thing which you behold with your natural eyes.¹⁶

Earlier, Calvin had quoted Augustine: ‘When men ask us... why God did this or that, our answer is to be, “Because it was his will”’. If they go on to enquire, Why did he so will it? our reply should be, “Now you ask that which is greater and higher than the will of God itself! You ask that which none can find out!” Let human rashness, then, keep itself within bounds. Let it never seek after that which is not, lest it should not find that which is’. Calvin added his endorsement: ‘Most truly does Augustine speak in these words, and he has my fullest assent’.¹⁷

As Calvin admitted: ‘If anyone should reply that this is above the capability of his mind to comprehend, I also acknowledge and

¹⁴ A very common tendency! ‘Oh! how happy were we, if as forward to obey the declarations of God’s will, as we are to pry into the hidden counsels of his secret will!’ (Burkitt Vol.1 p315).

¹⁵ Calvin: *Institutes* Vol.2 pp206,233.

¹⁶ Calvin: *Calvin’s Calvinism* pp308-309.

¹⁷ Calvin: *Calvin’s Calvinism* pp122-123. See also Bavinck p33.

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

confess the same'.¹⁸ In short, he said, 'let us leave to God his own secrets, and exercise ourselves as far as we can in the law [the Scriptures], in which God's will is made plain to us and to our children. Now let us go on'.¹⁹

Ella was himself of this mind when speaking of the reasons why God adopts certain sinners, and not others: 'These reasons', said Ella, 'are not entirely given us. We would most certainly not understand them. Nevertheless', as Ella explained, 'Paul gives us some inkling... Such reasons ought to satisfy anyone'.²⁰ Wise counsel! And my position exactly.

J.I.Packer, on how to approach a biblical paradox (or antinomy):

Accept it for what it is, and learn to live with it. Refuse to regard the apparent inconsistency as real; put down the semblance of contradiction to the deficiency of your own understanding; think of the two principles as, not rival alternatives, but, in some way that at present you do not grasp, complementary to each other. Be careful, therefore, not to set them at loggerheads, nor to make deductions from either that would cut across the other (such deductions would, for that very reason, be certainly unsound). Use each within the limits of its own sphere of reference (*i.e.*, the area delimited by the evidence from which the principle has been drawn). Note what connections exist between the two truths and their two frames of reference, and teach yourself to think of reality in a way that provides for their peaceful coexistence, remembering that reality itself has proved actually to contain them both. This is how antinomies must be handled, whether in nature or in Scripture.²¹

John Bunyan was of this opinion. So elementary he thought the principle, he put it into the mouth of a child in *The Pilgrim's Progress*: Prudence catechised Christiana's children to see how she had brought them up, asking Matthew, the eldest, what he thought of the Bible. 'It is the holy word of God'. Did he find some of it beyond his understanding? 'Yes, a great deal', the boy replied. 'What do you do when you meet with places you do not

¹⁸ Calvin: *Calvin's Calvinism* p127.

¹⁹ Calvin: *Commentaries* Vol.12 Part 1 p267.

²⁰ Ella: *The Free Offer* p10.

²¹ Packer p21; see also Packer pp21-36.

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

understand?’ ‘I think God is wiser than I. I pray also that he may be pleased to let me know all... that he knows will be for my good’.²²

Thus it is with God’s desire to save all sinners even though he has not decreed it. ‘How... do you reconcile these things?’ asked D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones. He replied: ‘The answer is – and here we come up against a great mystery which we shall never solve in this world – there is clearly a difference between what God desires and what God wills and brings to pass’.²³

In short, we must treat this biblical paradox in exactly the same way as we treat all the others; namely, we must hold both truths, without trying to reconcile them, certainly not playing down one or the other.²⁴ As I have shown, some dismiss the paradox,²⁵ whilst others try to explain it away. What we should do is accept it.

In the following chapter, I will quote Spurgeon using the illustration of the parallel lines of the railway track. The rails always stay exactly the same distance apart, of course. But they do meet! A glance along a long straight track will show the parallel rails meeting in the infinite. Thus it is with this paradox. Let us accept it, therefore, and derive all the benefit to be found in travelling on both rails at once, knowing that in eternity all will

²² Bunyan: *Pilgrim’s* p97. See also Delves pp48-49; Bates Vol.4 p156; Kevan pp114-115; Cunningham Vol.2 pp346-348; Tyler and Bonar pp200,216-217; Machen: *Galatians* pp67-68; *Christian* pp45,70-71; Parks p99.

²³ Lloyd-Jones: *Romans* p54.

²⁴ Ella will not do this. While he rightly emphasises God’s decree to save his elect, he has nothing but contempt for anything to do with God’s desire to save all sinners.

²⁵ As just one further example, take John Foreman: ‘Things that cannot be reconciled are opposed to one another, are against each other, and go to destroy and overturn each other’. In particular, Foreman was thinking of ‘universal invitations, which... are really so opposed, that no man can reconcile them with the counsels of God. As we therefore cannot be consistent to hold and preach both, we will endeavour... to abide by the whole counsel of God... opposed to universal invitations; and leave [free-offer preachers] in duty faith, by their universal invitations, which are admitted to be irreconcilable with the counsels of God’ (Foreman Vol.1 p42).

become clear.

But even this falls short of what is required. So let me ask the question once more: What are we to do with the paradox between God's decree and his desire to save sinners?

We must not only accept the paradox; we should preach it

Why do I not contend for a mere *acceptance* of the paradox? Just this. If the Bible teaches us that God desires the salvation of sinners, and commands us to preach his gospel to them on that basis, then it is our duty to declare his gospel to all men, and, in our appeals to them, to be as unrestrained as God's word allows – and demands. This is what is meant by the free offer. This is what is meant by preaching the gospel to sinners. This is what so many Calvinists in previous generations have done, and done with outstanding success. May God grant us the same sense of earnestness, the same freedom in preaching, and the same success. I would be delighted if my book made any contribution to this end.

As Fuller said: 'It is the revealed will of Christ that every one who hears the gospel should come to him for life'.²⁶ And as Zanchius put it: 'The brief of the matter is this: the secret things belong to God, and those that are revealed belong to us; therefore, when we meet with a plain precept, we should simply endeavour to obey it, without tarrying to inquire into God's hidden purpose'.²⁷ Just so! And a major part of God's revealed will, his precept or command is that we must invite, exhort, encourage, beg, command, call, and plead with all sinners to come to Christ, offering salvation to them all. We must tell them that God has revealed in his word that he desires their salvation, even though we know he has not determined to work effectually in all sinners to bring them to Christ. How this paradox can be reconciled no man comprehends, nor is it our concern to comprehend. As Zanchius declared, we must obey the precept and leave the decree to God. Let us get on with preaching the gospel, not wasting time in idle

²⁶ Fuller: *Exposition* in *Works* p530.

²⁷ Zanchius p49.

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

speculation. Idle? It is far worse! It is an abuse of God's twofold will. Both ministers and sinners can be guilty. Ministers, when they stifle the invitation by misusing the decrees; sinners, when they plead God's secret will against his revealed will, in order to excuse their unbelief.²⁸

Owen dealt with the first: 'A minister is not to make inquiry after, nor to trouble himself about, those secrets of the eternal mind of God; namely, whom he purposes to save, and whom he has sent Christ to die for in particular. It is enough for them to search his revealed will, and thence take their directions'.²⁹

Thomas Shepard answered the second; namely, the sinner who refuses to trust Christ because he does not know God's secret will, trying to excuse himself by saying: 'But I am not elected, nor redeemed; if I knew that, I [would] dare [to] receive the Lord and his love'. Shepard replied: 'What have you to do with God's secret decree of election? It is your duty to look to the gospel, which is the will of God's command... there is a will of God's command, and this you are to look to... Receive this love, and it is certain it is for you'.³⁰

²⁸ Arminians stress the revealed will; hyper-Calvinists, the secret. Both should be biblically preached.

²⁹ Owen: *Death in Works* Vol.10 p300.

³⁰ Shepard p232. Shepard had no doubt about the free offer of the gospel: 'It is offered universally to all wherever it comes, and therefore personally to every man... and not only to them that do belong to Christ, and shall believe; for though it is offered with the power of it effectually to these [only], yet offered it is also unto those that never shall have God... There is not a man here that can exempt himself. And I would make no doubt to go to every man particularly, and say, The Lord entreats you to be reconciled'. But Shepard knew and owned that 'neither does this universal offer infer [*sic*, imply] a universal redemption'. Even so, 'there is not one here present, but the Lord would have you receive his love... It is God's command, and Christ's desire, [that] you should receive it... It is offered really' (Shepard p231). There is much more in the same vein: 'Not one soul that hears me this day but the Lord Jesus is a suitor unto... Whatever the secret purpose of Christ is, I regard not [in this connection]. In this evangelical dispensation of grace, he makes love to all... If there is a gospel in the world, there is this love of Christ yearning toward all... The Lord is real in his desires... If the Lord did not make love to you, he would not be really angry for [your] rejecting of this love; but the Lord is really

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

Such testimonies could be multiplied. Marbury: In ‘our preaching, wherein we persuade [for] repentance, and promise life eternal, [the will of God... revealed to man] serves to direct all that look for salvation in the way of life, and it serves to convince the world of unrighteousness if they obey not... Let us not dispute the will of God, or search beyond that which is revealed; if [since] God has revealed his will to us, that must be our guide’.³¹ Pink: ‘It is sufficient for us to know that we are bidden to preach the gospel to every creature. It is not for us to reason about the consistency between this and the fact that “few are chosen”. It is for us to obey. It is a simple matter to ask questions relating to the ways of God which no finite mind can fully fathom... It is not for us to reason about the gospel; it is our business to preach it’.³² Septimus Sears: ‘The Lord will not own our paring down his exhortations [in order] to preserve ourselves from the appearance of contradiction in our preaching. Who that, when he first reads the word of God with solemn desire to receive it as it is in truth the word of God, but has found great obstacles in the way of harmonising its doctrines and its exhortations? And I am persuaded that the more scriptural our preaching is, the more likely will many hearers be to find the same difficulty in harmonising our preaching’.³³

So we accept both sides of the paradox, we believe both, we preach both. We do not try to explain the inexplicable, or meddle with that which does not belong to us. God has revealed what he wants us to know. Just as we may open only those letters addressed to us, and have no business to pry into those which are not, let us keep to that which is revealed. I am not saying we should not

angry for [your] rejecting it... [His love] is fervent, vehement, earnest love. Sometimes a suitor is real, but he is not earnest. Now, thus the Lord is... The Lord longs for this... pleads for this... thinks long for this... mourns when he has not this... [he is] content to give away anything for it... If you come not at once, he is content to wait that he may be gracious... See [the Lord Jesus] really before you, and see him willing to give himself unto you, even to you in particular’ (Shepard pp18,23-25,62-63,166,230-232,237). I have, of course, for lack of space omitted the many scriptural arguments Shepard used in making his pleas.

³¹ Marbury pp367,369.

³² Pink pp210-211.

³³ Sears pp40-43.

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

preach the decrees;³⁴ far from it! No! But while we preach God's decree, we must also preach his desire; we must preach both, without trying to reconcile the two.³⁵

But even this is not enough! So let me ask the question yet again: What are we to do with the paradox between God's decree and his desire to save sinners?

We must preach God's desire with passion

It all depends on the word 'preach'; if used biblically, then the heading is a tautology. Let me explain. To use Ella's words once more – which, I remind you, reader, he limited to repentance, but I apply to God's desire to see sinners saved: 'Sinners must be called, commanded, even *beseached*'.³⁶ In other words, merely to 'present' the gospel, to make an accurate statement of the facts, to pass on information, or deliver a doctrinal lecture, is not enough, not by a long chalk. We must plead with sinners, we must preach God's desire *with passion*.³⁷ Light in a sermon is important, but warmth is vital. 'Did not our heart burn within us?' (Luke 24:32). As R.B.Kuiper said:

A most striking biblical paradox is that God, who sovereignly chose out of the fallen race of men a fixed number to everlasting life, yet offers to all men without distinction eternal life and, when doing so, assures them that nothing would please him more than their acceptance of his offer. God assures sinners everywhere that he 'will have all men to be saved' (1 Tim. 2:4). That, too, is an expression of the sovereignty of God, and its proclamation is a recognition of that sovereignty. The Calvinist declares it passionately.³⁸

³⁴ As Ella insinuated (Ella: *The Free Offer* pp21-22). See Spurgeon: *Soul Winner* pp18-21.

³⁵ But, as I said in the Introduction and above, God's decrees ought not to be preached in such a way as to stifle the invitation of the gospel.

³⁶ Ella: *The Free Offer* p71, emphasis mine.

³⁷ Lloyd-Jones: *Preaching* pp91-99; Murray: *Fight* pp619,693.

³⁸ Kuiper pp182-183. See also Kuiper pp41-43. This is a subject on its own, even more vital than a mere understanding of the free offer. Preaching the gospel to sinners raises three issues: Who are the *sinners* to whom the gospel is to be preached? What is the *gospel* which is to be preached? What is *preaching*?

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

The principle is right. ‘The Calvinist declares it passionately’. But does he? Many Calvinists are confused about God’s desire, and, as a consequence, leave well alone. But what of those who are convinced of it? Do *we* declare it passionately? Reader, do you? Is there any danger that we might be what I call ‘incipient’ or *de facto* hypes?³⁹ I fear so. Far from preaching it with passion, too often we soft pedal God’s desire, wrongly thinking we must defend God from charges raised by Reformed logicians, fearing the scorn

³⁹ See chapter 3. As in chapter 4, I assure you, reader, I include myself in the above, and what follows; ‘physician, heal yourself!’ (Luke 4:23) has to be reckoned with, as does Jas. 3:1. I say what I say because I believe it to be right, not because I pretend to have attained to it. In fact, in writing this book, I have come to see how for years I have concentrated too much on the theoretical aspect of this matter, and missed the practical. However, I am encouraged (I hope I use the right word) – but also challenged – by M’Cheyne’s letter to his congregation on leaving for his visit to Palestine. He grieved over his hearers who had not been converted. One cause, he said, was in himself. He openly acknowledged his failure – his sin – to be what he should have been, and to do as he should have done (Bonar: *M’Cheyne* pp246-247). Elias: ‘I have much to be ashamed of, by reason of preaching in such a dark, carnal, cold, sleepy manner. The greatest loss I feel, is that of the Spirit, and earnestness of secret prayer. It is bad and poor in the study, dark and embarrassing in the sermon owing to this. I want to go there oftener, and be more anxious before preaching’ (Morgan p319). Lloyd-Jones: ‘The element of pathos... perhaps is what has been most lacking in my own ministry. [It] should arise partly from a love for the people. Richard Cecil... said something which should make us all think. “To love to preach is one thing, to love those to whom we preach quite another”. The trouble with some of us is that we love preaching, but we are not always careful to make sure that we love the people to whom we are actually preaching... And if you know nothing of this you should not be in a pulpit... Not only will your love for the people produce this pathos, the matter itself is bound to do this in and of itself. What can possibly be more moving than a realisation of what God in Christ has done for us... It is only when we begin to know something of this melting quality that we shall be real preachers... This element of pathos and of emotion is, to me, a very vital one. It is what has been so seriously lacking in the [twentieth] century, and perhaps *especially among Reformed people*’ (Lloyd-Jones: *Preaching* pp92-93, emphasis mine; see also Murray: *Fight* p694). See also the extracts from Spurgeon and M’Cheyne in the main text above.

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

of those who deny our Calvinistic credentials.⁴⁰ Perhaps we are embarrassed at showing emotion in our preaching, and we do not plead with sinners as we ought, shrinking from being reckoned one of the ‘fools for Christ’s sake’ (1 Cor. 4:10). But how wrong this is, for if earnestness is absent from our preaching, we rob it of much of its power. And how trivial is the disapproval of men compared to honouring God and seeking the salvation of sinners in his appointed way!

Spurgeon:

Very earnestly, I would speak to you a little upon the manner in which this [gospel] message is to be delivered... First, it is to be delivered *by beseeching* men, and begging⁴¹ men. ‘As though God did beseech you by us we beg you’ [2 Cor. 5:20]. Then [this means that] if I should merely tell you, dear hearers, the gospel, though God might bless it, I have not done all my duty. To inform the intellect is not the minister’s sole work; we are to proclaim, but we are to do far more – we are to beseech and to beg. We are not merely to convince the intellect, but to beseech the heart. Neither are we alone to warn and threaten; though that has its place, yet it is not to be our main work; we are to beseech. You know how a beggar... implores you when he is starving, that you will give him bread: with like earnestness are we bound to beseech you to be saved. You know how you will beg a fellow-creature to help you when you are in sore distress: in that same way are we to beg you to be reconciled to God. As I ponder this I feel self-condemned. I have besought you, and I have begged you sometimes, but not as I ought to have done. Oh, to be taught how to beseech men, how to beg them! God forbid we should fall into the error of those who think beseeching and begging [sinners] to be unlawful; it is the Christly principle which leads God’s ministers so to do; it is the main part of a minister’s business, and he who neglects it will have to answer for it before God’s great bar...

Oh, how God beseeches men, and he means his ministers to beseech them in the same way, with weeping tenderness and melting pathos, if perhaps the stony heart may be softened, and iron sinew be bowed. Do I hear some strong-doctrine brother say, ‘I do not like this’? My dear brother, I am not careful [that is, anxious how] to answer you in this matter. If the Lord appoints it, you ought to approve it, and if you do

⁴⁰ Scorn? What I have been arguing for has been dismissed as ‘blasphemous’ (Ella: *The Free Offer* p21).

⁴¹ Where Spurgeon used ‘pray’ in this extract, I have used ‘beg’, which better conveys Paul’s meaning. The NKJV uses ‘implore’.

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

not, you are wrong, but the Scripture is not. If God beseeches and bids me beseech as he does, I will do it; and, though I be counted vile for it by you, then so must it be. Besides, it is no derogation for God to beseech his creatures. You say we make God beg to his creatures. Assuredly that is how the Lord represents himself.⁴²

This is it: Telling sinners, informing sinners, proclaiming to sinners, convincing sinners, warning sinners, is not enough; we must beseech and beg them to be reconciled to God.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne:

Oh, for the bowels of Jesus Christ in every minister, that we might long after [sinners] all!... And here I would observe what appears to me a fault in the preaching of [today].⁴³ Most ministers are accustomed to set Christ before the people. They lay down the gospel clearly and beautifully, but they do not urge men to enter in. Now God says, 'Exhort' – beseech men – persuade men; not only point to the open door, but compel them to come in. Oh to be more merciful to souls,⁴⁴ that we would lay hands on men and draw them in to the Lord Jesus!... [We must do it] with urgency. If a neighbour's house were on fire, would we not cry aloud and use every exertion? If a friend were drowning, would we be ashamed to strain every nerve to save him? But alas! the souls of our neighbours are even now on their way to everlasting burnings – they are ready to be drowned in the depths of perdition. Oh, shall we be less earnest to save their never-dying souls, than we would be to save their bodies? How anxious was the Lord Jesus in this! When he came near and beheld the city, he wept over it. How earnest was Paul! 'Remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears'.⁴⁵ Such was

⁴² Citing, amongst other verses, Isa. 1:2,18; 55:1-2; 65:2; Jer. 44:4; Ezek. 33:11; Hos. 11:8; Matt. 11:28; 23:37; John 6:37 and Rom. 10:21, Spurgeon rightly argued, as did Paul, that the preacher must beg sinners to be reconciled to God because that is precisely what God himself does through the preacher, and what Christ himself did in his earthly ministry: 'Never such a pleader as Jesus' (Spurgeon: *Metropolitan* Vol.19 pp428-431, emphasis his). Again: 'Lost souls, you doubly lost, you more than ruined, my Master begs you to come' (Spurgeon: *The Pulpit Library* pp192-194). See also *Metropolitan* Vol.33 pp361-372; *Second* pp179-192.

⁴³ M'Cheyne had, 'of our beloved Scotland', speaking in 1840. What would he say today? and not only of Scotland?

⁴⁴ A searching thought; preachers are cruel to sinners if they merely *present* the gospel to them.

⁴⁵ See chapter 6.

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

George Whitfield; that great man scarcely ever preached without being melted into tears. Brethren, there is need of the same urgency now. Hell is as deep and as burning as ever. Unconverted souls are as surely rushing to it. Christ is as free – pardon as sweet as ever! Ah! how we shall be amazed at our coldness when we do get to heaven!

Again:

It is to be feared there is much unfaithful preaching to the unconverted... We do not speak to those who are [Christless] with anything like sufficient plainness, frequency and urgency. Alas! how few ministers are like the angels at Sodom, mercifully bold to lay hands on lingering sinners!... Many of those who deal faithfully, yet do not deal tenderly. We have more of the bitterness of man than of the tenderness of God. We do not *yearn over* men in the bowels of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote of ‘the enemies of the cross of Christ’ with tears in his eyes! There is little of his weeping among ministers now. ‘Knowing the terrors [*sic*] of the Lord’, Paul persuaded men. There is little of this persuading spirit among ministers now. How can we wonder that the dry bones are very, very dry – that God is a stranger in the land?... Some set forth Christ plainly and faithfully, but where is Paul’s *beseeking* men to be reconciled? We do not invite sinners tenderly; we do not gently woo them to Christ; we do not authoritatively bid them to the marriage; we do not *compel* them to come in; we do not travail in birth till Christ be formed in them the hope of glory. Oh, who can wonder that God is such a stranger in the land?⁴⁶

And this, reader, lies at the very heart of what I am trying to say. I have not locked horns with Ella over a theoretical nicety. The free offer is an important principle or doctrine, yes, but it is not so much a controversy over doctrine which is at stake; *it is the practical consequences of that controversy*. I want to let believers know how far we have fallen away from real gospel preaching. Above all, I pray that preachers who read my book – and I include myself – may be moved to fulfil the task God has laid upon them.

But what, precisely, is this task? What is the great need of the hour in this respect? These questions bring me to the climax of my book. Is the great need to preach the free offer? is it to preach God’s desire for the salvation of sinners? is it to preach the universal invitation and duty faith? to preach it even with passion?

⁴⁶ Bonar: *M’Cheyne* pp402-404,590-591, emphasis his.

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

I may startle you, reader, by my reply. The answer is, No! This *in itself* is not the need.

So what is the need?

We must preach God's desire with our heart constrained by that desire

Rather than merely accepting the paradox, or preaching it, or preaching it with passion, we must preach God's desire for sinners' salvation *with that desire burning in our heart*; we need to preach the free offer *constrained by the love of Christ*. Let me underline it; we are to show passion in our addresses to sinners, yes, but the passion we are to show must come from our *heart*. We, like God, must love sinners and desire their salvation. With sincerity, we must, like Spurgeon, be able to say: 'Oh! I want to bring you in'.⁴⁷ Let me repeat some of my quotation from M'Cheyne a few moments ago: 'Oh, for the bowels of Jesus Christ in every minister, that we might long after [sinners] all!' he cried. 'We do not yearn over men in the bowels of Jesus Christ', he complained. How searching is this thought! May the Holy Spirit fill our hearts with the love of God!

Hyper-Calvinists talk about need of a sinner's fitness to be invited to Christ.⁴⁸ They are mistaken; the sinner requires no fitness to be invited, none whatsoever. Even so, there is a fitness which *is* required. Which is? *The preacher needs to be fit – fit to invite the sinner!*⁴⁹ Warm lips and a cold heart, orthodox doctrine from a heart unmoved, is a diabolical combination in any believer who would win souls for Christ.⁵⁰ How easy it is to be a mere actor

⁴⁷ Spurgeon: *The Pulpit Library* p39.

⁴⁸ As I have shown. I will return to it in Appendix 2.

⁴⁹ 'I never was fit to say a word to a sinner, except when I had a broken heart myself; when I was subdued and melted into [repentance], and felt as though I had just received pardon to my own soul, and when my heart was full of tenderness and pity – no anger, no anger' (Payson Vol.1 p415).

⁵⁰ See Murray: *Spurgeon* pp93-97,113-114. And this applies not only to preachers: 'Weeping Christians! Weep for [sinners]. Let your tears flow in rivers... What! will you not weep and feel for them? Will your hearts be like stone and steel? And will you be worse than brutes, and let them

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

in the pulpit! But, my reader, it must not be. Spurgeon: ‘The most damnable thing a man can do is to preach the gospel merely as an actor’; ‘you must feel it yourself, and speak as a man who feels it; not *as if* you feel it, but *because* you feel it, otherwise you will not make it felt by others’; ‘we do not want pranks and performances which are the mere sham of earnestness, but real white-heat earnestness is the want of the times’.⁵¹ Our fervent words must be sincere; our heart must keep in step with our lips; indeed, we should feel more than we can express. Once again, I say: How searching is this thought! May the Holy Spirit help us.

Let Spurgeon explain my meaning:

If you think to do any great good in saving sinners, you must not be half-asleep yourself: you must be troubled even to tears. Perhaps the most difficult thing in winning souls is to get ourselves into a fit state. The dead may bury their dead, but they cannot raise the dead. Until a man’s whole soul is moved, he will not move his fellow. He might, possibly, succeed with those who are willing to be impressed; but the careless will be unmoved by any man who is unmoved himself. Tears storm a passage [make a way] for warnings. If Christ’s whole self must be stirred before Lazarus is raised, *we* must be thrilled before we can win a soul... We must feel, if others are to feel... Your Lord was all alive, and all sensitive, and you must be the same. How can you expect to see his power exercised on others if you do not feel his emotion in yourselves? You must be quickened into tenderness as he was, or you will not receive his life-giving power. When I am weak, then am I strong. ‘Jesus wept’ when he raised dead Lazarus.

perish without a sigh, without a prayer, without a tear?’ (Spurgeon: *The Pulpit Library* pp174-175).

⁵¹ Spurgeon: *Soul Winner* pp74,100,193, emphasis his; see also same volume pp72-74,100-102,178-184. ‘A man who tries to produce an effect becomes an actor, and is an abominable impostor’ (Lloyd-Jones: *Preaching* p93). Commenting on 2 Cor. 2:4, Calvin said: ‘There are many noisy reprovers, who... display a surprising ardour of zeal, while in the mean time they are at ease in their mind, so that it might seem as if they exercised their throats and sides [in crying] by way of sport. It is, however, the part of a pious [preacher], to weep within himself, before he calls upon others to weep; to feel tortured in silent musings, before he shows any token of displeasure; and to keep within his own breast more grief than he causes to others... Paul’s tears... show tenderness of heart’ (Calvin: *Commentaries* Vol.20 Part 2 pp147-148).

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

In short: ‘Except the spirit of the Lord rests upon you, causing you to agonise for the salvation of men even as Jesus did, you can do nothing’.⁵² This is it – we must ‘agonise... even as Jesus did’.

Let me drive this home with what I can only call a deliberate understatement by Owen. Speaking of ‘the terms of the gospel’, Owen, exhorting sinners, said:

It is God himself who proposes these terms; and not only proposes them, but invites, exhorts, and persuades you to accept... them. This the whole Scriptures testify to. It is fully expressed (2 Cor. 5:18-20). He has provided them [the terms], he has proposed them, and makes use only of men, of ministers, to act in his name. *And excuse us if we are a little earnest with you in this matter.*⁵³ Alas! our utmost that we can, by zeal for his glory or compassion to your souls, raise our thoughts, minds, spirits, words unto, comes infinitely short of his own pressing earnestness herein. See Isa. 55:1-4. Oh, infinite condescension! Oh, blessed grace!⁵⁴

What a standard! ‘Who is sufficient for these things?’ (2 Cor. 2:16). To which question there is only one answer: ‘Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant’ (2 Cor. 3:5-6). May we prove it by experience!

* * *

Working on the principle that an ounce of demonstration is worth a ton of theoretical explanation, I close this chapter with an example of what I am talking about. There is no shortage of excellent material from which to pick, but the sample I have chosen is from a sermon by Clarkson, Owen’s successor.

In light of his words, I am bound to ask myself if I have ever

⁵² Spurgeon: *Metropolitan* Vol.35 p344, emphasis his; Vol.27 p600; *Soul Winner* pp21-22,27,46-47,58-61,74-79,83-87,102-103,110-112,140-141, 156,162-165,180-184,192-193,214-215. See chapter 6 for Paul being constrained by Christ’s love.

⁵³ The ‘deliberate understatement’.

⁵⁴ Owen: *Psalms 130* in *Works* Vol.6 p517, emphasis mine. See also, for instance, Kelly pp49-51,76-78,83,146,150,153-154,172; Bridges pp318-339; Morgan pp349-355.

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

preached.⁵⁵ I ask my fellow-preachers: Can you honestly say that you have pleaded with sinners like Clarkson? If not, why not? How few sinners today can report they have felt such love and power flowing from the preacher as he addressed them. We must recover this way of preaching, my brothers, we must. The plight of sinners demands it. Our own peace of conscience demands it. Above all, the glory of Christ demands it.

So, then, let Clarkson, though long dead, preach again. May he speak to all who read these words – both believers and unbelievers:

[Take] Luke 14... Though Christ invites them again and again, though he lifts up his voice and cries aloud to them in the ministry of the word... they do not hear Christ; he speaks to stocks and stones, no more are they moved by his invitations... Though Christ weeps... yet they regard not... Though Christ knocks at the door of their hearts, and stands there knocking and knocking... by his word and Spirit... knock he may, and stand knocking till his head be wet with the dew... yet they will not open. Or if his importunity makes them listen, yet usually he gets no other answer, no other return than this, We are not now at leisure, trouble us not now; come another time and we may hear you...

Christ has... cause to complain of every one, You will not come to me... Such an averseness [unwillingness, dislike] is in [you]⁵⁶ towards Christ, as you will rather die than come to him. Nor fear of death, nor desire of life itself, can make men willing to come to Christ. Christ himself could not prevail with many sinners to make them willing, though he preached several years... and made this the chief scope of his sermons, and spoke so to this purpose as never man spoke, yet all that he could say or do was not effectual with the greatest part of those that heard him. Hence he concludes his sermons sometimes with complaints, sometimes with tears (Luke 13:34; Matt. 23:37). So few

⁵⁵ Lloyd-Jones quoted James Henry Thornwell, whom he described as ‘a very great preacher’: ‘My own [attempts at preaching]’, said Thornwell, ‘fill me with disgust. I have never made, much less preached, a sermon in my life, and I am beginning to despair of ever being able to do it’. Lloyd-Jones commented: ‘Any man who has had some glimpse of what it is to preach will inevitably feel that he has never preached. But he will go on trying, hoping that by the grace of God one day he may truly preach’ (Lloyd-Jones: *Preaching* pp98-99). I seem to recall that Lloyd-Jones said he felt he himself had preached only twice – and on both occasions he was dreaming.

⁵⁶ Clarkson had ‘them’, referring to what he called ‘our natures’.

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

did he prevail with... [Isa. 49:4; 53:1; 65:2; John 12:37-38]...

If you are willing to come to Christ, you are already come, for there is nothing stands between Christ and a sinner but this unwillingness [on your part]; as soon as you are willing, you are with him...

Come to Christ, and you shall be... united to him, one with him. This is Christ's aim in inviting you, this he desires, this he prays for (John 17:20-21). He invites you... all that Christ requires is but your consent; consent but to come, and the match is made, your Redeemer will be your husband (Isa. 54:5)... Are you not willing to come to Christ upon such terms?... Upon condition you will come, you shall have all that Christ can give you...⁵⁷ Christ would have you come... Does he require you to come upon any unreasonable terms? Oh no. Even those that must perish for their refusals, as all must that will persist [in] refusing, will be forced to confess that it was the most equal thing in the world that Christ desired, when he bade them leave their sins to come to him...

He waits till you come. The great God stoops so low as to wait upon sinners (Isa. 30:18). He waits as one ardently desiring... the return of sinners to himself, and shall he wait in vain? He stands willing to welcome you... There is a time, indeed, when sinners shall not be admitted... when sinners have worn out his patience, and rejected his offers and entreaties, till there be no remedy; but... he who now resolves to come need not doubt of welcome (John 6:37)... [Christ] never did, he never will, cast out a returning sinner. He will not do it in any way, upon any terms and considerations whatsoever...

And so he waits for your coming, waits industriously, waits patiently. He waits so as he uses all means to draw you to him. He speaks to you by his providence, he woos you by his word, he sends his messengers to invite, to entreat, to beseech you to come, he puts words in their mouths by which he would have them woo you, he suggests arguments to their minds by which he would have them persuade you, he assists them by his Spirit to manage these persuasions, to enforce these arguments, so as they may prevail, or leave you inexcusable...

Though you refuse to hear, and be weary of hearing, yet the Lord is not weary of waiting, not weary of entreating. And when others or yourselves would put away the word, and break off this treaty for reconciliation, yet the Lord maugres [despises, ignores?] all provocations, [and] continues it. Oh the wonderful indulgence of Christ.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Clarkson drove on page after page: 'Come, come, come...'

⁵⁸ Clarkson: *Men by Nature* in *Works* Vol.1 pp334-355.

Chapter 9: What Should We Do with the Paradox?

Reader, this is but one example out of hundreds which might have been chosen.⁵⁹ And the bulk, I assure you, is as good as the sample.

⁵⁹ I have not seen an unpublished paper by S. Isbel: 'A Bibliography of the Free Offer of the Gospel', but David Silversides called it 'very useful' (Silversides pp83-84). Of the many examples I have come across, I mention Clarkson: *Invitation* in *Works* Vol.2; Flavel: *Christ*; Alleine; Bunyan: *Jerusalem Sinner*; Whitefield; Shepard; Bonar: *M'Cheyne* pp365-371; see also pp583-584; M'Cheyne: *Fragments* pp92-96 (*Sermons* pp148-154); Boston: *Beauties* 1979; *The Sum* pp334-336; Owen: *Meditations* in *Works* Vol.1 pp419-432. For Spurgeon, see chapter 10.