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THE

**DOCTRINE OF ELECTION**

**ILLUSTRATED AND ESTABLISHED**

**IN A**

**SERMON**

**PREACHED ON THE EVENING OF THE SECOND LORD'S DAY IN**

**DECEMBER, 1816.**

**BY**

**GARDINER SPRING, A. M.**

**PASTOR OF THE BRICK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE CITY**

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**DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.**

**EPHESIANS I. 3, 4, & 5.**

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.*

The epistle to the Ephesians is one of the most practical portions of the Bible. No christian can read it without being impressed with the majesty and sweetness of its truths, and without feeling that he has been fed with "the sincere milk of the word." It is worthy of observation that in dictating this epistle, the Spirit of God directed the Apostle in his first thought, to the doctrine of Election. The writer seems transported with a view of the unsearchable wisdom and grace of God in the work of man's redemption, and after his accustomed salutations, gives utterance to his elevated sentiment in the language of our text: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; accor-

ding as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love : having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." It is impossible to avoid the conclusion, that this passage of Scripture brings into view the discriminating grace of God in the gospel method of salvation. It speaks of " spiritual blessings ;" it speaks of them as the gift of God ; it represents them as imparted to those whom he had " chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy ;" and to add energy to the thought, it represents the persons to whom they are imparted, as " predestinated" unto the adoption of children, from a wise regard to the " good pleasure of his will."

Whatever may be our views concerning the doctrine of Election, in whatever perplexity and darkness it may to our minds be enveloped, or however strenuously we may deny it ; it is evident that the Apostle Paul believed it, and has stated it with great precision in the words of our text. But my brethren, this subject is involved in no such perplexity as is sometimes imagined. It is one of those important, plain, practical truths which must be believed and loved.

In endeavoring to give as scriptural and intelligible view of this subject as I can, I propose

To illustrate the doctrine ;

To evince the truth of it; and  
To vindicate it from objections.

I. I am to illustrate, or explain the doctrine of Election.

This is the more needful, because it is sometimes identified with things that are not true, and often confounded with things that are true but which are foreign to the subject. Let it be observed therefore,

1. *That it is no part of the doctrine of Election, that God created a part of mankind merely to damn them.* This is often said by those who wish to bring the doctrine into contempt. But it is not true. The ultimate object for which God created all men is the advancement of his own glory. He *will* punish multitudes of the human race "with everlasting destruction from his presence;" but he did not bring them into being merely *for the sake* of punishing them. "God is love." There is not one malevolent emotion ranking in his bosom. It is one of the foulest stains that was ever cast upon his spotless character, to admit the thought that he brought creatures into being merely for the purpose of making them forever miserable. *In itself*, he desires the salvation of every living man. We have his oath, "that he has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." If he destroys the wicked, it is because their perdition is inseparable from the promotion of his own glory, and the highest good of his Kingdom, and not because it is well pleasing to his benevolent mind, or the ultimate object of their creation.

2. *It is no part of the doctrine of Election, that Christ died exclusively for the Elect.* Such a representation is an unjustifiable perversion of the doctrine, and exposes it to unanswerable objections. Though there would have been no atonement but for God's design to save the elect, and though there could have been no designs of mercy toward the elect without an atonement; yet the doctrine of atonement and election are two distinct things. Much idle breath and illiberal crimination might have been spared, by giving them that place in the christian system which they hold in the word of God. It has never yet been proved that Christ died exclusively for the elect. If language has any meaning, we are bound to believe that "he tasted death for every man." One would imagine that if the Apostle had intended to put this question forever at rest, he could not have said more than he has in these memorable words: "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

3. *It is no part of the doctrine of Election, that the Elect will be saved let them do what they will.* The immutable law of the divine Kingdom has made personal holiness essential to eternal life. It is not less certain that "no man will see the Lord without holiness," than that no man will see the Lord unless he be of the "election of grace." The elect cannot be saved unless they possess supreme love to God, sincere contrition for all their sins,

and faith unfeigned in the Lord Jesus Christ. The elect can no more enter heaven without being prepared for it than the non-elect. If a man continues stupid and secure, if he never reads the Scriptures, if he never attends upon the word and ordinances, if he is never anxious for the salvation of his soul, if he never repents and believes the gospel, if he never becomes the follower of the meek and lowly Jesus ; he may rest assured there is nothing in the doctrine of election that will save him. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

4. *It is no part of Election, that the non-elect will not be saved if they do as well as they can.* If they would "repent and believe the gospel," there is nothing in the doctrine of Election that would destroy them. If they would become reconciled to God, he would regard them with favor. If they would "come to Christ," they should "in no wise be cast out." Let the non-elect do their duty, and they will be saved. Nay, let them possess one holy desire, and they will be saved. And if they will not do this, it does not become them to wrest the doctrine of Election and say, it is an essential part of it that, do what they will, they must be lost. Not one of the non-elect will be lost, unless he persist in impenitence, reject the offers of mercy to the last, and die in his sins.

5. *It is no part of the doctrine of Election, that the non-elect cannot comply with the terms of the gospel.* The efforts to vindicate the

doctrine of election without separating it from this unscriptural notion, have not only proved futile, but done harm. There is but one thing that prevents the non-elect from accepting the offers of mercy, and that is their cherished enmity against God. We are well aware that the Scriptures represent it to be *impossible* for men to do what they are *unwilling* to do. Hence says our Saviour, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." His idea doubtless is, that men cannot come to him, *because* they are unwilling to come; for he had just said, in the course of the same address, "And ye *will not* come unto me, that ye might have life." He supposes that *mere unwillingness* renders it impossible for them to come. This mode of speaking not only runs thro' the Bible, but is agreeable to the plainest dictates of reason and common sense. All the inability of the non-elect therefore to comply with the terms of the gospel, arises from their unwillingness to comply. Their inability is of a *moral*, and not a *physical* nature. It is a criminal impotence. It consists in nothing but their own voluntary wickedness. While, therefore, it is proper to say, that men *cannot* do what they are unwilling to do, it is also proper to say, that they *can* do what they are willing to do. It is no perversion of language to say, that a knave *can* be honest, or that a drunkard *can* be temperate; for every one knows that they could be, if they would.

Hence it is no perversion to say, that a sinful man *can* become holy, or that the non-elect *can* comply with the terms of the gospel. Their unwillingness lays them under no *natural* inability, and may at any time be removed by their being willing. The non-elect are just as able to repent and believe the gospel as the elect, if they were but disposed to do so. They are as capable of doing right as of doing wrong. The doctrine of election leaves them in full possession of all their powers as moral agents, and all possible liberty to choose or refuse the offers of mercy. But for his voluntary wickedness, Judas was as able to accept the gospel as Paul. The non-elect are able to comply with the terms of the gospel, if they choose to do it. It is therefore their own choice, and not the decree of election, that shuts them out of the kingdom of heaven. All representations of the doctrine of election, therefore, that deny the non-elect *natural* power to comply with the overtures of mercy, form no part of that doctrine as it is exhibited in the Bible.

But if none of these things belong to the doctrine of election, what is it? For the sake of a clear understanding of the subject, several things must be particularly observed.

1. All mankind are by nature in a state of sin and condemnation. They are "estranged from the womb." The "imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." By the apostacy of their first parents, sin and the curse



are the birth-right of all their natural descendants from generation to generation; so that by their offence, all their posterity come into the world with a corrupt nature, and under the wrath of God.

2. Notwithstanding the native corruption of the human heart, and the lost condition of all mankind by nature, God has provided a full and complete atonement for all their sins. The atonement was made, not for the elect or non-elect, as such, but all men as *sinners*. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." The atonement of Christ is sufficient for all, adapted to all, offered to all, and irrespective of the divine purpose as to its effectual application, made as much for one man as another.

3. Notwithstanding the unlimited provision of the gospel, all with one consent reject the overtures of mercy, and will not come unto Christ that they might have life. Left to himself, every individual of the human race will reject the Saviour and plunge to perdition. No sense of guilt and danger, no consciousness of obligation and duty, no pressure of motives will constrain a living man to lay down the arms of rebellion and be reconciled to God. If the Spirit of God does not appear in the glory of his grace to wrest the weapons of revolt from his hands and make the sinner willing in the day of his power, all are lost and Christ is dead in vain.

4. This sad result God has determined to prevent. He does not mean that all mankind shall finally perish. He does not intend that they shall rob him of his glory, nor his Son of the reward of his death. Some he saves. There is a *part* he rescues from themselves and from perdition. This number is *definite*. His eye is upon them. When in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity, he sends his Spirit to convince them of their lost condition, to show them their need of mercy, to make his word quick and powerful, to create them anew in Christ Jesus, and to make them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. He begins, carries on and completes the work, and receives them at last to "the glory which is to be revealed."

5. God does this *from design*. Who are saved and who lost, is not with him a matter of indifference. He has not committed the destiny of souls to the obscure omnipotency of chance. He *formed a purpose* to renew, and sanctify, and justify, and glorify a certain part of our fallen race. He formed this purpose from eternity. This design is an eternal design, this determination an eternal, irrevocable decree.

6. In doing this, it is important to remark, that God is governed by a wise regard to his own good pleasure. He does not sanctify and save one part of mankind rather than another, because one part is better than another. The elect are no more worthy of being made the objects of regenerating and redeeming

grace, than the non-elect. When the design of saving them was formed, they were not in being, and "had done neither good nor evil." During the whole of their unregenerate state, they were opposing God and contemning the Son of his love. The moment before their regeneration, they were his determined enemies. It could not therefore, have been from regard to any thing in them, that *they* were taken and *others* left, but from a regard to the mere good pleasure of God. It was a *sovereign* purpose. It was that all the glory might redound to God's great and holy name.

7. Nor is it less important to subjoin, that this sovereign and eternal purpose was formed in view of the atonement of Christ. In its practical influence it regarded men as already fallen by their iniquity, and beyond the possibility of deliverance except by atonement. When God determined to save a part of mankind, he had it in prospect to provide such an expiation for the sins of the world, as to justify him in the unlimited offer of pardon, and in the full and complete justification of all who accept it. He owed it to himself, in forming the purpose to save, to devise a consistent method of salvation. It would have been a violation of the rights of moral government, to have received rebels in, to favor "without the shedding of blood." Hence the elect are said to be "chosen in Christ." In other places they are said to be "Christ's seed." In others they are repre-

sented as "given to him" by his Father. When in the covenant of peace, he engaged to lay down his life for the sins of the world, a stipulated number was "given him" as his reward. In view of mankind as already plunged in guilt and ruin, and of Christ as making an adequate atonement, God "chose them to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

This is what we suppose the scriptures mean by the doctrine of election. The Apostle represents himself and the christians at Ephesus to be "chosen"—"chosen in Christ"—"chosen in him before the foundation of the world;" and that, not upon condition they *would be* holy, ~~nor~~ because of any foreseen holiness; but "that they *should be* holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

With this illustration of the doctrine, we pass,

## II. To shew that it is true.

We think the truth of this doctrine may be evinced,

### 1. From the divine immutability.

God is unchangeable. "He is of one mind and none can turn him." But if God is unchangeable, then every thing that has been, or will be, was unalterably fixed and determined in the divine mind from eternity. Hence it is written, "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to

all generations." Hence God himself claims this exalted character: "I am God and there is none else ; I am God, and there is none like me ; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times, the things that are not yet done ; saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." If we could suppose the Deity to be wiser, and better, and mightier at some times than at others, we might suppose, that with every accession of knowledge, goodness and power, he would form some new design. But he is always the same. And as his character never alters, so his purposes never alter. Hence the divine immutability secures the doctrine of election. If the divine mind has formed any new purpose with regard to the salvation of men, then he has altered his plans, and is mutable ; but if he has always been of the same mind, then unless he actually saves the whole, he must have formed the purpose of saving a certain part. Every individual he saves, he must have "always meant to save," he must have always chosen and determined to save. But this is nothing more nor less than the doctrine of election. All the objections, therefore, that are made against the doctrine of election, are leveled equally against the divine immutability.

2. The doctrine of election may be conclusively argued from the divine foreknowledge. The mere light of nature is enough to teach us, that God knows all things present, past, and to come. It is impossible that a

being of infinite wisdom, should commence a system of operations, without knowing what he is about to do. If God does not know all events before they actually take place, then his knowledge may increase, and he may be wiser to-morrow than he is to-day. In short, if he does not foreknow all things, he may not only from day to day, discover things that are new, but he may deduce new results from them, may misjudge in his arrangements, and be frustrated in his purposes. But the Bible puts this question beyond a doubt. "Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world." It is a settled point, then, that God knew from all eternity, every thing that would take place.

God, therefore, *knows* who will at last be saved. In the ages of eternity, he beheld the long track of time from the fall of Adam to the general judgment, and fixed his eye on every individual of the human family, that would at last enter into his kingdom. He knew the *exact number*, and he knew with absolute certainty. I say, he knew *with certainty*; for there is nothing else that deserves the name of *knowledge*, except that which is certain. God did not know how many, and who would *probably* be saved, but how many would *certainly* be saved. Absolutely to foreknow a mere contingency, is impossible. To know who might be saved, and who might not be saved, is to know nothing about it. Certainly to know that a thing *will be*, and

yet certainly to know that it *may not* be, is the same thing as certainly to know, and not certainly to know at the same time; which is palpable contradiction. It must be conceded, therefore, that God must have known with *absolute certainty*, the exact number of those who would be saved. But how could this be known, unless it were a determined event? If it were undetermined, it was uncertain; and if uncertain, it could not certainly be known. Let any man but an Atheist, look at this with an unprejudiced mind, and he must receive the doctrine of election. How could God know from eternity, how many would be saved, unless he had from eternity determined to save precisely this number? In eternity, there was no being but God himself. There were no heavens and no earth; no angels and no men. God existed alone. And when he existed alone, he *certainly knew* how many intelligent beings would exist, and how many would be saved. But where did he obtain this knowledge? Not from any other being beside himself, for there was no other; and not from himself, unless he had formed the determination to save them; for if he had not formed the determination to save them, he could not have known that they would be saved. It is just as certain therefore, that God *determined* from eternity who would be saved, as that he *knew* from eternity who would be saved. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate," But this is nothing more nor

less than the doctrine of election. All the objections which lie against the doctrine of election, lie with equal force against the divine prescience.

3. In proof of this doctrine, we shall make our appeal to the Holy Scriptures.

We consider the doctrine unanswerably demonstrated from the preceding considerations; but "to the law and the testimony." My audience receive the Scriptures as the word of God, and the infallible rule of faith and practice. Here then we have a standard to which every thing must bow. From this oracle, there is no appeal. Let us go then to the Bible; and let us go—not to alter, not to expunge, not to supply, not to wrest from its plain and obvious meaning a single word; but simply to inquire, what the Lord hath spoken, and to yield our pre-conceived opinions to the paramount authority of eternal truth. Here, if we are not deceived, you will find the doctrine of election revealed as plainly as language can reveal it.

Before we extend this investigation, let me beg you to read with care the words of the apostle, in our text: "According as God hath *chosen* us in Christ;" and as though this were equivocal, he adds, "according as he hath *chosen* us in him *before the foundation of the world*;" and to give emphasis to the sentiment, he subjoins, "having *predestinated* us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of



*his will.*" Is not this the doctrine of election?

Turn to the eleventh verse of the same chapter: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being *predestinated* according to the *purpose* of him who worketh all things after the *counsel of his own will.*" Does this bear no resemblance to the decree of election?

The same thought you will also find in that noble challenge of the apostle, toward the close of the eighth of Romans. Paul had hopes of an elevated character. He "knew that all things worked together for good to them that love God." And how did he know this? He looked through the miseries and the darkness of time, to the counsels of eternity. "And we know," saith he, "that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them who are the called according to *his purpose.* For whom he did *foreknow*, he also did *predestinate* to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did *predestinate*, them he also *called*; and whom he *called*, them he also *justified*; and whom he *justified*, them he also *glorified.* What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of *God's elect*?"—How characteristic of this noble apostle to say, in the opening of this epistle, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ!"

—and how delightful to hear him thus glorying in electing grace !

In the ninth chapter of the same epistle there is a remarkable passage, which, with all their efforts, the opposers of this doctrine have found it hard to pervert or misunderstand. The apostle's affection for his countrymen had led him to see with grief, that "all are not Israel which are of Israel," and in this lamented fact, to acknowledge that the destinies of men were in the hands of a sovereign God. He saw sovereignty every where. He could not tell why Ishmael might not have been as fit a subject of the promise as Isaac. Both were the seed of Abraham, and yet it was the pleasure of God to fix his love on Isaac. Hence it is written, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called."—"And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, (for the children *being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil*, that the *purpose* of God according to *election* might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth) it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger, as it is written, *Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*"—*Think of this.*

In the second epistle to Timothy, the first chapter, and the ninth verse, we have this unequivocal declaration: "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own *purpose and grace*, which was given us in Christ Jesus *before the world began.*" And

in the second epistle to the Thessalonians, the second chapter and thirteenth verse, we have this declaration: "God hath *from the beginning*, chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." If there is any import in language, these passages of scripture expressly assert the doctrine of personal, unconditional election to holiness and eternal life.

Though all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and alike entitled to our confidence, yet it is desirable to throw together the thoughts of our Saviour on this interesting subject. There is no doctrine which he more frequently enforced, and in which he more greatly rejoiced, than the doctrine of election. It was a common observation with him, that "many are called, but few are chosen."\* He told his disciples, "Ye have not chosen me, but *I have chosen you*, and *ordained* you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit."† The same sentiment he inculcated in his reproof to the mother of Zebedee's children: "To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them *for whom it is prepared* of my Father."‡ Again he says, alluding to the promise of the everlasting covenant, "All that the Father *hath given me*, shall come to me."§ In the tenth chapter of the same evangelist, he likewise speaks of his elect with peculiar tenderness. He

\* Matt. xx. 16, and xxii. 14. † John xv. 16. ‡ Matt. xx. 23.  
§ John vi. 37.

calls them his flock, his "sheep," for whom he pre-eminently laid down his life. "My *sheep* hear my voice, and I *know* them, and I give unto *them* eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, that *gave them me*, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." In the same chapter he told the Jews, "Ye believe not, *because ye are not of my sheep*." In his prayer in the garden, he prayed for the elect, and for them only. These are his words: "I pray for *them*; I pray not for the world, but for them which *thou hast given me*."\* Christ also speaks of the impossibility of "deceiving the *elect*"—of "shortening the days of tribulation for the *elect's* sake," and of God's avenging "his own *elect*."† Such declarations do not need any comment, and we believe they do not admit any evasion. You may pervert and disbelieve them, but they are the words of Christ, and not one of them shall pass away. Future scenes shall reveal their unchanging verity, in signals hung out from the rending earth and the blackened heavens. The day is on the wing, when you shall "see the Son of man coming in the clouds, with power and great glory." The voice of the archangel will then proclaim the doctrine of election: "Then shall the Son of man send his angels, and shall gather together *his elect* from the

\* John xvii. 9. † Mark xiii. 32, —Matt. xxiv. 32. —Luke xviii. 7.

four winds.”\* And when gathered before him, what will he say? What will he say, my brethren—He will preach the doctrine of election to an assembled universe, as though “seven thunders uttered their voices.” Turning to those on his right hand, he will say, “Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom *prepared for you*, from the *foundation of the world!*” The top-stone of the christian temple will then be brought forth with the shoutings of electing grace.

But it is needless to multiply testimony: I have often been surprised, that men who profess to receive the Bible as the rule of their faith, should question the truth of this doctrine. It must be either, that they do not read the Bible; or, that they pervert its plain and obvious import; or that they feel at liberty to deny what God has expressly revealed. I should feel myself acting by far the more consistent part to disavow the truth of revealed religion, than to avow it and deny the doctrine of election. Search the Scriptures, my brethren, and remember that no truth however unpleasant, if found there, is to be treated with indifference and disrespect. You are bound to believe what is true. The claim of God upon your faith is as imperative as his claim upon your practice. You have no more right to disbelieve the doctrines of the gospel, than to neglect its duties. Both are crime; both are rebel-

\* Mark xiii. 27.

lion. If you have difficulties in viewing this subject, be willing to sit at the feet of Jesus and "learn of him." Submit your all to the decisions of his Holy Spirit. No matter what may have been your prejudices; no matter what your habits of thinking; no matter what your premeditated systems;—when we preach to you the solemn truths contained in the Bible, when on the face of the most unwelcome doctrine, we show you the indelible impress, "Thus saith the Lord;" you may murmur and complain, you may reject and condemn,—but you are fighting against God.

But we pass,

III. To vindicate the doctrine from all reasonable objections.

*Objection 1.* Why did God determine in the purposes of his grace, to make one man differ from another? Why did he not determine to save all?

*Ans.* It is easy to inform you: "Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight!"

*Obj. 2.* But if I am not one of the elect, what is there for me to do?

*Ans.* Your duty, or abide the consequences.

*Obj. 3.* But if I am not one of the elect, how am I to be blamed for not being saved?

*Ans.* Because you do not choose life, when life and death are with equal sincerity set before you. You are bound to be saved. It never was your duty to be lost. I know it is certain you will persist in sin and perish, if God does not stop you, and if he has not from

eternity determined to stop you. But are you not to be blamed for your invincible perseverance in iniquity? If it is certain that a man will commit the crime of murder, if God has not from eternity determined to prevent him, is he not to be blamed for committing it?

*Obj. 4.* But if I am not elected, how can I choose life?

*Ans.* Just as easily as you can choose death. Your rational and moral faculties capacitate and oblige you to choose life. The doctrine of election does not infringe upon your moral agency. It leaves you in full possession of all possible liberty to accept, or reject the Saviour.

*Obj. 5.* But if the doctrine of election be true, God cannot be sincere in the offers of mercy. How is it compatible with the sincerity of the calls and invitations of the gospel to all men, that he should have determined to make only a part accept them?

*Ans.* Beyond all question, the calls and invitations of the gospel are made to all. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." No sinner has the warrant to exclude himself from this gracious overture. The invitations of mercy are addressed to all alike, and with as much sincerity to each one, as though *he* were the only sinner in the world. But to obviate this objection conclusively, it will be well to consider, *What is necessary to constitute a sincere invitation?* We reply,

1. That the blessing offered *be in actual existence, and at the disposal of the offerer.* If a man invite me to a banquet which is not in being, and which he has not ability to provide ; every honest mind will pronounce the invitation insincere.

2. That the offerer *be willing his offer should be accepted.* If a man invite me to a banquet, and I ascertain that he does not wish me to accept the invitation ; I should consider the invitation insincere.

3. That the invitation be made *upon practicable terms.* Should you invite me to a banquet, upon condition that I first pluck the Sun from his orbit ; I should consider you insincere. And

4. That the offerer *be willing to impart* what he offers to all who will accept it. If you invite me to a banquet and I accept your invitation, but am refused a seat at your table ; I should be justified in considering the invitation insincere.

We submit to the objector, whether in any case where these four things combine, there be not a sincere invitation. Abstract from an invitation either of these properties, and I acknowledge it is insincere. But nothing is more true, than that the invitations of the gospel combine all these properties.

Pardon and eternal life are in actual existence and at the disposal of a Sovereign God. Christ died for the non-elect as well as for the elect, and therefore God *has mercy to offer* to them as well as the elect. If the atone-



ment had done nothing for the non-elect, so that they are precisely in the situation they would have been if no atonement had been made, then there is no sincerity in announcing *to them* the overtures of mercy. If there is no salvation provided for them, so that God offers what he had not to bestow, then his offers are insincere. But salvation is provided. "All things are ready." "There is bread enough and to spare."

God is willing the invitations of his grace should be accepted. He is willing every man should come. "As I live saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn and live." Nor is there any dishonesty in these professions. If he were unwilling the non-elect should accept the offers of life, or if he did any thing independently of their own voluntary agency to prevent their accepting it, there might be. But it is not so. He never did, he never will do any thing to prevent a sinner's accepting the Saviour, if he is willing to accept him.

God has also made the offers of mercy upon terms that are practicable and reasonable. If he had not, the charge of insincerity would remain unanswered. All that is required on the part of those to whom the invitations of the gospel are addressed, is a right disposition of heart, or in other words, a disposition to make the invitations of the gospel welcome. There is nothing in the way of accepting the offer, but a perverse will.

In connexion with this, God is willing to bestow mercy on all who will accept it. He has said, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Nor has there been an instance in which this declaration has proved untrue. So long therefore, as God has mercy to bestow—so long as he is willing to bestow it—so long as he is willing it should be accepted—so long as he offers it upon reasonable terms, and actually imparts it in every instance where it is not perseveringly rejected; it cannot be said, that he is insincere in the offers of mercy. The sincerity of his offer does not depend upon the perverseness which rejects it.

*Obj. 5.* The doctrine of election represents God as being *partial* in the dispensations of his grace; and the Scriptures declare that "there is no respect of persons with God."

*Ans.* That God is *discriminating* in the dispensations of grace, is most cheerfully allowed. He doubtless does more for the elect than for the non-elect. He makes them willing in the day of his power; he renews and sanctifies them; he matures them for the glory which shall be revealed; he finally advances them to heaven. This he designed to do for them from all eternity, while none of this he does for the non-elect. But though he is thus discriminating, he is not *partial*. *Partiality* is a *capricious* preference of one before another; and if it could be proved that the favor which God exercises toward

the elect were the result of *mere caprice*, he would be chargeable with criminal partiality. Partiality is a disposition to favor one before another *without reason*; and if it could be proved that God has no reason for the eternal difference he makes between the elect and the non-elect, he would be chargeable with partiality. Partiality is an undue respect *to the persons* of men; and if it could be proved, that in the method of grace, God regards the elect rather than the non-elect, from an undue respect to *them*, or *their persons*, he could not be acquitted of the charge of partiality. God is not partial, because his sovereignty is neither arbitrary, nor capricious, but in all its diversified operations, under the guidance of unerring wisdom and infinite goodness. God is not partial, because, as the moral governor of the world, he uniformly treats men according to their real character and conduct. He does not, through any "respect of the persons of men in judgment," or through the unguarded influence of any private partialities, condemn and punish the righteous, nor approve and reward the wicked. When I see the sovereign of the universe regard the prayers and alms of the devout Cornelius, a Roman centurion, with equal complacency as though he had been a Jew, I can repeat the sentiment of Peter: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

**Obj. 6.** The doctrine of election represents God as unjust.

**Ans.** It will not be pretended, that he is unjust to the elect. If there be injustice, it is toward the non-elect; and if he is unjust to the non-elect, it must be that *he treats them worse than they deserve*. But how does he treat them? He casts them out into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. And is this worse than they deserve? Is not this the just desert of every child of Adam? How then can God be accused of injustice, if in his great mercy by Jesus Christ, he is pleased to save a part of the human family, while he punishes the other part in proportion to their deserts? If he would not be unjust in punishing the *whole*, surely he would not be unjust in punishing a *part*. Erase the doctrine of election from the sacred record. Is God unjust to the non-elect then? No, they are exactly in the same state they are now. Not one of them would ever turn and live. The doctrine of election, then, so far from involving any injustice toward the non-elect, does not injure them at all. The non-elect are not losers by the doctrine of election. They are not gainers by it, we know; but they lose nothing more than they would have lost, if it were not true. If they are not elected, they will indeed perish; but election does not destroy them. They are no more certainly lost with election, than without it. But, perhaps, I ought to blush for attempting to answer an objection so

full of impiety, as to call in question the justice of God in the dispensations of his grace. I would rather repeat the answer of the apostle, "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!" This is enough to cover the objector with shame. "Who art thou, O man! that *repliest against God!*"

*Obj.* 7. If the doctrine of election be true, why can I not as well live in carelessness and sin, as in a punctual attendance upon the means of grace, and the duties of religion? I cannot alter God's eternal decree. To this I

*Ans.* You *can* live in carelessness and sin; you can cast off fear and restrain prayer; you can grieve the Holy Spirit and reject the Saviour—and you can perish! If you choose to leave your eternal salvation to the decree of God, without personal religion on your part, and without any efforts to obtain it, you will, beyond all question, die in sin and sink down to hell. If God has chosen you to salvation, *through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*, does it follow that you will be saved, if you always *reject the truth*, and *never become holy*? Because God determined to save Noah by means of the ark, does this prove that the ark was not necessary, or that Noah would have been saved without it? Or might he have sat down with the scoffing world, and resolved not to be at the trouble of building an ark, because God had determined to save him and his family from the flood? Because God had determined

that Paul should be saved from shipwreck by the exertion of the seamen, does this prove that their exertion was unnecessary? Though "there stood by him an angel of God, saying fear not Paul, thou must be brought before Cæsar, and lo! God hath given thee all them that sail with thee;" yet "as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, *except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.*" Because God had determined to deliver the church from the bondage of papal superstition, by the instrumentality of Luther and Calvin, does this prove that their instrumentality was unnecessary? God never determined the end without determining the means necessary to obtain it. If the objector expects that there is any decree of election that will save him without his own personal holiness, he will find his expectation sadly defeated at last.

*Obj. 8.* If the non-elect, left to themselves, will never accept of salvation, and if God has not determined to make them willing to accept it, why are they exhorted to repent and believe?

*Ans.* Because they are sinners, and it is reasonable they should repent, whether elect or non-elect. Because there is a Saviour provided for them, and it is reasonable they should believe on him. Because, they are able to do both. The doctrine of election does not take away a single power, does not infringe upon a single privilege, does not di-

minish the force of a single obligation. But more than this ; though they never will yield the controversy with God, and though God has not determined to make them yield ; yet all the exhortations to duty with which they are favored, answer a most important purpose. They illustrate the obduracy of their hearts, and prepare them to see, and acknowledge, and feel the justice of God, in their final condemnation. When they see themselves sinking into the pit, they will remember that they were once urged to believe and live ; and they and an assembled universe will forever feel, that the justice of God shines *brighter* by all the calls of his mercy.

*Obj.* 9. But the doctrine is calculated to drive men to despair.

*Ans.* It might be calculated to drive men to despair, if there were any other way by which sinners are reconciled to God. But so long as it is true, that unless God bow the stubborn heart of man, by the efficacious and almighty energy of his own grace, and unless he always meant to do this, every living man must perish ; we cannot see how the fact, that there is a part of mankind for whom he does this, and for whom he eternally designed to do it, should drive sinners to despair. No, the doctrine of election takes away all false hopes, and no others. It strips the sinner of all his self-righteousness ; it disrobes him of all his vain pretences ; it drags him out from all his hiding places, and throws him

into the hands of a sovereign God; but it takes away no solid foundation of hope. But *whom* does the doctrine of election drive to despair? The people of God? Pious parents? Faithful ministers? They would all be in despair without it. When cut off from every other hope, they can look up to God's unchangeable purpose to save, and there hang with comfort and delight. I ask again, *whom* does it drive to despair? Convinced and distressed sinners? It is upon this truth the desponding sinner throws himself in the last resort. He sees that if discriminating mercy does not raise him from the pit, he forever sinks. He feels that he must put his life in his hand, and cast himself at the footstool of sovereignty, "pouring out this sum of all his hopes, Lord if thou *wilt*, thou *canst* make me clean!" No, my brethren, the doctrine of election drives none to despair; throws none into discouragement, but the incorrigible enemies of God.

Still, some of you are ready to object after all, that the doctrine of election is full of perplexity, needless and unprofitable, and ought not to be preached.

To this I answer, it is one of the plainest doctrines in all the Bible. It is simply *God's determining to save whom he will, and making his own choice from among this lost world, according to his sovereign pleasure.* Surely there is no perplexity in this. But if it *were* a perplexing truth, this would be a reason



for preaching, rather than not preaching it. Sometimes the minds of sinners, and young converts, and older saints, are embarrassed by difficulties of their own creating, when contemplating this doctrine. And one reason why they are so, is because the doctrine is not frequently enough brought into view. When this truth is plainly and fully exhibited, it delights and nourishes the people of God. It is the sincere milk of the word: and both young and older christians always feel uneasy, and restless, and unstable, till they are informed and established in this important doctrine of the gospel. "Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people," saith the Lord.

If the objector still thinks that this is a very *unprofitable* doctrine, we have to make one inquiry. Is it contained in the Bible? If it is, we beg the permission to refer the objector to that unequivocal declaration of the Holy Spirit: "*All* Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and *is profitable* for doctrine, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness." Observe, it is not "all Scripture" *except the doctrine of election*; but "*all* Scripture"—*is "profitable."* The same reasons exist for preaching this doctrine, and for viewing it profitable, that there were for revealing it.

But it is more tedious than difficult, to follow the objector through all his windings, and expose his ever-varying expedients to

shake off the obligation to yield an implicit assent to this great and blessed truth. Some of the more common objections we have attempted to obviate. After all, there is a class of objections that will remain unobviated. They are the objections, not of the head, but of the heart. It is easy to prove that God is a sovereign, but we cannot make wicked men submit to his sovereignty. It is easy to demonstrate the doctrine of election, but it is not in man to make the wicked love it. It is important, therefore, that we make a suitable application of the whole subject. And,

1. From the view we have taken of our subject, we cannot fail to discover some of the reasons why the doctrine of election is so much and so violently opposed. This doctrine has drawn forth more opposition than any other single truth in the Scriptures. We are constrained to believe that it is opposed by some, because it is not clearly understood. We would feign hope that the opposition of many arises from no more corrupt source, than a prejudiced and darkened understanding. But by far the greater number of those who reject and oppose the doctrine, must trace the source of their opposition to some other cause. There are those who not only do not understand it, but who are unwilling to understand it. They do not choose to understand the nature and import of so trying, so humbling a doctrine. They are really unwilling to know what it means.

They manifest more solicitude how *not* to understand, than how to understand it. They are afraid to see this great truth of the gospel, in its nature, in its connexions, in its importance, and in its obligation. But there are very many who, notwithstanding all their efforts to pervert and misunderstand it, cannot help understanding it, and feeling its searching influence; and when they do, it calls forth the malignity of their unhumiliated hearts. Of this description are the great mass of those who are hostile to the doctrine. With multitudes, the very reason why they are hostile to it, is *because they understand it*. They see how it affects their interests for time and eternity. They see how it throws them into the hands of that God who "hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." It is because they see it in a light that disturbs their sins and their hopes, that they hate it, and oppose it when it is preached. This was the case when it was preached by our Saviour. On one occasion, when he preached it with great clearness and power, very many of those who had for a considerable time followed him, "went back and walked no more with him." On another occasion, when he preached it in the synagogue at Nazareth, his hearers were so exasperated, that they made a bold and desperate attempt upon his life. This is the secret spring of disaffection to the doctrine; *wicked men do not love the sovereignty of God*; they murmur, and re-

pine, and contend, because they are in his hands, as the clay in the hands of the potter, and because it depends on his mere good pleasure, whether they shall choose life or death; whether they shall go to heaven or hell. They cannot bear to submit to a sovereignty that is so absolute. They are not willing that the destinies of eternity should be in the hands of God. They wish to be above God. They wish him to alter his purposes respecting the salvation of men; and they are dissatisfied, because they cannot dethrone him; because they cannot hinder his working all things after the counsel of his own will, and because they know his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. It is not, therefore, because the doctrine of election is not true, that wicked men oppose it, but because it gives them no peace till they are reconciled to God. It is because it arrays the holy God against them, and gives a death-blow to all their selfish desires and selfish hopes. The same disposition that hates the law and the gospel, that hates God and rejects his Son, that loves sin and hates holiness; opposes the doctrine of election.

2. We are taught by our subject, that the opposition which is made to the doctrine of election, is exceedingly sinful. It is always sinful to oppose the truth as it is in Jesus. And the sinfulness of that opposition rises in proportion to the malignity of the opposition, and the importance of the truth against

which it is directed. But there is no truth that is opposed with greater bitterness by the carnal mind, than the truth we have this day set before you. Sometimes the wicked feel when they hear it, as the murderers of Stephen felt, when they gnashed upon him with their teeth. What is this but the *very spirit of the damned*? Against what is all this hostility directed? Against a truth that gives the fullest and clearest view of the divine glory. Against that eternal purpose, to which must be traced the gift of a Saviour—the descent of the Holy Ghost—the offer of mercy—the existence of the church, and the happiness of heaven. No, not a drop of mercy would have ever fallen upon our desolate world, but for electing love. It is owing to this blessed and eternal purpose, that you and I are now out of hell. That we enjoy a day of grace, and the means of salvation, is owing to God's eternal purpose to rescue from perdition, a part of our fallen race. Not a soul would have been spared from the desolations of the fall; not a sinner would have been converted and saved; not a ransomed rebel brought home to glory; not a note of the everlasting song have vibrated on the ear; but for the eternal purpose of God to save his people. And yet, it is against this fundamental, this glorious truth, that all the enmity of the selfish mind is set in array. It is against this glorious truth—that gives ministers all their encouragement to preach, Christians all their encouragement to pray, and sinners all their

encouragement to repent and believe the gospel, that the seed of the serpent spit out all their venom. O, what would become of our world, if those who hate the doctrine of election could gain the object of their wishes, and blot this day-star of hope from the sacred page ! Well might we “ cry to the rocks and the mountains to fall upon us, and cover us from the wrath of him that sitteth on the throne.” Which of you, my hearers, is prepared to bear the guilt of thus tearing away the last hope of a ruined world ! O sinner, it is the hidden opposition of that rebellious heart to this precious truth, that thus levels the fatal blow ! It is not for the want of an inclination to strike the doctrine of election out of being, that you *have not done it*, and thus defeated the purposes of redeeming mercy, and bathed Heaven in tears. *Are you this side eternity ?*

We may add,

3. The doctrine of election ought to be loved.

God loves it. He takes infinite delight in contemplating the designs of eternal mercy. Christ loves it. There was an hour when his soul broke out in high expressions of joy, while contemplating this truth in the days of his incarnation : “ At that time Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy

sight." The Holy Ghost loves it. With ineffable delight does he enter our world, as the great agent to carry on the designs of electing grace. All holy beings love it; and *all* beings, whether sinful or holy, *ought* to love it. They have no reason for hating it, but every possible reason for loving it.

If they are bound to love God, they are bound to love the doctrine of election. This doctrine, more than any other in the gospel method of salvation, brings God into view. He formed the purpose of saving the elect, because this was the method in which he could manifest all his perfections in the clearest, fullest manner, and in a manner calculated to awaken the attention of the universe, and fix it upon his great and amiable character. That character is perfect. Every thing that can render a being lovely and adorable, worthy of commendation and confidence, belongs to God without the shadow of imperfection in kind or degree. There are some faint resemblances of excellence in creatures; but they are the mere rays scattered from the fulness of his glory. When from this atom world, I look up, and look around me, and look every where, and every where behold the living Deity, I see perfection combined with perfection, perfection illustrating and beautifying perfection, and cannot but feel that it is infinitely desirable that this matchless excellence should be made to appear. Every truth that illustrates it, claims my highest regard. Not to delight in the truth

that illustrates it, is not to delight in God. Not to feel my obligation to love the truth that illustrates it, is not to feel my obligation to love him.

If all are bound to love what is best, they are bound to love the doctrine of election. God is infinitely wise and good, and both knows and will do what is on the whole wisest and best. As his wisdom enables him clearly to see what number and what persons it is best to save, so his goodness disposes him to desire and elect the very number and the very persons. In the designs of a perfectly wise and benevolent being, there can be nothing that is unlovely, but every thing that is lovely. God does not call upon his creatures to approve his purposes, merely because they are *his*; but because they are best. He has formed no purpose merely because he *will* form it; but because it is best. He does nothing merely because he *can* do it; but because it is best. In the holy sovereignty of the King of kings, there is no tyranny—no oppression—no injustice—no wanton exercise of power—no impulse of passion; but every design and every event is the result of one eternal impulse to what is best. The great plan of the divine operations is as good as it can be. It is because the eye and heart of God are fixed on the best possible results, that he is a God of electing love. This is the key to all that is inscrutable in the mystery of elec-



tion. This is the thought that binds every creature in the universe to "be still and know that he is God."

Yes, beloved hearers, the doctrine of election ought to be loved. You must not only believe, but *love* it. If you see its discriminating influence in these effusions of the Holy Spirit, you must see and adore. God is in all. "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 honor, and another to dishonor? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction? And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared to glory?" The rights of the Creator are merely nominal, unless uncontrolled. If God may not "do what he will with his own," no matter how soon he abandons the supremacy of the universe. Impenitent men! you must bow to this holy dominion. What do you hope to gain by your opposition to discriminating grace? Unfriendly as these unhumbled hearts may be to its searching influence, this hostility must cease. This doctrine *must be loved*. To hate it, is to take the side of the wicked against the righteous. To hate it, is to take the side of the adversary against God. To hate it, is to take the side of hell

against heaven. To hate it, is to be forever miserable.

Do I hear any of you say, "*I would love it, if I were one of the elect?*" Has it then come to this? What if you are not one of the elect? Have you a right to hate it? Have you a right to hate God for not arresting you in your own *chosen* way? Have you a right to hate God, because in the final recompense, he treats you as you deserve? Have you a right to hate God for saving *others*, merely because he does not save *you*? "Is thine eye evil, because he is good?" Do you cherish affections so selfish and malignant, that you can rejoice in no felicity incompatible with your own? Because *you* are not saved, would you have a world of sinners perish? Because you will "wail and gnash your teeth," will you murmur that you cannot hear the myriads of the redeemed mingling their sighs and moans with yours? Because you will sink to hell, will you complain that you cannot behold the throne of God sinking by the side of you? O sinners! Where are you? What spirit is this? And what is this spirit fit for, but fuel for the unquenchable flame?

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