

and depart; for this is not your rest. Come to the Lord Jesus, who alone can open the door of access to God, whose blood quenches the fire of wrath, and who can deliver from the curse of the law. Who would stay in a house ready to fall? who can sleep sound in a case where God is an enemy? Lay these things seriously to heart, and flee from the wrath ye lie under, for the plague is begun already; and speedily flee from the wrath to come: for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

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OF ELECTION TO EVERLASTING LIFE.

EPH. I. 3, 4, 5.—*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.*

THE answer to the question, ‘Did God leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery?’ contains two heads of doctrine of great importance in the Christian system, viz. the doctrine of election, and the covenant of grace, each of which I shall speak to distinctly. I shall discourse of the first from the text now read. In which we have,

1. A party brought out of their natural state into a state of salvation, ver. 3.—*Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.* For whereas by nature they were under the curse, now they are blessed, and that plentifully, with all blessings, not temporal only, but spiritual and heavenly, coming from heaven, and to be consummated there.

2. The person by whom they are brought into this state. It is by the Redeemer, as the purchaser. God the Father bestows them, as the Father of Christ, viz. for his sake. And they are blessed *in Christ*, upon account of his merit, and coming from him as their Head.

3. Who those are whom God brings out of their natural state into a state of grace; the elect, ver. 4, 5. *According as he hath chosen us in him, &c.* Where consider,

(1.) Election itself, *he hath chosen us*, separated us from others in his purpose and decree, selected us from among the rest of mankind, whom he passed by and left to perish in their natural state.

(2.) That to which they are elected : that is, to salvation, and the means leading thereto. The means are, sanctification, *that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love*; and adoption, ver. 5. that whereas they are by nature children of the devil, they should be children of God. The end is everlasting life in heaven; for that is imported in adoption, Rom. viii. 23. as the inheritance of the children of God.

(3.) Through whom this decree is to be executed, *in him*; that is, Christ, whom the Father chose to be the head of the elect, through whom he would save them.

(4.) When God elected them, *before the foundation of the world*, ere they were created; that is, from eternity; as appears from what our Lord says to his Father, John xvii. 24. 'Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world;' which can denote nothing else than from eternity.

(3.) That which moved him to elect them, *according to the good pleasure of his will*; that is, his mere good pleasure, so he would do it; and there was nothing without himself to move him thereto.

The words afford a foundation for the following doctrine.

Doct. 'God left not all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery, but having from all eternity elected some to everlasting life, brings them into a state of salvation by a Redeemer.'

In illustrating this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What election is.

II. Who are elected.

III. What they are chosen to.

IV. The properties of this election.

V. That all the elect, and only they, are in time brought out of a state of sin and misery into a state of salvation.

VI. By whom they are saved.

VII. *Lastly*, Conclude with some improvement.

I. Our first business is, to shew what election is. It is that decree of God whereby some men are chosen out from among the rest of mankind, and appointed to obtain eternal life by Jesus Christ, flowing from the mere good pleasure of God; as appears from the text. So the elect are they whom God has chosen to everlasting life, Acts xiii. 48. God seeing all mankind lost in Adam from all eternity, in his decree separated some from among them, to be redeemed by his Son, sanctified by his Spirit, and brought to glory.

II. I proceed to shew who are elected. Who they are in particular, God only knows; but in general we say,

That it is not all men, but some only. For where all are taken, there is no choice made. To say that God has made choice, plainly

imports that others are not chosen, but passed by. And so there is another party of men who are reprobated; that is, whom God has not chosen to life, but has decreed to let them lie in their natural state, and to damn them for their sins, Jude 4; whom he shews not saving mercy unto, but hardens, they first hardening themselves, Rom. ix. 18. Here is no injustice in God, seeing he might have left all to perish as well as some. This is also clear from plain scripture, Mat. xx. 16. 'Many are called, but few chosen.' Whence also it is plain, that the elect are the lesser number of the world, Mat. vii. 13, 14. 'Enter ye in at the strait gate (says Christ); for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' They are a *little flock*, Luke xii. 32. Yet the efficacy of the Lord's love and Christ's death is more and greater than that of Adam's sin, seeing it is greater to save one soul than to ruin all. And further, the scripture teaches, that though God has his own of all sorts, yet this blessed company, God does not make up, chiefly of the highest and most honourable among men. 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28. 'Ye see your calling; how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.'

III. The next head is, to shew what they are chosen to.

1. They are chosen to be partakers of everlasting life. Hence the scripture speaks of some being 'ordained to eternal life,' Acts xiii. 48. and of 'appointing them to obtain salvation,' 1 Thess. v. 9. God appoints some to be rich, great, and honourable, some to be low and mean in the world; and others to be in a middle station, objects neither of envy nor contempt; but electing love appoints those on whom it falls to be saved from sin, and all the ruins of the fall; its great view is to eternal glory in heaven. To this they were appointed before they had a being.

2. They are chosen also to grace as the mean, as well as to glory as the end. God's predestinating them to eternal blessedness includes both, as in the text; and it further appears from 2 Thess. ii. 13. 'God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.' Hence faith is held out as a certain consequent of election, Acts xiii. 48. 'As many as were ordained unto eternal life, believed.' The man who

intends to dwell in a house yet unbuilt, intends also the means by which it may be made a fit habitation. So God having from eternity pitched on a select number of the ruined race of mankind as objects of his love, and having predestinated them to everlasting life, intended also the means necessary and proper for obtaining that glorious end. And therefore there is no ground from the decree of election to slight the means of salvation. God has so joined the end and the means, that none can put them asunder.

IV. Let us consider the properties of election.

1. It is altogether free, without any moving cause, but God's mere good pleasure. No reason can be found for this but only in the bosom of God. There is nothing before, or above, or without his purpose, that can be pitched upon as the cause of all that grace and goodness that he bestows upon his chosen ones. There was no merit or motive in them, as Christ told his disciples, John xv. 16. 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.' His choice is antecedent to ours. The persons who are singled out to be the objects of his special grace, were a part of lost mankind, the same by nature with others who were passed by, and left to perish in their sin. When God had all Adam's numerous progeny under the view of his all-seeing eye, he chose some, and passed by others. He found nothing in the creature to cast the balance of his choice, or to determine it to one more than another. Those that were rejected were as eligible as those that were chosen. They were all his creatures, and all alike obnoxious to his wrath by sin. It was grace alone that made the difference. So the prophet argues, Mal. i. 2, 3. 'I have loved you, saith the Lord: yet ye say, wherein hast thou loved us? was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau.' And this is abundantly clear in the text. Why doth God write some men's names in the book of life, and leave out others? why doth he enrol some whom he intends to make citizens of Zion, and heirs of immortal glory, and refuse to put others in his register? The text tells us, it is the *good pleasure of his will*.

You may, says an eminent divine, render a reason for many of God's actions, till you come to this, which is the top and foundation of all; and this act can be reduced to no other head of reason, but to that of his royal prerogative. If you inquire, why doth God save some, and condemn others at last? the reason is, because of the faith of the one, and the unbelief of the other. But why do some men believe? It is because God hath not only given them the means of grace, but accompanied these means with the power and efficacy of the Spirit. But why did God accompany these means

with the efficacy of his Spirit in some, and not in others? It is because he decreed by his grace to prepare them for glory. But why did he decree and chuse some to glory, and not others? Into what can you resolve this, but only into his sovereign pleasure? Salvation and damnation at the last upshot are acts of God as the righteous Judge and Governor of the world, giving life and eternal happiness to believers, and inflicting death and eternal misery upon unbelievers, conformable to his own law. Men may render a reason for these proceedings. But the choice of some and the preterition of others, is an act of God as he is a sovereign monarch, before any law was actually transgressed, because not actually given. What reason can be given for his advancing one part of matter to the noble dignity of a star, and leaving another part to make up the dark body of the earth? to compact one part into a glorious sun, and another part into a hard rock, but his royal prerogative? What is the reason that a prince subjects one malefactor to condign punishment, and lifts up another to a place of profit and trust? It is merely because he will, Rom. ix. 18. Hence we may infer,

(1.) That God did not chuse men to everlasting life and happiness for any moral perfection that he saw in them; because he converts those, and changes them by his grace, who are most sinful and profligate, as the Gentiles, who were soaked in idolatry and superstition. He found more faith among the Romans, who were Pagan idolaters, than among the Jews, who were the peculiar people of God, and to whom his heavenly oracles were committed. He planted a saintship at Corinth, a place notorious for the infamous worship of Venus, a superstition attended with the grossest uncleanness; and at Ephesus, that presented the world with a cup of fornication in the temple of Diana. And what character had the Cretians from one of their own poets, mentioned by the apostle in his epistle to Titus, whom he had placed among them to further the progress of the gospel, but the vilest and most abominable liars, and not to be credited; evil beasts, not to be associated with; slow bellies, fit for no service. Now what merit and attractive was here? What invitations could he have from lying, beastliness, and gluttony, but only from his own sovereignty? By this he plucked firebrands out of the burning, while he left straiter and more comely sticks to consume to ashes.

(2.) God doth not chuse men to grace and glory for any civil perfection that is in them; because he calls and renews the most despicable. He doth not elevate nature to grace on account of wealth or honour, or any civil station or dignities in the world, 1 Cor. i. 26. forecited. A purple robe is very seldom decked and adorned with

the jewel of grace. He takes more of the mouldy clay, than of refined dust, to cast into his image, and lodges his treasures more in the earthly vessels, than in the world's golden ones. Should God impart his grace most to those who abound in wealth and honour, it had laid a foundation for men to think, that he had been moved by those vulgarly esteemed excellencies, and to indulge them more than others. But such a conceit languisheth, and falls to the ground, when we behold the subjects of divine grace as void originally of any allurements as they are full of provocations.

(3.) Their foreseen faith and good works, or perseverance in either of them, are not the cause of election; because these are the fruits and effects, and therefore cannot be the causes of election, Rom. viii. 29. Acts. xiii. 48. It is clear also from this text, where it is said, they are chosen to be holy, and to adoption, and therefore to faith, by which we obtain it, John. i. 12. God did not chuse and elect men to grace and glory because they were holy, or because he did foresee that they would be so, but that he might purify and make them holy. And let it be observed, that the scripture attributes election only to God's good pleasure, Rom. ix. 11, 13, 16. Mat. xi. 25. And indeed, if it depended on foreseen faith or good works, we should rather be said to chuse God than he to chuse us.

4. God did not chuse some to life and happiness, because he was under any obligation to do so. He is indebted to none, and he is disobliged by all. He was under no tie to pity man's misery, and repair the ruins of the fall. He owes no more debt to fallen man than to fallen angels, to restore them to their first station by a superlative grace. God as a Sovereign gave laws to man, and strength sufficient to observe them. Now, what obligation is upon God to repair that strength which man hath wilfully lost, and to pull him out of that miserable pit into which he had voluntarily plunged himself? None at all. So then there was nothing in the elect more than others to move God to chuse them either to grace or glory. It was, and must be, the gracious issue and result of his sovereign will and mere good pleasure.

2. Election is eternal. They are elected from all eternity, Eph. i. 4. *chosen before the foundation of the world*, 2 Tim. i. 9. 'He hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.' All God's decrees are eternal, Eph. i. 11. 'We are predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. God takes no new counsels, to do which would be inconsistent with his infinite perfection. Because God is eternal, his purposes must

be of equal duration with his existence. And to imagine that an infinitely wise and sovereign Being existed from eternity, without any forethought, or resolution what to do, would be to suppose him to be undetermined or unresolved, at the time of his giving being to all things. And to suppose that the divine will is capable of new determinations, is to argue him to be imperfect; which would be as much an instance of mutability in him, as for him to alter his purpose. Election to everlasting life, must therefore be eternal.

3. It is particular and definite. God has chosen a certain number of the children of men to life, whom he knows by name, so as they can neither be more nor fewer. Hence their names are said to be written in the book of life, Luke x. 20. Phil. iv. 3. and others are said not to be written there, Rev. xvii. 8. Though they are known to none, yet God knows them all, 2 Tim. ii. 19. And they are given to Christ, John xvii. 9. Therefore God's decree of election is not a general decree only to save all that shall believe and persevere in the faith; for that way it might happen that none at all might be saved.

4. It is secret, or cannot be known, till God be pleased to discover it. Hence it is called 'the mystery of his will,' Eph. i. 9. as being hid in God from before the foundation of the world, and would for ever have been so, had he not discovered it in his word.

It is unchangeable. Mutability is an imperfection peculiar to creatures. As the least change in God's understanding, so as to know more or less than that hid from eternity, would be an instance of imperfection; the same must be said with respect to his holy will, which cannot be susceptible of new determinations. Though there are many changes in the external dispensations of his providence, which are the result of his will, as well as the effects of his power; yet there is no shadow of change in his purpose. No unforeseen occurrence can render it expedient for God to change his mind, nor can any higher power oblige him to do it; nor can any defect of power to accomplish his design, induce him to alter his purpose. Those who are once elected can never be reprobated. All that are elected shall most certainly be saved. None of them can be left to perish. For all the divine purposes are unchangeable, and must be fulfilled, Isa. xlvi. 10.; and this in particular, 2 Tim. ii. 19. Election is the foundation of God's house, laid by his own hand, which cannot be shaken, but stands sure; and a sealed foundation, as men seal what they will have; a seal of two parts securing it; on God's part, God loves and keeps them that are his, that they fall not away; on our part, the same God takes care that his elect depart from iniquity. It is not possible they can be totally

and finally deceived, Matth. xxiv. 24, and whom God has chosen he glorifies, Rom. viii. 29, 30. When we are bid make our election sure, it is meant of certainty and assurance as to our knowledge of it, and by no means of God's purpose.

V. The next thing is to shew, that all the elect, and they only, are in time brought out of a state of sin and misery into a state of salvation.

1. All the elect are redeemed by Christ, John x. 15. 'I lay down my life for the sheep,' says he. They are all in due time, by the power of the Spirit, regenerated, converted, and brought to Christ, and get faith to lay hold on him, John vi. 37. 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.' Acts xiii. 48. 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' Everlasting love at length breaks forth in bringing them to grace, Jer. xxxi. 3. 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.' They are all justified, adopted and sanctified, Rom. viii. 30.; and all of them persevere in grace, John xvii. 12. 1 Pet. i. 5. And all this by virtue of their election, Tit. ii. 14.

2. None other but the elect are brought into a state of salvation; none but they are redeemed, sanctified, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, John xvii. 9. Christ prays not for them. Those that perish were never redeemed, nor experienced a saving change passing upon them, as appears from Rom. viii. 29, 30. and 1 John ii. 19. God has passed them by, and suffers them to perish in their sin and guilt.

VI. I come to shew by whom the elect are saved. It is by Christ the Redeemer. Hence the apostle says, Tit. iii. 4, 5, 6. 'After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.' There is no other way of salvation but by him, Acts iv. 12. By him is all grace and glory purchased, and by his satisfaction there is a way opened for the venting of mercy with the good leave of justice. More particularly,

1. Before the elect could be delivered from that state of sin and misery into which they had brought themselves, a valuable satisfaction behoved to be given to the justice of God for the injury done by sin. It is evident from scripture, that God stood upon full satisfaction, and would not remit one sin without it. Several things plead strongly for this:

As, (1.) The infinite purity and holiness of God. There is a contrariety in sin to the holiness of his nature, which is his peculiar



glory; and from thence his hatred of it doth arise, which is as essential to him as his love to himself. The infinite purity and rectitude of his nature infers the most perfect abhorrence of whatever is opposite to it. Hence says the Psalmist, Psal. v. 4, 5. 'Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.' God cannot but hate all the workers of iniquity, and he cannot but punish them. His holiness is not only voluntary, but by necessity of nature. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity.

(2.) The justice of God pleads for a valuable satisfaction for sin. And here we are not to consider God as a private person wronged, but as the righteous Judge and Governor of the world, and the sovereign Protector of those sacred laws by which the reasonable creature is to be directed. Now, as it was most reasonable and convenient, that at the first giving of the law he should lay the strongest restraint upon man for preventing sin by the threatening of death; so it was most just and congruous, when the law was broken by man's rebellion, that the penalty should be inflicted either upon the person of the offender, according to the immediate intent of the law, or that satisfaction equivalent to the offence should be made, that the majesty and purity of God might appear in his justice. He is the Judge of all the earth, and cannot but do right.

(3.) The wisdom of God, by which he governs the rational world, admits not of a dispensation or relaxation of the threatening without a valuable satisfaction. For it is as good to have no king as no laws for government, and as good to have no law as no penalty, and as good that no penalty be annexed to the law as no execution of it. Hence, says a learned divine, It is altogether indecent, especially to the wisdom and righteousness of God, that that which provoketh the execution of the law, should procure the abrogation of it, as that should supplant and undermine the law, for the alone prevention of which the law was made. How could it be expected, that men should fear and tremble before God, when they should find themselves more scared and hurt by his threatenings against sin?

(4.) The truth and veracity of God required a satisfaction for sin. The word had gone out of God's mouth, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;' and again it is said, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' Now, this sentence was immutable, and the word that had gone out of his mouth must stand. Had God violated his truth by dispensing with the punishment threatened,

he had rendered himself an unfit object of trust; he had exposed all the promises or threatenings which he should have made after man's impunity, to the mockery and contempt of the offender, and excluded his word from any credit with man for the future. And therefore God's word could not fall to the ground without an accomplishment. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall stand firm. He will be true to his threatenings, though thousands and millions should perish.

2. As satisfaction to justice was necessary, and that which God insisted upon, so the elect could not give it themselves, neither was there any creature in heaven and earth that could do it for them. Heaven and earth were at an infinite loss to find out a ransom for their souls. We may apply to this purpose what we have, Isa. lxiii. 5. 'I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold.' This is the desperate and forlorn condition of the elect by nature as well as others.

3. God pitched upon Christ in his infinite grace and wisdom as the fittest person for managing this grand design. Hence it is said, 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty.' And the apostle saith, he 'hath set him forth to be a propitiation for sin.' On this account he is called 'his servant whom he hath chosen, and his elect in whom his soul delighteth.' God speaks to them, as Job xxxiii. 24. 'Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.'

4. Christ accepted the office of a Redeemer, and engaged to make his soul an offering for sin. He cheerfully undertook this work in that eternal transaction that was between the Father and him. He was content to stand in the elect's room, and to submit himself to the terrible strokes of vindictive justice. He is brought in by the Psalmist offering himself as a Surety in their stead, Psal. xl. 6, 7. 'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, &c. Then said I, Lo, I come,' &c. He willingly yielded to all the conditions requisite for the accomplishment of our redemption. He was content to take a body, that he might be capable to suffer. The debt could not be paid, nor the articles of the covenant performed, but in the human nature. He was therefore to have a nature capable of and prepared for sufferings. Hence it is said, Heb. x. 5. 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not; but a body hast thou prepared me.' It behoved him to have a body to suffer that which was represented by these legal sacrifices wherein God took no pleasure. And he took a body of flesh, surrounded with the infirmities of our fallen nature, sin only excepted. He condescended to lay aside the robes of his glory, to make himself of no reputation, to take upon him the form of a servant, and be found in the likeness of men.

5. Christ satisfied offended justice in the room of the elect, and purchased eternal redemption for them. 'He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,' Phil. ii. 8. This was the prime article in the covenant of grace, 'When he shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed,' Isa. liii. 10. God required this sacrifice exclusive of all others in the first treaty. 'Sacrifice and burnt-offerings thou wouldst not; in them thou hadst no pleasure: then said I, Lo, I come,' &c. These sacrifices were entirely useless for the satisfaction of justice, though fit to prefigure the grand sacrifice that God intended. It was by the death of Christ alone that redemption was purchased for men, Rom. v. 10. Eph. ii. 13. Col. i. 21. And when he was upon the cross, he cried, 'It is finished;' that is, the work of redemption is accomplished; I have done all that was appointed for me to do; the articles on my part are now fulfilled; there remain no more deaths for me to suffer.

Thus the elect are saved by the Lord Jesus Christ.

I shall conclude all with a few inferences.

1. Behold here the freedom and glory of sovereign grace, which is the sole cause why God did not leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery, as he did the fallen angels. He was no more obliged to the one than the other. Why did he chuse any of the fallen race of men to grace and glory? It was his mere good pleasure to pitch on some, and pass by others. He could have been without them all, without any spot either on his happiness or justice; but out of his mere good pleasure he pitched his love on a select number, in whom he will display the invincible efficacy of his sovereign grace, and thereby bring them to the fruition of glory. This proceeds from his absolute sovereignty. Justice or injustice comes not into consideration here. If he had pleased, he might have made all the objects of his love; and if he had pleased he might have chosen none, but have suffered Adam and all his numerous offspring to sink eternally into the pit of perdition. It was in his supreme power to have left all mankind under the rack of his justice; and, by the same right of dominion, he may pick out some men from the common mass, and lay aside others to bear the punishment of their crimes. There is no cause in the creature but all in God. It must be resolved into his sovereign will. So it is said, Rom. ix. 15, 16. He saith to Moses, 'I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.' And yet God did not will without wisdom. He did not chuse hand over head, and act by mere will without reason and understanding. An infinite wisdom

is far from such a kind of procedure. But the reason of God's proceedings is inscrutable to us, unless we could understand God as well as he understands himself. The rays of his infinite wisdom are too bright and dazzling for our weak and shallow capacities. The apostle acknowledges not only a wisdom in his proceeding, but riches and a treasure of wisdom; and not only that, but a depth and vastness of these riches of wisdom; but was wholly incapable to give a scheme and inventory of it. Hence he cries out, Rom. xi. 33. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' Let us humbly adore the divine sovereignty. We should cast ourselves down at God's feet, with a full resignation of ourselves to his sovereign pleasure. This is a more becoming carriage in a Christian, than contentious endeavours to measure God by our line.

2. This doctrine should stop men's murmurings and silence all their pleadings with or against God. O what strivings are there sometimes in the hearts of men about God's absolute sovereignty in electing some and rejecting others? The apostle insists much upon this in Rom. ix. where, having represented the Lord speaking thus by Moses, ver. 15. 'I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion;' he presently prevents an objection, or the strife of man with God about that saying, ver. 19. 'Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?' This is man's plea against the sovereign will of God. But what saith the Lord by the apostle to such a pleader? We have his reproof of him for an answer, in ver. 20. 'Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?' The apostle brings in this argument as to man's eternal state, He must not strive with God about that. He must not say, Why doth God find fault with man? His absolute power in his reason why he disposeth thus or thus of thee, or any other man. He will give thee no account why it is so; but his own will to have it so. He may chuse some for the glory of his rich, free, and sovereign grace, and leave others to perish in their sins for the glory of his power and justice. This should stop men's mouths, and make them sit down quietly under all God's dealings.

3. This is ground of humility and admiration to the elect of God, and shows them to what they owe the difference that is between them and others, even to free grace. Those who are passed by were as eligible as those that were chosen. Though God hath dignified them, and raised them to be heirs of glory, yet they were heirs of

wrath, and no better than others by nature, Eph. ii. 3. Well may they say with David in another case, 'Lord, what am I, or what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?' All were in the same corrupt mass, and nothing but free grace made the difference between the elected and the non-elected.

4. Then the elect shall not persist in their infidelity and natural state, but shall all be effectually called and brought in to Christ. Whatever good things God hath purposed for them shall surely be conferred upon and wrought in them by the irresistible efficacy of his powerful grace. God's counsel shall stand and he will do all his pleasure.

5. Then people may know that they are elected. Hence is that exhortation, 2 Pet. i. 10. 'Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.' Though we cannot break in at the first hand upon the secrets of God, yet if we do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, receive him as our only Saviour, and submit to him as our Lord and Sovereign, we may know that we are elected, seeing the elect and they only are brought to believe. Others may be elected, but they cannot know it till they actually believe.

6. The Lord will never cast off his elect people. He that chose them from eternity, while he saw no good in them, will not afterwards cast them off. God's decree of election is the best security they can have for life and salvation, and a foundation that standeth absolutely sure. Whatever faults and follies they may be guilty of, yet the Lord will never cast them off. They shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

7. *Lastly*, This doctrine may teach us to form our judgment aright concerning the success of the gospel. The gospel and the ministrations thereof are designed for the bringing in of God's chosen ones. All never did nor ever will believe: but one thing is sure, that all who are ordained to eternal life shall believe and obey the gospel, Rom. xi. 7.