



The Doctrine of Election



Part Six

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10. Its Blessedness

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First, the doctrine of election *magnifies the character of God*. It exemplifies His *grace*. Election makes known the fact that salvation is God's free gift, gratuitously bestowed upon whom He pleases. This must be so, for those who receive it are themselves no different from and no better than those who receive it not. Election allows some to go to hell, to show that all deserved to perish. But grace comes in like a dragnet and draws out from a ruined humanity a little flock, to be throughout eternity the monument of God's sovereign mercy. It exhibits His omnipotency. Election makes known the fact that God is all powerful, ruling and reigning over the earth, and declares that none can successfully resist His will or thwart His secret purposes. Election reveals God breaking down the opposition of the human heart, subduing the enmity of the carnal mind, and with irresistible power drawing His chosen ones to Christ. Election confesses that "we love him because he first loved us," and that we believe because He made us willing in the day of His power (Psa. 110:3).

The doctrine of election ascribes all the glory to God. It disallows any credit to the creature. It denies that the unregenerate are capable of predicting a right thought, generating a right affection, or originating a right volition. It insists that God must work in us both to will and to do. It declares that repentance and faith are themselves God's gifts, and not something which the sinner contributes towards the price of his salvation. His language is, "Not unto us, not unto us," but "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." These paragraphs were written by us almost a quarter of a century since, and today we neither rescind nor modify them.

"The Lord makes distinctions among guilty men according to the

sovereignty of His grace. ‘I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel: but I will have mercy upon the house of Judah.’ Had not Judah sinned too? Might not the Lord have given up Judah also? Indeed He might justly have done so, but He delighteth in mercy. Many sin, and righteously bring upon themselves the punishment due to sin: they believe not in Christ, and die in their sins. But God has mercy, according to the greatness of His heart upon many, who could not be saved upon any other footing but that of undeserved mercy. Claiming His royal right He says, ‘I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.’ The prerogative of mercy is vested in the sovereignty of God: that prerogative He exercises. He gives where He pleases, and He has a right to do so, since none have any claim upon Him” (C. H. Spurgeon: “The Lord’s Own Salvation”—(Hos. 1:7).

The above makes it sufficiently plain that it is no light thing to reject this blessed part of eternal truth: nay, it is a most solemn and serious matter so to do. God’s Word is not given us to pick and choose from—to single out those portions which appeal to us, and to disdain whatever commends itself not to our reason and sentiments. It is given to us as a whole, and by it each of us must yet be judged. To reject the grand truth we are here treating of is the height of impiety, for to repudiate the election of God is to repudiate the God of election. It is a refusal to bow before His high sovereignty. It is the corrupt preacher opposing himself against the holy Creator. It is presumptuous pride which insists upon being the determiner of its own destiny. It is the spirit of Lucifer, who said, “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God . . . I will be like the Most High” (Isa. 14:13, 14).

Second, the blessedness of this doctrine appears in that *it is all important in the plan of salvation*. Consider this first from the divine side. A Scriptural presentation of this grand truth is indispensable if the distinctive acts of the triune God in salvation matters are to be recognized, honoured, and owned. Salvation proceeds not from one divine person only, but equally from the everlasting three. Jehovah has so ordered things that each one in the Godhead should be magnified and glorified alike. The Father is as really and truly the Christian’s Saviour as is the Lord Jesus, and so too is the Holy Spirit—note how the Father is expressly designated

“God our Saviour” in Titus 3:4, as distinct from “Jesus Christ our Saviour” in verse 5. But this is ignored and lost sight of if this precious doctrine be omitted. Predestination pertains to the Father, propitiation to the Son, regeneration to the Spirit. The Father originated, the Son effectuated our salvation, and by the Spirit it is consummated. To repudiate the former is to take away the very foundation.

Consider it now from the human side: election lies at the very base of a sinner’s hope. By nature all are the children of wrath. In practice, all have gone astray. The whole world has become guilty before God, all are exposed to wrath, and if left to themselves would be involved in one common ruin. They are “clay of the same lump,” and continuing under nature’s forming hand would be all “vessels to dishonour” (Rom. 9:21). That any are saved is of the grace of God (Rom. 11:4-7). Jesus Christ, the redeemer of sinners, is Himself the elect one, as described by the prophet (Isa. 42:1). And all who shall ever be saved are elected in Him, given to Him of the Father, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. It was to accomplish their salvation that God gave His only begotten Son, and that Jesus Christ assumed our nature and gave His life a ransom.

It is to call the elect that the Scriptures are given, that ministers are sent, that the gospel is preached, and the Holy Spirit is here. It is to accomplish election that men are taught of God, drawn of the Father, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, made partakers of precious faith, endued with the spirit of adoption, the spirit of prayer, and the spirit of holiness. It is in consequence of their election that men are made obedient to the gospel, are sanctified by the Spirit, and become holy and without blame before God. Had there been no divine election, there had been no divine salvation. Nor is this a mere arbitrary assertion of ours: “Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah” (Rom. 9:29). Lost sinners cannot save themselves. God was under no obligation to save them. If He be pleased *to* save, He saves whom He will.

Election not only lies at the foundation of a sinner’s hope, but also accompanies every step of the Christian’s progress to heaven. It carries to him the glad tidings of salvation. It opens his heart to

receive the Saviour. It is seen in every act of faith, in every holy duty, and in every effectual prayer. It calls him. It quickens him in Christ. It beautifies his soul. It crowns him with righteousness and life and glory. It contains within it the precious assurance that "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). There was nothing in them which moved God to choose. His people, and He so deals with them as not to permit anything in or from them as to cause Him to reverse that choice. As Romans 8:30 so definitely intimates, predestination involves glorification, and therefore guarantees the supply of the elect's every need in between the two.

Third, the blessedness of this doctrine appears in *its essential elements*. We will single out three or four of the principal of these. First, the superlative honour of being chosen by God. In all choices the person choosing puts a value on the chosen. To be selected by a king unto an office, or to be called to some employment by the state, how it will dignify a man. Thus it is in spiritual affairs. It was a special commendation of Titus that he had been "chosen of the churches" (2 Cor. 8:19). But that the great God, the blessed and only potentate, should choose such poor, contemptible, worthless, and vile creatures as we are, passeth knowledge. Ponder 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, and see how this is there dwelt upon. How it should amaze us. How it should humble us. Note how this honourable emphasis is put upon the Lord Jesus: "Behold my servant, *whom I have chosen*" (Matt. 12:18); so upon His members too: "The elect's sake, *whom he hath chosen*" (Mark 13:20).

Again; the consequent excellency of this. They are *the elect*: the ones which God hath chosen, and doth not high worth, honour, excellency, necessarily follow from this? The chosen of God must needs be choice: the act of God makes them so. Observe the order in 1 Peter 2:6, "chief cornerstone, elect, precious"—precious because elect. Take the most eminent of God's saints, and what is their highest title and honour? This: "For David My servant's sake, *whom I chose*" (1 Kings 11:34). "Aaron whom He had chosen" (Psa. 105:26). Paul, "he is a chosen vessel unto Me" (Acts 9:15). "Ye are a chosen generation, a peculiar people" (1 Pet. 2:9), that is, elect. That expression is taken from "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people" (Exod. 19:5). It imports that

which is dear to God: “since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable” (Isa. 43:4).

Again, mark the *fullness* of such high privilege. “Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts” (Psa. 65:4); yea, he is “most blessed forever” (Psa. 21:6), or as the Hebrew has it (see mar.) “set for blessings,” that is, set apart or appointed for naught but blessings. As the New Testament expresses it, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with *all spiritual blessings* in the heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him” (Eph. 1:3, 4). Election, then, is the treasury-fountain of all blessedness. The elect are chosen unto the nearest approach and union unto God that is possible for creatures, to the highest communion with Himself. Consider too the *time* when He chose us. Paul dates it from “the beginning” (2 Thess. 2:13). God hath loved us ever since He was God, and while He is God He will continue to do so. God is from everlasting and He continues to be God to everlasting (Psa. 90:2), and His love to us is as old: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” And His love is like Himself: causeless, changeless, endless.

The blessedness of election appears again in the comparative *fewness* of the elect. The paucity of men enjoying any privilege magnifies it the more, as in the case of the preservation of Noah and his family: “The ark . . . wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved” (1 Pet. 3:20). What a contrast was that from the whole world “of the ungodly,” which all perished! The same fact and contrast was emphasized by Christ in Luke 12. “For all these things do the nations of the world seek after” (verse 30): that is, the things of time and sense, and God gives such to them. But in opposition thereto, the Lord says, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you *the kingdom*” (verse 32). His design was to show the greater mercy of God that so few are reserved unto spiritual and eternal favours, while all others have only material and temporal things as their portion.

How this solemn fact should affect our hearts. Turn your eyes, dear reader, upon the world today, and look where you will, what do you behold? Are you not compelled to say of the present generation, in all nations alike, that God has left them to walk “in their own

ways?” Must we not mournfully conclude of the men and women of this age that “the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19)? The sparse number that are of God, are indeed thinly sown, a small handful of gleaning in comparison with the whole great crop of mankind. And let it not be forgotten that what appears now before our eyes is but the actualization of that which was foreordained in eternity. There is no disappointed and defeated God on the throne of the universe. He has *His* way “in the whirlwind and in the storm” (Nab. 1:3).

And again we say how deeply should this startling contrast affect our hearts. “For a few to be singled forth and saved, when a multitude, yea, a generality of others are suffered to perish, how doth it heighten the mercy and grace of salvation to us; for God in His providence to order many outward means to deliver a few which He denies to others, who perish: how doth this affect the persons that are preserved? How much more when it is ‘so great a salvation’” (Thomas Goodwin). This appears from what were types and mere shadows of it in Old Testament times, as in the case of the one small family of Noah alone being spared from the universal deluge. So, too, by the example of Lot, pulled out of Sodom by the hand of angels. And why? “The Lord being merciful unto him” says Genesis 19:16. Mark what a deep sense of and valuation upon Lot had of the same: “Behold now thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast showed unto me in saving my life” (Gen. 19:19).

But there is this further to be considered: our being delivered from a condition of like wretchedness and wrath as pertains to the non elect, which held not in the cases mentioned above. Noah was “A just man, and perfect in his generations” (Gen. 6:9), and Lot was “righteous” and “vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked” (2 Pet. 2:7, 8). They were not guilty of those awful sins because of which God sent the flood and fire upon their fellows. But when *we* were ordained to salvation, we lay before God in a *like condition* of corruption and guilt as all mankind are in. It was only the sovereign decree of a sovereign God which purposed our being brought out of a state of sin and wrath into a state of grace and righteousness. How stupendous, then, was the mercy of God unto *us*, in making this difference (1 Cor. 4:7) between those in whom

there was “no difference” (Rom. 3:22)! O what love, what wholehearted obedience, what praise are due unto Him.

Fourth, the blessedness of this doctrine appears in that a true apprehension thereof is *a great promoter of holiness*. According to the divine purpose the elect are destined to a holy calling (2 Tim. 1:9). In the accomplishment of that purpose, they are actually and effectually brought to holiness. God separates them from an ungodly world. He writes upon their hearts His Law and affixes to them His seal. They are made partakers of the divine nature, being renewed in the image of Him who created them. They are an habitation of God, their bodies becoming the temple of the Holy Spirit, and they are led by Him. A glorious change is thus wrought in them, transforming their character and conduct. They wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. To them, old things are passed away and all things are become new: forgetting the things which are behind, they press forward to the things which are before. They are kings and priests unto God, and shall yet be adorned with crowns of glory.

There are those who, in their ignorance, say that the doctrine of election is a licentious one, that a belief of it is calculated to produce carelessness and a sense of security in sin. Such a charge is a blasphemous reflection upon the divine author of it. This truth, as we have shown at length, occupies a prominent place in the Word of God, and that Word is *holy*, and the whole of it profitable for instruction in *righteousness* (2 Tim. 3:16). The apostles one and all believed and taught this doctrine, and they were promoters of piety and not encouragers of loose living. It is true that this doctrine, like every other Scripture, may be *perverted* by wicked men and put to an evil use, but so far as militating against the truth, it only serves to demonstrate the fearful extent of human depravity. We also grant that unregenerate men may intellectually espouse this doctrine and then settle down into a fatalistic inertia. But we emphatically deny that a *heart* reception thereof will produce any such effect.

That faith, obedience, holiness are the inseparable consequences and fruits of election is unmistakably clear from the Scriptures (Acts 13:48; Eph. 1:4; 1 Thess. 1:4-7; Titus 1:1), and has been fully set forth by us in previous chapters. How can it be otherwise? Election always involves regeneration and sanctification, and when

a regenerated and sanctified soul discovers that he owes his spiritual renewal solely to the sovereign predestination of God, how can he but be truly grateful and deeply thankful? And in what other way can he express his gratitude than in a holy course of fruitful obedience? An apprehension of the everlasting love of God for him will of necessity awaken in him a responsive love to God, and wherever *that* exists there will be a sincere effort to please Him in all things. The fact is that a spiritual sense of the distinguishing grace of God is the most powerful constraining motive unto genuine godliness.

Were we to enter into detail upon the principal elements of holiness this chapter would be extended indefinitely. A due consideration of the fact that there was nothing in us which moved God to fix His heart upon us, and that He foresaw us as ruined and hell-deserving creatures, will *humble* our souls as nothing else will. A spiritual realization that all our concerns are entirely at the disposal of God, will work in us a *submission* to His sovereign will as nothing else can. A believing perception that God set His heart upon us from everlasting, choosing us to be His peculiar treasure, will work in us a *contempt of the world*. The knowledge that fellow-Christians are the elect and beloved of God will evoke *love* and *kindness* unto them. The assurance that God's eternal purpose is immutable and guarantees the supply of our every need will impart solid *comfort* in every trial.

11. Its Opposition

Wherever the doctrine of election is Scripturally presented it meets with fierce opposition and bitter declamation. It has been so throughout the entire course of this Christian era, and that, among all races and classes of people. Let the high prerogatives of God be set forth, let the sovereignty of His grace be proclaimed, let men be told they are but clay in the hands of the divine potter to be shaped into vessels of wrath or vessels of mercy as seemeth good in His sight, and at once there is an uproar and outcries of protest. Let the preacher insist that the fallen creature has no claim whatever upon his maker, that he stands before Him as a convicted felon, and is entitled to naught but everlasting judgment, and let him declare that all of Adam's progeny are so utterly depraved that their minds are

“enmity against God” and therefore in a state of inveterate insubordination, that their hearts are so corrupt they have no desire for spiritual things, their wills so completely under the domination of evil they cannot turn unto the Lord, and he will be denounced as a heretic.

But this should neither surprise nor stagger the child of God. As he becomes more familiar with the Scriptures, he will find that in every generation the faithful servants of God have been hated and persecuted, some for proclaiming one part of the truth, some for another. When the sun shines on a dunghill, an odious stench is the consequence; when its rays fall upon the stagnant waters of a swamp, disease germs are multiplied. But is the sun to be blamed? Certainly not. So when the sword of the Spirit cuts to the root of human pride, reveals man to be a fallen and foul being, reduces him to an impotent creature, laying him in the dust as a bankrupt pauper, and declares him to be entirely dependent upon the discriminating pleasure of a sovereign God, there is a storm of opposition evoked, and a determined effort is made to silence such flesh-withering teaching.

The method which is usually followed by those who reject this truth is one of *misrepresentation*. The doctrine of election is so grand and glorious that to bear any opposition at all it must be perverted. Those who hate it can neither look upon nor speak of it as it really deserves. Election is treated by them as though it did not include a designation to faith and holiness, as though it was not a conforming of them unto the image of Christ; yea, as though the elect of God might continue to commit all manner of wickedness and yet go to heaven; and that the non-elect, no matter how virtuous they be, or how ardently they long for and strive after righteousness, must assuredly perish. False inferences are drawn, grotesque parodies exhibited, and unscrupulous tactics are employed to create prejudice.

By such devilish efforts do the enemies of God seek to distort and destroy this blessed doctrine. They besmirch it with mire, seek to overwhelm it with things odious, and present it to the indignant gaze of men as something to be repudiated and abominated. A monster of iniquity is thus created and christened “Election,” and then presented to the world as something to be cast out as evil.

Thereby multitudes have been cheated out of one of the most precious portions of divine truth, and thereby some of God's own people have been sorely perplexed and harassed. That the avowed opponents of Christ should revile a doctrine taught by Him and His apostles is only to be expected; but when those who profess to be His friends and followers join in denouncing this truth, it only serves to demonstrate the cunning of that old serpent the devil, who is never more pleased than when he can persuade nominal Christians to do his vile work for him. Then let not the reader be moved by such opposition.

The vast majority of these opposers have little or no real understanding of that which they set themselves against. They are largely ignorant of what the Scriptures teach thereon, and are too indolent to make any serious study of the subject. Whatever attention they *do* pay to it is mostly neutralized by the veil of prejudice which obstructs their vision. But when such persons examine the doctrine with sufficient diligence to discover that it leads only to holiness—holiness in heart and life—then they redouble their efforts to do away with it. When professing Christians unite with its detractors, charity obliges us to conclude that it is because of failure to properly understand the doctrine. They take a one-sided view of this truth: they view it through distorted lenses: they contemplate it from the wrong angle. They fail to see that election originated in everlasting love, that it is the choosing of a company to eternal salvation, who otherwise would have inevitably perished, and that it makes that company a willing, obedient, and holy people.

We shall not now attempt to cover the whole range of objections which have been brought against the doctrine of election, yet our discussion would be incomplete if we totally ignored them. The workings of unbelief are always endless in number. The child of God needs to be occupied with something more profitable. Yet we feel that we should at least consider briefly the ones which the enemy suppose are the most forceful and formidable. Not that our object is to try and convince them of their errors, but rather with the design of seeking to help fellow-believers who may have been shaken if not stumbled thereby. Our business is not to refute error, but (under God) to establish our readers in the truth. Yet in order to

do this, it is sometimes needful to expose the wiles of Satan, show how baseless are the most insidious of his lies, and seek to remove from the Christian's mind any injurious effect they may have had upon him.

Before starting on this unwelcome task let it be pointed out that any lack of ability on our part to refute the calumnies of opponents, is no proof that their position is impregnable. As the renowned Butler pointed out long ago in his masterly "Analogy," "If a truth is established, objections are nothing. The one (i.e., Truth) is founded upon our knowledge, and the other on our ignorance." Once it is established that two and two make four, no quibbling or juggling with figures can disprove it. "We should never suffer what we know to be disturbed by what we know not" said that master of logic, Paley. Once we see anything to be clearly taught in Holy Writ, we must not allow either our own prejudices or the antagonism of others to shake our confidence in or adherence to it. If we are satisfied that we have a "thus saith the Lord" to rest upon, it matters nothing if we be unable to show the sophistry in the arguments brought to bear against it. Be assured that God is true, even if that involves our accounting every man a liar.

The bitterest enemies against the doctrine of election are *the Papists*: This is exactly what might be expected, for the truth of election can never be made to square with the dogma of human merits—the one is diametrically opposed to the other. Every man who loves himself and seeks salvation by his own works, will loathe sovereign grace, and seek to load it with contempt. On the other hand, those who have been effectually humbled by the Holy Spirit and brought to realize that they are utterly dependent upon the discriminating mercy of God, will have no hankering after nor patience with a system which sets the crown of honour upon the creature. History bears ample testimony that Rome detests the very name of Calvinism. "From all sects there may be some hope of obtaining converts to Rome *except Calvinism*" said the late "Cardinal" Manning. And he was right, as our own degenerate age bears full witness, for while no regenerated Calvinist will ever be fatally deceived by the wiles of the mother of harlots, yet thousands of "Protestant" (?) Arminians are annually rushing to her arms.

It is an irrefutable fact that as Calvinism has met with less and

less favour in the leading Protestant bodies, as the sovereignty of God and His electing love have been more and more crowded out of their pulpits, that Rome has made increasing progress, until today she must have, both in England and in the U.S.A., a greater number of followers than any single evangelical denomination. But what is saddest of all is that, the vast majority of those now occupying so-called Protestant pulpits are preaching the very things which further Rome's interests. Their insistence upon the freedom of fallen man's will-to-good must fill the Papist leaders with delight—in the Council of Trent she anathematized all who affirmed the contrary. To what extent the leaven of Popery has spread may be seen in that “Evangelical Protestants” (?) who oppose the doctrine of election are now employing the self-same objections as were used by the Italian doctors four hundred years ago.

But to come now to some of the objections. First, such a doctrine is *utterly unreasonable*. When it suits her purpose Rome makes a big pretence of appealing to human reason, but at other times she demands that her children close their mental eyes and accept blindly whatever their unholy “mother” is pleased to palm upon them. Yet Rome is by no means the only offender at this point: multitudes of those who regard themselves as Protestants are guilty of the same thing. So too almost the first response of those who make no religious profession, when they have this truth presented to their notice, is to exclaim, “Such a concept does not appeal to me at all. If there is a God, and if He has anything at all to do with our present lives, I believe He will give us all an equal chance, balance our good deeds against our bad, and be merciful unto us. To say that He has favourites among His creatures, and that He fixed the destiny of every one before his birth, strikes me as outrageous.”

Our first reply to such an objection is that, it is quite beside the point. The only matter which needs deciding at the outset is, What saith the Scriptures? If election be clearly taught therein, *that* settles the matter for the child of God, settles it once and for all. Whether he understands it or no, he knows that God cannot lie, and that His Word is “true from the beginning” (Psa. 119:160). If his opponent will not allow this, then there is no common ground on which they can meet, and it is utterly futile to discuss the matter with him. Under no circumstances must the Christian allow himself to be

drawn away from his stand on the impregnable rock of Holy Writ, and descend to the treacherous ground of human reason. Only on that high plane can he successfully withstand the onslaughts of Satan. Reread Matthew 4 and observe how Christ vanquished the tempter.

The holy Word of God does not come to us craving acceptance at the bar of human reason. Instead, it demands that human reason surrender itself to its divine authority and receive uncomplainingly its inerrant contents. It emphatically and repeatedly warns men that if they despise its authority and reject its teachings, it is to their certain eternal undoing. It is by that Word each of us shall be weighed, measured, judged in the day to come; and therefore it is the part of human wisdom to bow to and thankfully receive its inspired declarations. The supreme act of right reason, my reader, is to submit unreservedly unto divine wisdom, and accept with childlike simplicity the revelation which God has graciously given us. Any other, any different attitude thereto, is utterly unreasonable—the derangement of pride. How thankful we should be that the ancient of days condescends to instruct us.

Our second reply to the above objection is that, in a written revelation from heaven we should fully expect to find much that transcends the grasp of our poor earth-bound minds. What was the use of God communicating to us only that which we already knew? Nor are the Scriptures given to us as a field on which reason may be exercised: what they require are *faith and obedience*. And faith is not a blind, unintelligible thing, but confidence in its Author, an assurance that He is too wise to err, too righteous to be unjust; and therefore that He is infinitely worthy of our trust and subjection to His holy will. But just because God's Word is addressed to faith, there is much in it which is contrary to nature, much that is most mysterious, much that leaves us wondering. Faith must be tested—to prove its genuineness. And God delights to honour faith: though His Word be not written to satisfy curiosity, and though many questions are not there fully answered, yet the more faith be exercised, the fuller is the light granted.

God Himself is profoundly mysterious. “Lo, these are parts of His ways: but how little a portion is heard of Him!” (Job 26:14); “How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding

out” (Rom. 11:33). We must therefore expect to find in the Bible much that strikes us as strange: things “hard to be understood” (2 Peter 3:16). The creation of the universe out of nothing, at the mere fiat of the Almighty, is beyond the grasp of the finite mind. The divine incarnation transcends human reason: “Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh” (2 Tim. 3:16): that Christ should be conceived and born of a woman who had known no contact with man, cannot be accounted for by human reason. The resurrection of our bodies, thousands of years after they had gone to dust, is inexplicable. Is it not, then, most unreasonable to reject the truth of election because human reason cannot fathom it!

Second, it is *highly unjust*. Rebels against the supreme sovereign hesitate not to charge Him with unrighteousness because He is pleased to exercise His own rights, and determine the destiny of His creatures. They argue that all men should be dealt with on the same footing, that all should be given an equal opportunity of salvation. They say that if God shows mercy unto one and withholds it from another, such partiality is grossly unfair. To such an objector we reply in the language of Holy Writ: “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?” (Rom. 9:20, 21). And there we leave him.

But some of the Lord’s own people are disturbed by this difficulty. First, then, we would remind them that God is “light” (1 John 1:5), as well as “love.” God is ineffably holy, as well as infinitely gracious. As the Holy One He abhors all evil, and as the moral governor of His creatures it becomes Him to eternally manifest His hatred of sin. As the gracious one He is pleased to bestow favours upon the undeserving, and to give an everlasting demonstration that He is “the Father of mercies.” Now in election *both* of these designs are unmistakably accomplished. In the preterition and condemnation of the non-elect, God gives full proof of His holiness and justice, by visiting upon them the due reward of their iniquities. In the foreordination and salvation of His chosen people, God makes a clear display of the exceeding riches of His grace.

Suppose that God had willed the destruction of the entire human race: then what? Had that been unjust? Certainly not. There could be no injustice whatever in visiting upon criminals the penalty of that law which they had defiantly broken. But what had then become of God's *mercy*? Had naught but inexorable justice been exercised by an offended God, then every descendant of fallen Adam had inevitably been consigned to hell. Now on the other hand. Suppose God had decided to open wide the floodgates of mercy, and carry the whole human race to heaven: then what? The wages of sin is death—eternal death. But if every man sinned, and none died, what evidence would there be that divine justice was anything more than an empty name? If God had saved all sinners, would not that necessarily inculcate light views of sin? If all were taken to heaven, should we not conclude that this was due us as a right?

Because all are guilty, are the hands of divine mercy to be tied? If not, if mercy may be exercised, then is God obliged to wholly renounce His justice? If God be pleased to exercise mercy upon some, who have no claim thereto, cannot He also show Himself to be a just judge by inflicting upon others the punishment to which they are entitled? What wrong does a creditor do if he releases one and enforces his demands on another? Am I unjust because I bestow charity on a beggar, and decline doing so to his fellow? Then is the great God less free to impart His gifts where He pleases? Before the above objection can have any force it must be proved that every creature (because he is a creature) is *entitled* to everlasting bliss, and that even though he falls into sin and becomes a rebel against his maker, God is morally *obliged* to save him. To such absurdities is the objector necessarily reduced.

“If eternal felicity be due to every man without exception, surely temporal felicity must be their due likewise: if they have a right to the greater their claim to the less can hardly be doubted. If the Omnipotent is bound, on penalty of becoming unjust, to do all He can to make every individual happy in the next life; He must be equally bound to render every individual happy in this. But are all men happy? Look around the world and say Yes if you can. Is the Creator therefore unjust? none but Satan would suggest it: none but his echoes will affirm it. The Lord is a God of truth, and without

iniquity: just and right is He. . . . Is the constituted order of things mysterious? impenetrably so. Yet the mysteriousness of God's dispensations evinces, not the injustice of the sovereign dispenser, but the shallowness of human comprehension, and the shortness of human sight. Let us then, by embracing and revering the Scriptural doctrines of predestination and providence, give God credit for being infinitely wise, just, and good; though for the present His way is in the deep, and His footsteps are not known" (A. Toplady, author of "Rock of Ages").

Finally, let it be pointed out that God *never refuses mercy* to any one who humbly seeks it. Sinners are freely invited to forsake their wicked ways and sue unto the Lord for pardon. The gospel feast is spread before them; if they refuse to partake thereof, if instead they loathe and turn away from it with disdain, is not their blood on their own heads? What sort of "justice" is it which requires God to bring to heaven those who hate Him? If God has performed a miracle of grace in you, my reader, and begotten in *your* heart a love for Him, be fervently thankful for the same, and disturb not your peace and joy by asking why He has not done the same for your fellow transgressors.

Third, *the gospel offer is meaningless*. Those who refuse to receive the truth of divine election are fond of saying that the idea of God having eternally chosen one and passed by another of His creatures would reduce evangelical preaching to a farce. They argue that if God has foreordained a part of the human race to destruction, it can contain no bona fide offer of salvation to them. Let it first be pointed out that this objection does not press upon Calvinism alone, but applies with the same force to Arminianism. Free-willers deny the absoluteness of the divine decrees, yet they affirm the divine presence. Then let us turn the question round upon him: How can God in good faith bid men to repent and believe the gospel, when He infallibly *foreknows* they will never do so? If he supposes the former objection to be irrefutable, he will find our question is unanswerable by his own principles.

Whatever difficulty may be presented at this point—and the writer has no thought of belittling it—one thing is clear: to whomsoever the gospel comes, God is sincere in bidding its hearers submit to its requirements, receive its glad tidings, and be saved

thereby. Whether we can or cannot perceive how this is so, matters nothing; but the integrity of the divine character must be maintained at all costs. The mere fact that we are unable to discern the consistency and harmony between two distinct lines of truth, certainly does not warrant our rejecting either one of them. The doctrine of sovereign election is clearly revealed in the Scriptures; so too is the genuineness of the gospel offer to all who receive it: the one must be contended for as earnestly as the other.

But do we not create our own difficulty by supposing that the *salvation* of men is God's sole object, or even His principal design, in the sending forth of the gospel? But what other ends, it may be asked, are accomplished thereby? Many. God's first end in the gospel, as in everything else, is the honour of His own great name and the glory of His Son. In the gospel the character of God and the excellency of Christ are more fully revealed than anywhere else. That a worldwide testimony should be borne thereto is infinitely fitting. That men should have made known to them the ineffable perfections of Him with whom they have to do is certainly most desirable. God, then, is magnified and the matchless worth of His Son proclaimed, even though not one sinner ever believed and was saved thereby.

Again; the preaching of the gospel is the appointed instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit whereby the elect are brought to Christ. God does not disdain instrumental agencies, but is pleased to employ them: He who ordained the end, also appointed the means thereto. Just because God's elect are "scattered abroad" (John 11:52) among all nations, He has commanded that "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations" (Luke 24:47). It is by hearing the gospel they are called out of the world. By nature God's elect are the children of wrath "even as others:" they are lost sinners needing a Saviour, and apart from Christ there is no salvation for them. Therefore the gospel must be preached to and believed in by them before they can rejoice in the knowledge that their sins are forgiven. The gospel, then, is God's great winnowing fan, separating the wheat from the chaff, and gathering the former into His garner.

Moreover, the non-elect gain much from the gospel even though it effects not their eternal salvation. The world exists for the elect's

sake, yet all share the benefits of it. The sun shines upon the evil as well as the good; refreshing showers fall upon the lands of the wicked as truly as on the ground of the righteous. So God causes the gospel to reach the ears of many of the non-elect, as well as those of His favoured people. Why? Because it is one of His powerful agencies to hold in check the wickedness of fallen men. Millions who are never saved by it, are reformed: their lusts are bridled, their outward course improved, and society is made more suitable for the saints to live in. Compare the peoples without the gospel and those who have it: in the case of the latter it will be found that higher morality obtains even where there is no spirituality.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the gospel is made a real test of the characters of all who hear it. The Scriptures declare that man is a fallen, corrupt, and sin-loving creature. They insist that his mind is enmity against God, that he loves darkness rather than light, that he will not be subject to God under any circumstances. Yet who believes such humbling truths? But the response to the gospel by the non-elect demonstrates the verity of God's Word. Their continued impenitence, unbelief, and disobedience bears witness to their total depravity. God instructed Moses to go unto Pharaoh and make request that Israel should be allowed to worship Jehovah in the wilderness; yet in the next verse He told him, "I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, not by a mighty hand" (Exod. 3:18, 19). Then why send Moses on such an errand? To make manifest the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, the stubbornness of his will, and the justice of God in destroying such a wretch.

Fourth, *it destroys human responsibility*. Arminians contend that to affirm God has unalterably decreed and fixed the history and destiny of every man, would be to demolish human accountability, that in such a case man would be no better than a machine. They insist that man's will must be free, free equally unto good and evil, or otherwise he would cease to be a moral agent. They argue that unless a person's actions are without compulsion, and are in accordance with his own desires and inclinations, he could not be justly held responsible for them. From this premise the conclusion is drawn that it is the creature and not the Creator who chooses and decides his eternal destiny, for if his acts are self-determined, they cannot be divinely determined.

Such an objection is really a descent into the dark regions of philosophy and metaphysics, a specious attempt of the Enemy to lead us away from the realm of divine revelation. So long as we abide by the Holy Scriptures, we are safe, but as soon as we resort to reasoning upon spiritual matters we are certain to err. God has already made known all that He deems well for us to know in this life, and any attempt to be wise above that which is written is naught but folly and impiety. From the Scriptures it is clear as a sunbeam that man—whether considered as unfallen or fallen—is a responsible being, that he is made to reap whatsoever he sows, that he will yet have to render unto God an account of all his deeds and be judged accordingly; and nothing must be allowed to weaken the impression of these solemn facts upon our minds.

The same line of reasoning has been employed by those who reject the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. It is contended that such a postulate entirely eliminates the human element from the Bible, that if we insist (as this writer, for one, most emphatically does) that not only the thoughts and sentiments but the very language itself is divine, that every word and syllable of the original manuscripts was God-breathed then the human penman employed in transmitting the same were merely automatons. But this we know is false. In like manner, with as much show of reason might the objector declare that Christ cannot be both divine and human: that if He be God, He cannot be man, and that if He be truly man, it follows that He cannot be God. What is reasoning worth, my reader, upon such matters!

The books of the Bible *were* written by men, written by them under the free exercise of their natural faculties, in such a way that the impress of their personalities is clearly left upon their several contributions. Nevertheless, they originated nothing: they were “moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21), and so completely were they controlled by Him, that not the slightest shadow of a mistake or error was made by them, and every thing they wrote was “the words which . . . the Holy Ghost teacheth” (1 Cor. 2:13). The redeemer is the Son of man, who was “in all things . . . made like unto His brethren” (Heb. 2:17); yet because His humanity was taken into union with His divine person everything He did possessed a unique and infinite value. Man is a moral agent, acting according to the

desires and dictates of his nature: he is at the same time a creature, fully controlled and determined by his Creator. In each of these cases the divine and human elements coalesce, but the divine dominates, yet not to the exclusion of the human.

“Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it *must* needs be that offenses come.” Then surely, may an objector reply, there can be no guilt resting on him who introduces that which is inevitable. Different far was the teaching of Christ: “but *woe* to that man by whom the offense cometh” (Matt. 18:7). “When ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things *must* needs be” (Mark 13:7). There is a must-be for these death-dealing scourges, yet that alters not the criminality of the instigators of them. There is a needs-be for “heresies” (I Cor. 11:19), yet the heretics themselves are blamable. Absolute necessity and human responsibility are, therefore, perfectly compatible, whether *we* can perceive their consistency or no.

Fifth, it is objected against the truth of predestination that it *supersedes the use of means* and renders all incentives to human endeavour negatory. It is asserted that if God has elected a man unto salvation that he will be saved although he remains utterly unconcerned and continues to take his fill of sin; that if he has not been elected, then no efforts to obtain eternal life would be of any use. It is said that for men to be told they have been divinely ordained either to life or death by an eternal and immutable decree, they will at once conclude that it makes no difference whatever how they conduct themselves, since no acts of theirs can to the slightest degree either impede or promote the foreordination of God. Thus, it is argued, all motives to diligence are effectually neutralized, that it is subversive of every exhortation to morality and spirituality.

Really this is the most senseless of all objections. It is not an objection at all against the *Scriptural* doctrine of predestination, but against an entirely different concept, one hatched in the brains of ignorance, or conceived by malignity in order to bring odium on the truth. The only sort of predestination to which this objection is applicable, would be an absolute pre-appointment to an end without any regard to the means. Stripped of all ambiguity, this objection presupposes that God secures His purposes without employing any instrumental agencies. Thus, when the objection is exposed in its

nakedness we see at once what a sorry figure it cuts. Those whom God has elected to salvation He has chosen to it “*through* sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth” (2 Thess. 2:13).

The fact is that God decreed to bring His elect to glory in a way of sanctification, and in no other way than that; and throughout their entire course. He treats them as rational and accountable creatures, using suitable means and motives to draw out their hearts unto Himself. To affirm that if they are elected they will reach heaven whether sanctified or no, is just as silly as to say Abraham might have been the father of many nations although he had died in infancy, or that Hezekiah could have lived his extra fifteen years without food or sleep. Prior to the taking of Jericho it was divinely revealed to Joshua that he should be master of that place (6:2): the assurance was absolute. Did, then, Israel’s leader conclude that no action was needed, that all might sit down and fold their arms? No; he arranged the procession around its walls in obedience to God’s command, and the event was accomplished accordingly.

We turn now briefly to consider some of the principal Scriptures used by those who resist the Truth. “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof” (Prov. 1:24, 25). “I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts” (Isa. 65:2). “How often would I have gathered thy children together . . . and ye would not” (Matt. 23:37). We are told by Arminians that these declarations are irreconcilable with Calvinism, that they show plainly the will of God *can be* resisted and thwarted by men. But most certainly a disappointed and defeated God is not the God of Holy Writ. To draw from these verses the conclusion that the divine decrees fail of accomplishment is utterly erroneous: they have nothing whatever to do with God’s eternal purpose, but instead, they respect only His *external* agencies, whereby He enforces man’s responsibility, tests his character, and makes evident the wickedness of his heart.

“For God so loved *the world* that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). From these words it is urged that if God loves the world He desires the salvation of the whole human race, and that it was for this end He provided a Saviour for them. Here it is a case of

being misled by the mere sound of a word, instead of ascertaining its real import. To say that God gave His Son with the design of providing salvation for all of Adam's children is manifestly absurd, for half of them had already died before Christ was born, and the vast majority of them perished in heathen darkness. Where is there the slightest hint in the Old Testament that God loved the Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Babylonians? And where else in the New Testament is there any statement that God loves all mankind? The "world" in John 3:16 (as in many other places) is a *general* term, used in contrast from *Israel*, who imagined they had a monopoly on redemption. God's love extends far beyond the bounds of Judaism, embracing His elect scattered among all nations.

"And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40). Strange to say this is one of the verses appealed to by those who will not have election at any price. They suppose it teaches the free will unto good of fallen man, and that Christ seriously intended the salvation of those who despise and reject Him. But what is there in these words which declares that Christ seriously intended their salvation? Do they not rather signify that He was here preferring a solemn charge against them? So far from our Lord's utterance implying that these men had the power within themselves to come to Him, they rather declare the perversity and stubbornness of their wills. Instead of any inclination for the Holy One, they hated Him.

"Who will have *all men* to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth . . . who gave Himself a ransom for *all*" (1 Tim. 2:4, 6). In order to understand these words they must not be considered separately, but in connection with their setting. From the context it is unmistakably evident that the "all men" God wills to be saved and for whom Christ died are all men *without regard to national distinctions*. Timothy's ministry was exercised chiefly among Jewish converts, many of whom still retained their racial prejudices, so that they were unwilling to submit to the authority of heathen rulers. This was why the Pharisees had sought to discredit Christ before all people when they asked Him whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Caesar. Paul here tells Timothy that Christians were not only to yield obedience unto Gentile rulers, but to pray for them as well (verses 1, 2).

In 1 Timothy 2 Paul struck at the very root of the prejudice which

Timothy was called upon to combat. That law of Moses was now set aside, the distinction which so long obtained between the lineal descendants of Abraham and the rest of mankind no longer obtained: God willed the salvation of Gentiles and Jews alike. Note particularly these details. First, “There is one God [see Rom. 3:29, 30], and one mediator between God and [not “the Jews” but] men” (verse 5). Second, “Who gave himself a ransom for all [indefinitely], *to be testified in due time.*” (verse 6): when Christ was crucified it was not generally understood, not even among His disciples, that He gave Himself for Gentiles and Jews alike; but in “due time” (particularly under Paul’s ministry), it *was* clearly “testified.” Third, “whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle . . . a teacher of the *Gentiles*” (verse 7). Fourth, “I [with apostolic authority] will therefore that men pray *every where*” (verse 8): those professing the faith of Christ must drop at once and forever their Jewish notions and customs—Jerusalem no longer possessed any peculiar sanctity.

“We see Jesus . . . that he by the grace of God should taste death for *every man*” (Heb. 2:9). Have you taken the trouble to ascertain how that expression is used elsewhere in the New Testament? “And then shall *every man* have praise of God” (1 Cor. 4:5). Does that mean all of Adam’s race? How can it, when “depart from me, ye cursed” will be the portion of many? “The head of *every man* is Christ” (1 Cor. 11:3): was He the Head of Judas or Nero? “The manifestation of the Spirit is given to *every man*” (1 Cor. 12:7). But some are “sensual, having not the Spirit” (Jude verse 19 and compare with Rom. 8:9). It is “every one” in *God’s* family that is meant in all of these epistle passages: note how the “every one” of Hebrews 2:9 are defined as “many sons” (verse 10), “brethren” (verse 11), “children” (verses 12-14).

“There shall be false teachers among you who truly shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them” (1 Peter 2:1). This verse is often cited in an attempt to disprove that Christ died for the elect only, which only serves to show what desperate shifts our opponents are reduced to. Why the verse makes no reference unto Christ at all, still less to His death! The Greek word here is not *kurios* at all—the one commonly used when referring to the Lord Jesus; but *despotes*. The only places where it

occurs, when applied to a divine person, are Luke 22:9; Acts 4:24; 2 Timothy 2:22; Jude 4; Revelation 6:10, in all of which God the Father is plainly intended, and in most of them as manifestly distinguished from Christ. “Buying” here has reference to temporal deliverance, being taken from Deuteronomy 32:6. Peter was writing to Jews, who boasted loudly they were a people purchased by the Lord, and therefore he used this expression to aggravate the impiety of these false teachers among the Jews.

“Not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Here again a false meaning is extracted by divorcing a snippet from its context. The key to this verse is found in the word “us-ward:” “the Lord is . . . longsuffering to us-ward,” for He is not willing that “any” *of them* should perish. And who are they? Why, the “beloved” of verse 1 (those mentioned at the beginning of the First Epistle, “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit”), and because He has purposed that “all” *of them* “should come to repentance,” He defers the second coming of Christ (verses 3, 4). Christ will not return till the last of His people are safely in the Ark of Salvation.

The sixth of seven booklets.

