

# ETERNAL ELECTION

A

CAUSE OF AND MOTIVE UNTO HOLINESS.

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## CHAP. II.

*Other arguments for the necessity of holiness, from God's eternal election.  
The argument from thence explained, improved, vindicated.*

WE have seen, upon the whole matter, what conclusions (as unto our own duty) we ought to draw from that revelation of the nature of God in Christ, which is made unto us, and our relation unto him: if we are not thereby prevailed on, always, in all instances of obedience, to endeavour to be holy, universally, in all manner of holy conversation, we neither can enjoy his favour here, nor be brought unto the enjoyment of him in glory hereafter.

That consideration which usually we take of God, next after his *nature* and the properties of it, is of the *eternal free acts* of his *will*, or his *decrees* and *purposes*. And we shall now inquire, what respect they have unto *holiness* in us, what *arguments* and *motives* may be taken from them, to evince the *necessity* of it unto us, and to press us thereunto; especially from the decree of *election*, which in an especial manner is by some traduced, as no friend to this design. I say then, that,

*It is the eternal and immutable purpose of God, that all who are his in a peculiar manner, all whom he designs to bring unto blessedness in the everlasting enjoyment of himself; shall antecedently thereunto be made holy.* This purpose of his, God hath declared unto us, that we may take no wrong measures of our estate and condition, nor build hopes or expectations of future glory, on sandy foundations that will fail us. Whatever we are else, in parts, abilities, profession, moral honesty, usefulness unto others, reputation in the church, if we are not personally, spiritually, evangelically holy, we have no interest in that purpose or decree of God, whereby any per-

sons are designed unto salvation and glory. And this we shall briefly confirm.

Eph. i. 4. 'He hath chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and unblamable before him in love.' But is this that which firstly and principally we are ordained unto, and that for its own sake, namely, holiness, and unblamableness in the obedience of love? No; we are firstly ordained unto 'eternal life;' Acts xiii. 48. we are 'chosen from the beginning unto salvation;' 2 Thess. ii. 13. That which God, in the first place, intends as his end in the decree of election, is our eternal salvation, to the 'praise of the glory of his grace;' Eph. i. 5, 6. 11. How then is he said to choose us that we should be holy? in what sense is our holiness proposed as the design of God in election? It is as the indispensable means for the attaining of the end of salvation and glory. I do, saith God, choose these poor lost sinners, to be mine in an especial manner, to save them by my Son, and bring them, through his mediation, unto eternal glory; but in order hereunto, I do purpose and decree, that they shall be holy and unblamable in the obedience of love, without which, as a means, none shall ever attain that end. Wherefore, the expectation and hope of any man, for life and immortality and glory, without previous holiness, can be built on no other foundation but this, that God will rescind his eternal decrees, and change his purposes, that is, cease to be God, merely to comply with them in their sins. And who knows not what will be the end of such a cursed hope and expectation? The contrary is seconded by that of the apostle, Rom. viii. 36. 'Whom he did predestinate, them he also called.' Wherever predestination unto glory goes before, concerning any person, there effectual vocation unto faith and holiness infallibly ensues: and where these never were, the other never was. So 2 Thess. ii. 13. God hath 'chosen you from the beginning unto salvation, through the sanctification of the Spirit.' Chosen we are unto salvation, by the free sovereign grace of God: but how may this salvation be actually obtained? how may we be brought into the actual possession of it? Through the sanctification of the Spirit, and no otherwise. Whom God doth not sanctify and make holy by his Spirit, he never chose unto salvation from the beginning. The counsels of God, therefore, concerning

us, do not depend on our holiness ; but upon our holiness our future happiness depends in the counsels of God.

Hence we may see, wherein lies the force of the argument for the necessity of holiness, from God's decree of election ; and it consists in these two things :

First, That such is the *nature* of the *unalterable decree* of God in this matter, that no person living, can ever attain the end of *glory* and *happiness*, without the means of *grace* and *holiness*. The same eternal purpose respecteth both. I shall afterward shew, how the infallible and indissolvable connexion of these things is established by the law of God. Our present argument is from hence, that it is fixed by God's eternal decree. He hath ordained none to salvation, but he hath ordained them antecedently to be holy. Not the least infant that goes out of this world, shall come to eternal rest, unless it be sanctified, and so made habitually and radically holy. He chooseth none to salvation but through the sanctification of the Spirit. As, therefore, whatever else we have or may seem to have, it is contrary to the nature of God, that we should come to the enjoyment of him, if we are not holy, so it is contrary to his eternal and unchangeable decree also.

Secondly, It ariseth from hence, that we can have no *evidence* of our *interest* in God's decree of *election*, whereby we are designed unto life and glory, without *holiness* effectually wrought in us. Wherefore, as our life depends upon it, so do all our comforts. To this purpose speaks our apostle, 2 Tim. ii. 19. 'The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth who are his.' It is the decree of election which he intends, and he proposeth it as that alone which will give security against apostacy in a time of great temptations and trials ; as our Saviour doth likewise ; Matt. xxiv. 24. Every thing else will fail, but what is an especial fruit and effect of this decree. What, therefore, is incumbent on us with respect thereunto, that we may know we have an interest in this single security against final apostacy ? saith the apostle, 'And let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.' There is no other way to come unto an evidence thereof, but by a departure from all iniquity, by universal holiness. So the apostle Peter directs us, to 'give all diligence to make our election sure ;'

2 Pet. i. 10. Sure it is in itself, from all eternity. 'The foundation of God standeth sure.' But our duty it is to make it sure and certain unto ourselves. And this is a thing of the highest importance and concernment unto us, whence we are required to give all diligence unto that end. How then may this be done or effected? This he declares in the foregoing verses, and it is only by finding in ourselves, and duly exercising that train of gospel graces and duties which he there enumerates; ver. 5—9.

It is evident, therefore, and necessary from God's decree of election, that if we intend either eternal glory hereafter, or any consolation or assurance here, that we must endeavour to be 'holy and unblamable before him in love.' For whomsoever God purposeth to save, he purposeth first to sanctify; neither have we any ground to suppose, that we are built on that foundation of God which standeth sure, unless we depart from all iniquity. What farther motives may be taken from the especial nature of this decree, shall be considered when we have removed one objection out of our way.

Some there are, who apprehend that these things are quite otherwise. For they say, that a supposition of God's decree of personal election is a discouragement unto all endeavours for holiness, and an effectual obstruction thereof in the lives of men. And under this pretence chiefly, is the doctrine concerning it blasphemed and evil spoken of. 'For,' say they, 'if God have freely from eternity chosen men unto salvation, what need is there that they should be holy? They may live securely in the pursuit of their lusts, and be sure not to fail of heaven at the last. For God's decree cannot be frustrated, nor his will resisted. And if men be not elected, whatever they endeavour in the ways of holy obedience, it will be utterly lost, for eternally saved they cannot, they shall not be. This, therefore, is so far from being a conviction of the necessity of holiness, and a motive unto it, as that indeed it renders it unnecessary and useless; yea, defeats the power and efficacy of all other arguments for it, and motives unto it.'

Now this objection, if not for the sake of those who make use of it as a cavil against the truth, yet of those who may feel the force of it in the way of a temptation, must be removed out of our way: to this end, I answer two things:

1. In *general*; that this *persuasion is not of him that calleth us*. This way of arguing is not taught in the Scripture, nor can thence be learned. The doctrine of God's free electing love and grace is fully declared therein. And withal, it is proposed as the fountain of all holiness, and made a great motive thereunto. Is it not safer now for us to adhere to the plain testimonies of Scripture, confirmed by the experience of the generality of believers, captivating our understandings to the obedience of faith, than hearken unto such perverse cavils, as would possess our minds with a dislike of God and his ways? Those who hate gospel holiness, or would substitute something else in the room of it, will never want exceptions against all its concernments. A holiness they lay claim unto, and plead an interest in. For, as I said formerly, a confession in general of the necessity hereof, is almost the only thing wherein all that are called Christians do agree. But such a holiness they would have, as doth not spring from eternal divine election, as is not wrought in us originally by the almighty efficacy of grace in our conversion, as is not promoted by free justification, through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. Now, this is such a holiness as the Scripture knoweth nothing of, unless it be to reject and condemn it. Wherefore, this objection proceeding only from the craft of Satan, opposing the ways and methods of God's grace, when he dareth not openly oppose the thing itself, it is safer for a believer to rest quietly in the clear Scripture revelation, than to attend unto such proud, perverse, and froward cavillings.

2. In *particular*; we are not only obliged to believe all *divine revelations*, but also in the *way, order, and method*, wherein, by the *will* of God, they are proposed unto us, and which is required by the *nature* of the things themselves. For instance, the belief of eternal life is required in the gospel: but yet no man is obliged to believe, that he shall be eternally saved whilst he lives in his sins, but rather the contrary. On this supposition, which is plain and evident, I shall, in the ensuing propositions, utterly cast this objection out of consideration.

(1.) The decree of *election*, considered *absolutely* in itself, without respect unto its *effects*, is no part of God's *revealed will*; that is, it is not revealed, that this or that man, is,

or is not elected. This, therefore, can be made neither argument nor objection, about any thing wherein faith or obedience are concerned; for we know it not, we cannot know it, it is not our duty to know it, the knowledge of it is not proposed as of any use unto us, yea, it is our sin to inquire into it. It may seem to some, to be like the tree of knowledge of good and evil unto Eve; good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and much to be desired to make one wise, as all secret [forbidden things seem to carnal minds. But men can gather no fruit from it but death. See Deut. xxix. 29. Whatever exceptions, therefore, are laid against this decree as it is in itself, whatever inferences are made, on supposition of this or that man's being, or not being, elected, they are all unjust and unreasonable, yea, proved contending with God, who hath appointed another way for the discovery hereof, as we shall see afterward.

(2.) God sends the *gospel* to men in pursuit of his *decree of election*, and in order unto its effectual accomplishment. I dispute not what other end it hath or may have, in its indefinite proposal unto all. But this is the first, regulating, principal end of it. Wherefore, in the preaching of it, our apostle affirms, that he 'endured all things for the elect's sake, that they might obtain the salvation which is in Jesus Christ, with eternal glory;' 2 Tim. ii. 10. So God beforehand commanded him to stay and preach the gospel at Corinth, because 'he had much people in that city;' namely, in his purpose of grace; Acts xviii. 10. See chap. ii. 47. xiii. 48.

(3.) Wherever this *gospel comes*, it proposeth *life and salvation* by *Jesus Christ*, unto all that shall *believe, repent*, and yield *obedience* unto him. It plainly makes known unto men their duty, and plainly proposeth unto them their reward. In this state of things, no man without the highest pride, and utmost effect of unbelief, can oppose the secret decree of God unto our known duty. Saith such an one, I will neither repent, nor believe, nor obey, unless I may first know whether I am elected or no, for all at last will depend thereon. If this be the resolution of any man, he may go about his other occasions, the gospel hath nothing to say or offer unto him. If he will admit of it on no other terms, but that he may set up his own will, and wisdom, and methods, in

opposition unto and exclusion of those of God, he must, for aught I know, take his own course, whereof he may repent when it is too late.

(4.) The *sole way* of God's appointment, whereby we may come to an apprehension of an interest in *election*, is by the *fruits* of it in our *own souls*: nor is it lawful for us to inquire into it or after it any other way. The obligation which the gospel puts upon us to believe any thing, respects the order of the things themselves to be believed, and the order of our obedience, as was before observed. For instance; when it is declared, that Christ died for sinners, no man is immediately obliged to believe, that Christ died for him in particular, but only that he died to save sinners, to procure a way of salvation for them, among whom he finds himself to be. Hereon the gospel requires of men faith and obedience: this are they obliged to comply withal. Until this be done, no man is under an obligation to believe that Christ died for him in particular. So is it in this matter of election: a man is obliged to believe the doctrine of it, upon the first promulgation of the gospel, because it is therein plainly declared. But as for his own personal election, he cannot believe it, nor is obliged to believe it any otherwise, but as God reveals it by its effects. No man ought, no man can justly question his own election, doubt of it, or disbelieve it, until he be in such a condition as wherein it is impossible that the effects of election should ever be wrought in him; if such a condition there be in this world. For as a man whilst he is unholy can have no evidence that he is elected, so he can have none that he is not elected, whilst it is possible that ever he may be holy. Wherefore, whether men are elected or no, is not that which God calls any immediately to be conversant about. Faith, obedience, holiness, are the inseparable fruits, effects, and consequents of election; as hath been proved before. See Eph. i. 4. 2 Thess. ii. 13. Tit. i. 1. Acts xiii. 48. In whomsoever these things are wrought, he is obliged, according to the method of God and the gospel, to believe his own election: and any believer may have the same assurance of it as he hath of his calling, sanctification, or justification; for these things are inseparable. And by the exercise of grace, are we obliged to secure our interest in election; 2-Pet. i. 11. But as for those who are

as yet unbelievers and unholy, they can draw no conclusion that they are not elected, but from this supposition, that they are in a state and condition, wherein it is impossible that ever they should have either grace or holiness; which cannot be supposed concerning any man but he that knows himself to have sinned against the Holy Ghost.

Wherefore, all the supposed strength of the objection mentioned, lieth only in the pride of men's minds and wills, refusing to submit themselves unto the order and method of God in the dispensation of his grace, and his prescription of their duty, where we must leave it.

To return unto our designed discourse. The doctrine of God's *eternal election* is every where in the Scripture proposed for the *encouragement* and *consolation* of believers, and to further them in their course of *obedience* and *holiness*. See Eph. i. 3—10. Rom. viii. 28—33. As unto men's present concernment therein, it is infallibly assured unto them by its *effects*; and being so, it is filled with *motives* unto holiness, as we shall now farther declare in particular.

First, The *sovereign* and ever-to-be-adored *grace* and *love* of God herein, is a powerful *motive* hereunto. For we have no way to express our resentment of this grace, our acknowledgment of it, our thankfulness for it, but by a holy fruitful course of obedience; nor doth God on the account hereof require any thing else of us. Let us, therefore, inquire what sense and obligation this puts upon us; that God from all eternity, out of his mere sovereign grace, not moved by any thing in ourselves, should first choose us unto life and salvation by Jesus Christ, decreeing immutably to save us out of the perishing multitude of mankind, from whom we neither then did in his eye or consideration, nor by any thing in ourselves ever would differ in the least? What impression doth this make upon our souls? What conclusion as to our practice and obedience do we hence educe? Why saith one, 'If God hath thus chosen me, I may then live in sin as I please, all will be well and safe in the latter end, which is all I need care for.' But this is the language of a devil, and not of a man. Suggestions possibly of this nature, by the craft of Satan, in conjunction with the deceitfulness of sin, may be injected into the minds of believers; as what may not so be? But he that shall foment, embrace, and act practically



according to this inference, is such a monster of impiety and presumptuous ingratitude, as hell itself cannot parallel, in many instances. I shall use some boldness in this matter. He that doth not understand, who is not sensible, that an apprehension by faith of God's electing love in Christ, hath a natural, immediate, powerful influence upon the souls of believers, unto the love of God and holy obedience, is utterly unacquainted with the nature of faith, and its whole work and actings towards God, in the hearts of them that believe. Is it possible, that any one who knows these things, can suppose, that those on whom they are in sincerity and power, can be such stupid, impious, and ungrateful monsters, so devoid of all holy ingenuity, and filial affections towards God, as merely out of despite unto him, to cast poison into the spring of all their own mercies? Many have I known complain, that they could not arrive at a comfortable persuasion of their own election; never any, who when they had received it in a due way and manner, that it proved a snare unto them, that it tended to ingenerate looseness of life, unholiness, or a contempt of God in them. Besides, in the Scripture it is still proposed and made use of unto other ends. And those who know any thing of the nature of faith, or of the love of God, any thing of intercourse or communion with him by Jesus Christ, any thing of thankfulness, obedience, or holiness, will not be easily persuaded, but that God's electing love and grace, is a mighty constraining motive unto the due exercise of them all.

God himself knoweth this to be so, and, therefore, he maketh the consideration of his electing love, as free and undeserved, his principal argument to stir up the people unto holy obedience; Deut. vii. 6—8. 11. And a supposition hereof lies at the bottom of that blessed exhortation of our apostle; Col. iii. 12. 'Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, forgiving one another.' These things, which are so great a part of our holiness, become the elect of God; these are required of them on the account of their interest in electing love and grace. Men may frame a holiness to themselves, and be stirred up unto it by motives of their own (as there is a religion in the world, that runs in a parallel line by that of

evangelical truth, but toucheth it not, nor will do so to eternity), but that which the gospel requires, is promoted on the grounds and by the motives that are peculiar unto it, whereof this of God's free electing love and grace is among the principal. Farther to confirm this truth, I shall instance in some especial *graces, duties, and parts* of holiness, that this consideration is suited to promote.

1. *Humility* in all things, is a necessary consequent of a due *consideration* of this *decree* of God. For what were we when he thus set his heart upon us, to choose us, and to do us good for ever? Poor, lost, undone creatures, that lay perishing under the guilt of our apostacy from him? What did he see in us, to move him so to choose us, nothing but sin and misery? What did he foresee that we would do of ourselves more than others, if he wrought not in us by his effectual grace? nothing but a continuance in sin and rebellion against him, and that for ever. How should the thoughts hereof keep our souls in all humility and continual self-abasement. For what have we in or from ourselves, on the account whereof we should be lifted up? Wherefore, as the elect of God, let us put on humility in all things. And let me add, that there is no grace whereby at this day we may more glorify God and the gospel, now the world is sinking into ruin under the weight of its own pride.

The spirits of men, the looks of men, the tongues of men, the lives of men, are lifted up by their pride unto their destruction. The good Lord keep professors from a share in the pride of these days. Spiritual pride in foolish self-exalting opinions, and the pride of life in the fashions of the world, are the poison of this age.

2. *Submission* to the *sovereign will* and *pleasure* of God, in the disposal of all our *concerns* in this world: that this is an excellent *fruit* of *faith*, an eminent part of *holiness*, or duty of *obedience*, is acknowledged; and never was it more signally called for than it is at this day. He that cannot live in an actual resignation of himself and all his concerns unto the sovereign pleasure of God, can neither glorify him in any thing, nor have one hour's solid peace in his own mind. This public calamities, this private dangers and losses, this the uncertainty of all things here below, call for at present in an especial manner. God hath taken all pre-

tences of security from the earth, by what some men feel and some men fear. None knows how soon it may be his portion to be brought unto the utmost extremity of earthly calamities. There is none so old, none so young, none so wise, none so rich, as thence to expect relief from such things? Where then shall we in this condition cast anchor? whither shall we betake ourselves for quietness and repose? It is no way to be obtained, but in a resignation of ourselves and all our concernments into the sovereign pleasure of God: and what greater motive can we have thereunto than this? The first act of divine sovereign pleasure concerning us, was the choosing of us from all eternity unto all holiness and happiness. This was done when we were not, when we had no contrivances of our own. And shall we not now put all our temporary concerns into the same hand? Can the same fountain send out sweet and bitter water? Can the same sovereign pleasure of God be the free only cause of all our blessedness, and can it do that which is really evil unto us? Our souls, our persons, were secure and blessedly provided for, as to grace and glory, in the sovereign will of God; and what a prodigious impiety is it not to trust all other things in the same hand, to be disposed of freely and absolutely? If we will not forego our interest in mere absolute free sovereign grace for ten thousand worlds, as no believer will, how ready should we be to resign up thereunto that little portion which we have in this world among perishing things?

3. *Love, kindness, compassion*, forbearance towards all *believers*, all the *saints* of God, however differenced among themselves, are made indispensably *necessary* unto us, and pressed on us from the same consideration. And herein also doth no small part of our holiness consist. To this purpose is the exhortation of the apostle before mentioned, Col. iii. 12. For, if God have chosen them all from eternity, and made them the objects of his love and grace, as he hath done so concerning all sincere believers, do we not think it necessary, doth not God require of us, that we should love them also? How dare any of us entertain unkind severe thoughts? how dare we maintain animosities and enmities against any of them whom God hath eternally chosen to grace and glory? Such things, it may be, upon provoca-

tions and surprisals, and clashings of secular interests, have fallen out, and will fall out amongst us; but they are all opposite and contrary unto that influence which the consideration of God's electing love ought to have upon us. The apostle's rule is, that, as unto our communion in love, we ought to receive him whom God hath received, and because God hath received him, against which no other thing can be laid in bar; Rom. xiv. 1. 3. And the rule is no less certain, yea, is subject to less exceptions, that we ought to choose, embrace, and love all those, whoever they be, whom God hath chosen and loved from eternity. There is no greater evidence of low, weak, selfish Christians, than to prescribe any other rules or bounds unto their spiritual evangelical affections, than the decree of God's election, as manifesting itself in its effects. 'I endure all things,' saith our apostle, not for the Jews or Gentiles, not for the weak or strong in the faith, not for those of this or that way, but 'for the elect's sake.' This should regulate our love, and mightily stir it up unto all actings of kindness, mercy, compassion, forbearance, and forgiveness.

4. *Contempt of the world*, and all that belongs unto it, will hence also be ingenerated in us. Did God set his heart upon some from eternity? did he choose them to be his own peculiar, to distinguish them as his from all the residue of mankind? doth he design to give them the highest, greatest, best fruits and effects of his love, and glorify himself in their praises for ever? What then will he do for them? will he make them all kings or emperors in the world? Or at least, will he have them to be rich, and noble, and honourable among men, that it may be known and proclaimed, 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king of heaven delighteth to honour;' however, that they should be kept from straits, and difficulties, and trials, from poverty, and shame, and reproach in the world? alas! none of these things were in the least in the heart of God concerning them. They deserve not to be named on the same day, as we use to speak, with the least of those things which God hath chosen his unto. Were there any real substantial good in them on their own account, he would not have cast them out of the counsels of his love. But on the contrary, 'you see your calling, brethren,' which is the

infallible fruit and consequent of election, 'how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many noble, not many mighty are called, but God hath chosen the poor of the world, the base and the contemptible,' for the most part. Yea, he hath designed the generality of his elect, to a poor, low, and afflicted condition in this world. And shall we set our hearts on those things that God hath so manifestly put an under valuation upon, in comparison of the least concernment of grace and holiness? Wherefore, let them that are poor and despised in the world, learn to be satisfied with their state and condition: had God seen it to have been good for you to have been otherwise, he would not have passed it by when he was acting eternal love towards you. And let them that are rich not set their hearts upon uncertain riches. Alas! they are things which God had no regard unto, when he prepared grace and glory for his own. Let the remembrance hereof suit your esteem and valuation of them; do but think with yourselves that these are not the things that God had any regard unto, when he chose us unto grace and glory, and it will abate of your cares about them, cool your love towards them, and take off your hearts from them, which is your holiness.

Secondly, *Electing love* is a *motive* and *encouragement* unto holiness, because of the *enabling supplies of grace* which he may and ought thence to expect by Jesus Christ. The difficulties we meet withal in a course of holiness are great and many. Here Satan, the world, and sin, do put forth and try their utmost strength; oft-times the best are foiled, oft-times discouraged, sometimes weary and ready to give over: it requires a good spiritual courage, to take a prospect of the lions, serpents, and snares, that lie in the way of a constant persevering course in gospel obedience. Hereon our knees are ready to grow feeble, and our hands to hang down. It is no small relief herein, no small encouragement to continue in our progress, that the fountain of electing grace, will never fail us, but continually give out supplies of spiritual strength and refreshment. Hence may we take heart and courage, to rise again when we have been foiled, to abide when the shock of temptation is violent, and to persevere in those duties which are most wearisome to the flesh. And they are unacquainted with a course of holy obedience, who

know not how needful this consideration is unto a comfortable continuance therein.

Thirdly, It hath the same *tendency* and effect in the *assurance* we have from thence, that notwithstanding all the oppositions we meet withal, we shall not utterly and finally miscarry. God's election will at last obtain; Rom. xi. 7. and 'his foundation standeth sure;' 2 Tim. i. 19. His purpose, which is 'according unto election,' is unchangeable; and therefore the final perseverance and salvation of those concerned in it, are everlastingly secured. This is the design of the apostle's discourse, Rom. viii. from ver. 28. unto the end. Because of the immutability of God's eternal purpose in our predestination, and his effectual operations in the pursuit and for the execution thereof, the elect of God shall infallibly be carried through all, even the most dreadful oppositions that are made against them, and be at length safely landed in glory. And there is no greater encouragement to grow and persist in holiness, than what is administered by this assurance of a blessed end and issue of it.

Those who have had experience of that spiritual slumber and sloth which unbelief will cast us under, of those weaknesses, discouragements, and despondencies, which uncertainties, doubts, fears, and perplexities of what will be the issue of things at last with them, do cast upon the souls of men, how duties are discouraged, spiritual endeavours and diligence are impaired, delight in God weakened, and love cooled by them, will be able to make a right judgment of the truth of this assertion. Some think that this apprehension of the immutability of God's purpose of election, and the infallibility of the salvation of believers on that account, tends only to carelessness and security in sin; and that to be always in fear, dread, and uncertainty of the end, is the only means to make us watchful unto duties of holiness. It is very sad, that any man should so far proclaim his inexperience and unacquaintedness with the nature of gospel grace, the genius and inclination of the new creature, and the proper workings of faith, as to be able thus to argue, without a check put upon him by himself and from his own experience. It is true, were there no difference between faith and presumption, no difference between the spirit of liberty under the covenant of grace, and that of bondage under the old

covenant; no spirit of adoption given unto believers, no filial genuine delight in, and adherence unto, God, ingenerated in them thereby, there might be something in this objection: but if the nature of faith, and of the new creature, the operations of the one and disposition of the other, are such as they are declared to be in the gospel, and as believers have experience of them in their own hearts, men do but bewray their ignorance, whilst they contend, that the assurance of God's unchangeable love in Christ, flowing from the immutability of his counsel in election, doth any way impeach, or doth not effectually promote the industry of believers in all duties of obedience.

Suppose a man that is on his journey, knoweth himself to be in his right way, and that passing on therein, he shall certainly and infallibly come to his journey's end, especially if he will a little quicken his speed, as occasion shall require; will you say, that this is enough to make such a man careless and negligent, and that it would be much more to his advantage to be lost and bewildered in uncertain paths and ways, not knowing whither he goes, nor whether he shall ever arrive at his journey's end? Common experience declares the contrary, as also how momentary and useless are those violent fits and gusts of endeavours, which proceed from fear and uncertainty, both in things spiritual and temporal, or civil. Whilst men are under the power of actual impressions from such fears, they will convert to God, yea, that they will *momento turbinis*, and perfect holiness in an instant: but so soon as that impression wears off (as it will do on ever occasion, and upon none at all), such persons are as dead and cold towards God, as the lead or iron, which ran but now in a fiery stream, is when the heat is departed from it. It is that soul alone, ordinarily, which hath a comfortable assurance of God's eternal, immutable, electing love, and thence of the blessed end of its own course of obedience, who goeth on constantly and evenly in a course of holiness, quickening his course, and doubling his speed, as he hath occasion from trials or opportunities. And this is the very design of our apostle, to explain and confirm, Heb. vi. from the tenth verse unto the end of the chapter, as is declared elsewhere.

It appears, from what hath been discoursed, that the electing love of God, is a powerful constraining motive unto ho-

liness, and that which proves invincibly, the necessity of it in all who intend the eternal enjoyment of God. But it will be said, 'That if it be supposed or granted, that those who are actually believers, and have a sense of their interest herein, may make the use of it that is pleaded; yet as for those who are unconverted, or are otherwise uncertain of their spiritual state and condition, nothing can be so discouraging unto them as this doctrine of eternal election. Can they make any other conclusion from it, but that, if they are not elected, all care and pains in and about duties of obedience are vain; if they are, they are needless.' The removal of this objection shall put a close unto our discourse on this subject. And I answer:

1. That we have shewed already, that this doctrine is *revealed* and proposed in the Scripture, principally to acquaint believers with their privilege, safety, and fountain of their comforts. Having, therefore, proved its usefulness unto them, I have discharged all that is absolutely needful to my present purpose. But I shall shew moreover, that it hath its proper benefit and advantage towards others also.

For, 2. suppose the doctrine of personal election be preached unto men, together with the other sacred truths of the gospel: two conclusions, it is possible, may by sundry persons be made from it. (1.) That whereas this is a matter of great and eternal moment unto our souls, and there is no way to secure our interest in it, but by the possession of its fruits and effects, which are saving faith and holiness; we will, we must, it is our duty, to use our utmost endeavours, by attaining of them, and growth in them, to make our election sure. And herein, if we be sincere and diligent, we shall not fail. Others, (2.) may conclude, that if it be so indeed, that those who shall be saved are chosen thereunto before the foundation of the world, then it is to no purpose to go about to believe or obey, seeing all things must fall out at last according as they were fore-ordained. Now I ask, which of these conclusions is (I will not say, most suited unto the mind and will of God, with that subjection of soul and conscience which we owe to his sovereign wisdom and authority, but whether of them is) the most rational, and most suitable to the principles of sober love of ourselves, and care of our immortal condition? Nothing is more certain, than



that the latter resolution will be infallibly destructive (if pursued) of all the everlasting concernments of our souls ; death and eternal condemnation are the unavoidable issues of it. No man giving himself up to the conduct of that conclusion, shall ever come to the enjoyment of God. But in the other way, it is possible at least, that a man may be found to be the object of God's electing love, and so be saved. But why do I say, it is possible ? there is nothing more infallibly certain, than that he who pursues sincerely and diligently the ways of faith and obedience, which are, as we have often said, the fruits of election, shall obtain in the end everlasting blessedness ; and, ordinarily, shall have in this world a comfortable evidence of their own personal election. This, therefore, on all accounts, and towards all sorts of persons, is an invincible argument of the necessity of holiness, and a mighty motive thereunto : for it is unavoidable, that if there be such a thing as personal election, and that the fruits of it are sanctification, faith, and obedience ; it is utterly impossible, that without holiness any one should see God, the reason of which consequence is apparent unto all.