



The Doctrine of Election



Part Seven

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12. Its Publication

During the last two or three generations the pulpit has given less and less prominence to doctrinal preaching, until today—with very rare exceptions—it has no place at all. In some quarters the cry from the pew was, We want living experience and not dry doctrine; in others, We need practical sermons and not metaphysical dogmas; and yet others, Give us Christ and not theology. Sad to say, such senseless cries were generally heeded: “senseless” we say, for there is no other safe way of *testing* experience, as there is no *foundation* for practicals to be built upon, if they be divorced from Scriptural doctrine; while Christ cannot be known unless He be preached (1 Cor. 1:23), and He certainly cannot be “preached” if doctrine is shelved. Various reasons may be given for the lamentable failure of the pulpit: chief among them being laziness, desire for popularity, superficial and lop-sided “evangelism,” love of the sensational.

Laziness. It is a far more exacting task, one which calls for much closer confinement in the study, to prepare a series of sermons on say the doctrine of justification, than it does to make addresses on prayer, missions, or personal-work. It demands a far wider acquaintance with the Scriptures, a more rigid disciplining of the mind, and a more extensive perusal of the older writers. But this was too exacting for most of the ministers, and so they chose the line of least resistance and followed an easier course. It is because of his proneness to this weakness that the minister is particularly exhorted, “Give attendance to reading . . . take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them” (1 Tim. 4:13, 16); and again, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a *workman* that needeth not to be ashamed” (2 Tim. 2:15).

Desire for popularity. It is natural that the preacher should wish to please his hearers, but it is spiritual for him to desire and aim at

the approbation of God. Nor can any man serve two masters. As the apostle expressly declared, "For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10): solemn words are those. How they condemn them whose chief aim is to preach to crowded churches. Yet what grace it requires to swim against the tide of public opinion, and preach that which is unacceptable to the natural man. But on the other hand, how fearful will be the doom of those who, from a determination to curry favour with men, deliberately withheld those portions of the truth most needed by their hearers. "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it" (Deut. 4:2). O to be able to say with Paul, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you. . . . I am pure from the blood of all" (Acts 20:20, 26).

A superficial and lop-sided "evangelism." Many of the pulpiteers of the past fifty years acted as though the first and last object of their calling was the salvation of souls, everything being made to bend to that aim. In consequence, the feeding of the sheep, the maintaining of a Scriptural discipline in the church, and the inculcation of practical piety, was crowded out; and only too often all sorts of worldly devices and fleshly methods were employed under the plea that the end justified the means; and thus the churches were filled with unregenerate members. In reality, such men defeated their own aim. The hard heart must be ploughed and harrowed before it can be receptive to the gospel seed. Doctrinal instruction must be given on the character of God, the requirements of His law, the nature and heinousness of sin, if a foundation is to be laid for true evangelism. It is useless to preach Christ unto souls until they see and feel their desperate need of Him.

Love of the sensational. In more recent times the current has changed. A generation arose which was less tolerant even of superficial evangelism, which demurred at hearing anything which was calculated to make them the least uneasy in their sins. Of course, such people must not be driven from the churches: they must be catered to and given something which would tickle their ears. The stage of public action afforded abundant material.

The World-war and such characters as the Kaiser, Stalin, and Mussolini were much in the public eye, as Hitler and Abyssinia have been since. Under the guise of expounding prophecy the pulpit turned its attention to what was styled “the Signs of the Times” and the pew was made to believe that the “dictators” were fulfilling the predictions of Daniel and the Apocalypse. There was nothing in such preaching (?) that pricked the conscience, yet tens of thousands were deluded into thinking that the very hearing of such rubbish made them religious; and thus the churches were enabled to “carry on.”

Ere proceeding further, let it be pointed out that the objections most commonly made against doctrinal preaching are quite pointless. Take, first, the clamour for experimental preaching. In certain quarters—quarters which though very restricted, yet consider themselves the very champions of orthodoxy and the highest exponents of vital godliness—the demand is for a detailed tracing out of the varied experiences of a quickened soul both under the law and under grace, and any other type of preaching, especially doctrinal, is frowned upon as supplying nothing but the husk. But as one writer tersely put it, “Though matters of doctrine are by some considered merely as the shell of religion, and experience as the kernel, yet let it be remembered that there is no coming to the kernel but through the shell; and while the kernel gives value to the shell, yet the shell is the guardian of the kernel. Destroy that, and you injure this.” Eliminate doctrine and you have nothing left to *test* experience by, and mysticism and fanaticism are inevitable.

In other quarters the demand has been for preaching along practical lines, such people supposing and insisting that doctrinal preaching is merely theoretical and impracticable. Such a concept betrays woeful ignorance. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable [first] *for doctrine*, [and then] for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). Study the epistles of Paul and see how steadily that order is maintained. Romans 1-11 are strictly doctrinal; 12-16 practical exhortations. Take a concrete example: in 1 Timothy 1:9, 10 the

apostle draws up a catalogue of sins against which the denunciations of the law are imminently directed, and then he added “And if there be any other thing which is contrary to sound *doctrine*.” What a plain intimation is this that error in principles fundamental has a most unfavourable influence on practicals, and that in proportion as the doctrine of God is disbelieved the authority of God is disowned. It is the doctrine which supplies motives for obedience to the precepts.

In connection with those who cry, preach Christ and not theology, we have long observed that they never preach Him as the One with whom God made a covenant (Psa. 89:3), nor as His “elect” in whom His soul delighteth (Isa. 42:1). They preach a “Christ” which is the product of their own imaginations, the creation of sentiment. If we preach the Christ of Scripture we must set Him forth as the servant of God’s choice (1 Peter 2:4), as the Lamb “foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:19, 20), as the One “set for the fall and the rising again of many in Israel” (Luke 2:34), as “the stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.” Christ is not to be preached as separate from His members, but as the Head of His mystical body—Christ and those whom God chose in Him are one, eternally and immutably one. Then preach not *a mutilated* Christ. Preach Him according to the eternal counsels of God.

Now if doctrinal preaching generally be so unpopular, the doctrine of election is particularly and pre-eminently so. Sermons on predestination are, with very rare exceptions, hotly resented and bitterly denounced. “There seems to be an inevitable prejudice in the human mind against this doctrine, and although most other doctrines will be received by professing Christians, some with caution, others with pleasure, yet this one seems to be most frequently disregarded and discarded. In many of our pulpits it would be reckoned a high sin and treason to preach a sermon upon election” (C. H. Spurgeon). If that was the case fifty years ago, much more is it so now. Even in avowedly orthodox circles the very mention of predestination is like waving a red rag before a bull. Nothing so quickly makes manifest the enmity of the

carnal mind in the smug religionist and self-righteous pharisees as does the proclamation of the divine sovereignty and His discriminating grace; and few indeed are the men now left who dare to contend valiantly for the truth.

Fearful beyond words are the lengths to which the horror and hatred of election have carried even avowedly evangelical leaders in their blasphemous speeches against this blessed truth: we refuse to pollute these pages by quoting from their ungodly speeches. Some have gone so far as to say that, even if predestination be revealed in the Scriptures it is a dangerous doctrine, creating dissent and division, and therefore it ought not to be preached in the churches; which is the self-same objection used by the Romanists against giving the Word of God to the common people in their own mother tongue. If we are to whittle down the truth so as to preach only that which is acceptable to the natural man, how much would be left? The preaching of Christ crucified is to the Jews a stumblingblock and to the Greeks foolishness (1 Cor. 1:23): is the pulpit to be silent thereon? Shall the servants of God cease proclaiming the person, office and work of His beloved Son, merely because He is “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense” (1 Peter 2:8) to the reprobate?

Many are the objections brought against this doctrine by those who desire to discredit it. Some say election should not be preached because it is so mysterious, and secret things belong unto the Lord. But it is not a secret, for God has plainly revealed it in His Word; and if it is not to be preached because of its mysteriousness, then for the same reason nothing must be said about the unity of the divine nature subsisting in a trinity of Persons, nor of the virgin-birth, nor of the resurrection of the dead. According to others, the doctrine of election cuts the nerve of all missionary enterprise, in fact stands opposed to all preaching, rendering it entirely negatory. Then in such a case the preaching of Paul himself was altogether useless, for it was full of this doctrine: read his epistles and it will be found that he proclaimed election continually, yet we never read of him ceasing to preach it because it rendered his labour useless.

Paul taught that “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13), yet we do not find that on this account he ceased to exhort men to will and endeavour those things which are pleasing to God, and to work themselves with all their might. If we are unable to perceive the consistency of the two things, that is no reason why we should refuse to believe and heed either the one or the other. Some argue against election because the preaching of it shakes assurance and fills the minds of men with doubts and fears. But in our day especially we should be thankful for any truth which shatters the complacency of empty professors and arouses the indifferent to examine themselves before God. With as much reason might it be said that the doctrine of regeneration should not be promulgated, for is it any easier to make sure that I have been truly born again than it is to ascertain that I am one of God’s elect? It is not.

Still others insist that election should not be preached because the ungodly will make an evil use of it, that they will shelter behind it to excuse their unconcern and procrastination, arguing that if they are elected to salvation that in the meantime they may live as they please and take their fill of sin. Such an objection is puerile, childish in the extreme. But what truth is there that the wicked will not pervert? Why, they will turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, and use (or rather misuse) His very goodness, His mercy, His long sufferance, for continuance in a course of evil doing. Arminians tell us that to preach the eternal security of the Christian encourages slothfulness; while at the opposite extreme, hyper-Calvinists object to the exhorting of the unregenerate unto repentance and faith on the ground that it inculcates creature ability. Let us not pretend to be wise above what is written, but preach *all* the counsel of God and leave results to Him.

The servant of God must not be intimidated or deterred from professing and proclaiming the unadulterated truth. His commission today is the same as Ezekiel’s of old: “Be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among *scorpions*: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a

rebellious house. And thou shalt speak my words unto them whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious” (Ezek. 2:6, 7). He must expect to encounter opposition, especially from those making the loudest profession, and fortify himself against it. The announcement of God’s sovereign choice of men has evoked the spirit of malice and persecution from earliest times. It did so as far back as the days of Samuel. When the prophet announced to Jesse concerning his seven sons “neither hath the Lord chosen these” (1 Sam. 16:10), the anger of his firstborn was kindled against David (1 Sam. 17:28). So too when Christ Himself stressed the distinguishing grace of God unto the Gentile widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian, the synagogue worshippers were “filled with wrath” and sought to kill him (Luke 4:25-29). But the very hatred this solemn truth arouses is one of the most convincing proofs of its divine origin.

Election is to be preached and published, first, because it is brought forward all through the Scriptures. There is not a single book in the Word of God where election is not either expressly stated, strikingly illustrated, or clearly implied. Genesis is full of it: the difference which the Lord made between Nahor and Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, and His loving Jacob and hating Esau are cases to the point. In Exodus we behold the distinction made by God between the Egyptians and the Hebrews. In Leviticus the atonement and all the sacrifices were for the people of God, nor were they bidden to go and “offer” them to the surrounding heathen. In Numbers Jehovah used a Balaam to herald the fact that Israel were “*the* people” who “shall dwell alone, and shall *not* be numbered among the nations” (23:9); and therefore was he constrained to cry “How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel” (24:5). In Deuteronomy it is recorded “The Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance” (32:9).

In Joshua we behold the discriminating mercy of the Lord bestowed upon Rahab the harlot, while the whole of her city was doomed to destruction. In Judges the sovereignty of God appears

in the unlikely instruments selected, by which He wrought victory for Israel: Deborah, Gideon, Samson. In Ruth we have Orpah kissing her mother-in-law and returning to her gods, whereas Ruth cleaves to her and obtained inheritance in Israel—who made them to differ? In 1 Samuel David is chosen for the throne, preferred to his older brethren. In 2 Samuel we learn of the everlasting covenant “ordered in all things, and sure” (23:5). In 1 Kings Elijah becomes a blessing to a single widow selected from many; while in 2 Kings Naaman alone, of all the lepers, was cleansed. In 1 Chronicles it is written “Ye children of Jacob, His chosen ones” (16:13); while in 2 Chronicles we are made to marvel at the grace of God bestowing repentance upon Manasseh. And so we might go on. The Psalms, Prophets, Gospels and Epistles are so full of this doctrine that he who runs may read.

Second, the doctrine of election is to be prominently preached because the gospel cannot be Scripturally proclaimed without it. Alas, so deep is the darkness and so widespread the ignorance which now prevails, that few indeed perceive that there is any vital connection between predestination and the evangel of God. Pause, then, for a moment and seriously ponder these questions: Is the success or failure of the gospel a matter of chance? or, to put it in another way, are the fruits of the most stupendous undertaking of all—the atoning work of Christ—left contingent upon human caprice? Could it be positively affirmed that the Redeemer shall yet “see of the travail of his soul, and . . . be satisfied” (Isa. 53:11) if all is left dependent upon the will of fallen man? Has God so little regard for the death of His son that He has left it uncertain as to how many shall be saved thereby?

“The gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1) can only be Scripturally presented as *the Triune God* is owned and honoured therein. The attenuated “gospel” of our degenerate age confines the attention of its hearers to the sacrifice of Christ, whereas salvation originated in the heart of God the Father and is consummated by the operations of God the Spirit. All the blessings of salvation are communicated according to God’s eternal counsels, and it was for the whole of election of grace (and none others) that Christ

wrought salvation. The very first chapter of the New Testament announces that Jesus “shall save *His people* from their sins:” not “may,” but “shall;” not shall offer to or try to, but actually “save” them. Again; not a single soul had ever benefited from the death of Christ if the Spirit had not been given to apply its virtues to the chosen seed. Any man, then, who *omits* the Father’s election, and the Spirit’s sovereign and effectual operations, preaches not the gospel of God, no matter what be his reputation as a “soul winner.”

We have exposed the senselessness of those objections which are made against doctrinal preaching in general and the arguments which are levelled against the proclamation of predestination in particular. Then we pointed out some of the reasons why this grand truth is to be published. First, because the Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation, are full of it. Second, because the gospel cannot be Scripturally preached without it. The great commission given to the public servants of Christ, duly called and equipped by Him, reads thus, “preach the gospel” (Mark 16:15): not parts of it, but the whole of it. The gospel is not be preached piecemeal, but in its entirety, so that each person in the Godhead is equally honoured. Just as far as the gospel is mutilated, just so far as any branch of the evangelical system is suppressed, is the gospel *not* preached. To begin at Calvary, or even at Bethlehem, is to begin in the middle: we must go right back to the eternal counsels of divine grace.

Rightly did a renowned reformer put it, “Election is the golden thread that runs through the whole Christian system . . . it is the bond which connects and keeps it together, which, without this, is like a system of sand ever ready to fall to pieces. It is the cement which holds the fabric together; nay, it is the very soul that animates the whole frame. It is so blended and interwoven with the entire scheme of gospel doctrine that when the former is excluded, the latter bleeds to death. An ambassador is to deliver the whole message with which he is charged. He is to omit no part of it, but must declare the mind of the sovereign he represents, fully and without reserve. He is to say neither more nor less than

the instructions of his court require, else he comes under displeasure, perhaps loses his head. Let the ministers of Christ weigh this well” (J. Zanchius, 1562).

Moreover the Gospel is to be preached “to every creature,” that is, to all who frequent the Christian ministry, whether Jew or Gentile, young or old, rich or poor. All who wait upon the ministrations of God’s servants have a right to hear the gospel fully and clearly, without any part of it being kept back. Now an important part of the gospel is the doctrine of election: God’s eternal, free, and irreversible choice of certain persons in Christ to everlasting life. God foreknew that if the success of the preaching of Christ crucified were left contingent upon the response made to it by fallen men, there would be a universal despising of the same. This is clear from, “They *all* with one consent began to make excuse” (Luke 14:18). Therefore did God determine that a remnant of Adam’s children should be the eternal monuments of His mercy, and accordingly He decreed to bestow upon them a saving faith and repentance. *That* is good news, indeed: all rendered certain and immutable by the sovereign will of God.

Christ is the supreme evangelist, and we find this doctrine was on His lips all through His ministry. “I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast *hid* these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight;” “For the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened;” “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 11:25; 24:22; 25:34). “Unto *you* it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without [i.e., the pale of election], all these things are done in parables” (Mark 4:11). “Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20). “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;” “Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep;” “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you” (John 6:37; 10:26; 15:16).

The same is true of the greatest of the apostles. Take the first and chiefest of his epistles, which is expressly devoted to an

unfolding of “the Gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1). In Chapter 8 he describes those who are “the called according to God’s purpose” (verse 28), and in consequence of which they were “foreknown” and “predestinated to be conformed to the image of his son” (verse 29). The whole of Chapter 9 is devoted thereto: there he shows the difference which God made between Ishmael and Isaac, between Esau and Jacob, the vessels of wrath and the vessels of mercy. There he tells us that God hath “mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth” (verse 18). Nor were these things written to a few persons in some obscure corner, but addressed to the saints at Rome, “which was, in effect, bringing this doctrine upon the stage of the whole world, stamping an universal imprimatur upon it and publishing it to believers at large throughout the earth” (Zanchius).

The doctrine of election is to be preached, third, because the grace of God cannot be maintained without it. Things have now come to such a sorry pass that the remainder of this chapter should really be devoted to the elucidation and amplification of this important point; but we must content ourselves with some brief remarks. There are thousands of Arminian evangelists in Christendom today who deny predestination, either directly or indirectly, and yet suppose they are magnifying divine grace. Their idea is that God, out of His great goodness and love, has provided salvation in Christ for the whole human family, and that such is what He now desires and seeks. It is the view of these men that God makes an offer of His saving grace through the gospel message, makes it to the freewill of all who hear it, and that they can either accept or refuse it. But *that* is not “grace” at all.

Divine grace and human worthiness are as far apart as the poles, standing directly opposed the one to the other. But not so is the “grace” of the Arminian. If grace is merely something which is offered to me, something which I must improve if it is to do me any good, then my acceptance thereof is a meritorious act, and I have ground for boasting. If some refuse that grace and I receive it, then it must be (since it is wholly a matter of the freewill of the

hearer) because I have more sense than they have, or because my heart is more tender than theirs, or because my will is less stubborn; and were the question put to me “Who maketh thee to differ?” (1 Cor. 4:7), then the only truthful answer I could make would be to say, I made myself to differ, and thus place the crown of honour and glory upon my own head.

To this it may be replied by some, We believe that the heart of the natural man is hard and his will stubborn, but God in His grace sends the Holy Spirit, and He convicts men of sin and in the day of His visitation melts their hearts and seeks to woo them unto Christ; yet they must respond to His “sweet overtures” and co-operate with His “gracious influence.” Here the ground is forsaken that it is *wholly* a matter of man’s will. Yet here too we have nothing better than a burlesque of divine grace. Those very men affirm that many of those who are the subjects of these influences of the Spirit, resist the same and perish. Thus, those who are saved, owe their salvation (in the final analysis) to *their* improving of the Spirit’s overtures—they “cooperate” with Him. In such a case the honours would be divided between the Spirit’s operations and my improvements of the same. But *that* is not “grace” at all.

There are still others who seek to blunt the sharp edge of the Spirit’s sword by saying, We believe in the doctrine of predestination, though not as you Calvinists teach it. A single word serves to untie this knot for us—“foreknowledge:” Divine election is based upon divine foreknowledge. God foresaw who would repent of their sins and accept Christ as their Saviour, and accordingly he chose *them* unto salvation. Here again human merits are dragged in. Grace is not free, but tied by the “decision” of the creature. Such a carnal concept as this *reverses* the order of Scripture, which teaches that the divine foreknowledge is based upon the divine purpose—God foreknows what will be because He has decreed what shall be. Note carefully the *order* in Acts 2:23 and Romans 8:28 (last clause) and 29. Nowhere does Holy Writ speak of God foreseeing or foreknowing our repentance and faith: it is always foreknowledge of persons and never of *acts*—

“*whom* He did foreknow” and not “*what* He did foreknow.”

But does not Scripture say “whosoever will may come?” It does, and the all-important question is, where does the willingness come from in the case of those who respond to such an invitation? Men in their natural condition are unwilling: as Christ declared “ye will not come to me that ye might have life” (John 5:40). What, then, is the answer? This, “Thy people [says the Father to the Son—see context] shall be willing [to come] in the day of thy *power*” (Psa. 110:3). It is divine power, that and nothing else, which makes the unwilling willing, which overcomes all their enmity and obstinacy, which impels or “draws” them to the feet of the Lord Jesus. The grace of God, my readers, is far more than a lovely concept to sing about: it is an almighty power, an invincible dynamic, a principle victorious over all resistance. “My grace [says God] is sufficient for thee” (2 Cor. 12:9); it asks for no assistance from us. “By the grace of God [and not by my co-operation], I am what I am” (1 Cor. 15:10), said the apostle.

Divine grace has done far more than make possible the salvation of sinners: it makes *certain* the salvation of God’s chosen ones. It not only provides salvation for them, it brings salvation *to* them; and it does so in such a way that its honours are not shared by the creature. The doctrine of predestination batters down this dagon-idol of “freewill” and human merits, for it tells us that if we have indeed willed and desired to lay hold of Christ and salvation by Him, then that very will and desire are the effect of God’s eternal purpose and the result of the efficacious workings of His grace, for it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure; and therefore do we glory only in the Lord and ascribe all the praise unto Him. This writer sought not the Lord, but hated, opposed, and endeavoured to banish Him from his thoughts; but the Lord sought him, smote him to the ground (like Saul of Tarsus), subdued his vile rebellion, and made him willing in the day of His power. *That* is Grace indeed—sovereign, amazing, triumphant grace.

Fourth, the doctrine of election is to be published because it abases man. Arminians imagine that *they* do so by declaring the

total depravity of the human family, yet in their very next breath they contradict themselves by insisting on their ability to perform spiritual acts. The fact is that “total depravity” is merely a theological expression on their lips which they repeat like parrots for they understand not nor believe the terrible import of that term. The fall has radically affected, corrupted, every part and faculty of our being, and therefore if man be totally depraved it necessarily follows that unto sin our wills are completely enslaved. As man’s apostasy from God resulted in the darkening of his understanding, the defiling of his affections, the hardening of his heart, so it brought his will into complete bondage to Satan. He can no more free himself than can a worm under the foot of an elephant.

One of the marks of God’s people is that they have “no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3), and nothing is so well calculated to bring them into that state as the truth of election. Shut out divine predestination and you must bring in the doings of the creature, and that makes salvation contingent, and thus it is neither of grace alone nor of works alone, but a nauseating mixture. The man who thinks he can be saved without election must have some confidence in the flesh, no matter how strongly he may deny it. Just so long as we are persuaded that it lies in the power of our own wills to contribute anything, be it never so little, unto our salvation, we remain in carnal confidence, and therefore are not truly humbled before God. It is not until we are brought to the place of self-despair—abandoning all hope in our own abilities—that we truly look *outside* of ourselves for deliverance.

When the truth of election is divinely applied to our hearts we are brought to realize that salvation turns solely on the will of a sovereign God, that “it is *not* of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of *God* that showeth mercy” (Rom. 9:16). When we are granted a feeling sense of those words of Christ’s “without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5), then our pride receives its death-wound. So long as we entertain the mad idea that we can lend a helping hand in the business of our salvation, there is no hope for

us; but when we perceive that we are clay in the hands of the divine potter to be moulded into vessels of honour or dishonour as pleaseth Him, then we shall renounce our own strength, despair of any self-assistance, and pray and submissively wait for the mighty operations of God; nor shall we pray and wait in vain.

Fifth, election is to be preached because it is a divinely appointed means of faith. One of the first effects produced in serious-minded hearers is to stir them unto earnestly inquiring, Am I one of the elect, and to diligently examine themselves before God. In many instances this leads to the painful discovery that their profession is an empty one, resting on nothing better than some “decision” made by them years before under emotional stress. Nothing is more calculated to reveal a sham conversion than a Scriptural setting forth of the birth-marks of God’s elect. Those who are predestinated unto salvation are made the subjects of a miraculous work of grace in their hearts, and *that* is a vastly different thing from a creature-act of “deciding for Christ” or becoming a member of some church. Far more than a natural faith is required to unite the soul unto a supernatural Christ.

The preaching of election acts as a flail in separating the wheat from the chaff. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17), and how can “the faith of God’s elect” (Titus 1:1) be begotten and strengthened if the truth of election be suppressed? Divine foreordination does not set aside the use of means, but ensures the continuation and efficacy of them. God has pledged Himself to honour those who honour Him, and that preaching which brings most glory unto the Lord is what He most blesses. That is not always apparent now, but it will be made fully manifest in the Day to come, when it will be seen that much which Christendom regarded as gold, silver, precious stones, was naught but wood, hay, and stubble. Salvation and *the knowledge of the truth* are inseparably connected (1 Tim. 2:4), but how can men arrive at a saving knowledge of the truth, if the most vital and basic part of it be withheld from them?

Sixth, election is to be preached because it incites to holiness. What can possibly be a more powerful incentive to piety than a

heart which is overwhelmed by a sense of the sovereign and amazing grace of God! The realization that He set His heart upon me from all eternity, that He singled me out from many when I had no more claim upon His notice than they had, that He chose me to be an object of His distinguishing favour, giving me unto Christ, inscribing my name in the Book of life, and at His appointed time bringing me from death unto life and giving me vital union with His dear Son; this indeed will fill me with gratitude and cause me to seek to honour and please Him. God's electing love for us begets in us an endless love for Him. No motives so sweet or so potent as the love of God constraining us.

Seventh, election is to be preached because it promotes the spirit of praise. Said the apostle, "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13). How can it be otherwise? Gratitude must find vent in adoration. A sense of God's electing grace and everlasting love makes us bless Him as nothing else does. Christ Himself returned special thanks unto the Father for His discriminating mercy (Matt. 11:25). The gratitude of the Christian flows forth because of the regenerating and sanctifying operations of the Spirit; it is stirred afresh by the redemptive and intercessory work of Christ; but it must rise still higher and contemplate the first cause—the sovereign grace of the Father—which planned the whole of our salvation. As then election is the great matter of thanksgiving unto God, it must be freely preached to His people.

The value of this blessed doctrine appears in its suitability and sufficiency to stabilize and settle true Christians in the certainty of their salvation. When regenerated souls are enabled to believe that the glorification of the elect is so infallibly fixed in God's eternal purpose that it is impossible for any of them to perish, and when they are enabled to Scripturally perceive that they themselves belong to the people of God's choice, how it strengthens and confirms their faith. Nor is such a confidence presumptuous—though any other most certainly is so—for every genuinely

converted person has the right to regard himself as belonging to that favoured company, since the Holy Spirit quickens none but those who were predestinated by the Father and redeemed by the Son. This is a hope “which maketh not ashamed,” for it cannot issue in disappointment when entertained by those in whose hearts the love of God is shed abroad by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5).

The holy assurance which issues from a believing apprehension of this grand truth is forcibly set forth by the apostle in the closing verses of Romans 8. There he assures us, “Whom He did *predestinate*, them he also called: and whom He called them He also justified: and whom he justified, them he also *glorified*” (verse 30). Such a beginning guarantees such an end: a salvation which originated in a past eternity must be consummated in a future eternity. From such grand premises Paul drew the blessed conclusion “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (verse 31). And again, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” (verse 33). And yet again, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (verse 35). If such precious streams issue from this fountain, then how great is the madness and how heinous the sin of those who desire to see it choked. The everlasting security of Christ’s sheep cannot be presented in its full force until we base it upon the divine decree.

How apt the trembling believer is to doubt his final perseverance, for sheep (both natural and spiritual) are timid and self-distrustful creatures. Not so the wild and wayward goats: true to their type, they are full of carnal confidence and fleshly boasting. But the believer has such a sense of his own weakness, such a sight of his sinfulness, such a realization of his fickleness and instability, that he literally works out his own salvation “in fear and trembling.” Moreover, as he sees so many who did run well doing so no longer, so many who made such a fair and promising profession end by making shipwreck of the faith, the very sight of their apostasy causes him to seriously question his own state and latter end. It is to stabilize their hearts that God has revealed in His Word that those who are enabled to see in themselves the marks of election may rejoice in the certainty of their everlasting

blessedness.

Let us also point out what a stabilizing effect the apprehension of this grand truth has upon the true servant of God. How much there is to dishearten him: the fewness of those who attend his ministry, and opposition made to those portions of the truth which most exalt God and abase man, the scarcity of any visible fruits attending his labours, the charge preferred by some of his officers or closest friends that if he continues along such lines he will have no one at all left to preach to, the whisperings of Satan that God Himself is frowning on such efforts, that he is a rank failure and had better quit; these and other considerations have a powerful tendency to fill him with dismay or tempt him to trim his sails and float along the tide of popular sentiment. We know whereof we write, for we have personally trod this thorny path.

Ah, but God has graciously provided an antidote for Satan's poison, and an effectual cordial to revive the drooping spirits of His sorely tried servants. What is this? The knowledge that their Master has not sent them forth to draw a bow at a venture, but rather to be instruments in His hand of accomplishing His eternal decree. Though He has commissioned them to preach the gospel unto all who attend their ministry, yet He has also made it plain in His Word that it is not His purpose that all or even that many should be saved thereby. He has made it known that His flock is (Greek) a "very little" one (Luke 12:32), that there is only "a *remnant* according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11:5), that the "many" would be found on the broad road that leadeth to destruction and that only a "few" would walk that narrow way that leadeth unto life.

It is for the calling out from the world of this chosen remnant and for the feeding and establishing of them that God chiefly employs His servants. It is the due apprehension and personal belief of this which tranquilizes and stabilizes the minister's heart as nothing else will. As he rests upon the sovereignty of God, the efficacy of His decrees, the absolute certainty that God's counsels shall be fully realized, then he is assured that whatever God has sent him forth to do *must* be accomplished, that neither man nor

devil can prevent it. Appalled by the ruin all around him, humiliated by his own sad failures, yet he perceives that the outworking of the divine plan is infallibly ensured. Those whom the Father ordained *will* believe (Acts 13:48), those for whom the Son died *must* be saved (John 10:16), those whom the Spirit quickens *shall* be effectually preserved (Phil. 1:6).

When the minister receives a message to deliver in the name of his Master, he may rest with unshaken confidence on the promise, "So shall My Word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it [not "may"] *shall* accomplish that which I please, and it *shall* prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:11). It may not accomplish what the preacher wishes nor prosper to the extent which the saints desire, but no power on earth or in hell can prevent the fulfilment of God's will. If God has marked out a certain person to be brought into a saving knowledge of the truth under a particular sermon, then no matter how buried in sin that soul may be nor how hardly he may kick against the pricks of conscience, he shall (like Paul of old) be made to cry "Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?" Here, then, is a sure resting place for the minister's heart. This was where Christ found consolation, for when the nation at large despised and rejected Him, He consoled Himself with the fact that "*All* that the Father giveth me *shall* come to me" (John 6:3 7).

The value of this doctrine appears again in that it provides real encouragement to praying souls. Nothing so promotes the spirit of holy boldness at the throne of grace as the realization that God is our God and that we are the people of His choice. They are His peculiar treasure, the very apple of His eye, and they above all people have His ear. "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him?" (Luke 18:7). Assuredly He shall do so, for they are the only ones who supplicate Him in meekness, presenting their requests in subjection to His sovereign pleasure. O my readers, when we are on our knees, how this fact that God set His heart upon us from everlasting must inspire fervency and faith. Since God chose to love us, can He refuse to hear us? Then let us take courage from our predestination to make more earnest

supplication.

“But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto him” (Psa. 4:3). “‘But know.’ Fools will not learn, and therefore they must again and again be told the same thing, especially when it is such a bitter truth which is to be taught them, viz:—the fact that the godly are the chosen of God, and are, by distinguishing grace, set apart and separated from other men. Election is a doctrine which unrenewed man cannot endure, but nevertheless it is a glorious and well-attested truth, and one which should comfort the tempted believer. Election is the guarantee of complete salvation, and an argument for success at the throne of grace. He who chose us for Himself will surely hear our prayers. The Lord’s elect shall not be condemned nor shall their cry be unheard. David was king by divine decree, and we are the Lord’s people in the same manner; let us tell our enemies to their faces that they fight against God and destiny, when they strive to overthrow our souls” (C. H. Spurgeon).

Not only does a knowledge of the truth of election afford encouragement to praying souls, but it supplies important instruction and guidance therein. Our petitions ought ever to be framed in harmony with divine truth. If we believe in the doctrine of predestination we should pray accordingly. The language we use should be in agreement with the fact that we believe there are a company of persons chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and that it was for them, and them alone, He suffered and died. If we believe in particular redemption (rather than in a universal atonement) we should beg the Lord Jesus to have respect unto such as He has purchased by His soul’s travail. This will be a means of keeping up right apprehensions in our own minds, as it will also be setting a proper example in this matter before others.

In the present day there are many deplorable expressions made use of in prayer, which are utterly unjustifiable, yea, which are altogether opposed to the will or Word of the Lord. How often the modern pulpit asks for the salvation of all present, and the head of

the household requests that not one in the family miss eternal glory. To what purpose is this? Are we going to direct the Lord, who He shall save? Let us not be misunderstood: we are not against the preacher praying for his congregation, nor the parent for his family; that which we are opposed to is that praying which is in direct *opposition* unto the truth of the gospel. Prayer must be subordinated to the divine decrees, otherwise we are guilty of rebellion. When praying for the salvation of others, it should always be with the proviso “If they be thine elect” or “if it be thy sovereign will,” or with some similar qualification.

The Lord Jesus has left us a perfect example in this, as in everything else. In His great high priestly prayer, recorded in John 17, we find Him saying, “I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine” (verse 9). Our Lord knew the whole of His Father’s good will and pleasure towards the elect. He knew that the act of election was a sovereign and irreversible act in His mind. He knew that He Himself could not add one to the number of the chosen. He knew that He was sent from the Father to live and die for them, and them only. And in perfect agreement with this He declared, “I pray for them: I pray not for the world.” If, then, Christ left out the world, if He prayed not for the non-elect, neither should we. We must learn of Him and follow His steps, and instead of resenting, be well pleased with the whole good pleasure of God’s sovereign will.

To be submissive unto the divine will is the hardest lesson of all to learn. By nature we are self-willed and anything which crosses us is resented. The upsetting of our plans, the dashing of our cherished hopes, the smashing of our idols, stirs up the enmity of the flesh. A miracle of grace is required in order to bring us into acquiescence to God’s dealing with us, so that we say from the heart “It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good” (1 Sam. 3:18). And in bringing this miracle to pass, God uses *means*. He impresses on our hearts, an effectual sense of His sovereignty, so that we are brought to realize that He has the unqualified right to do as He pleases with His creatures. And no other truth has such a

powerful tendency to teach us this vital lesson as has the doctrine of election. A saving knowledge of the fact that God chose us unto salvation begets within us a readiness for Him to order *all* our affairs, till we cry “not my will, but thine be done.”

Now in view of all these considerations, we ask the reader, ought not the doctrine of election to be plainly and freely proclaimed? If God’s Word be full of it, if the gospel cannot be Scripturally preached without it, if the grace of God cannot be maintained when it is suppressed, if the proclamation of it abases man into the dust, if it be a divinely appointed means of faith, if it be a powerful incentive unto the promotion of holiness, if it stirs in the soul the spirit of praise, if it establishes the Christian in the certainty of his security, if it be such a source of stability to the servant of God, if it supplies encouragement to praying souls and affords valuable instruction therein, if it work in us a sweet submission to the divine will; then shall we refuse to give unto God’s children this valuable bread merely because dogs snap at it or withhold from the sheep this vital ingredient of their food simply because the goats cannot digest it?

And now, in conclusion, a few words on *how* this doctrine should be published. First, it ought to be presented *basically*. This is not an incidental or secondary truth, but one of fundamental importance and therefore it is not to be crowded into a corner, nor spoken of with bated breath. Predestination lies at the very foundation of the entire scheme of divine grace. This is clear from Romans 8:30, where it is mentioned before effectual calling, justification, and glorification. It is clear again from the order followed in Ephesians 1, where election (verse 4) precedes adoption, our acceptance in the Beloved, and our having redemption through His blood (verses 5-7). The minister must, therefore, make it clear to his hearers that God first chose a people to be His peculiar treasure, then sent His Son to redeem them from the curse of the broken law, and now gives the Spirit to quicken them and bring them to everlasting glory.

Second, it ought to be preached *fearlessly*. God’s servants must not be intimidated by the frowns of men nor deterred from

performing their duty by any form of opposition. The minister of the gospel is called upon to “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3), and soldiers who fear the foe or take to flight are of no service to their king. The same holds good of those who are officers of the King of kings. How fearless was the apostle Paul! How valiant for the truth were Luther and Calvin, and the thousands of those who were burned at the stake because of their adherence to this doctrine. Then let not those whom Christ has called to preach the gospel conceal this truth because of the fear of man, for the Master has plainly warned them “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of *my words* in this evil and adulterous generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed” (Mark 8:38).

Third, it is to be preached *humbly*. Fearlessness does not require us to be bombastic. The holy Word of God must ever be handled with reverence and sobriety. When the minister stands before his people they ought to feel by his demeanour that he has come to them from the audience-chamber of the Most High, that the awe of Jehovah rests upon his soul. To preach upon the sovereignty of God, His eternal counsels, His choosing of some and passing by of others, is far too solemn a matter to be delivered in the energy of the flesh. There is a happy medium between a cringing, apologetic attitude, and adopting the style of a political tirader. Earnestness must not degenerate into vulgarity. It is “in *meekness*” we are to instruct those who oppose themselves “if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (2 Tim. 2:25).

Fourth, it is to be preached *proportionately*. Though the foundation be of first importance it is of little value unless a superstructure be erected upon it. The publication of election is to make way for the other cardinal truths of the gospel. If any doctrine be preached exclusively it is distorted. There is a balance to be preserved in our presentation of the truth; while no part of it is to be suppressed, no part of it is to be made unduly prominent. It is a great mistake to harp on one string only. Man’s responsibility must be enforced as well as God’s sovereignty

insisted upon. If on the one hand the minister must not be intimidated by Arminians, on the other he must not be brow-beaten by hyper-Calvinists, who object to the calling upon the unconverted to repent and believe the gospel (Mark 1:15).

Fifth, it is to be preached *experimentally*. This is how the apostles dealt with it, as is clear from “give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10). But how can this be done unless we are taught the doctrine of election, instructed in the nature and use of it? The truth of election can be small comfort to any man until he has a well-grounded assurance that *he* is one of God’s chosen people; and that is possible only by ascertaining that he possesses (in some measure) the Scriptural marks of Christ’s sheep. As we have already dealt with this aspect of our subject at some length, we will say no more. May it please the Lord to use these words unto His own glory and the blessing of His dear saints.

The seventh of seven booklets.

