

ELECTION AND HOLINESS

NO. 303

A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 11, 1860
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 AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

*“Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD’s thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.
 Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them,
 and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.
 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.”
 Deuteronomy 10:14-16*

HE who preaches the whole truth as it is in Jesus will labor under continual disadvantages, albeit that the grand advantage of having the presence and blessing of God will more than compensate the greatest loss. It has been my earnest endeavor ever since I have preached the Word, never to keep back a single doctrine which I believe to be taught of God. It is time that we had done with the old and rusty systems that have so long curbed the freeness of religious speech.

The Arminian trembles to go an inch beyond Arminius or Wesley, and many a Calvinist refers to John Gill or John Calvin, as the ultimate authority. It is time that the systems were broken up, and that there was sufficient grace in all our hearts to believe everything taught in God’s Word, whether it was taught by either of these men or not.

I have frequently found when I have preached what is called high doctrine, because I found it in my text, that some people have been offended, they could not enjoy it, could not endure it and went away. They were generally people who were best gone, I have never regretted their absence.

On the other hand, when I have taken for my text some sweet invitation, and have preached the freeness of Christ’s love to man, when I have warned sinners that they are responsible while they hear the Gospel and that if they reject Christ, their blood will be upon their own heads, I find another class of doubtless excellent individuals, who cannot see how these two things agree. And therefore, they also turn aside, and wade into the deceptive miry bogs of Antinomianism. I can only say with regard to them, that I had rather also that they should go to their own sort, than that they should remain with my congregation.

We seek to hold the truth. We know no difference between high doctrine and low doctrine. If God teaches it, it is enough. If it is not in the Word, away with it! away with it! but if it be in the Word, agreeable or disagreeable, systematic or disorderly, I believe it.

It may seem to us as if one truth stood in opposition to another, but we are fully convinced that it cannot be so, that it is a mistake in our judgment. That the two things do agree we are quite clear, though where they meet we do not know as yet, but hope to know hereafter. That God has a people whom He has chosen for Himself, and who shall show forth His praise, we do believe to be a doctrine legible in the Word of God to every man who cares to read that Book with an honest and candid judgment.

That at the same time, Christ is freely presented to every creature under heaven, and that the invitations and exhortations of the Gospel are honest and true invitations—not fictions or myths, not tantalizations and mockeries, but realities and facts—we do also unfeignedly believe. We subscribe to both truths with our hearty assent and consent.

Now, this morning it may be that some of you will not approve of what I have to say. You will remember however, that I do not seek your approbation, that it will be sufficient for me if I have cleared my conscience concerning a grand truth and have preached the Gospel faithfully. I am not accountable to you, nor you to me. You are accountable to God, if you reject a truth, I am accountable to Him if I

preach an error. I am not afraid to stand before His bar with regard to the great doctrines which I shall preach to you this day.

Now, two things this morning. First, I shall attempt to *set forth God's Election*, secondly, to show *its practical bearings*. You have both in the text. "Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day." And then, in the second place, its practical bearings, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked."

I. In SETTING FORTH ELECTION, I must have you observe first of all, *its extraordinary singularity*.

God has chosen to Himself a people whom no man can number, out of the children of Adam—out of the fallen and apostate race who sprang from the loins of a rebellious man. Now this is a wonder of wonders, when we come to consider that the heaven, even the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's.

If God must have a chosen race, why did He not select one from the majestic orders of angels, or from the flaming cherubim and seraphim who stand around His throne? Why was not Gabriel fixed upon? Why was he not so constituted that from his loins there might spring a mighty race of angels, and why were not these chosen of God from before the foundations of the world?

What could there be in *man*, a creature lower than the angels, that God would select him rather than the angelic spirits? Why were not the cherubim and seraphim given to Christ? Why did He not take up angels? Why did He not assume their nature and take them into union with Himself? An angelic body might be more in keeping with the person of Deity, than a body of weak and suffering flesh and blood.

There were something congruous if He had said unto the angels, "Ye shall be my sons." But no! though all these were His own, He passes by the hierarchy of angels, and stoops to man. He takes up an apostate worm, and says unto him, "Thou shalt be my son," and to myriads of the same race He cries, "ye shall be my sons and daughters, by a covenant, for ever."

But saith one, "It seems that God intended to choose a fallen people that He might in them show forth His grace. Now, the angels, of course, would be unsuitable for this, since they have not fallen." I reply, there are angels that have fallen, there were angels that kept not the first estate, but fell from their dignity. And how is it that these are consigned to blackness of darkness forever? Answer me, you that deny God's sovereignty, and hate His election—how is it that angels are condemned to everlasting fire, while to you, the children of Adam, the Gospel of Christ is freely preached?

The only answer that can possibly be given is this, God wills to do it. He has a right to do as He pleases with His own mercy. Angels deserve no mercy, and we deserve none. Nevertheless, He gave it to us, and He denied it them. They are bound in chains, reserved for everlasting fire to the last great day, but we are saved. Before Thy sovereignty, I bow, great God, and acknowledge that You do as You will and that You give no account of Your matters.

Why, if there were any reason to move God in His creatures, He would certainly have chosen devils rather than men. The sin of the first of the fallen angels was not greater than that of Adam. It is not the time to enter into that question. I could, if opportunity were needed, prove it to be rather less than greater, if there were degrees in sin. Had the angels been reclaimed, they could have glorified God more than we, they could have sang His praises louder than we can, clogged as we are with flesh and blood. But passing by the greater, He chose the less, that He might show forth His sovereignty, which is the brightest jewel in the crown of His divinity.

Our Arminian antagonists always leave the fallen angels out of the question, for it is not convenient to them to recollect this ancient instance of election. They call it unjust, that God should choose one man and not another. By what reasoning can this be unjust when they will admit that it was righteous enough in God to choose one race—the race of men, and leave another race—the race of angels, to be sunk into misery on account of sin. Brethren, let us have done with arraiging God at our poor fallible judgment

seat. He is good and does righteousness. Whatever He does we may know to be right, whether we can see the righteousness or no.

I have given you then, some reasons at starting, why we should regard God's election as being singular. But I have to offer to you others. Observe, the text not only says, "Behold, the heaven, even the heaven of the heavens is the LORD's," but it adds, "the earth also, with all that therein is." Now, when we think that God has chosen us, when you, my brethren, who by grace have put your trust in Christ, read your "title clear to mansions in the skies," you may well pause and say in the language of that hymn—

***"Pause, my soul! Adore, and wonder!
Ask, 'O why such love to me?'"***

Kings passed by and beggars chosen, wise men left, but fools made to know the wonders of His redeeming love, publicans and harlots sweetly compelled to come to the feast of mercy, while proud Pharisees are suffered to trust in their own righteousness and perish in their vain boastings. God's choice will ever seem in the eyes of unrenewed men to be a very strange one. He has passed over those whom *we* should have selected, and He has chosen just the odds and ends of the universe, the men who thought themselves the least likely ever to taste of His grace.

Why were we chosen as a people to have the privilege of the Gospel? Are there not other nations as great as we have been? Sinful a people as this English nation has manifested itself to be, why has God selected the Anglo-Saxon race to receive the pure truth, while nations who might have received the light of God with even greater joy than ourselves, still lie shrouded in darkness, and the sun of the Gospel has never risen on them? Why, again I say, in the case of each individual, why is the man chosen who is chosen? Can any answer be given but just the answer of our Savior—"Even so, Father, for it seemeth good in thy sight"?"

Yet one other thought, to make God's election marvelous indeed. God has unlimited power of creation. Now, if He willed to make a people who should be His favorites, who should be united to the person of His Son, and who should reign with Him, why did He not make a new race? When Adam sinned, it would have been easy enough to strike the world out of existence. He had but to speak and this round earth would have been dissolved, as the bubble dies into the wave that bears it. There would have been no trace of Adam's sin left, the whole might have died away and have been forgotten forever.

But no! Instead of making a new people, a pure people who could not sin, instead of taking to Himself creatures that were pure, unsullied, without spot, He takes a depraved and fallen people, and lifts these up, and that too, by costly means, by the death of His own Son, by the work of His own Spirit, that these must be the jewels in His crown to reflect His glory forever. Oh, amazing choice! Oh, strange election! My soul is lost in Your depths, and I can only pause and cry, "Oh, the goodness, oh, the mercy, oh, the sovereignty of God's grace."

Having thus spoken about its singularity, I turn to another subject. Observe *the unconstrained freeness* of electing love. In our text this is hinted at by the word "ONLY." Why did God love their fathers? Why, *only* because He did so. There is no other reason. "*Only*, the Lord had a delight in your fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day."

There was doubtless some wise reason for the Lord's acts, for He does all things after the counsel of His will, but there certainly could not be any reason in the excellence or virtue of the creature whom He chose. Now, just dwell upon that for a moment. Let us remark that there is no original goodness in those whom God selects.

What was there in Abraham that God chose him? He came out of an idolatrous people and it is said of his posterity—a Syrian ready to perish was your father. As if God would show that it was not the goodness of Abraham, He says, "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him."

There was nothing more in Abraham than in any one of us why God should have selected him, for whatever good was in Abraham God put there. Now, if God put it there, the motive for His putting it there could not be the fact of His putting it there. You cannot find a motive for a fact in itself, there must be some motive lying higher than anything which can be found in the mere act of God.

If God chose a man to make that man holy, righteous, and good, He cannot have chosen him because he was to be good and righteous. It were absurd to reason thus. It were drawing a cause for an effect, and making an effect a cause. If I were to plead that the rosebud were the author of the root, well! I might indeed be laughed at. But were I to urge that any goodness in man is the ground of God's choice, when I call to recollection that that goodness is the effect of God's choice, I would be foolish indeed.

That which is the effect cannot be the cause. But what original good is there in any man? If God chose us for anything good in ourselves, we must all be left unchosen. Have we not all an evil heart of unbelief? Have we not all departed from His ways? Are we not all by nature corrupt, enemies to God by wicked works? If He chooses us it cannot be because of any original goodness in us.

"But," saith one, "perhaps it may be because of goodness foreseen, God has chosen His people because He foresees that they will believe and be saved." A singular idea indeed! Here are a certain number of poor persons, and a prince comes into the place. To some ninety out of the hundred he distributes gold. Some one asks the question, "Why did the prince give this gold to those ninety?" A madman in a corner, whose face ought never to be seen, replies, "He gave it to them because he foresaw that they would have it!" But how could he foresee that they would have it apart from the fact that he gave it to them?

Now, you say that God gives faith, repentance, salvation, because He foresaw that men would have it. He did not foresee it apart from the fact that He intended to give it them. He foresaw that He would give them grace. But what was the reason that He gave it to them? Certainly, not His foresight. That were absurd indeed! and none but a madman would reason thus.

Oh, Father, if You have given me life, and light, and joy, and peace, the reason is known only to Yourself, for reasons in myself I can never find, for I am still a wanderer from You, and often does my faith flicker and my love grow dim. There is nothing in me to merit esteem or give You delight. It is all by Your grace, Your grace alone that I am what I am. So will every Christian say, so must every Christian indeed confess.

But is it not all idle talk, even to controvert for a single moment, with the absurd idea that man can fetter his Maker. Shall the purpose of the Eternal be left contingent on the will of man? Shall man be really his Maker's master? Shall free will take the place of the divine energy? Shall man take the throne of God and set aside as he pleases all the purposes of JEHOVAH—compelling Him by merit to choose him? Shall there be something that man can do that shall control the motions of JEHOVAH?

It is said by someone that men give free will to everyone but God, and speak as if God must be the slave of men. Ay, we believe that God has given to man a free will—that we do not deny, but we will have it that God has a free will also—that moreover, He has a right to exercise it and does exercise it, and that no merit of man can have any compulsion with the Creator. Merit, on the one hand, is impossible, and even if we did possess it, it could not be possible that we could possess it in such a degree as to merit the gift of Christ.

Remember, if we deserve salvation, man must have virtue enough to merit heaven, to merit union with Jesus, to merit, in fact, everlasting glory. You go back to the old Romish idea, if you once slip your anchor and cut your cable, and talk about anything in man that could have moved the mercy of God.

"Well," says one, "this is vile Calvinism." Be it so, if you choose to call it so. Calvin found his doctrine in the Scriptures. Doubtless he may have also received some instruction from the works of Augustine, but that mighty doctor of grace learned it from the writings of St. Paul, and St. Paul, the apostle of grace, received it by inspiration from Jesus the Lord.

We can trace our pedigree direct to Christ Himself. Therefore, we are not ashamed of any title that may be appended to a glorious truth of God. Election is free, and has nothing to do with any original goodness in man, or goodness foreseen, or any merit that man can possibly bring before God.

I come to the hardest part of my task this morning—Election in its *justice*. Now, I shall defend this great fact, that God has chosen men to Himself, and I shall regard it from rather a different point of view from that which is usually taken. My defense is just this. You tell me, if God has chosen some men to eternal life, that He has been unjust. I ask you to prove it. The burden of the proof lies with you, For I would have you remember *that none merited this at all*.

Is there one man in the whole world who would have the impertinence to say that he merits anything of his Maker? If so, be it known unto you that he shall have all he merits, and his reward will be the flames of hell forever, for that is the utmost that any man ever merited of God. God is in debt to no man, and at the last great day every man shall have as much love, as much pity, and as much goodness, as he deserves. Even the lost in hell shall have all they deserve, ay, and woe worth the day for them when they shall have the wrath of God, which will be the summit of their deservings.

If God gives to every man as much as he merits, is He therefore to be accused of injustice because He gives to some infinitely more than they merit? Where is the injustice of a man doing as he wills with his own? Has he not a right to give what he pleases? If God is in debt to any, then there would be injustice. But He is indebted to none, and if He gives His favors according to His own sovereign will, who is he that shall find fault? You have not been injured, God has not wronged you. Bring up your claims and He will fulfill them to the last jot.

If you are righteous and can claim something of your Maker, stand up and plead your virtues, and He will answer you. Though you gird up your loins like a man, and stand before Him, and plead your own righteousness, He will make you tremble, and abhor yourself, and roll in dust and ashes, for your righteousness is a lie, and your best performance but as filthy rags. God injures no man in blessing some. Strange is it that there should be any accusation brought against God, as though He were unjust.

I defend it again on another ground. To which of you has God ever refused His mercy and love when you have sought His face? Has He not freely proclaimed the Gospel to you all? Does not His Word bid you come to Jesus? and does it not solemnly say, “Whosoever will, let him come”? Are you not every Sabbath invited to come and put your trust in Christ? If you will not do it, but will destroy your own souls, who is to blame?

If you put your trust in Christ, you shall be saved, God will not run back from His promise. Prove Him, try Him. The moment you renounce sin and trust in Christ, that moment you may know yourself to be one of His chosen ones, but if you will wickedly put from you the Gospel which is daily preached, if you will not be saved, then on your own head is your blood. The only reason why you can be lost is because you would continue in sin and would not cry to be saved therefrom. You have rejected Christ, you have put Him far from you and left to yourselves, you will not receive Him.

“Well, but,” saith one, “I cannot come to God.” Your powerlessness to come lies in the fact that you have no will to come. If you were but once willing you would lack no power. You cannot come because you are so wedded to your lusts, so fond of your sin. That is why you cannot come. That very inability of yours is your crime, your guilt. You could come if your love to evil and self were broken. The inability lies not in your physical nature but in your depraved moral nature.

Oh! if you were willing to be saved! There is the point—there is the point! You are not willing, nor will you ever be, till grace make you willing. But who is to blame because you are not willing to be saved? None but yourself, you have the whole blame. If you refuse eternal life, if you will not look to Christ, if you will not trust to Him, remember your own will damns you.

Was there ever a man who had a sincere will to be saved in God’s way who was denied salvation? No, no, a thousand times NO, for such a man is already taught of God. He who gives will, will not deny power. Inability lies mainly in the will. When once a man is made willing in the day of God’s power, he is made able also. Therefore, your destruction lies at your own door.

Then let me ask another question. You say it is unjust that some should be lost while others are saved. Who makes those to be lost that are lost? Did God cause you to sin? Has the Spirit of God ever persuaded you to do a wrong thing? Has the Word of God ever bolstered you up in your own self-righteousness? No, God has never exercised any influence upon you to make you go the wrong way. The whole tendency of His Word, the whole tendency of the preaching of the Gospel, is to persuade you to turn from sin unto righteousness, from your wicked ways to JEHOVAH.

I say again, God is just. If you reject the Savior proclaimed to you, if you refuse to trust Him, if you will not come to Him and be saved, if you are lost, God is supremely just in your being lost, but if He chooses to exert the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon some of you, He is surely just in giving the mercy which no man can claim, and so just that through eternal ages there shall never be found a flaw in His acts, but the "Holy, Holy, Holy" God shall be hymned by the redeemed, and by cherubim and seraphim, and even the lost in hell shall be compelled to utter an involuntary bass to that dread song, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth."

Having thus tried to defend the justice of election, I now turn to notice the *truth* of it. I may possibly have here some godly men who cannot receive this doctrine. Well, my friend, I am not angry with you for not being able to receive it, because no man can receive it unless it is given him from God, no Christian will ever rejoice in it unless he has been taught of the Spirit. But after all, my brother, if you are a renewed man, you believe it. You are coming upstairs to controvert with me. Come along and I will allow you to controvert with yourself, and before five minutes have passed you will out of your own mouth prove my point.

Come, my dear brother, you do not believe that God can justly give to some men more grace than to others. Very well. Let us kneel down and pray together, and you shall pray first. You no sooner begin to pray than you say, "O Lord, be pleased, in Thy infinite mercy, to send Thy Holy Spirit to save this congregation, and be pleased to bless my relatives according to the flesh."

Stop! Stop! you are asking God to do something which, according to your theory, is not right. You are asking Him to give them more grace than they have got, you are asking Him to do something special. Positively, you are pleading with God that He would give grace to your relatives and friends, and to this congregation. How do you make that to be right in your theory?

If it would be unjust in God to give more grace to one man than to another, how very unjust in you to ask Him to do it! If it is all left to man's free will why do you beg the Lord to interfere? You cry, "Lord, draw them, Lord, break their hearts, renew their spirits." Now, I very heartily use this prayer, but how can you do it, if you think it unrighteous in the Lord to endow this people with more grace than He does the rest of the human race?

"Oh!" but you say, "I feel that it is right, and I will ask Him." Very well then, if it is right in you to ask, it must be right in Him to give, it must be right in Him to give mercy to men, and to some men such mercy that they may be constrained to be saved. You have thus proved my point, and I do not want a better proof. And now, my brother, we will have a song together, and we will see how we can get on there. Open your hymn book, and you sing in the language of your Wesleyan hymn book,

*"Oh, yes, I do love Jesus
Because He first loved me."*

There, brother, that is Calvinism. You have let it out again. You love Jesus because He first loved you. Well, how is it you come to love Him while others are left not loving Him? Is that to your honor or to His honor? You say, "It is to the praise of grace, let grace have the praise." Very well, brother, we shall get on very well after all, for although we may not agree in preaching, yet we agree, you see, in praying and praising.

Preaching a few months ago in the midst of a large congregation of Methodists, the brethren were all alive, giving all kinds of answers to my sermon, nodding their heads and crying, "Amen!" "Hallelujah!"

“Glory be to God!” and the like. They completely woke me up. My spirit was stirred, and I preached away with an unusual force and vigor, and the more I preached the more they cried, “Amen!” “Hallelujah!” “Glory be to God!”

At last, a part of the text led me to what is styled high doctrine. So I said, “This brings me to the doctrine of election.” There was a deep drawing of breath. “Now, my friends, you believe it,” they seemed to say. “No, we don’t.” But you do, and I will make you sing “Hallelujah!” over it. I will so preach it to you that you will acknowledge it and believe it.

So I put it thus: Is there no difference between you and other men? “Yes, yes, glory be to God, glory!” There is a difference between what you were and what you are now? “Oh, yes! Oh, yes!” There is sitting by your side a man who has been to the same chapel as you have, heard the same Gospel, he is unconverted, and you are converted. Who has made the difference, yourself or God? “The Lord!” said they, “the Lord! Glory! Hallelujah!” Yes, cried I, and that is the doctrine of election, that is all I contend for, that if there be a difference, the Lord made the difference.

Some good man came up to me and said, “Thou’rt right, lad! thou’rt right. I believe *thy* doctrine of election, I do not believe it as it is preached by some people, but I believe that we must give the glory to God, we must put the crown on the right head.” After all, there is an instinct in every Christian heart, that makes him receive the substance of this doctrine, even if he will not receive it in the peculiar form in which we put it. That is enough for me.

I do not care about the words or the phraseology, or the form of creed in which I may be in the habit of stating the doctrine. I do not want you to subscribe to my creed, but I do want you to subscribe to a creed that gives God the glory of His salvation. Every saint in heaven sings, “Grace has done it,” and I want every saint on earth to sing the same song, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, to him be the glory for ever and ever.”

The prayers, the praises, the experience of those who do not believe this doctrine prove the doctrine better than anything I can say. I do not care to prove it better, and I leave it as it is.

II. We now turn to ELECTION IN ITS PRACTICAL INFLUENCES.

You will see that the precept is annexed to the doctrine, God has loved you above all people that are upon the face of the earth, therefore, “circumcise the foreskin of your hearts and be no more stiffnecked.” It is whispered that election is a licentious doctrine. Say it out loud, and then I will answer you. Election is a licentious doctrine! How do you prove it? It is my business to prove to you that it is the very reverse.

“Well but,” cries one, “I know a man that believes in election and yet lives in sin.” Yes and I suppose that disproves it. So that if I can go through London and find any ragged drunken fellow who believes a doctrine and lives in sin, the fact of his believing it disproves it. Singular logic, that! I will undertake to disprove any truth in the world if you only give me that to be my rule. Why, I can bring up some filthy, scurvy creature, who doubts the universal bounty of God. Then, I suppose that will disprove it.

I might bring up to you some wretch that is living in sin, who yet believes that if he were to cry, “Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner,” from his heart, he would be saved, even though he was on his dying bed, I suppose his believing that, disproves it—does it? No! You know very well, though you use such logic as that against us, you would not use it against yourself.

The fact is, that the bad lives or the good lives of some individuals cannot be taken as a proof either for or against any set of doctrines. There are holy men that are mistaken, there are unholy men who receive truth. That may be seen any day by any man who will candidly make the observation. If however, any one sect were peculiarly full of ungodly professors and hypocrites, then would I admit the force of your argument. But I defy you to the proof.

The men that have believed this doctrine have been the wide world over—though perhaps, it is not my place to say it, except that I will glory in it as Paul did—have been the most zealous, most earnest, most holy men.

Remember, sirs, you that scoff at this doctrine, that you owe your liberties to men who held it. Who carved out for England its liberties? I do not hesitate to give the palm to the strong arms of the Ironsides and the mighty will of Oliver Cromwell. But what made them dash to battle as they did, but a firm belief that they were God's chosen ones, and could sweep everything before them, because the Lord their God was with them?

It was said in Charles the second's time that if you wanted to find believers in Arminianism, you could find them in every pot-house, but if you wanted to find those who believed the doctrine of grace you must go into the dungeons where the saints of God were shut up, because of the rigidity of their lives and the peculiar straitness of their conversation. Never were men more heavenly-minded than the Puritans, and what Puritan can you find that holds any other doctrine than that which I preach today? You may find some modern doctor who teaches the reverse, but march through centuries, and with few exceptions, where are the saints who denied the election of God?

The banner has been passed from one hand to the other. Martyrs died for it! they sealed the truth with their blood. And this truth shall stand when rolling years shall cease to move, this truth which shall be believed when every error and superstition shall crumble to the dust from which they sprang.

But I come back to my proof. It is laid down as a matter of theory that this doctrine is licentious. We oppose that theory. The fitness of things proves that it is not so. Election teaches that God has chosen some to be kings and priests to God. When a man believes that he is chosen to be a king, would it be a legitimate inference to draw from it—"I am chosen to be a king, therefore I will be a beggar, I am chosen to sit upon a throne, therefore I will wear rags."

Why, you would say, "There would be no argument, no sense in it." But there is quite as much sense in that as in your supposition that God has chosen His people to be holy, and yet that a knowledge of this fact will make them unholy. No! the man, knowing that a peculiar dignity has been put upon him by God, feels working in his bosom a desire to live up to his dignity. "God has loved me more than others," says he, "then will I love Him more than others. He has put me above the rest of mankind by His sovereign grace, let me live above them, let me be more holy, let me be more eminent in grace than any of them."

If there be a man that can misuse the dignity of grace which Christ has given him, and pervert that into an argument for licentiousness, he is not to be found among us. He must be something less than man, fallen though man be, who would infer from the fact that he has become a Son of God by God's free grace, that therefore he ought to live like a son of the devil, or who should say, "Because God has ordained me to be holy, therefore I will be unholy." That were the strangest, oddest, most perverted, most abominable reasoning that ever could be used. I do not believe there is a creature living that could be capable of using it.

Again, not only the fitness of things, but the thing itself proves that it is not so. Election is a separation. God has set apart him that is godly for Himself, has separated a people out of the mass of mankind. Does that separation allow us to draw the inference thus—"God has separated me, therefore I will live as other men live." No! if I believe that God has distinguished me by His discriminating love, and separated me, then I hear the cry, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will be a Father unto you."

It were strange if the decree of separation should engender an unholy union. It cannot be. I deny, once for all, in the name of all who hold the truth—I deny solemnly, as in the presence of God, that we have any thought that because God has separated us, therefore we ought to go and live as others live. No, God forbid. Our separation is a ground and motive for our separating altogether from sinners.

I heard a man say once, "Sir, if I believed that doctrine I should live in sin." My reply to him was this, "I dare say YOU would! I dare say YOU would!" "And why," said he, "should I more than you?" Simply because you are a man, and I trust I am a new man in Christ Jesus. To man that is renewed by grace, there is no doctrine that could make him love sin.

If a man by nature is as a swine that wallows in the mire, turn him into a sheep, and there is no doctrine you can teach that can make him go and wallow in the mire again. His nature is changed, there is a raven transformed into a dove. I will give the dove to you, and you may teach it whatever you like, but that dove will not eat carrion any more. It cannot endure it, its nature is entirely changed. Here is a lion roaring for its prey. I will change it into a lamb, and I defy you to make that lamb, by any doctrine, go and redden its lips with blood. It cannot do it—its nature is changed.

A friend on board a steamboat, when we were coming across from Ireland, asked one of the sailors, “Would you like a risqué song?” “No,” he said, “I do not like such things.” “Would you like a dance?” “No,” said he, “I have a religion that allows me to swear and be drunk as often as ever I please, and that is never, for I hate all such things with perfect hatred.”

Christian men keep from sin because their nature abhors sin. Do not imagine we are kept back from sin because we are terrified with threats of damnation, we have no fear, except the fear of offending our loving Father. But we do not want to sin—our thirst is for holiness and not for vice.

But if you have a kind of religion that always keeps you in restraint, so that you say, “I should like to go to the theater tonight if I dare”—if that is what you say, depend upon it, your religion is not of much value. You must have a religion that makes you hate the thing you once loved, and love that which you once hated—a religion that draws you out of your old life and puts you into a new life.

Now, if a man has a new nature, what doctrine of election can make that new nature act contrary to its instincts? Teach the man what you will, that man will not turn again to vanity. The election of God gives a new nature, so, even if the doctrine were dangerous, the new nature would keep it in check.

But once more, bring me hither the *man*—shall I call him?—bring me the beast or devil that would say, “God has set His love upon me from before all worlds; my name is on Jesus’ heart; He bought me with His blood; my sins are all forgiven; I shall see God’s face with joy and acceptance, therefore, I hate God, therefore I live in sin.”

Bring me up the monster, I say, and when you have brought up such-an-one, even then I will not admit that there is reason in that vile lie, that damnable calumny, which you have cast upon this doctrine, that it makes men live in licentiousness. There is no truth that can so nerve a man to piety as the fact that he was chosen of God ere time begun.

Loved by Thee with an unlimited love that never moves, and that endures to the end—O my God! I desire to spend myself in Thy service.

*“Love, so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all,”*

and gratitude to God, for this rich mercy constrains us, compels us to walk in the fear of God, and to love and serve Him all our lives.

Now, two lessons, and then I will send you away.

The first lesson is this, Christian men and women, chosen of God and ordained unto salvation, recollect that this is a doctrine everywhere spoken against. Do not hide it, do not conceal it, for remember, Christ has said, “He that is ashamed of my words, of him will I be ashamed.”

But take care that you do not dishonor it. Be ye holy, even as He is holy. He has called you, stand by your calling, give diligence to make your calling and election sure. Put on as the elect of God, hearts of compassion, holiness and love, and let the world see that God’s chosen ones are made by grace, the choicest of men, who live nearer to Christ, and are more like Christ, than any other people upon the face of the earth.

And let me add to you, if the world sneers at you, you can look your enemy in the face and never tremble. For this is a degree of nobility, a patent of divine dignity which you never need blush for, but which will keep you from ever being a coward, or bowing your knee before pomp and station, when they are associated with vice.

This doctrine has never been liked, because it is a hammer against tyrants. Men have chosen their own elect ones, their kings, dukes, and earls, and God's election interferes with them. There are some that will not bow the knee to Baal, who hold themselves to be God's true aristocracy, who will not resign their consciences to the dictation of another. Men rail, and rave, and rage because this doctrine makes a good man strong in his loins, and will not let him bend his knee, or turn back and be a coward.

Those Ironsides were made mighty because they held themselves to be no mean men. They bowed before God, but before men they could not and would not bow. Stand fast therefore, in this your liberty, and be not moved from the hope of your calling.

One other word of exhortation, it is the second lesson. There are some of you who are making an excuse out of the doctrine of election, an excuse, an apology for your own unbelieving and wicked hearts. Now remember the doctrine of election exercises no constraint whatever upon you. If you are wicked you are so because you will be so. If you reject the Savior you do so because you will do so. The doctrine does not make you reject Him. You may make it an excuse, but it is an idle one, it is a cobweb garment that will be rent away at the last day. I beseech you lay it aside, and remember that the truth which you have to do is this, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

If you believe, you are saved. If you trust Christ, be you who you may, or what you may, the wide world over, you are a saved man. Do not say, "I will not believe because I do not know whether I am elected." You cannot know that until you have believed. Your business is with believing. "Whosoever"—there is no limitation in it—"Whosoever believeth in Christ shall be saved." You, as well as any other man. If you trust Christ, your sins shall be forgiven, your iniquities blotted out.

O may the Holy Spirit breathe the new life into you. Bowing the knee, I beseech you, kiss the Son lest He be angry. Receive His mercy now, steel not your hearts against the gracious influence of His love, but yield to Him, and you shall then find that you yielded because He made you yield, that you came to Him because He drew you, and that He drew you because He had loved you with an everlasting love.

May God command His blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.