

EFFECTS OF SOUND DOCTRINE NO. 324

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, APRIL 22, 1860,
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*“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”
Matthew 24:24.*

I AM not about to enter upon any argument in proof of the doctrine of election tonight. That I have done at other times and am prepared to do so yet again. I purpose rather to speak of some of the practical effects which result from this article of the believer's faith. We cannot, however, pass over the text without observing that it is very certain there is an elect and that these elect are a special people; for they are here defined as being “the very elect”—those who are such in deed and in truth. It is equally clear that these elect ones cannot be deceived. The text informs us that if it were possible, those deceivers who had gone to the full stretch of great signs and wonders, doubtless adding thereto all kinds of eloquence and persuasion, were not able to deceive the elect; the simple reason being that it is not possible. They would have deceived them if there had been a possibility, but the elect were a people who could not possibly be turned from the steadfastness of their faith and be deceived. Moreover, we may add that in the 22nd verse, these same elect people are spoken of as being those for whose sake the rigor of God's punishments is abated. “Then shall be a great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time; no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened.” God did not temper the rigor of His dispensations for the sake of all flesh, but for the *elect's* sake! The piteous wail of manhood moves not the Almighty to spare His righteous dispensation of punishment upon the nations; it is the cry of the elect that moves His heart! For their sake He promises to shorten those days and sheath, as it were, His sword before its time.

We simply make these remarks to show that in the dealings of God's providence, and surely also in the dealings of His grace, God has a special regard for His chosen and justified ones. For the elect's sake, He does many things which otherwise would not enter into the plan of His government. If our Bibles were read by us in the original, we should be exceedingly struck with the prominence which is given to the doctrine of election; and if, my brothers and sisters, you were at all acquainted with the manners of the early Christian Church, or had read any of the letters which have been preserved of the first age of Christianity, you would be astonished to find how conspicuously this great doctrine appears; so much so that Christians were accustomed to address each other as, “*elect* ones.” The term, far from being obscure, was common in daily conversation. And the doctrine, far from being kept back—I do not hesitate to say, that great doctrine of the crucifixion and the resurrection of our most blessed Lord—even *that* doctrine had not such prominence in the early Christian Church as the doctrine of the election of grace. The word, “*elect*,” recurred so frequently in conversation, and was so mixed up with all their preaching, with all their assembling together, and with all their church acts—that it is impossible to conceive that its meaning could be obscured, or held in disesteem. Upon that matter, however, as I said before, it is not my present intention to enlarge; my simple endeavor will be to clear the doctrine of sundry aspersions which have been cast upon it, by showing its proper practical influence—an influence which I hope as a church we do not merely show in words by the lips of our minister, but in our daily life and conversation as a people!

It has often been objected to those who hold the doctrine of election that it restricts ministers from earnestly preaching to sinners. Now, we are compelled to confess with the greatest sorrow, and I may add also with no little indignation, that there have been some men who have never been able to grasp the

gospel in its integrity in order to present the grace of God to men's minds at once in its sovereignty and in its freeness. Though their sermons sometimes ring with the clear melodious note of the grace of God, they are too often bent on qualifying the extent of its welcome, and inventing explanations of their own, to wrest the simple meaning of Scriptures. Calvinists, such men may call themselves, but, unlike the Reformer, whose name they adopt, they bring a system of divinity to the Bible to interpret it, instead of making every system, be its merits what they may, yield and give place to the pure and unadulterated Word of God! They will not imitate their Master in inviting all men to Christ—they dare not preach a full Christ to empty sinners—they are ashamed to say, "Ho, everyone who thirsts come to the water." They have been obliged to cover up such a passage as this, because they could not understand it—"Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing, but you would not." They will not preach upon such a text as this—"As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live." They are ashamed to say to men, "Turn you, turn you, why will you die?" They dare not come out and preach as Peter did—"Repent you, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." This, they say, would be to deny the doctrine of election at once! But, beloved, we have not so learned Christ. I trust we have learned to prove practically, by our ministry, that it is possible to have all the heart of compassion which a man can feel for dying souls, and yet grasp with a firm hand the standard of the doctrine of grace. It has been our aim and objective—at least I can speak for myself—it has been *my* aim and objective in my ministry, to show that while I believe the Lord knows them who are His, it is, at the same time, written over the fountain of living waters, "Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."

Sometimes it has been said that the doctrine of election leads naturally to carelessness, and to hard-heartedness in sin—that it acts as a bugaboo to frighten penitents, and as a drug which sinks the impenitent into deeper sleep. Here again, I must confess, for it is but the duty of candor to acknowledge it, that the preaching of some men has had this tendency. This doctrine has been used too frequently for the destruction of men's souls! But what argument is this against the truth of God? What truth of God has not been perverted? Are there not, on the other hand, those who teach God's universal mercy; and have not damned men's souls? You may teach and teach rightly, too, that God is long-suffering and that at the eleventh hour He still invites a sinner to Himself. But has not that very fact of God's long-suffering helped to lull sinners to sleep and weaken the power of that tremendous Word of God, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts"? There is no passage of Scripture which may not be the means of a man's destruction, if he wills to make it so! From the very pinnacle of the temple you may cast yourselves down, saying at the moment you commit suicide, "He has given His angels charge over me, to keep me in all my ways." If you will be foolish enough to destroy yourselves at the foot of the cross, you may do it. There are many ways to hell, and when a man would commit self-murder on his soul, he need be at no loss to extract from the most wholesome truths in Scriptures, poison to his spirit. I say, therefore, it proves nothing whatever against the doctrine, that men have so perverted it!

This doctrine has likewise often been charged with a tendency to cut off the sympathies of Christians from their fellows. "Surely," says one, "if you believe yourself to be an 'elect one,' and if *I* cannot receive the doctrine, but, nevertheless, put my humble trust in Christ, there is a tendency in the doctrine to make you separate yourself from all the rest of men." And I must confess too many hold the doctrines of grace in bitterness. An old Puritan at St. Paul's cross, complained of a set of ministers that were like bitterns—using the old English word—they were like a bittern, as he called it. They had no song, they could make but hoots. They had not a sweet note to sing. Alas, there are such! Their style always seems to be—"If you hold what I preach, you shall go to heaven; if you do not, I warn you very solemnly as the part of a faithful man, it is all up with you." It does not matter though there is but a shade of difference, though the unlearned cannot tell where there is any point of divergence, yet, according to these good brothers, we are forever to be destroyed because we cannot sit down at their feet and exclusively receive all the dogmas they teach! But, my dear friends, if any of you are laboring under the idea that the doctrine of election fosters such a spirit, allow me to dissuade you. On the contrary, it has been the desire of the true Calvinist—not of the *hyper*-Calvinists, I cannot defend them—to feel that if he has re-

ceived more of the light of God than another man, it is due to God's grace, and not to his merits. Therefore charity is taught, while boasting is excluded. We give our hand to every man who loves the Lord Jesus Christ, be he what he may or who he may! The doctrine of election, like the great act of election, itself, is intended to divide not between Israel and Israel, but between Israel and the Egyptians—not between saint and saint, but between saints and the children of this world! A man may be evidently of God's chosen family and yet, though elected, may not believe in the doctrine of election! I hold that there are many savingly called who do not believe in effectual calling and that there are a great many who persevere to the end, who do not believe the doctrine of final perseverance. We do hope that the hearts of many are a great deal better than their heads. We set not their fallacies down to any willful opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus, but simply to an error in their judgments, which we pray God to correct. We hope that if they think we are mistaken too, they will reciprocate the same Christian courtesy. And when we meet around the cross, we hope that we shall always feel that we are one in Christ Jesus, even though as yet the ministering Spirit has not led all of us into all the lengths and breadths of the truth.

Having thus cleared the way by cutting down a few of the trees that have been standing in my track, I proceed to notice the real effect of the doctrine of election upon the true Christian. I shall divide my subject thus—the influence it has upon *our opinions*, *our emotions*, *our experiences*, *our devotions*, and *our actions*. I conceive that these five embrace the whole of the Christian life.

I. THE BELIEF IN THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION HAS A HIGHLY SALUTARY EFFECT UPON OUR OPINIONS.

Any observer, who has looked through the history of the church, will not fail to have discovered that there has been a salting influence exercised by the *doctrine of grace* upon the minds of those who have been rooted and grounded in its strong and fruitful soil. At the present time, Lutheranism on the continent is scarcely better than infidelity. I have been informed by those who are capable of judging, that too many of the followers of Luther have become degenerate, have cast aside spirituality and have really returned to the beggarly elements of Romanism, even though they persist in their Protestant profession. But, my brothers and sisters, the like cannot be said of the followers of Calvin. The Dutch Reformed Church, albeit that there may be much in it over which we might mourn, has never departed from the truth as it is in Jesus. Enter the place of worship where the Reformed occupy the pulpit, and you need not be at any loss to discover the way to heaven. There may be too much dryness in their prayers, and too much dullness in their mode of preaching, but the truth of God, the vital truth, is there and God still acknowledges it in the salvation of sinners. They may not bear so high a fame or exert so wide an influence as their noble ancestors, but they have not turned aside to heresy, or perverted the truths of the gospel of Christ! And with all the defections of the present age, albeit that Sectarians of all classes have seceded to the Church of Rome, I can scarcely remember a solitary instance where any man who has once embraced that “form of sound words” called the doctrines of grace, has ever forsaken them—at least to turn aside to the desperate heresy of that false Church! The truth is that the doctrine of election, with the sister truths linked with it, acts as a great anchor. It holds fast the soul, and through the influence of the Holy Spirit, a man is brought to feel that he has something stable to rely upon, which he cannot and will not leave to be tossed about upon a sea, without chart or compass, at the mercy of every wind of doctrine. There is something in the doctrine which, as it were, digs up the earth and lets the soul strike its roots down deep—that girds us about as with a triple belt of steel and leaves no place in which arrow of infidelity or false doctrine can find a place to wound us! As a church and as a people banded together in the fear of the Lord, I hope we shall prove to the world in our experience, that though other churches may step aside gradually from their simplicity and steadfastness, we, forswearing everything which is not consistent with the naked simplicity and beauteousness of the unclothed truth of God, will hold fast to the form of truth which we have received and which has been taught us by the Spirit of God in His most Holy Book. Nor is this all: Election, I take it—and I am here speaking of the whole set of truths which group around this as their central sun—has not only a salting power, but exercises a flavoring and seasoning power over all our other doctrines! The purest evangelism springs from this truth of God. I will not say that the Arminian teaches that salvation is by works; this is so continually denied by the

Arminian, that I will not charge a falsehood upon him, at which he professes to shudder. But at the same time, I do say that the tendency of Arminianism is towards legality—it is nothing but legality which lays at the root of Arminianism! Any one doctrine of the Arminian which differs from the orthodox—let it be carefully dissected—will prove that after all, his ground of difference is *legality*. I received but the other day, a letter from an earnest Arminian anxious to correct my opinions. He said, “If God has chosen some men from before the foundation of the world, is it not more consistent with His justice to conceive that He chose those who through life have used their best endeavors to serve Him, rather than that He should choose the drunk, or the harlot, to give them salvation?” Of course it is more consistent! Moses proves it—if salvation is by the law or by works; but with the gospel it is totally inconsistent, for Christ declares, “The publicans and the harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before you”—that is, before you Pharisees—before the very men who in their own blind way had strived to win salvation by works!

My dear friends, after all, the kicking against the doctrine of election is a kicking against the gospel. This doctrine is a first principle in the divine plan of mercy, and when rightly known, it prepares our minds to receive all the other doctrines. Or, on the contrary, misunderstand this, and you are pretty sure to make mistakes about all the rest! Take for instance, *final perseverance*. Some men say, “If we continue in faith, and if we continue in holiness, we shall certainly be saved at last.” Do you not see at once that this is *legality*—that this is hanging our salvation upon our *work*—that this is making our eternal life to depend on something *we do*? No, the *doctrine of justification* itself, as preached by an Arminian, is nothing but the doctrine of salvation by works after all. For he always thinks faith is a work of the creature, and a condition of his acceptance. It is as false to say that man is saved by faith as a *work*, as that he is saved by the deeds of the law! We are saved by faith as the *gift* of God, and as the first token of His eternal favor to us; but it is not faith as our *work* that saves, otherwise we are saved by works and not by grace at all. If you need any argument upon this point, I refer you to our great apostle Paul, who so constantly combats the idea that works and grace can ever be united together. He argues, “If it is of grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace were no more grace. But if it is of works, then is it no more of grace; otherwise work is no more work.”

You will, I think, perceive, if you look through the roll of mighty preachers, that all those who have been great in the simple preaching of the doctrine of salvation by faith, have been men who held the doctrine of election. You cannot find that I am aware of, but one or two old Puritan works written by any but those who held this truth of God. You cannot discover a great divine—look back through centuries—who has not held it. There have been some small ones in modern times, and some earnest ones, too, but the ages past have been all utterly destitute of anything like a great preacher who has not held this doctrine! I might make exception of Wesley and Fletcher, of Madely among modern divines—but in the olden times there was nothing like any great and successful preacher, who has not held the doctrine of election. This doctrine has always had an evangelizing power on the souls of men, so that those who have held it have preached more clearly than any others, the simple truth of God that we are saved by grace and not by works. And I would add, that I have also observed that the doctrine of election exercises another influence upon men’s opinions—it renders them more clear and lucid. Out of hundreds of young persons who continually come to join our Church, from all bodies of Christians, I have always discovered that those who have the best idea of Scripture—not simply looking at it from my own point of view, but allowing other people to be judges—are those who have held this doctrine. Without it there is a lack of thought and, generally speaking, they have no idea whatever of a system of divinity. It is almost impossible to make a man a theologian unless you begin with this. You may, if you please, put a young believer to college for years, but unless you show him this ground plan of the everlasting covenant, he will make little progress, because his studies do not cohere—he does not see how one truth of God fits with another—and how all the truths of God must harmonize together! Once let him get a clear idea that salvation is by grace—let him discover the difference between the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace—let him clearly understand the meaning of election, as showing the purpose of God, and its bearing upon other doctrines which show the accomplishment of that purpose—and from that moment he is on the high road to become an instructive believer. He will always be ready to give a reason of the hope that is in him with meekness and with fear. The proof is self-evident. Take any commu-

nity throughout England—you will find poor men hedging and ditching that have a better knowledge of divinity than one half of those who come from our academies and colleges! The reason is simply and entirely that these men have first learned in their youth, the system of which election is a center, and have afterwards found their own experience exactly square with it. They have built upon that good foundation, a temple of holy knowledge, which has made them fathers in the Church of God.

Every other scheme is as nothing to build with—they are but wood, hay and stubble! Pile what you will upon them, and they will fall. They have no system of architecture; they belong to no order of reason or revelation. A disjointed system makes its topstone bigger than its foundation; it makes one part of the covenant to disagree with another; it makes Christ's mystical body to be of no shape whatever; it gives Christ a bride whom He does not know and does not choose, and it puts Him up in the world to be married to anyone who will have Him—but He is to have no choice Himself! It spoils every figure that is used with reference to Christ and His Church. The good old plan of the doctrine of grace is a system which once received, is seldom given up; when rightly learned, it molds the thoughts of the heart, and it gives a sacred stamp to the characters of those who have once discovered its power.

II. In the second place, I come to notice THE INFLUENCES OF THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION UPON OUR EMOTIONS.

Here we speak not of matter of opinion, but of effect. The man who sighs for some divine witness that He is chosen of God is, I should think, necessarily humble. But the man who knows by gracious evidences that this seal is set upon him, is one from whose eyes every selfish pretension is forever hid. If he could suppose that God had chosen him by the foresight and foreknowledge of some good qualities he possessed, he might be puffed up with unbearable conceit! But he knows God has chosen the foolish things, the weak things, the base things, the things that are not, things too worthless for notice in this world. He must take his place, therefore, down there among the offscouring of earth, before he can be lifted up by divine grace to sit among the adopted heirs of glory! There are some who profess to believe the doctrine of election that are as proud as Lucifer, but it is not the doctrine of election which makes them so; it is their own evil hearts that can turn everything good into evil. Such men, I think, are rather fatalists in judgment, than believers in God the Father's love at heart. The doctrine itself, if it were rightly construed, would tend to humble such and keep them humble. Can you conceive a more contrite spirit than that expressed in these lines—

*“Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter where there's room?
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?
'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced me in,
Else I'd still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin.”*

I ask whether such a hymn, which has in it the very gist of the doctrine, is not the meek utterance of a chastened soul. Can the haughty unsubdued heart entertain a sentiment like this?—

*“What was there in me to merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
It is even so, Father, we even must say,
For so it seemed good in Your sight.”*

The language of this hymn ought to be in harmony with our daily life. If we are elect and precious, we must bow humbly before the throne, and give God the glory of our salvation!

Take the doctrine again, with regard to another emotion of the soul, not amply of prostration—but the emotion of gratitude. There is a common bounty of God that appeals to common gratitude. Too often, alas, we pass by these ordinary mercies and slight the goodness that bestows them. “He makes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust.” You may go abroad into the fields and see the liberal providence of the Creator; and when you do so, it behooves you to lift up your hearts and adore. But tell me is there not a sweeter sense of gratitude to the soul that experiences His particular favor? Has He brought you into the banqueting house? Has the banner of His love waved

over your head? Does He place His left hand under your head and His right hand embrace you? What gratitude will such choice attentions to His chosen ones stir up! This surely will put some stanzas into your psalm of praise that never echoed through the gladsome mountains and fruitful valleys—a music too soft for the outer world and suited only to the inner chamber of affection. Boaz spoke with a goodly salutation to the reapers. He was bountiful to the maidens who were gathering the sheaves. But greater kindness he showed to Ruth. The gratitude she felt was more than theirs—“She fell on her face and bowed herself to the ground and said unto him, why have I found grace in yours eyes, that you should take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?” This electing favor, this choice comfort, this friendly speech, these words to the heart—these are the things that awaken devout gratitude in the believer—distinguishing and discriminating love wakes the echo of soul-stirring gratitude!

Then, again, it is sometimes said that this is a very gloomy doctrine. John Calvin is often described by those who hate the doctrines which he clarified and preached—for he is not the author of them any more than I am—he is described as being such a terrible ascetic, of a forbidding countenance, of preaching the destruction of infants, and reveling in other hideous sentiments—which in his soul he loathed—and none of his writings ever taught. These are the inventions of lies. John Calvin certainly was a sickly man, and looked ill, and well he might. If an Arminian had to go through half the difficulties and trials, he would have been in his grave 10 years before; he would have had no stamina in his soul to bear up against the bodily disease which poor John Calvin had to endure. Yet he was seen every morning going up to the divinity college, and delivering his lectures in the halls before his students. And we have the result of his labors in about 56 large volumes of most extraordinary divinity, which those who rage against him had better read before they open their mouths again! That man was preserved in the midst of troubles, perils and woes, still a joyous man in his heart, with gleams of sunshine in his soul—the flash of which I have continually seen in his Commentary and discovered in his Institutes! The tendency of the doctrine of election is not gloomy—it is joyous! I know there have been times with me when my spirit has been so low that nothing could elevate it but this precious truth of God! I have even taken down old Elisha Coles’ book on *God’s Sovereignty*, and read a chapter out of that as a tonic, and I have felt all the happier and better. Next to the Bible, such books tend to cheer one’s soul more than any books I know. In my bright and happy days, let me have other things, trifles, if you will, but I must come to sound things when I lie on my couch, and especially when I come near to the grave’s mouth, and I am ready to look into eternity. I know not what you will discover to comfort *you*—there is nothing but the doctrine of grace that satisfies me—nothing but that will give me any comfort! This doctrine has filled our souls, sometimes, with joy that we scarcely knew how to contain; we have mounted as on the wings of eagles up to our God, who has made us to rejoice in Him by reason of His distinguishing favor. What was it that made David dance before the ark? The doctrine of election, for what did he say to the woman who mocked him for his dancing? He said, “God has chosen me before your father!” That truth moved him to mirth! And many an heir of heaven has danced before God’s ark when the Spirit has revealed to him that his name is enrolled among the chosen ones of Jehovah!

III. Having shown the effect of this doctrine upon our emotions, in humbling us, and in stirring us up, and carrying us away in holy joy and rapture, let us now ask **WHAT EFFECT IT HAS ON OUR EXPERIENCE?**

This is its effect upon the Christian’s experience—it causes him to rejoice in the midst of deep dependence; and again, it sobers him in the midst of worldly joy. It seems to say to him—“Nevertheless rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” On this I will not dwell, but perhaps it is only fair to add this thought—the doctrine of election has had in its raw misstated form, a very painful influence upon the experience of many a young believer. There are many who have grace enough to convict them of sin, but not light enough to see the Savior, who for a long time are kept in darkness and the valley of the shadow of death through fear that they could not come to Christ rightly without they first *knew* their election. I had this matter brought before me this afternoon by one out of a numerous body of converts with whom I had the pleasure of conversing. Some good woman said to me, “I had a period of something like hope after I was brought to seek the Lord. Then suddenly the doctrine of election crossed my path and I was, for a long time, in great distress about it.” I was not surprised at

her anxiety, but I was gratified to find that she had obtained the true solution of her knotty point. It was not by shutting her eyes to the truth of God as recorded in the Bible, but by having it commended to her conscience with the power of the Spirit that she found peace. And now the doctrine which once appeared to her dark bodings as an iron fence or a bronze wall to exclude *sinner*s from coming to CHRIST is made clear to her faith as an open door to admit *saint*s into the FATHER'S presence. Do you understand this, my brothers and sisters? If I speak of *doctrine* in the divine order, the purpose of God the Father went before the work of God the Son. That is to say, we were inscribed as saints in the Book of Life before we were accounted sinners, and before the sentence of death passed upon us in Adam! When, however, I come to speak of *experience*, the order is reversed. We are brought to knowledge of our sinfulness in the flesh before we learn our acceptance in the Beloved. If without seeming to forget the eternal Unity of the Three Persons in the Godhead I might venture to illustrate my meaning, I would put it to you in this way. God the Father first loved us, and gave us to Christ—that is the doctrine of the everlasting covenant. But in showing you the doctrine of redemption, Jesus Christ first finds us as lost sheep, and then having sanctified us by His one offering, He presents us to the Father. Again, the *decree of election* is more ancient than the *fact of our calling*, as it stands in the councils of eternity. Not so in the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Here our *calling* is opened first, and the knowledge of our *election* follows after. And why? I answer for this reason—because in the *call* of grace we are always viewed as *sinner*s, and invited and wooed as sinners—while in the *election* of grace we are always viewed as *saint*s, as sanctified persons in the highest sense of the word. Well, then, it is as lost sinners we are invited to Christ; but it is as elect and precious ones we are presented to the Father without blame in love. Election shouts as loudly as any other doctrine—“Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” And if election is called to account for this, it replies—“Those who will come, God *wills* shall come, and those who hunger to come, God has *made* them hungry, and *there* is the proof of their election.” Those who seek must find Him, for election itself decrees that he who seeks *shall* find, and to him who knocks it *shall* be opened.

IV. And now I must be very brief indeed upon the next point—THE EFFECT WHICH ELECTION HAS UPON OUR DEVOTIONS.

Strange to say, this effect is discovered in a Christian whatever his religious creed may be. My brothers and sisters in Christ, you who have had yours eyes blinded for a long time with wrong-doing, come and let us hear you pray—“Our Father, who are in heaven, we bless You for Your grace which sought us when we were estranged from You—for Your love which was forced upon us when we loved You not. We praise You, Lord, that You did call us and did bring us into the fold.” There the man, you see, is acknowledging the free grace of God in his prayers! He goes on, “O Lord, when we look on those round about us who are still dead in sin, we weep over them, and we are compelled to say, ‘O Lord, it is of Your grace that we are what we are; You have made us to differ. Lord, take those others as brands from the burning and stretch out Your hand to save them.’” Why, my dear men, you are not leaving it to their free will at all! You are not leaving it to *them*, but asking God to choose them! You are talking Calvinism of the highest order! A man may *preach* Arminianism, but *pray* it, he cannot; it would be blasphemy in prayer if he did! And so the doctrine of grace is the very inspiration of song! Kent's hymns are, I think, about as destitute of any poetry as any hymns I ever read, yet they roll with the full tide of melody. They give a simple statement of good sound high doctrine and that is poetry. It is essential poetry, for poetry is, after all, the grandest form of truth. There will always be an effect produced in the loving child of God in his worship, by his belief. His instinctive thoughts, perhaps, deny belief in the doctrine of election—a belief which must exist in the faith of every child of God, however strenuously he may deny it a place in his creed. Then again, does this doctrine mar the Christian's watchfulness? Surely not! Believing himself to be chosen of God, he is always watching unto prayer that he may not stain his garments, and bring dishonor upon the God who has honored him. Or will this prevent him from searching the Scriptures, do you fancy, when he knows that in every line of Scripture he has a special interest? The devotion of those men who have held this great truth of God is beyond comparison! The ardor of the most enthusiastic believer in good works has never rivaled the holy ardor of the man

who has nothing to move him in his prayer, instrumentally beyond the grateful recognition of his election by God in Christ Jesus.

V. Then to conclude—WHAT EFFECT DOES ELECTION HAVE ON OUR ACTIONS?

If this doctrine is fully received and known, it breathes with all gratitude to God, an earnest desire to show forth His praise; it leads to all kinds of holy activity, and a hearty endeavor for the service of God. We are told continually by philosophic writers, that the idea of *necessity*—the idea that anything is fixed or decreed—tends at once to dampen activity. Never was there a grosser misrepresentation! Look abroad—everything that has been great in the spirit of the age has had a Necessitarian at the bottom of it. When Mohammed preached predestination, he took a necessitarian view. Did that doctrine of predestination make his followers idle? Did it not make them dash into the battle, declaring they must die when the appointed time came, and while they lived they must fight and earnestly defend their faith? Or to take an instance from the history of our own country, did the Calvinism of Oliver Cromwell make his Ironsides idle? Did they not keep their powder dry? They believed that they were chosen men of God, and were they not men of valor? Did this doctrine mar their energy? So in every good enterprise our churches are never behind. Are we backward in Missionary enterprise? Are we slow to send forth men of God to preach in foreign lands? Are we deficient in our efforts? Are we the people who would preach to a select few?—who would erect buildings for worship that the poor scarcely dare to enter? Are we the people who would keep our religious services for a privileged circle? The fact is the most zealous, the most earnest, and the most successful of men have been those who have held this truth of God! And, therefore, it cannot be true that this tends to dampen our energies or thwart our zeal. The best proof of this is especially in our lives. In the midst of God’s holy congregation, let us pledge ourselves tonight—that holding this truth of God—it makes us neither unholy nor inactive. It is our anxious endeavor to be seen as men chosen to bear the vessels of the Lord. It is our hearty prayer that in season and out of season we may labor for the winning of men’s souls—knowing that to God’s churches is committed the work of gathering in those sheep who are of His fold, but who must be brought in, that there may be one flock and one Shepherd.

I have gone a great way into controversy tonight. It is not often I do so. But every builder in these times must have his sword upon his thigh, and I have shown you the sword tonight. May God lead every one of us to this glorious Book, to lay hold upon the truths of God taught us. And when we have seen a truth of God, let us not be backward to declare it! You can be sure that those who honor Christ in His Word shall be honored by Christ in His glory. Oh that you here present, who have as yet never sought Christ, and know nothing of Him, instead of being frightened by this doctrine, would now come to Christ and say, “Lord, take me as I am and save me, for You can do it, and unto You shall be all the glory”! It would be well if some of you could say what a convert now present said when driven almost to despair. He said in his prayer, “Jesus, if You will not have me, I will have You;” so he laid hold upon Jesus. Presently he had a clear view of Christ and His grace, and could personally discern that if he would have Christ, then certainly Christ had already got him! Such a desire and resolution as that would never otherwise have sprung up in his soul. May God add a blessing on these remarks, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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