

ELECTION NO. 386

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My dear Christian friends, those who best know my cast of mind and ministry will readily believe me when I say I would rather have spoken on the majesty and mystery of the person of Christ, or I would rather have spoken on the perfection and intrinsic worth of the mediation of Christ, or on the great attractions of Christ as a gracious and omnipotent Savior, than on the subject that has been assigned to me. The subject that has been given me is that of the doctrine of eternal and personal election; I have to prove that the doctrine of election is a Scriptural truth, and, at the commencement of my few remarks on this profound subject, allow me to say that I hold and firmly believe the Bible to be a revelation from God, that the revelations of God's mind are essentially and infallibly true, that its ancient historical records are of the greatest value, that its prophecies are to be studied and to be venerated, that the doctrines of the Bible are in harmony with the majesty, wisdom, holiness, and goodness of their Author. Now it should not be a point with us whether a doctrine is liked or disliked, whether it is believed or disbelieved, but whether it is a doctrine according to godliness, whether it is the doctrine of the Word of God.

Truth has never been popular in this world; Jesus Christ when on earth was by no means popular. Truth never will be popular in this world while men are influenced by sin, and enmity against God. Perhaps no doctrine has met with such bitter opposition as the doctrine on which I have to speak. It has been fearfully misunderstood for a want of prayerful and independent study of the Holy Scriptures, or perhaps from the miserable misrepresentations that have been given of it by some public men. It is a truth which has been bitterly opposed; we may oppose a doctrine which we cannot with all our puny efforts depose. We may dispute in our blindness and enmity a doctrine which we cannot refute. We believe firmly that the doctrine of election to salvation in Jesus Christ is a doctrine of the Scriptures. We believe in sovereign love, but not in sovereign hatred. We believe in salvation by the grace of God without works, but not in damnation without sin. We believe firmly in election to salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but we discard from our creed the miserable, wretched doctrine of reprobation without sin. Is the doctrine of election a Scriptural doctrine? Can we prove it from the Word of God? It is one thing to believe it to be a doctrine of divine revelation, and it is another thing to have the sanctifying grace and power of it in our hearts.

The election we read of in the Scriptures is inseparably connected with holiness, and we believe in no election to salvation without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He who has appointed salvation as an end has appointed the methods by which that end shall be accomplished. Perhaps no man possessed of his reasoning powers questions the truth that God has predestinated harvests as long as this world shall continue. But without sowing of seed, without the agricultural labor that is given to the land, we should have no harvest, because He who predestinated harvest predestinated the sowing of the seed as much. And God has appointed us not unto wrath, but to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ.

I shall endeavor now to prove, from the quotations of a few Scriptures, that the doctrine of eternal and personal election is a Scriptural and Divine truth. Jesus Christ Himself was said to be "chosen of God and precious." He is God's elect, for JEHOVAH Himself says, "Behold my servant, mine elect in whom my soul delights." Angels that continue in their unfallen dignity and felicity are termed elect angels. Elect angels are employed as ministering spirits to those that shall be heirs of salvation. Elect angels will be employed in the gathering of God's elect into the heavenly world. The Jewish nation was a chosen nation, and as such they were privileged with the oracles of God, and stood as a representative people. They were chosen not because of their personal worth, they were chosen not because of their goodness, but they were chosen to be a separated people, a people that should be God's peculiar

treasure, and should be holiness unto the Lord, of them it was said, “For you are a holy people unto the Lord your God—the Lord has chosen you to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.” Jesus Christ Himself, in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, speaks of certain days being shortened because of God’s elect. The Psalmist craved to be remembered with the favor that God was pleased to bear towards His people, that he might see the good of His chosen. And Jesus Christ Himself said to His disciples, “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.” And the apostle Paul very often in his writings has brought out this great and profound doctrine. He says, “There is a remnant according to the election of grace.” He speaks to the Ephesian Church, and says, “You are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world that you may be holy, and that you may stand before God without blame in love.”

God has in the exercise of His sovereignty *chosen* a *people* in Christ to *salvation* before time began—it was before the foundation of the *world*, here is its antiquity—it is in Christ according to the riches of God’s grace, and it is to *holiness* and salvation. He, in his addresses to the Church at Thessalonica, said he could but thank God “that they were chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth.” Peter speaks of the people of God as a chosen generation and a royal priesthood. He wrote to the *elect* according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.

More Scriptures might be given upon this subject, but I think they would be unnecessary. If we would only give our attention to the simple teachings of the Spirit of God by the prophets, by the Psalmist, by Christ, and by the apostles, we could not have one moment’s doubt as to the doctrine of Divine election being a Scriptural truth.

My second point is to show that God has chosen His people to the highest possible relation to Himself, and to the enjoyment of the most precious blessings in Christ.

All spiritual relations stand in Christ; all spiritual relations originated in God’s grace; and all spiritual relations are standing manifestations of the sovereignty of God’s favor and of the immutability of God’s love. If we are the sons of God, what has constituted us the sons of God? We are sons of God by God’s sovereign love, it is by an act of adoption, it is by an act of JEHOVAH’S will, that we are constituted His sons and His daughters. Adoption is a relation established to which we have no natural right, adoption is one thing, and the spirit of adoption is another. Now Christ is God’s first-born, and all the family are chosen in Him, Christ is the glorious Head of the Church, and all the family of God are chosen members in Him, Christ is the everlasting Priest of His Church, and He represents all the family, just as the Jewish priest represented by his breast-plate and in the fulfillment of his office the whole of the Jewish nation. All relation to God then stands in Christ, originated in the sovereignty of JEHOVAH’S will, and is expressive of the infinite love of JEHOVAH’S heart.

We are chosen to salvation—that is the end, the means by which that end is accomplished is by the “sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth.” We are chosen to usefulness, every Christian should seek to be useful, every Christian in his right mind is a witness for God, every Christian, as he is influenced by Christian principles, bears testimony to the dignity of the relation that God has established, and bears testimony to the holiness of the principles by which his heart is influenced, every Christian should be a living Gospel, his life should bear testimony to the holiness of that Christianity that he studies and is influenced by.

We are chosen to eternal life, but it is eternal life through Christ. Without faith there is no evidence of interest in Christ, without faith there is no enjoyment of salvation by Christ. Without faith, a man has no evidence of interest in the Lamb’s Book of Life; but he who believes in Christ, however weak and trembling his faith has evidence in his own heart that his name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, and his conduct corresponding with the holiness of the Gospel, he carries in his life a witness to his interest in all the purposes of heaven, and in all the redemptive excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The great evidence of interest in election is holiness. A man to talk of believing in election, and going to heaven, because he is one of God’s elect, and yet living in sin, and in enmity to God, this can never, never be. We are chosen unto salvation, it is said, “through sanctification of the Spirit and the

belief of the truth,” and without this sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth, there is no holiness, and “without holiness, no man can see the Lord.” Without holiness, no man would be capable of serving God in heaven, without holiness, no man would be capable of beholding the glories of Jesus Christ there; without holiness, no man can serve God with power and success here; without holiness, no man can have fellowship with God, and so have fellowship with us, for truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. It is only by a practical life of consistency with faith in Christ Jesus, that we have evidence of our interest in election. We are chosen, not because we are holy, but that we might be holy; we are chosen, not because we are good, but that by the principles of the everlasting Gospel, we might become so; we are chosen, not because we are saved, but that we may be saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I hold, dear friends, that the great doctrine of election should be preached. It should be preached, because it is part of a grand system of truth. Truth is not one doctrine, but it is a grand system, and you cannot leave out one part without impairing its beauty, nor leave out one part of this system without weakening its strength. The beauty of truth lies in its perfection, and in that harmony of its connection; the strength of truth lies in the unity of its parts, and it is like gold dust—it is all precious. If Election be not a truth inspired by the Spirit of the living God—if it be not a truth proclaimed by the prophets that were inspired—if it be not a truth published by the apostles—if it is not a truth found in the teachings of the Word of God, let us never say one word about it, but if it was truth in the days of the apostles, then it is no less a truth now. What the apostles preached, I hold, we ought to preach in the spirit of love, in the spirit of faith, in the spirit of meekness, entirely depending on the power of the Holy Spirit to give us success in the conversion of immortal souls.

One moment longer and I have done. There is nothing in the doctrine of election that is discouraging to a penitent, seeking sinner. There is everything in the Gospel to welcome the returning prodigal to his Father’s house, there is everything to meet the necessities of an awakened conscience, there is everything in the Gospel to satisfy the longing of a penitent soul. I know some may say, “I fear, sir, I shall not be saved because I am not one of God’s elect.” Are you a sinner? Are you a penitent sinner? Are you a seeking sinner? If you are a seeking, penitent sinner, you cannot imagine how welcome you are to the provisions of infinite love. Every truth in the Gospel is open to you, every promise in the Gospel is open to you, every invitation in Scripture speaks to you. If you are a sinner seeking mercy, let this cheer your heart—that God delights in mercy. If you are seeking salvation, Jesus is a willing and an able Savior, and He has said, “All that the Father gives to me shall come to me, and him that comes I will in no wise cast out.”

There is nothing, dear friends, in the doctrine of election as it stands in the Scriptures that should discourage any penitent in seeking after mercy through Jesus Christ. I know, in the miserable misrepresentations of this great and glorious truth, men might well be discouraged from seeking mercy through the Savior. But see it in its Scriptural connection; see it in the simplicity of it as it is put before us by the great apostles; see it in the teachings of the Savior Himself, and there is nothing in it but that which welcomes a penitent sinner. It is a great encouragement to a seeking soul.

Does the farmer who sows his seed sow that seed with less or more encouragement because he knows that God has ordained that harvests shall be? He sows his seed with a heart brimful with hope, because God has promised that a harvest shall be as long as the world continues. Only let the means be used according to the Holy Scriptures, only let the poor awakened, penitent sinner renounce everything but Christ and Him crucified, mercy will roll into his troubled heart and fill his spirit with peace, and he shall come off more than conqueror, shouting, Victory through the blood of the Lamb—Victory, victory through Jesus Christ.

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