

THE
DOCTRINE
OF
ELECTION;
STATED, DEFENDED AND APPLIED
IN
THREE DISCOURSES.

BY REV. E. P. ROGERS, A. M.,
PASTOR OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, AUGUSTA, GA.

WITH AN
INTRODUCTORY ESSAY;
BY REV. THOMAS SMYTH, D. D.,
CHARLESTON, S. C.

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P R E F A C E .

THE following Discourses were prepared and delivered in the ordinary course of the Author's pulpit labors, and without any reference to publication.

In accordance with a general expression of a wish on the part of his congregation that they should be printed, and by the advice of several of his brethren in the ministry, they are now given to the public, in the earnest hope that they may be generally useful, and may, with the blessing of the Great Head of the church, assist in commending one of the great and glorious doctrines of His word, to the hearty faith and love of His people.

E. P. ROGERS.

AUGUSTA, JUNE, 1850.

INTRODUCTION.

ON several accounts I am particularly gratified in being permitted to introduce this little volume. As it respects its author, it may be regarded as a kind of first-fruits of that diligence to approve himself a faithful steward, rightly dividing to every man a portion in due season; which, as it has already secured for him the confidence and regard of a large and growing congregation, cannot fail to bring forth still more abundantly to the glory of God, to the edification of his people, and to his own recompense and great reward.

This volume is not less gratifying, as a manifest proof of the prosperity of the congregation for whose benefit it is printed, and in whose welfare I have ever taken a deep and sincere interest. I rejoice with them in the present happy relations in which they stand to each other, and to a pastor in whom they can so cordially unite; and my earnest prayer is, that they may long continue to grow up together into a holy temple in the Lord.

The doctrine unfolded and treated of in this book, is truly one of those "hard sayings"—those "Scriptures which men wrest to their own destruction"—or at least to the injury of that peace and joy in believing, which would impart the assurance of faith to their own hearts, and of that love and charity which would fill them with brotherly kindness towards all who call upon the Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours.

It might quiet the resentment with which this doctrine is repelled by its opponents, were they to consider that fundamen-

tal as we regard it to be to THE SYSTEM of the gospel, and as an answer to the inquiry how that system was devised and perfected, that nevertheless there is a broad platform of common Christianity upon which we can meet, where we can walk arm in arm, and where we can labor hand to hand with Christians of every evangelical denomination.

We must carefully distinguish between the relation of fundamental doctrines, *first*, to the system of revealed truth; *secondly*, to the church; and *thirdly*, to individual salvation; since a truth may be essential in any one of these cases and not in the others. In other words, what is essential to the scheme of salvation and to a full confession of what this scheme is, in its nature, origin, and plan, is very different from what is essential to the being of a church, and to the enjoyment of the benefits of salvation by individual inquirers.

Many things are essential to the conception, design and completion of the *scheme* of salvation, and consequently to that *system* of truth which imbodyes the origination as well as the actual nature and way of salvation,—which are not essential to a participation of all the benefits of that salvation as a scheme already finished and complete, and offered to our acceptance. It is one thing to ask, “How was this glorious scheme devised and perfected, and what is its comprehensive plan?” and another to ask, “What must I do to be saved?” The answer to these two questions must be altogether as different as would be the answers to the question, “How came I to exist, and how am I constituted?” and to the question, “How am I to act so as to enjoy and to perpetuate this life?” The one refers to the nature of things, and is purely abstract. The other refers to duty, and is as purely practical. The one relates to the *science*, and the other to the *way* of salvation. The one describes the origin and the method of salvation, the other tells me how this salvation may be secured *by me*. The one unfolds the divine philosophy of salvation, and leads us back to its origin in

the counsels of eternity and the covenant of grace, while the other puts us in the way and leads us forward to the full and everlasting enjoyment of it in a blessed immortality. To the former, and not to the latter, belong all those "doctrines of high mystery" which are to be "handled with special prudence and care," and about which there ever have been such diversities of opinion among those who must on all hands be acknowledged as humble, honest, and sincere inquirers after the true knowledge of God's word and will.

To the *scheme* of salvation, and a complete *system of divine truth*, these doctrines, that is, whatever is plainly revealed or can be properly inferred from the words of inspiration, however high and mysterious, must be considered as essential. Here, however, there is room given for those diversities of opinion to which, in our present state, the nature, capacity, and degree of cultivation of the human mind will inevitably lead, even when directed to the study of the Scriptures with prayerful examination and habitual docility. About these truths, therefore, there may be an honest, humble, and reverent difference of opinion. These are among the things about which even those who are "perfect" may be "otherwise minded," without bringing into question their *Christian* character, or interfering with their Christian union and co-operation in *those* things "in which they ARE agreed."*

Another reason which may moderate the resentment cherished towards this doctrine is that it is not made by the Presbyterian church a test of piety, and therefore not a pre-requisite to *Christian* communion and membership. As a truth fundamental to the system of revealed truth and the divine philosophy of the plan of salvation, the doctrine of Election is held forth in the standards of the church, taught in her pulpits, her works and her catechisms, and made necessary to be both

* See discourse by the author on the fundamental doctrines of Christianity and Phil., A. S. S. U.

received and believed by those who assume the office of bishops or elders. But while the effectual call, the saving faith, and the godly sorrow of every true penitent who seeks admission to her membership, are believed to be the fruits of this heavenly tree and the streams from this divine fountain, yet it is not believed that a perfect knowledge and understanding of this high mystery, is essential to the experience of "the power of God unto salvation."

Another observation which may lead to a less prejudiced examination of this doctrine of Election is, that it is not a doctrine peculiar to revelation, but one which is found imbodyed in the whole system of divine government. The objections, therefore, and the prejudice against this doctrine, apply equally to every department of the divine workmanship and providence.

A belief in this doctrine is founded in that constitutional principle of our nature, by which we are led intuitively and necessarily to believe that every effect must have a cause fully adequate to its production. For when we consider this whole universe as **ONE** system, governed by **ONE** mind, regulated by His will, and conspiring to the promotion of His glory, we are irresistibly led to believe that every thing was constituted according to a divine plan, is carried on by divinely appointed laws, and is made to work together for the accomplishment of His purposes.

The very conception of God as omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, and equally existing in the past, present and future eternity, implies in it all that is involved in the doctrine of Election, as it regards every part of His wide dominion, and teaches us that every thing which takes place in nature, providence and grace, comes to pass in accordance with the fixed purpose and will of God, which must be eternal. Sovereignty, foreknowledge, predestination, predetermination, and efficient direction and control are necessary parts of God's universal providence over all His works, and over all His intelligent creatures. The further science advances, the clearer is the proof

that this knowledge and this providence are essential to the very nature of God; whether therefore, we look to the heavens or the earth, to the elements, the seasons, the productions of our globe, its minerals, its plants, or its animals, we find the same fixed and invariable laws, by which all are governed and directed. We are therefore told that not a sparrow can fall to the ground without our heavenly Father's knowledge, and that the hairs of our head, as well as our days, are all numbered. The same thing is true in the moral government of God, the only difference being this, that in this kingdom, free, moral and accountable beings are the subjects of God's dominion. His government is adapted to their nature, and works in them to will and to do of His good pleasure. All objections, therefore, to the doctrine of predestination as it regards the kingdom of grace, are overruled and set aside by the existence of the same principles of divine procedure, throughout God's wide and universal dominion, and the only question left for reason and inquiry is, "Is this doctrine taught in the word of God?" If it is, then any objections against it are inapplicable, since they apply as much to God's nature and providence, as these are manifested in every other department of His works.

One other remark which I would make is, that reprobation is not included in the doctrine of Election. Reprobation is not a counterpart of Election. Election or choice implies it is true that some are not chosen, who are called in Scripture, "*the rest*." But it is not less true that reprobation in Scripture is never opposed to Election or used in connection with it.

A person in Scripture language may be *reprobate* and yet elected. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that Jesus Christ *is* in you, except ye be reprobates?" 2 Cor. 15:15. There was a time when Christ was not in Paul, and when Paul was mad against Christ. "But," says he, "it pleased God to reveal His son in me." Until then Paul was *reprobate*, but he never was *non-elect*, but was on the contrary chosen or elect in

Christ before the world was. And so has every child of God been found naturally, and has remained *reprobate*, "without Christ in the world," until called by His grace, and enabled to make their calling and Election sure.

Again, reprobation in Scripture is always distinguished from Election, by having direct respect to the character and condition of the party so described; whereas, Election is an act of God's sovereignty arising merely from the will of God, without any fitness or merit in the individuals elected. Sin and unbelief are the characteristics of the reprobate; and continued impenitence, unbelief and sin constitute the only reason why God will punish those who die reprobates. The end of God's decree in this case, is not the condemnation of the creature, but the manifestation of His own glorious justice. And as sin is the effect of man's free will, and condemnation is the effect of justice, so the decree of God is the cause of neither.

Reprobation in Scripture stands opposed, therefore, not to *election* but to *approbation*. Hence vile professors are compared to the alloy or dross, frequently mixed with metal, which on trial is found base or deficient in quality. "Reprobate silver shall men call them, because God has rejected them." Jer. 6:30. Thus also the apostle means to say that the mere profession of any man in whom Christ is not, is of no value. It will at last be found mere refuse. All such "are nothing and less than nothing." 2 Cor. 13:5, 6. Thus also men of corrupt minds are called "reprobates concerning the faith;" that is, persons destitute of a true understanding of the truth. 2 Tim. 3:8. See also Tit. 1:16 and Rom. 1:26—29.

It is therefore manifest that reprobation in Scripture does not mean that a person is not elected to salvation, and much less that he is absolutely appointed to eternal misery, but that in his present character, principles or conduct, he is regarded with disapprobation by God.

Election therefore, let it be remembered, is neither the *cause*

nor the *occasion* of damnation. Election arises out of God's sovereign will, and has exclusive reference to the salvation of a sinner who deserves damnation, and can therefore in no way be predicated upon that sinner's claims to mercy. Damnation on the contrary, arises from the holiness of God's nature, and the equity of His government, and has reference to the guilt of the individual damned. If then it be right in God to punish sin, He must resolve and determine to do so. This however is not Election, nor in any way consequent upon it.

But I must conclude, and would therefore express the hope, that this volume will be examined with that candor and prayerful consideration, which the importance of the subject demands.

THOMAS SMYTH.

CHARLESTON, S. C., June, 1850.

ON ELECTION.



DISCOURSE I.

STATEMENT AND PROOFS OF THE DOCTRINE.

“God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation,
through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.”

2 THESSALONIANS, ii: 13.

FROM this passage of Scripture I deduce, and my object will be to prove and defend, the Calvinistic doctrine of Election. No article of the christian scheme has received such treatment, alike from friends and foes. Its friends have been afraid to maintain it—its foes have assailed it with denial, vituperation, and ridicule. Yet while there is no truth of more value and interest to men, so there is none more susceptible of abundant proof and confirmation from the word of God. And as Protestant Christians, regarding the Holy Scriptures as the only and the sufficient rule of faith and practice, we turn

“to the law and the testimony,” and endeavor to ascertain what is the teaching of the Holy Ghost in respect to this much abused, often misrepresented, yet comforting and glorious doctrine.

In order to prepare the way for the intelligent consideration of the doctrine before us, I call your attention to a few plain, scriptural propositions.

I. GOD IS THE ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGN OF THE UNIVERSE.

“The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.” (Ps. 97:1.) “The Lord is a Great God, and a great King above all gods.” (Ps. 95:2.) “He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him what doest thou?” (Dan. 4:35.) “The Lord, He is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting King.” (Jer. 10:10.) “Thy throne O God, is forever and ever.” (Ps. 45:6.) “His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation.”

(Dan. 4 : 3.) "He is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords." (1 Tim. 6 : 15.)

God then is absolute Sovereign and Ruler of the world. He was sovereign in its creation — the calling it into being by the word of His power, was of His own will and for His own pleasure. He is sovereign in the ordering of its affairs, in the natural, the providential and the moral world. He must be supreme and absolute, or He cannot be God.

II. ALL MEN, HIS CREATURES, ARE BY NATURE IN A STATE OF RIGHTEOUS CONDEMNATION FOR SIN AGAINST GOD.

"The soul that sinneth it shall die." (Ezek. 18 : 4.) "The imaginations of man's heart are evil from his youth." (Gen. 8 : 21.) "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Ps. 51 : 5.) "There is not a just man upon the earth, that liveth and sinneth not." (Eccl. 7 : 20.) "All we like sheep have gone astray." (Is. 53 : 6.) "There is none upright among men." (Micah 7 : 2.)

“They are all gone out of the way — they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Rom. 3 : 10.) “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3 : 25.) “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” (Rom. 8 : 7.) “He that believeth not is condemned already.” (John 3 : 18.) “The wages of sin is death.” (Rom. 6 : 23.) “By nature children of wrath, even as others.” (Eph. 2 : 3.) This is the natural state of all mankind — a state of sin, of condemnation, of death.

III. FROM THIS STATE OF SIN AND DEATH, THERE IS NO DELIVERANCE FOR MAN, BUT THROUGH THE MERCY OF GOD.

“O Israel, thou has destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help.” (Hosea 13 : 9.) “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else.” (Is. 45 : 22.) “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3 : 16.) “By

the deeds of the law, shall no flesh be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Rom. 3:20.) "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 15:56, 57.) "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6:23.) "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8.)

Man by his fall from original holiness, has lost all claim to the favor of God. He is a rebel against his government; he is an alien from His love. He cannot ask for love and favor now from his Sovereign, for he has put himself into a hostile attitude, and over him hangs the anathema of a broken law. There he must lie so far as himself and his own character are concerned, in hopeless, helpless ruin. He was made upright, but he has sought out many inventions, and now he lies in the ruins of apostacy, a sad hopeless wreck of all that was once fair, noble, and God-like. I know that this doctrine of the depth and hopelessness of

man's fall and the dark condition into which he is thrown by sin, is a humbling and repulsive doctrine to the natural heart. But if there be any truth taught us in the word of God, it is this:—Man is now in a state of sin and just condemnation, from which he never can be raised but by the mere mercy and grace of God.

IV. BUT GOD IS UNDER NO OBLIGATION TO SHOW THIS MERCY TO APOSTATE MAN.

The awful breach between God and man was effected by the act of man alone—he began the controversy between himself and his Maker. Like the apostate angels, he first raised the standard of rebellion, and boldly waved it in the very presence of God. And if the Almighty had lifted his right arm, and hurled him down to the dungeons of eternal night, a fellow prisoner forever with the lost sons of the morning, who will dare to say that it would have been unjust? what plea could man urge why the sentence of the law he had broken, should not be inflicted to the uttermost upon him? Why had he so waywardly broke away from God? Why had

he lifted a rebellious hand against his lawful Sovereign? — Coming from His creative hand, a being whose magnificent endowments proclaimed him a glorious work of Omnipotence, and furnished with powers and faculties, which would have been strengthened, refined and exalted in the service of his Maker, it was a sad, an awful thing, that he should have so soon used these very powers and faculties only in sinful and wanton disobedience, and while he daringly insulted his Sovereign and Friend, inflicted an irreparable wrong upon his own soul. Of such disobedience nothing but hopeless ruin could be the result. And on what ground could God have been laid under any obligation to interfere and stay man's suicidal hand? He spared not the rebel angels — why should he spare him? No! this is the stern fact with regard to man. When he sinned against God, and brought upon himself and his posterity to the end of time, the wasting and blighting power of the curse of the law, his condemnation was just, and had God executed it to the utmost upon him, and swept him as with the besom of destruction, down to an everlasting hell, not a shade would have

dimmed the lustre of His throne, not a faltering or discordant note would have been heard in the anthems of praise and adoration, which the angelic hosts are ever sending up before His majestic presence.

Remember then my hearers, what is man's state and prospects, considered simply as a sinner against God. Look steadily on the picture, dark and threatening as it is. There is no light there. A world of rebels, justly condemned to die, is before you. A holy, just, immaculate God offended — an immutable law disobeyed ; a universe of holy beings assenting to its condemnation, as just and right ; this is the panorama which the apostacy has stretched out before you. Look upon it, and as you behold what God and His law are, and what man as a sinner is, you must see the awful gloom of despair settling down upon it, and say, in tones of agonizing, reluctant conviction, "There is no hope for man — God only can save him, but there is no obligation upon him to do so — it is not to be expected that he will do so — then man must be lost." Not so, for

V. GOD HAS ACTUALLY DETERMINED, OUT OF HIS MERE GOOD PLEASURE, THAT HE WILL SAVE A PORTION OF MANKIND FROM SIN AND FROM DEATH — OR, IN OTHER WORDS, GOD HAS ELECTED SOME TO EVERLASTING LIFE.

Inasmuch as our standards have been much misrepresented in regard to this doctrine, I will before adducing the scriptural evidence in its behalf, state as clearly as I can, what we as Calvinists, understand by it. This then is the sum of it. “Man having by wilful and deliberate transgression sinned against God, fell under his wrath and curse. All men regularly descended from Adam, became children of wrath, alienated from the life of God, and utterly destitute of original righteousness. The consequence was, that sentence of condemnation actually passed upon all men. Unless we are prepared to question or impugn the stainless justice of God, we must admit that this sentence, thus solemnly passed upon the race, was a righteous sentence. Out of this race of guilty and polluted sinners thus justly condemned, God graciously and eternally selected some to life and happiness and

glory, while He left the rest in their state of wretchedness and ruin, and determined to inflict upon them the punishment which they justly deserved. The reason why he elected some, and passed by others, where all were equally undeserving, is to be referred wholly to himself, to the counsel of His own will, or His mere good pleasure." (THORNWELL ON ELECTION, p. 67.)

Let us now adduce the proofs of this doctrine which are furnished by the Scriptures. "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." (Eph. 1 : 3, 4.) "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will." (Eph. 1 : 11.) "Knowing brethren beloved, your election of God." (1 Thess. 1 : 4.) "But we are bound to give thanks always to God, for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. (2

Thess. 2: 13.) "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus." (1 Peter 1: 2.) Our Saviour declares, (John 15: 19,) "I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me." (John 6: 37.) The Apostle (Rom. 11: 5,) says, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the Election of grace." Our Saviour also says, "I speak not of you all, I know whom I have chosen." (John 13: 18.) "Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you." (John 15: 16.) "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were and thou gavest them me." (John 17: 6.) "When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord, and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." (Acts 13: 48.) "And we know 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. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" (Rom. 8:28—30.) "God is faithful by whom ye were called into the fellowship of His Son." (1 Cor. 1:19.) "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord." (1 Thess. 5:9.) "God who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began." (2 Tim. 1:9.) "They went out from us because they were not of us." (1 John 2:19.) "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." (Rev. 20:15.) "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Rev. 21:27.)

I have quoted but a small part of those

passages in the word of God, which teach directly or indirectly the doctrine of Election. Their language is plain and unequivocal, and cannot by any just rules of interpretation be made to teach any other than our doctrine. If there is any meaning in language, they declare that there was in the mind of God, a determinate purpose to confer the blessings of holiness and eternal life on a portion of His creatures.

But there are several points involved in this doctrine of election, to which I must now call your attention.

I. IT IS A PERSONAL ELECTION. By this I mean that it is a choice of certain individuals to spiritual blessings. There is an election spoken of in the Bible, which is national ; where nations, as such, have been elected to special privileges and favors by the Almighty Ruler of the universe. There is also an election of persons to particular offices — and of Christ to the office and work of a Mediator between God and man. But there are many passages of Scripture which obviously cannot be thus understood and applied. Paul in writing to the Christians at Ephesus, uses

this language of himself and them : "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." This cannot be spoken of a nation, or a community, but of individuals of whom the writer himself was one. And he goes on in the same chapter to the special blessings which were theirs as individuals, which could not be predicated of nations. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, to himself. In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." The blessings of which the apostle speaks here, to which those whom he addressed were predestinated, are spiritual and saving blessings, blessings which therefore could not be spoken of as belonging to communities, but to individuals.

II. ELECTION IS UNCONDITIONAL AND ABSOLUTE. — By this I mean that it is wholly irrespective of any good works wrought by man, as its foundation, but arises out of the mere good pleasure of God. The language of our

Confession of Faith, (Sec. 5,) is, "Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving Him thereunto, and all to the praise of His glorious grace." In confirmation of this view we direct you to the language of the apostle in 2 Tim. 1 : 9, "Who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began:"—and again, Titus 3 : 5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy he saved us."

This is the most humbling and unpalatable view of the doctrine of Election. In the strong pride of our nature, we shrink from that which is a gratuity, and which we cannot purchase or deserve by some work or merit of our own.

Thus the Arminians say that God has chosen to save all that repent and believe, because of their faith and repentance, which He foresaw would be exercised by them. This view suspends the election of the saints upon their own faith and good works, and not upon the absolute purpose of a sovereign God. They say, the only reason why one man is elected and another is not, is that the one repents and believes, the other does not. Now you must not understand us as saying, that the divine decree of Election is entirely irrespective of means, and that repentance and faith are not indispensably necessary to its final accomplishment. But we say that this faith, repentance and obedience which the elect do in all cases profess and exercise, is not the ground or reason of their Election, but that this is found only in the purpose of God. And this is obvious, first from the fact, that faith in the creature is in consequence of Election, and not Election a consequence of faith. "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." (Acts 13:48.) Here it is stated that those who believed were ordained to eternal life before their faith, and consequently believed because

they were thus ordained. The inference is irresistible that those who were not ordained to eternal life did not believe. "All that the Father hath given me shall come to me." (John 6:37.) Here the Saviour teaches that the coming to Him on the part of all who do come or believe, is in consequence of such having been given to Him by the Father — and again, (John 6:39.) "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing." Here again the final salvation of believers is said to be based upon the will or purpose of God, and not upon faith, repentance, or good works of their own. If the faith of the sinner be the ground of election, then he elects God, and God does not elect him. His choice of God is the ground of his salvation, and not God's choice of him. But this is directly opposed to the language of our Saviour in John 15:16, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you;" and "Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

In fact, the whole tenor of the language of the Scriptures is that the cause of election is the

sovereign pleasure of God, and not any considerations derived from the character of the creature. Thus, "having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." (Eph. 1:5, 11.) And, "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. (2 Tim. 1:9.) The Apostle in treating of the sovereignty of God in election, says, "For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." (Rom. 9:15, 16.) "Therefore He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will, he hardeneth." (Rom. 9:18.) It would be difficult to find language which could teach the doctrine that Election is absolute and unconditional, in plainer or more decisive terms than this.

III. ELECTION IS ETERNAL.—By this we

mean that the purpose of God, to save a portion of the human race, was an eternal purpose — that it always existed in the Divine Mind. If God saves men at all, He has determined to save them. He never acts without a purpose, in any thing which he does. If then He determined to save them, there is no absurdity in supposing that he always determined to do so. Not only so, but this determination must have been eternal. Whatever purpose God has now, He always has had. Whatever purposes He will have in regard to the destiny of man, He always had. He is the same in all His designs as well as in all the essential attributes of His character, “yesterday, to-day, and forever.” No contingency can arise under His all wise government, which requires Him to adopt new principles of action, different designs, and an altered course of Providence. “Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.” (Acts 15:18.) All the decrees of God are eternal, but there is a prominence given in the Scriptures to that of Election. — “According as He hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world.” (Eph. 1:4.)

“According to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” (2d Tim. 1:9.) From these passages, we learn that the purpose of God to save a portion of the human race is eternal.

I have thus set before you a brief and simple statement of the Calvinistic doctrine of Election, and the scriptural basis on which it rests. It is a purpose of God to rescue from the condemnation of sin in which all mankind are justly involved, a certain portion, and raise them to holiness and eternal salvation. I have shown that this purpose respects individuals; that they are personally regarded in the divine decree, and designated as infallibly destined to eternal life; that their election is not in consequence of any less amount of sinfulness in them, or any foreseen faith, repentance or good works, exercised and practised by them, but that it is out of the mere good pleasure of a sovereign God and for His own glory, and that this purpose is an eternal purpose, always and unchangeably existing in the divine mind. I shall proceed in subsequent discourses to answer objections to this doctrine, and then endeavor to show its real

excellence and glory. For although no doctrine of the word of God has been so misrepresented, abused, and perverted ; though Christians have looked at it with timidity, and often shrank from its bold avowal ; though sinners have stumbled over it into the infernal pit, and infidels have made it their scoff and their jest, yet I maintain, and hope that I shall be able to show you, if you will listen with any degree of candor and attention, that there is no doctrine in the holy Scriptures more glorious to God, more full of comfort and strength to the Christian, while it is the only one that opens the door of hope for the sinner, and bids him “flee from the wrath to come and lay hold on eternal life.”

DISCOURSE II.

OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE.

"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."

2 THESSALONIANS, ii: 13.

IN my last discourse I endeavored to place before you a simple statement of the doctrine of election, as it is held, by the Presbyterian Church. In that discourse I only aimed at making you acquainted with what we believe, as Calvinists, and the texts of Scripture upon which we rest that belief. It is my purpose at this time, to answer the various objections which have been urged against it.

But before I do this, I will make a few remarks upon the doctrine of Reprobation as we hold it. It is commonly said that if the doctrine of election is true, or if God has determined from all eternity to save a portion of the human race, then it follows that He has also determined from all eternity, to damn all the rest. This is not a fair

statement of the doctrine which the Scriptures teach, and which we believe. You must remember, that all men by nature are in a state of righteous condemnation for sin, and that it would have been no more than just and right in God to have left them in that state of ruin, in which they had by their own guilt involved themselves. If they be left in that state, they will inevitably perish, but they perish in consequence of their own sin. It requires a positive agency on God's part to secure their salvation, but it requires no such agency to insure their destruction. "The wages of sin is death." If then God out of His mere good pleasure exerts this positive agency, and insures the salvation of some, does this make Him the destroyer of the others? If He simply lets them alone, or passes them by, can it be said that He created them only to make them miserable forever? Without His intervention all must perish, and perish justly. No part of them have any right to expect this intervention. It was never made in behalf of any of the fallen angels. It has, however, for reasons known only to God, been made in behalf of a part of mankind. That part

will be saved ; the others, being simply left alone in their fallen state, under the condemnation of a holy law, will sin on, and perish. It is just as certain that they will do this as that the elect will believe and be saved. But how is God justly chargeable with it? — How does the mere leaving of men in a state in which they have wilfully placed themselves, subject God to the awful charge of effecting, by a positive agency, the damnation of His creatures? Suppose a whole province of an empire had rebelled against their monarch. His administration had been mild, kind, and just. Not one subject had ever had good reason to complain of him, in any particular. Yet they rebel, they conspire to pull down his throne, they throw his whole realm into disorder, they take arms against his life, and light the torch of rebellion with a ruthless hand. They are defeated, brought to justice, tried and condemned to die. Every good subject approves the sentence. They deserve death, and all are righteously condemned. If now the monarch chooses to extend the royal clemency to a portion, while he allows the law to take its course with the

rest, is this tyrannical or despotic? Is he the cause of the death of the unforgiven portion? The sentence was a just one; does the decree of mercy to some, make it any the less just? Do they suffer any more than the righteous law which they had violated, decreed that they should suffer? They were indeed reprobated — their destruction was certain, but who destroys them, their Monarch, or their own rebellion?

You can see the analogy here plainly. The lost state of man is not one into which God has brought him by any positive influence, which man could not resist — it is a state into which indeed God permitted him to fall, but into which he freely fell. God's decree of election finds men in this state, it did not put them into it. It saves some from this state, it leaves the rest just where it found them, and who can complain of this? This is what I understand by the doctrine of Reprobation.

The various objections to the doctrine of election may be classed under two general heads.

I. IT IS DEROGATORY TO GOD. II. IT IS DISCOURAGING TO MAN.

In respect to the dishonor which the doctrine, according to its opponents, puts upon God, it is said that it is contrary to His justice, His goodness, and His truth.

L. Men say that it is unjust in God to save some and leave others of the race to perish. Let us consider this objection. Justice is the rendering to every man his due. If I hire a laborer for a certain price, and he performs his amount of stipulated labor, justice requires that I should pay him the full sum, recognized in the contract. If I withhold a part, it is unjust—I must pay him what he has earned, according to our agreement. But if I employ two men on the same terms, and having paid both according to agreement, choose to make one of them a present, over and above his wages, have I not a right to do it, and is there any injustice to the other, in the transaction? He has received his due, and has no claim upon me for anything more. Out of my own pleasure I add a gratuity to what I had already given, and thus make a distinction between him and his fellow. Will any man say that I am guilty of any injustice in

so doing? Neither of the parties had any claim upon me for any thing beyond what their labor deserved, and any addition is a gratuitous act, which should excite the gratitude of the recipient, while it affords no cause of complaint on the part of him who was passed by. Now as these two men had neither of them any claim upon my bounty, so the fallen race of Adam had no claim upon the mercy of God. All had sinned, and all were condemned: God and angels beheld them all in the same condemnation. If all had been left to perish in sin, no stain could have been cast upon the character of God. There would have been no injustice in leaving them all under a condemnation which was just and right; a condemnation similar to that under which the apostate angels perished. But if all might justly have been left in their sins, and exposed to the natural course of the law, may not a part be left, and yet God be just? If any are saved, where all alike deserved to die, is it not a gratuity, a matter of mercy, free and sovereign, and not of law and justice? Does this reverse the decision of the law in the case of the rest, and make their condemnation an act of injustice?

If the government chooses to select out of a company of rebels, who have all been condemned, by the highest tribunals in the land, for the crime of high treason, a certain portion for pardon, and proceeds to inflict the just sentence of the law upon the rest, is there any injustice here? There would be, if the government had been the occasion of their rebellion; if a positive influence had been exerted upon them, to force them to sin; then any discrimination in favor of a portion of the rebels would be obviously unjust. But if they had wilfully and unreasonably rebelled, and justly brought upon themselves the penalty, then all, being in the same condemnation, never had any claim upon the government, and if any are spared it is an act of gratuitous mercy, and does not affect the claims of justice or stop the course of law in respect to those who are passed by, and left unpardoned.

How then does the doctrine of election impugn the justice of God? Men are all sinners—God has not made them such. The idea is blasphemous, and cannot be tolerated for a moment. As sinners they are all justly condemned to die,

and no power in the universe can save them from that just desert, except the God whose holy law has pronounced their doom. But he is under no obligation to interpose in their behalf. Aside from His special revelation, there was no reason to suppose that he would. But He has revealed a purpose to do so in the case of some. And what of the others? Why He simply leaves them where they are; He does not add a feather's weight to their condemnation; He does not make their case a whit more hopeless than it was before; he simply lets them alone, and they are lost, but God is just. That He saves any is a wonder of mercy far beyond what could have been expected; far more than the annals of human law, and earthly sovereigns have ever recorded. If a corresponding instance should occur in the history of men — if out of a thousand rebels who had been justly condemned to die for their crimes, five hundred of them were spared, it would be considered as a splendid instance of mercy and compassion, and no one would ever dream of calling it an act of injustice that the whole were not pardoned. But when God, the Sovereign

of the universe, whose creatures have rebelled against Him, and are all condemned to die, announces that He will not execute the dreadful penalty upon all, but will out of His mere good pleasure rescue a portion, and that too at an infinite sacrifice, men impiously arraign His justice, in the exercise of His clemency, and that, which would exalt an earthly monarch in their estimation, is made an occasion of senseless and wicked reproach and scorn in the case of the Almighty and glorious Sovereign of the universe. Show me an earthly king who has ever done anything half as merciful as this. Amid all the exhibitions of love, where is one parallel with this? “If there be any love in the gift of God’s only begotten Son to die for us — if there be any love in the sufferings and death of Christ — if there be any love in rescuing millions and millions of souls from hell, and raising them to everlasting glory and felicity, then is Election the fruit of love and not of wrath. For Election lies at the foundation of redemption, and all its beneficent results — “for whom He did predestinate, (that is, whom He chose in Christ Jesus, before the foundation of the world) them He

also called, and whom He called them He also justified, and whom He justified them He also glorified.' So far should we be from repudiating this precious doctrine, or investing it with terror, that we ought to cling to it as the ground of our hopes, and fly to it in seasons of trial as the anchor of our souls." (BOARDMAN ON ELECTION, p. 16.)

II. Another objection to our doctrine is that it limits and restricts the love of God. The language of our opponents is "as God is infinitely good, He must delight in the happiness of all His creatures. How then can He select a portion of them as the objects of His special regard, and leave all the rest to perish? Surely it is more honorable to the Deity to suppose that He makes no discrimination among them, as this doctrine implies, but loves them all with an equal love, and employs in all instances the same means for their salvation."

This is indeed a very attractive light in which to present the character of God to sinful and ruined man. Men who are condemned for crime had much rather hear of mercy than of justice —

justice is what they fear the most. God is good — His goodness is written on the fair face of nature, on the flowers, the forests, the meadows, the rivers, the stars in characters of light and beauty. And it is graven on the pages of His word as “with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond.” But is the doctrine of Election the only thing that seems inconsistent with the goodness of God? Go back to the garden of Eden. Why did God permit sin to enter that blessed and peaceful abode, to turn its flowers into thistles, its music into thunders, its fruitfulness into sterility, and its happiness into wo? Is this consistent with perfect goodness? Stand on Mt. Ararat, and look upon a buried world — populous cities submerged — happy homes desolated — a whole race swept into a wretched eternity. Is God good? See the fiery shower descend upon the cities of the plain — like hissing serpents the flames seize upon the devoted dwellings — the mother clasps her babe to her bosom, and shrieks in agony as the hot breath of the conflagration scorches her cheek — huge walls and lofty palaces totter and fall, burying thousands beneath their ruins,

while the insatiable flame leaps madly on its devouring way. Does this look like goodness? Go to doomed Jerusalem when the avenging Roman is treading her glory in the dust. Grim visaged war has drank the blood of her noblest sons. Gaunt famine has dried up the fountains of tenderness in the hearts of her daughters, and driven them to devour in the madness of hunger, their own children. Misery, yea, the deepest hell of misery riots madly over the once glorious city. Is God good? Look at all the sickness and pain, and hunger and want, which prey upon men; look at the vice that festers in dens of infamy, until it breaks out into a foul and hideous blotch on the face of society, and tell me, is this, too, consistent with the perfect goodness of the Sovereign of the universe?—Yea, lean over the battlements of Time and look into Eternity; gaze upon the horrors of hell, for you will not deny hell if you do Election; see the smoke of its torment ascending up forever and ever; listen to its weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, which cease not forever, and then tell me, is the doctrine of Election the only thing that seems inconsistent with the goodness of God?

But what is the goodness of God? The great difficulty with man, as to a correct understanding of the doctrines of revelation is, the impossibility of his fully comprehending God. We are so apt to measure the Divine Being by human standards, that we forget that He is infinite and we are finite, and that we can no more fully comprehend Deity than we can create a world. The goodness of God is in perfect harmony with all the other essential attributes of His character; with His absolute sovereignty, His inflexible justice, His immaculate holiness. The moment it comes into conflict with any of these, it ceases to be perfect goodness, and He to be a perfect God. Now the idea of infinite goodness in the Creator, does not imply that He must, by the necessity of His nature, do all the good that He can do to each one of His creatures.— Goodness cannot be perfect goodness unless it is guided by wisdom, limited by justice, and sanctioned by holiness. It is that attribute in the Divine character, that element in the nature of God, which prompts Him to seek the good of His whole universe as a whole, and in that method which will most certainly magnify His own perfections.

But if the goodness of God binds him to do all He can for the happiness of every individual in the universe, then how is it possible to reconcile His goodness with His treatment of the angels? We are told that He spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them into chains and darkness, reserved unto the judgment of the great day. Why do not men denounce God as a tyrant, as much for not saving even a portion of those glorious sons of the morning who rebelled, as they do for the doctrine that He has determined to save a portion only of the fallen human race! They were far more splendid and magnificent specimens of His creative power and goodness; but He elected none and passed by all of them. Why may He not do so with regard to men? Do you say lost angels deserved their punishment for their daring rebellion? But why did God permit them to rebel, if His goodness binds Him to do all the good He possibly can to every individual of the universe? And what do ungodly sinners deserve for their rebellion? Now here is a fact for those who say the doctrine of Election is inconsistent with the goodness of God. "In the case of an order of

creatures, every way more exalted than our own, God has displayed His sovereignty in allowing some of them to fall to rise no more, while He has confirmed the remainder in holiness and happiness." Here is a new count in the indictment which man would impiously bring against God.

But again.—How do you account for the fact that under the administration of a God of infinite goodness, a vast number of His creatures do actually perish forever? When you have disproved election, you have not disproved retribution. You may blot out this doctrine from your Bible, but you cannot blot out hell from its pages. Unless you take your stand with Infidels, and Deists, and Universalists, you must believe that a large portion of the human race do perish forever. What will you do with this fact? You say that the doctrine that God has determined to save a part of the race from sin and death, and to leave the rest just where their sin has placed them, is a slander upon His character. It is just what the Universalist will tell you when you assert that any will be lost. I challenge the world to show that the doctrine

of election, or reprobation, sends one solitary sinner to hell, who would not go there just as certainly without it. This doctrine makes no man a sinner—it forces no man to hell who would otherwise go to heaven. The retributions of a miserable eternity are for sinners, wilful, incorrigible, determined sinners, and if there were no such thing as election or non-election, there would still be the same retribution for the same sinners.

If then, under the administration of a God of infinite goodness, millions of the human race are actually lost forever, and if the doctrine of election does not destroy this vast multitude, but really insures the salvation of a part of mankind, who would otherwise be all lost, how can men of sense or candor say that this doctrine is dishonorable to the divine perfections? Unless God does interfere in behalf of men, all must perish. The objectors to our doctrine admit this, at least those who receive the teachings of the Bible in respect to regeneration. They acknowledge that unless God interposes in man's behalf, he must justly and inevitably perish forever; that there is no hope for man,

in himself, and that his help must come from God. When the Scriptures then, plainly reveal for man's encouragement that God does intend to afford this help to a portion of the race, not revealing how large or how small this portion may be, yet giving us reason to believe that it will in the end embrace by far the greater part of the human family, it is a very strange and unaccountable thing that men should cavil at such a revelation, as derogatory to the goodness of their Maker, and inflicting a blow upon the perfections of His character. It would indeed be a glorious thing for the wicked if they could annihilate the justice of God, and limit His sovereignty and bring Him down to their puny and imperfect standard, and paint Him all smiles and favors for His rebellious and ungodly creatures. But they must change the whole face of nature first, as well as blot the pages of revelation. They must remove every vestige of the flood from the mountains, and valleys, and forests and morasses of the earth; they must fill up the dismal waters of the Dead Sea; they must rebuild in all their pristine glory, Nineveh, and Babylon, and Tyre, and Jerusalem, and

restore the "scattered and peeled" remnant of Israel to the splendors of the olden times. They must do all this before they can deface the memorials of God's absolute sovereignty, or blot out the trophies of His awful justice. And they must tear out of the Bible every warning, every threatening, every description of the state and prospects of the wicked, every image of wo, and wrath, and desolation, before they can proclaim immunity for the condemned, and salvation for the lost, independent of the eternal and merciful purposes of a sovereign God!

III. The third objection which is urged against the doctrine of Election, as it respects the character of God is, that it makes Him to appear insincere in the universal offer of salvation in the Gospel—and is inconsistent with His declarations that He has no pleasure in the death of the sinner—that He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

The many passages in the Bible which inculcate such sentiments on the part of God, are relied on, as utterly inconsistent with our

doctrine. Now if we are to understand these passages as teaching that there is a fixed purpose in the Divine mind actually to save all mankind, then of course the doctrine of Election falls at once to the ground. The Universalist boldly takes this position, and says that when it is declared that "God is not willing that any should perish," and that "He will have all men to be saved," it means that it is God's determination that none shall perish. But this is a position which my hearers will hardly be willing to assume, even for the sake of ridding themselves of the bugbears of Calvinism. But if these passages do not teach that all will be saved, then they teach nothing inconsistent with the doctrine of Election. If God has a purpose to save all the human family, then all will be saved. But all evangelical Christians reject this doctrine with abhorrence.

How then are we to understand those passages which speak of the love of God to His creatures, and His reluctance that any of them should perish? Simply as the language of a benevolent God, to whom the suffering of His creatures is, in itself, not an object of desire, though He has

decreed and will inflict it where deserved. The love of God is of two kinds; the general benevolence which He feels towards His creatures, and that special complacency which He takes in all holy beings. To the former love, we must ascribe all the blessings of Providence, such as God bestows when "He makes His sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and sends rain upon the just and the unjust." Now you would not say that because God thus dispenses the daily mercies of life alike to the good and the bad, therefore He regards them both with the same feelings of affection. A parent may not be willing that his child should suffer punishment; the pain and anguish of the child may be abhorrent to his kind and benevolent feelings, and yet he will resolutely inflict chastisement upon him for disobedience, "nor stay his hand for his crying." Those passages then which speak of the love of God for all His creatures, and which represent Him as declaring that He has "no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked," are to be understood as expressing the general benevolent feeling with which He regards the beings whom

He has made. God marks even the sparrow's fall, and delights in the happiness of the smallest insect, but this general benevolence of His character, will never interfere with the infliction of the stern penalty of His law upon the incorrigibly wicked.

But we are referred to another class of passages, which it is said are inconsistent with our doctrine. They are those which contain the invitations to repent and return to God, addressed to all mankind—such as “Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely,” and others of like character. “What a mockery it is,” say the objectors, “for God thus to invite all men to be saved, when He does not intend that they shall all be saved.” This objection is plausible, but as fallacious as any that have been considered. I reply to it, that the universal offer of salvation is no proof that every man individually, to whom it is offered, will be saved. When that offer comes to you, it does not address you by name, and say, you A. or you B. are certainly included in the number of the elect. But the offer is universal, so that it may be the ground of hope to every man, to encourage him

to seek salvation. God has not revealed to us who are elected, and who not, and therefore to afford a basis of faith and hope for man everywhere, He addresses all alike, and presents an universal offer of salvation. He must do this, or else reveal to men his secret purposes, and if He does not see fit to do this, what other course can He pursue but call upon all men to seek salvation, as it is freely offered in the Gospel.

But again—the calls and invitations of the Gospel which are addressed to all men, are not to be considered as revealing God's purposes, but as declaring man's duty. You will acknowledge that all men ought to do right, taking as the standard of right, what the law of God requires. Election or non-election have nothing to do with this question of universal duty. It is the duty of all men to repent of sin, and forsake it, whether they are saved or not. It is the duty even of the fallen angels in hell to do right; nothing can justify sin, or alter the inflexible laws of rectitude in the case of a single individual. The murderer condemned to die, is, in his dismal dungeon, just as much under

the obligation of civil and moral law as when he was a free, innocent citizen, and though it may seem a mockery to repeat the statute against murder to him, while he is in his cell awaiting execution, still it sets forth his duty and establishes the majesty of right. The commands and exhortations to all men, to repent and believe, set forth the duty of all men, but they do not determine that all men will obey and be saved. God must call upon all men to repent, because it is the duty of all men to do this, and God never exerts any positive influence upon them to keep them from doing it. If He did, the command would indeed be a mockery, and an insult. But if we say He does this, we make God the author of sin, which is as absurd as it is blasphemous. Those passages of Scripture in which all men are exhorted to repent and believe, indicate what is the duty of all men, and not what is the purpose of God in respect to them. "They tell us what we are to do for God, not what God is to do for us."

II. We come now to the objection which relates to the influence of the doctrine of election to discourage man. And we can show that as

it is not dishonorable to God, so neither is it hopeless for man. Says the objector, "If God has chosen a certain portion of the human race to salvation, and their number is unalterably fixed, then we have no responsibility in the matter. If we are of the elect we shall be saved, in any case, and if we are not elected, there is no use in effort." This is the standing argument, presented on all occasions, and by every class as an irresistible answer to our doctrine. And yet a more absurd, illogical semblance of an argument could not be framed. It is difficult to believe that sensible men can really use it sincerely. I will first show that men reject this mode of reasoning in respect to every thing else, but their religious interests.

All men agree that God has ordained the laws and operations of the vegetable kingdom, and that it is by His power that plants germinate and produce fruit. Now suppose a farmer should say, "It is ordained either that I shall have a crop, or that I shall not. If I am to have it, I shall have it, in any case, and there is no need that I should trouble myself to do any thing about it. If I am not to have a crop, why

nothing that I can do will be of any use." Would you regard that as very sound logic? A sick man reasons, "It is appointed by God, either that I shall recover or I shall not. If I am to recover, I shall in any case; and if I am not, there is no use for me to take any medicine. The thing is decreed, one way or another, and I have nothing to do but wait the issue." A man has fallen overboard, and is struggling in the waters. A rope is thrown him. He reasons, "It is decreed either that I shall be drowned, or I shall not. If the latter, I shall be saved at all events, and if the former, there is no use in trying—I must drown." If I were to tell you that a man had actually reasoned in this way, the involuntary exclamation from every one would be, "he is mad!" Yet this is the very same sort of argument which men use when they say, "If I am elected I shall be saved; and if not, I cannot be saved let me do what I will."

But let us take a method, other than the "*reductio ad absurdum*," to prove the fallacy of this mode of reasoning. God has decreed that certain things shall come to pass. He has

decreed also, and this is an essential part of His purpose, that they shall come to pass by appropriate means. For instance, He has decreed that the earth shall produce her fruits for the support of the human race. He has also decreed that this result shall be produced by the use of agricultural processes. Men are to plough and enrich the ground ; sow the seed, and cultivate the crop. But when they have done this, they have not insured the harvest. The process of germination and growth must go on—the sun must shine—the rains must fall—the breezes must blow, and all the machinery of nature must work in concert with man, before the result is produced. Unless man works, there will be no crop ; and unless God works there will be none. If man refuses to use the means which God has appointed, there is nothing in God's decree which will produce the crop. God has not determined to produce it that way. That would be a miracle, and no man has a right to expect that God will work a miracle to prosper him in his indolence. Apply now this principle to the doctrine before us. God has decreed that a certain part of mankind shall

be saved. But how is this to be accomplished? Are they to be snatched up as by a whirlwind, and on the rushing blast hurried into the kingdom of heaven? Are they to be compelled, by an arbitrary power, to bow themselves before God; and receive salvation whether they will or not? Or are there certain means which are to be used to this end? Those who use these means always, and in every case, obtain the end. There is a portion of this congregation who are cherishing a hope of salvation. It is certain that they will be saved. How do they differ from those who have no such hope? They have felt and manifested real sorrow for sin; they have prayed earnestly and constantly for forgiveness. They have received the Lord Jesus Christ into their affections as a Saviour; they have abandoned their former evil ways, and though in much weakness and imperfection, they are trying to live like Christ, and do His most holy will. Have the other part done these things? No! their consciences have often reproved them for not doing them, they have often felt inclined for a moment to attend to her calls, but it has been so convenient for them

to evade the claims of duty by quarrelling with some doctrine like the one we are considering, and in many other ways, that while others have obeyed the commands of God and obtained a hope in Christ, and thus made their "calling and Election sure," they still remain without God and without hope. If they die in this state, as all may, and doubtless some will, they will be forever lost. But what will consign them to perdition forever? Will it be the doctrine that they were not elected, or their own neglect of those means which God has inseparably connected with salvation, and without the use of which no man on earth can be saved?

But, again replies the objector—"Your doctrine is a discouraging one; it represses effort. I cannot tell that I am one of the elect, and therefore I have no encouragement to try." My dear friend, do you ever act on this principle in reference to any thing else? When you were in college, several prizes were promised to those members of your class who should stand highest in scholarship. There were three prizes and fifty competitors. You reasoned thus: "Three will certainly gain these prizes; they are offered

to all; I do not know that I shall be one of the successful competitors, therefore it is of no use to try." What would be thought of you if you had withdrawn from the contest on such grounds as this? Even though the probabilities were three to fifty against success, yet it would be a most craven spirit which would decline the trial. Much more then if the number of prizes was unlimited; even though you were sure that there would not be as many as the numbers of the class, yet if the limit was not fixed, it would add greatly to the hopefulness of the case. You see men daily risking their property in lotteries, where the chances are thousands to one against success, but each hopes that he may be the lucky one. Now you say to me: I do not know that I am one of the elect. True, but do you know that you are not? And how can you know that you are elected, so long as you neglect to do those things which the elect always do, and the doing of which makes it evident that they are elected? You know just as much about it as any man does, and that is, that God has a purpose of mercy towards a part of the human race; He has not told us how small or

how large; but that a part will certainly be saved. You know, too, that in consequence of this purpose He has made a sacrifice for the salvation of men, of infinite worth, and sufficient in its intrinsic value to justify every sinner. You know that the offers of the gospel are addressed to every man, and that every man who accepts those offers will be saved. This is all you need to know, all you can well know in this world, and if you wait for a special revelation from God, before you will repent and believe, that revelation will flash upon you in the light of the unquenchable flame.

I put this question to the men who object to our doctrine, on the ground of its tendency to discourage effort. What have you ever done to secure the salvation of your soul? Have you ever faithfully used one means of salvation? Are you not to-day, an impenitent, and consequently an unforgiven sinner, with the wrath of God abiding on you? If so, what will you gain by quarrelling with this doctrine? If you blot it from the Bible, does it make your case any better? Will you be any nearer heaven than now? No! you will still be just where you are,

an unforgiven sinner, under the curse of God ! And if you live and die thus, your soul will be lost, and it will not be chargeable to the doctrine of Election, but to your own wickedness and folly in refusing to repent and believe that your sins might be forgiven.

What force then has this objection — “ Election gives me nothing to do.” It gives you just as much to do, as if there were no such doctrine. There never was a man who obtained the hope of the Christian, who did not put forth all his energies to obtain it. He alone reaches the kingdom of heaven, who agonizes to enter in at the straight gate, who with indomitable perseverance pursues his toilsome journey, wrestles with sin, resists temptation, grapples boldly with every spiritual foe, and finally by dint of desperate fighting, comes off conqueror, and more than conqueror through Him that has loved him. Away then with this senseless objection : I do not know that I am elected, and therefore it is of no use for me to do any thing. You are to do something that you may know. This is the way in which all Christians obtained a hope that they were elected. You have no right to

suppose that you are not one of the elect. God has not revealed it to you, and it is presumption in you to assume that you are left out, in His purposes of mercy towards your ruined race. It is just as truly criminal presumption for a man to assume that he is not elected as to claim that he certainly is; while he as yet has no evidence that such is the fact. Would you know that you are one of the elect? Do that which your conscience, and the word of God, and the instructions of the pulpit, and the admonitions of pious friends, tell you is your immediate and solemn duty. Repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, take up your cross, deny yourself and follow the Saviour, and then you may hope to receive God's Holy Spirit, to witness with your spirit that you are in truth a child of God; that you are of those who are "called according to His purpose."

The last objection which time permits me to notice is, that Election is inconsistent with man's freedom. "If," say our opponents, "the event in the case of every man is pre-determined positively, and it is decreed that he shall be either saved or lost, how can he be free in

choosing or rejecting God?" Concerning these two things, the absolute sovereignty of God and the entire moral freedom of man, all we can say is, that there can be no doubt of the truth of each. The one is clearly taught in the word of God, and is indeed essential to the idea of Deity; the other is equally proved by human consciousness. If there is any thing of which we are certain, it is of the freedom of our own volitions. A man considers himself insulted when his freedom is questioned, and often proclaims it with bold and determined emphasis. In the transactions of our daily lives, in our plans of business, and all that we do in our earthly history we are conscious of freedom. You came to the sanctuary this morning freely: you will return to your homes as freely as you came. You will to-morrow enter freely upon all your business operations, and carry out the plans which you have formed in respect to the transactions of life. And yet all these things were embraced in God's purposes, and determined before you were born. How does that destroy your freedom, and your accountability? You can remember a time when you felt some

unusual interest in the subject of religion. Your conscience was remarkably active, and urged you to abstain from certain wrong courses of conduct and to do certain other right things ; yet you did not follow her dictates ; you went contrary to her precepts and pleadings. Did you act freely then, or not ? You object to the doctrine of Election. Do you object freely, or are you compelled to do it ? Perhaps some of you will do something this afternoon, which will be a breach of the Sabbath. You will walk or ride out for your own amusement. Will you do this freely, or will you act under compulsion ? I have heard of persons who have vowed that they would never be seen within the house of God. They will probably be lost. Are they free in making such a wicked vow ? And if they go to hell, will any want of moral freedom send them there ?

You say, if the event is certain, then there is no use in making efforts. You all admit that God is omniscient ; that He knows every thing past, present, and to come. Then of course God must have certainly known always, who would embrace the offers of the gospel and be

saved, and who would reject those offers and be lost. But does this knowledge on the part of God interfere with the freedom of man? It makes the event certain. If God is omniscient and He knows that such and such things will come to pass, then they must come to pass or God is not an omniscient God. But how does this certainty in the mind of God, affect the freedom of those who act in bringing these things about? Before the battle of Waterloo was fought, God knew what the issue would be, as certainly as after it occurred. But did this affect the plans and movements of Wellington or Napoleon? Did they not lay their plans, and conduct their troops according to their own judgment, with perfect freedom? Do you not see that the objection to the doctrine of Election, or predestination, is just as strong against the foreknowledge of God, and are you prepared to deny that?

Now in the case of man, it is not merely his salvation or perdition that is embraced in the purpose of God, but all the means which produce either result. Our text declares, that "God hath from the beginning chosen (His people)

unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." The truth then is to be believed, if man is to be saved. That truth is placed before him, and he is to choose whether he will be a believer or not. He is called upon to believe; it is his duty to believe; he is told that if he believes he will be saved; thousands of men have believed and are saved. He refuses to believe, and is lost. It was certain always to the mind of God that he would do this, but he has done it freely, and has destroyed himself. Away then, with such idle and baseless objections to this doctrine.—Address yourselves to present duty—spend the time in seeking salvation, which you now spend in quarreling with God's purposes; "give all diligence to make your calling and Election sure," or you perish, hopelessly and forever perish!

DISCOURSE III.

USE AND GLORY OF THE DOCTRINE.

"But we are bound always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."—2 THESSALONIANS 2 : 13.

IN my former discourses on this subject, I have endeavored to explain the Calvinistic doctrine of Election, to show the scriptural grounds on which it rests, and to answer some of the objections which are urged against it.

It is possible that there may be some minds, who are in this attitude in respect to this doctrine. They believe that it is taught in the word of God. It is embodied in the creed of that branch of the church of Christ to which they belong. They are not able to deny it, yet they yield a reluctant assent to it. They do not receive the doctrine cordially, and they had rather not have it urged upon their attention.

They consider its discussion unprofitable, and ask, what is its practical use? and why should it be presented from the sacred desk?

Now it would be a sufficient answer to this inquiry, that the doctrine in question is a part of that "whole counsel of God" which His ministers are commanded "to shun not to declare." And so long as an inspired apostle has told us (2 Epis. to Tim. 3:16) that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;" and in his same epistle (2:15) charges the minister thus, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth;" so long the ministers of the Lord Jesus, commissioned by Him to declare His truth, are guilty of unfaithfulness to their solemn duty, if they keep back any part of the complete, symmetrical, harmonious system revealed in the word of God. They are to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as they would answer to their Master at the judgment day.

Another reason why all the doctrines of the

christian scheme ought to be fully and faithfully presented from the pulpit, is the superficial and erroneous views, current in the community in respect to doctrine as a means of grace, and sanctification of believers. "Truth is in order to goodness;" and there is no maxim which unites more of philosophical absurdity and licentious tendency, than that "it is of no consequence what a man believes, so long as his conduct is right." For men who do not think right, will not be likely to act right. And we deem it not an unwarrantable statement, that in all the ordinary cases of religious experience, there is no such thing as the conversion of a sinner, or the progressive sanctification of a Christian, but through the influence of divine truth upon the mind and heart. What are called the practical duties of the Christian life, grow out of its doctrines, and he who in obedience to the superficial taste of many in the church, neglects these doctrines, while he gives his people what are called "practical sermons," will soon degenerate into a mere moralizer, rather than be a faithful expounder and defender of the truth of God.

But there are other reasons why this doctrine should be often made the theme of our investigations, and the subject of our meditations, and these are found in its own intrinsic worth and usefulness. There is hardly a doctrine in the Bible which we can so ill spare as this; none, the loss of which would in a greater degree diminish the comfort of the Christian, and destroy the hope of the sinner. Yes! this abused, misrepresented, reviled and persecuted doctrine, lies at the very foundation of all our hopes, and is the glorious ladder by which we climb from the depths of sin and the jaws of hell, to the lofty heights of a holy and eternal heaven.

Before proceeding to show the use and glory of this doctrine, I would observe, that the views of Calvinists are very grossly, and it would almost seem wilfully, misrepresented on this subject, and there are some who are so blinded by prejudice, that they cannot or will not see the truth even when it is held up before them. They are the men, who represent Calvinists as teaching that God has created a certain portion of His creatures, for the express purpose of making them forever miserable in hell. That

this portion of His creatures are destined to perdition, let them do what they will; that the elect will be saved, no matter whether they make effort or not, and the non-elect will be damned, in spite of all that they can do to avoid so dreadful a doom. The non-elect are represented as perfectly helpless creatures, in the hands of a despot who exerts a positive influence upon them to keep them from repentance, and then punishes them in hell forever for not repenting. Men who can say this after hearing the statements which Calvinists make, or reading their writings on this subject, are either too obtuse to understand plain language, or too much prejudiced to acknowledge the force of their arguments, and must be allowed to caricature and abuse our doctrines to their hearts' content. There is nothing to be gained by arguing with them. But to those who are sincere inquirers after truth, and who are willing to be convinced, we rejoice to present our argument, and esteem all our labor as well spent if we relieve a solitary mind from an erroneous impression, or shed one ray of light upon the darkness in which this subject has been most unfortunately and needlessly involved.

The language of our standards which speaks of Election as "absolute or unconditional," has often been misunderstood and often misrepresented. When we say that Election is unconditional, we do not mean that God determines to save men, no matter what their characters may be, but that as this decree of Election was made when all men were sinners, and under a just and hopeless condemnation, it was not based upon man's character, but God's good pleasure. As men actually were, when God determined to save a portion of them from their lost estate, there was nothing in their characters which God could make the ground of His merciful purpose. It originated therefore in His own good pleasure. And this is abused authority proved in various passages of Scripture. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 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." (Eph. 1:5—11.) "Who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according

to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began." (2 Tim. 1:9.) "Not by works of righteousness which we had done, but according to His mercy He saved us," &c. (Titus 3:5.) These passages show that so far as the ground of the decree of Election is concerned, it is unconditional; that is, not founded on any goodness in the creature, but arising solely out of the sovereign will and pleasure of the Creator. But the decree is not irrespective of the character of men in its actual operation. God does not decree to save men in their sins, but from their sins, and this salvation from sin can only be brought about by the repentance and faith of the sinner, who by penitence, reformation, and a holy life, uses those means which God has inseparably connected with His decree of Election. Unless those means are used, there is nothing in the decree that can save him. There is in fact, no decree at all, for God has determined to save the sinner only in one way, and that is, through repentance of sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. No sinner ever was saved in any other way than by repentance and

faith, and none was ever lost in any other way than by remaining in wilful impenitence and unbelief.

The following illustration may perhaps explain this point more clearly:—In a hospital for orphans there are a number of destitute and friendless children. They are all strangers to me, and have no claim upon my bounty. Out of their number I determine to select several, and adopt them as my children, and I say to the governor of the hospital that out of those who for a given time, say for a year, display the most industry, steadiness and virtue, I will make my selection, and adopt them into my family. Unless they prove virtuous and industrious, I will not adopt them, but my determination in the first place, is not founded on their worth, but arises out of my own will and pleasure. I do not use this as illustrating the doctrine of Election in all its particulars, but simply with reference to this one point, the foundation of my determination to choose some of the number of orphans to be my adopted children. When I come to carry my purpose out, and receive them into my family, then I will have respect to their

character ; but as it respects the formation of a purpose in my mind to select some, it is based simply and entirely upon my own pleasure, and not upon the future character of my destined protégés. This is what we mean by the statement that Election is unconditional. It is not that God has determined to save a part of the human race, no matter what they may be, but that the ground of His determination is His own sovereign will and pleasure.

But when God comes to carry out this decree in the case of individuals, then we see that it secures the formation of a holy character. It is the penitent, believing, holy living man who is saved. The man who in reliance on the divine grace, and in compliance with the divine command, diligently uses the appointed means of salvation is blessed by God to the saving of his soul. The impenitent, careless, unbelieving, ungodly man, is left to reap the awful consequences of his wickedness and folly. If means are not as much a part of the purpose of God as the ends ; in other words, if some men are to be lost, let them do what they will, then we should expect to find some instances of men who had

tried in earnest to secure salvation, had used all the means, and had at last failed of eternal life. But who ever heard of a case like this? Who ever heard of a man who repented of sin, believed on the Redeemer, and tried in dependence upon grace to live a holy life, who failed at last of salvation? And who ever heard of a man who lived and died in the enjoyment of the gospel hope, who did not use those means which God has made the condition of salvation for every individual? This then is the doctrine of Election. God has determined from all eternity to save a portion of the human race. This purpose embraces all who repent of sin, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and live holy lives. All men who do this, are of the elect, and will certainly be saved. All men are commanded to do this, and are guilty for not doing it, and they who refuse to do it are not of the elect and will perish forever; but their destruction is chargeable only to their own refusal to do what God requires as the indispensable condition of salvation, in the case of all His creatures.

We now proceed to show the use and glory of this doctrine.

I. IT IS HONORABLE TO GOD. It declares and magnifies His sovereignty. If you were to ask me what is the truth in which angels and all holy beings take the greatest delight, I should answer, it is that "the Lord reigneth." And it is just this truth against which devils and wicked men rage with intense though impotent fury. But if a good government well administered is the greatest blessing to a state or nation, then it must be a glorious thing for the universe that God is supreme. Infinite in wisdom, to devise the best measures for the welfare of His wide empire, boundless in benevolence to prompt to their adoption, and of unlimited power to be able fully to carry them into execution: the fact that He is at the head of the government of the Universe is a ground of confidence, of rejoicing and of glorying to all His subjects. From the idea of "cold necessity" or "frantic chance" as the originator and ruler of all things, the mind recoils in dismay and horror, to stay itself upon the satisfying and comforting

doctrine of a sovereign God. The doctrine we have considered exalts God as the ruler of the universe. It represents Him as sitting in His majesty, conceiving His own august purposes, and carrying them into complete and glorious accomplishment, according to the counsel of His own will. If we deny this doctrine we rob God of His independence and His power. We make His purposes dependent on, and controlled by His creatures ; for if God has willed that all men shall be saved, and all are not saved, then either God has not power to carry out His designs, or His will is dependent upon that of His creatures. If He has not willed that all should be saved, or in other words, if He has determined to save only a portion of the human race, then we find Him carrying out His purposes, unrestrained and unfettered by any power in His wide universe. We must admit if God has any purpose at all in reference to man's salvation, either that He has not determined to save the whole human race, or that He has determined to do it. If He has determined to do so, then all will be saved, or else God is not able to carry out His own

purposes. He is not omnipotent, and therefore is not God. If He has not determined to do it, then all will not be saved, or else He cannot be supreme. To one result or the other you are inevitably driven, if you deny this doctrine. God either has no purpose at all in respect to man's salvation, or else He is not able to carry out His purposes. Either of these views virtually breaks down the throne of Jehovah, and wrenches the sceptre of the universe from His hand. His independence and omnipotence are gone at once. And what is there left as a ground of confidence in God as a sovereign? Nothing. What are wisdom, and holiness, and goodness, without power? What security have you under the administration of such a God, that the good will enjoy His favor permanently, or that the wicked will not burst the dungeons of hell and scale in triumph the very battlements of heaven? But establish His sovereignty; let Him do His will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; let none stay His hand, or say unto Him, "what doest thou," and the interests of the universe are safe, and all holy beings can repose in perfect

confidence beneath the shadow of His throne. There is no doctrine which makes God so great as this ; none which places Him on so lofty a throne ; none which establishes more conclusively the fact that He is supreme, and that He doeth all things according to the counsel of His own will. And what a glorious truth it is that "The Lord reigneth." Let devils rage, and wicked men declare that they will not have God to reign over them, yet to the good what doctrine can be of such strengthening and comforting power as that of the absolute sovereignty of God ? He is a perfect Being, in His wisdom, justice, goodness and power. He knows every thing, He can do every thing, while His perfect holiness and benevolence afford a guarantee that His wisdom will never be perverted, or His power abused. Amid all the chances and changes of time ; amid all that is mysterious and trying in life ; amid doubt and conjecture, and ignorance, as to the ordering of things below, this one truth is the anchor of faith and hope, pours oil on the troubled waters, and says to the waves of doubt and fear, "peace, be still !" The doctrine of Election then, which more than

any other, magnifies the divine sovereignty, and establishes His independence and omnipotence, is in the highest degree honorable to God.

2d. But this doctrine not only glorifies the independence and power of God, but it displays His love in the most beautiful and impressive light. We talk of the love of God, but ah! how unable we are to rise to any adequate conception of that love. But look again at a picture so familiar that its great points may have become almost undistinguishable by reason of their very familiarity. There is rebellion in heaven. Bright and glorious "sons of the morning," who sat on celestial thrones and sung to heavenly harps, are dashed down to hell, withered and blighted by an anathema from their insulted God. Behold those vacant thrones, those tuneless harps, and then behold the dungeons of Hell, and listen to its awful chorus of mingled defiance and despair. You see sin, and its legitimate consequences, and it is all just and right. The hand that could raise the standard of rebellion against such a God, ought to be shrivelled in the unquenchable flame. Look now at a race of creatures lower in the

scale of being. They too rebel, they lift their puny hands against the throne of God, and raise their feeble voices in shouts of rebellious defiance. Are they too blasted by the malediction of Jehovah? The curse is on them, on them all, but its execution is suspended. Behold now a sight of wonder, a most unexpected and astonishing spectacle. The Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His person, leaves the homage and music of the skies. He veils the divinity in human flesh. He is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; a pure, holy, humble, obedient, suffering man. He moves among the sons of men like a messenger of heavenly mercy; He spends a short life of privation and toil and reproach, yet of perfect obedience to the law of God; He dies on the cross, a bleeding, mangled victim; He is laid in a rocky sepulchre; He rises from the tomb; He ascends again to the skies, and there could we behold him to-day, we should see Him bowing as our Intercessor before the eternal throne, and "claiming His own at His Father's hands, like a conqueror demanding the trophies of his conquest." But this is not all.

Around that throne, we see a great multitude, which no man can number, clothed in white robes, and waving the palm-branch of triumph, and as we listen, an anthem-peal of the richest melody bursts from that glorious company—"Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb," and the chorus is taken up again, and wafted over the heavenly plains until it dies away in the far off regions of interminable space. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honor and glory, and blessing." "Who are these," we ask, "which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" Ah! they are not the holy angels who never sinned, nor are they those "lost sons of the morning" restored to holiness and heaven; but they are poor mortal sinners for whom Christ died, for whom He interceded, and who have been redeemed by His blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and made kings and priests unto God. Tell me now, why was all this? Why did Jesus die for men and not for angels? Why have these unnumbered myriads been rescued from death

and hell, and brought to heaven "with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads?" Why? ah! my brethren, our text gives us an answer to this inquiry. "We are bound always to give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you unto salvation." Here is the answer. Because God had an eternal purpose of mercy towards fallen man, and to carry out this grand purpose "the costly processes of the incarnation and the sacrifice" of Christ were instituted. Yea, brethren, our doctrine sheds an everlasting halo around the love of God. Had there been no purpose to save, there would have been no Saviour. If there be no election, then verily there is no atonement, no mediation, no Spirit strivings with poor lost sinners to lead them to Jesus, no pardon, no justification, no victory over death, no crown of heavenly glory. If there be no eternal purpose to save, Bethlehem, Gethsemane, Calvary, are nothing to us; their power and meaning all grow out of the fact that they are the fruit of an eternal purpose to rescue a portion of our apostate race from sin, and its curse. Here then is the love of

God displayed in this doctrine, in the clearest light. The whole history of Redemption is but the working out of God's eternal purpose of mercy in Christ, to those who "were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world."

Thus honorable to God is the doctrine of Election. It is no less a doctrine of comfort and hope to man.

I. It is so to the inquiring sinner. So far from discouraging him, it is the only rational ground of encouragement and hope. He has just begun to see how far he is from God, to understand how great his sin is, and what an awful condemnation it has justly brought upon him. When he thinks of himself, it is not as of a man overtaken by misfortune, but deeply involved in guilt. He is ready to despair when he thinks of God's law and its terrible sanctions, and remembers that he has incurred its penalty. Oh! can such a guilty wretch as I, have any right to hope that I can be saved? What words of encouragement can you speak to me that may inspire me with courage to make an effort to "flee from the wrath to come?" Let

now the anti-Calvinist answer this convicted, trembling sinner, and what can he tell him? The most that he can say is, salvation is barely possible to you. Ah, replies the agonized soul, is this all you can tell me? Is a bare possibility all that you can give me to cling to? Is there no certainty about this matter? Yes! anxious soul, there is a certainty that millions will be saved, for God has revealed an eternal purpose to snatch them as brands from the burning, and bring them into the kingdom of His dear Son. To carry out this purpose He sent that Son to make an atonement, sufficient in itself for the whole world, and to furnish a ground of justification and pardon to all who repent and believe. But what is the number of those embraced in this purpose, and is my name among them? No name is revealed to mortal eye, but there is no limit fixed. God has determined to save some, and all who comply with the conditions connected with salvation, are embraced in that purpose, and will certainly be saved. It is more than a bare possibility—it is a certainty, for it is based upon an eternal and immutable purpose of a sovereign God. Ah! says the trembling man, this is the doctrine for me.

This meets my case. There is a certainty that some will be saved. The offer is made to all—it is made to me; I will try and seek it, for some will surely gain it, and there is therefore hope for me. Yes, my hearers, this doctrine is the very one to preach to an anxious, inquiring sinner, for his encouragement and comfort. Take it away, and there is no hope for him. Those who reject this doctrine take away the only star from the sinner's darkened sky. And this is not mere assertion. The objectors to our doctrine say, men are saved by freely accepting the offers of God's mercy. But the scriptures uniformly represent man as so depraved and lost that he never will, if left to himself, accept these merciful offers and be saved. "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John 6:44.) "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." (John 5:40.) "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom. 8:7.) If then, no man can ever repent and come to Christ, without a special influence on the part of God, and God has not revealed to us any

purpose of granting this influence to any of His creatures, what hope is there left for the sinner? How can you ever pray for the conversion of an impenitent friend? Ah, the men who object to the doctrine of Election, reject it in their arguments, but always acknowledge it in their prayers. When they speak to men they deny the doctrine, when they speak to God, then they confess it. You cannot pray for a sinner without acknowledging this doctrine. What do you ask of God for your impenitent friend? You ask Him, and with deep earnestness of appeal, to change his heart, to lead him to repentance, to send the special influences of the Holy Spirit upon him, and constrain him to submit to God. What right have you to put up such a prayer to God, if He has not a purpose to do just such things for His guilty and ruined creatures? And if this purpose embraces all men, why do you pray with so much fervor and agony for your individual friend, and ask God to exert a special influence upon him in particular, and do for him what He intends to do for all men? You cannot utter a single petition for an impenitent sinner without acknowledging this doctrine. Christian

parent, why do you pray so imploringly for your child, that God will bring him to repentance and save his precious soul? On what ground do you base your request? On the determination of God to save all men? Then why do you pray for him? On the determination of God to save none? Then his case and yours alike are hopeless. If He has determined nothing about it, what encouragement have you to pray? Ah! you plead for that beloved child because God has a purpose of mercy, certain and immutable, to some, and you want your child to be one of God's elect.

In this connection I will speak of the glory of this doctrine, in reference to those who die in infancy. Many gross and wicked slanders have been heaped on Calvinists in reference to the tendencies of their system in respect to infants. We believe that children dying in infancy, are among the elect, and embraced in the purposes of God. But if there is no decree of Election, what ground have we for our hope with respect to our children? They are naturally depraved, and are under the curse of sin, else they would not suffer and die. Now what will you do with

this difficulty? You object to the doctrine that God has out of His mere good pleasure elected some to everlasting life, and yet you claim that children, who are "by nature children of wrath," and if spared will certainly act out their depraved nature and sin, are saved and made holy and happy in heaven. If this be so, then they must be chosen to salvation by God, and their Election is just as liable to objection as that of any other persons, because it is a discrimination on the part of God in favor of a portion of the human race. Do you say, infants are innocent of any actual sin; we reply, no man is saved in sin; the elect are chosen to holiness, and thus to salvation. This is the dilemma to which you are reduced by a denial of the doctrine of Election. If you deny that infants are elect, you consign them forever to perdition. If you admit that they are saved, it is just as much a gratuitous, unconditional decree on God's part, as that for which we contend in the case of any man. Says another, "Why does God take one infant to heaven while as yet it is unstained with actual sin, and leave another to grow up in impenitence, to become polluted with

crime, and sink at last under His fearful displeasure? What is this but sovereign, discriminating mercy, exerted to the utmost extent ever contended for by the most rigid Calvinist? Why is one taken to glory in infancy, and another, born on the same day, spared to old age, only to treasure up wrath against a day of wrath?" For all the comfort and joy which comes to the desolate and bleeding heart of bereaved parents, when their young children are taken away from them by death, they are indebted to this glorious doctrine.

I repeat it, this is the doctrine for the sinner, and to prove it I have only to advert to the prayers that are offered in their behalf. You object to the doctrine that God has determined to select a portion of the human race, and make them the subjects of His saving grace. Go now and pray for a dear child, or brother, or husband, or wife, or friend. For what will you pray? Why for the very thing which you say God has never determined to do. You deliberately and earnestly ask God to select your friend from the mass of sinners, to change his heart, to renew his nature, to lead him to the Saviour and make

him an heir of heaven. You acknowledge that if God does not do this, he will never be saved. Now suppose God hears your prayers, and grants your request. He does bring your friend to repentance, and you rejoice over him as one that was dead and is alive again—was lost and is found. But if God does this, He must do it by design. And if He designs to do it, He must always have designed to do it, for “known unto God are all His works from the foundation of the world.” So, brethren, do not object to our preaching the doctrine of Election, when you pray it, in every petition you utter in behalf of an impenitent sinner. But that which is the very foundation of your prayers for sinners cannot surely be a hopeless or disheartening doctrine.

3. This doctrine is essential to the cultivation and growth of some of the noblest Christian virtues in the believer. It is fitted to deepen and strengthen his love. The apostle declares that “we love him because He first loved us.” And what doctrine so strikingly displays not only God’s love, but His peculiar love to us?

When I remember that He looked upon me, in my lost estate, and when there was nothing in my character to recommend me to His favor, that He freely selected me from others, and made me the subject of His grace; when I remember that the reason why I am not to-day in all the darkness and wretchedness of my natural state, with the awful malediction of the law hanging over me, and nothing before me but an angry Judge, and an everlasting hell—is, that the sovereign mercy and grace of God would not let me go on in my course of sin and death, but sweetly constrained me to return from my wanderings, to repent and be forgiven, the tide of grateful and intense affection must flow out of my deepest soul to God, and the language of my heart will be

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“O! to grace how great a debtor,
Daily I'm constrained to be.”

Humility, too, that loveliest of all the Christian virtues, is cultivated by this doctrine. It lays the axe at the root of pride and self-righteousness, magnifies the sovereign mercy of God, and

teaches us to remember that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." When we feel that our salvation is due to nothing good in us, or performed by us, but that it springs from the free and unmerited grace and mercy of God, there can be no spirit of boasting, but humble reliance on God, grateful affection for His wonderful love, and a sincere and constant ascription to Him of all the glory of our salvation.

Our doctrine also furnishes the strongest motive to diligence and faithfulness in the discharge of Christian duty. It teaches us that the means of our salvation are just as much a part of the purpose of God as the end. That we are chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, and that penitence, faith, and holy living are the evidences of our being of the number of God's elect. How powerful then the motive to obedience, to faith, to holiness. These are the indispensable evidences of the reality of our hope, the title deeds to our heavenly inheritance. Without them there is nothing in the decree of Election that can

save us, for God has not determined to save men in that way, but through the means which He has appointed. Here then is a constant and adequate stimulus to duty. Our hopes, our all, depend upon it. The moment we neglect duty our hopes fade, and the evidence of our Election is weakened. It is only by a steadfast adherence to the principles of the kingdom of Christ, and the daily practice of Christian virtue, that we make our calling and Election sure. So far then from being a snare to the Christian, to lead him to security and indolence, this doctrine is the very one to act always as a stimulus to renewed exertion and increased faithfulness. It assures the believer that he is chosen by God unto salvation, but it also assures him that he is chosen to holiness as a condition of salvation, and "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

Again—this doctrine furnishes the only ground of assurance to the Christian that he shall finally attain to everlasting life. His salvation is not an uncertainty, a possibility. It is based upon the immutable purpose of God, and it shall certainly come to pass. He may

daily mourn over sin, and sigh over the corruption that remains in his heart. He may "find a law in his members warring against the law in his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin, which is in his members." Temptation may beset him at every step of his journey. The world, the flesh, and the devil, may oppose his progress. He may often cry out in anguish, "Who is sufficient for these things?" But his sufficiency is of God. He who chose him in Christ before the world began: He who sent his son to die for his salvation—He who gently constrained him to believe and repent, will not leave His good work unfinished. Christ "shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." Every sinner for whom He died, and who hangs his hope of salvation on His cross, shall be redeemed by His blood, and brought to Mount Zion above. It is a glorious truth, brethren, your salvation is not an uncertain thing. Be not discouraged. "Greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world." "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is Christ that died." "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or

distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that hath loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Yes! brethren, this doctrine is the rock on which we build, the anchor of our hope. Take this away, and the most that is left us is a bare possibility of salvation. Now we have a certainty. The language of the 17th article of the Church of England, which I quote directly from the Book of Common Prayer, shows in what light that venerable church regards it. "The godly consideration of predestination, and of our Election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the spirit of Christ, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation, to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth

fervently enkindle their love toward God." Such is the natural effect of the proper apprehension of this doctrine by the pious heart. It confirms the hope of salvation, while it prompts to deeper love for that God whose eternal purpose secures that salvation. It is a doctrine which man cannot do without. It opens first the door of hope to the sinner. It tells him that God has not determined, as in the case of the angels, to leave all men in the ruin and woe of the apostacy. It calls on him to be up and doing in the use of the means which God has provided and freely offered to him, and through which his salvation has been decreed by God. It teaches him when he has believed and been forgiven, to what to ascribe the praise and glory. It keeps him humble. It makes him faithful. It increases his love. It comforts him in despondency, gives him strength to resist temptation, to struggle on to the end of his earthly pilgrimage, and makes him conqueror and more than conqueror through Him that has loved him. It is a good doctrine. It is a glorious doctrine. We cannot get to heaven without it, though we may know it not, and it will

be the burden of our songs of gratitude through everlasting ages.

I have now set before you, as concisely and plainly as I am able, the Scriptural doctrine of Election. The doctrine as I have stated it to you, is held by the great majority of Christian denominations throughout the world. I have presented it to you, in the regular course of my ministrations, simply because it is an important doctrine of the word of God, and therefore bound to be presented by the public expounders of that word. And I should regard it as a happy omen, if this discussion should awaken any of you to a better sense of the great importance of a thorough acquaintance with the doctrines of grace, and lead to a more diligent and prayerful study of the Holy Scriptures, to see if these things be so. There is great need that you be *intelligent* Christians, and able to give a reason of the faith that is in you—that you be able to defend that faith from the sneers of the infidel, or the sophistries of the opposer, and that you should especially be careful to teach your children, and those committed to your care,