

SERMON UPON MATTHEW XXII. 14.

For many are called, but few are chosen.—MAT. xxii. 14.

THESE words contain the reason of the different manner of receiving the gospel-offer of Christ and his benefits. The reason is, because the election of grace is not commensurate or of equal extent with the gospel-offer, as appeareth by the foregoing parable. Many were invited, but some refused to come to the marriage-supper, and slighted and contemned the invitation out of an affection to worldly things; others, for a pretence and cover, do not flatly deny, but make excuse; *non vacat*, no leisure, is their plea; *non placet*, no mind, is their meaning. At length some came, but not all with a wedding-garment; that is, they professed to receive the gospel, but did not walk worthy of it. Here is a plain difference, some refuse, some come, and among those that come, some disgrace the marriage rather than honour it, which is another difference. What is the reason of this variety of success? I answer—Nothing else but the secret and victorious power of God's grace maketh the difference; but whence cometh it that it overcometh some men's obstinacy, and the strength of their sensual inclination, but prevaleth not over others? Because all the invited are not chosen and predestinated to the fruit of God's elective love: 'For many are called, but few are chosen.'

In the words take notice—

1. Of two different sorts of persons; some are 'called' and others 'elected.'

2. The proportion that each sort bears to others, 'many,' 'few.'

3. The particle that connects the observation with the foregoing parable, 'for.'

Now, for the first, it should seem they are of à like extent: Rom. viii. 30, 'Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified.' But we must distinguish of a two-fold calling—

1. External and ineffectual. They are called with an outward and common calling; as the guests were invited to the feast, who either came not, or came not in a prepared manner; for calling is an invitation to Christ.

2. Calling is put for effectual calling, when God powerfully pursueth his eternal purpose; a calling, *κατὰ προθέσιν*, according to purpose: Rom. viii. 28, 'And we know that all things shall work together for good

to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.' And so it is of the same extent with election : 2 Tim. i. 9, 'Who hath saved us, and called us with a 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.' These are not only called outwardly by the preaching of the gospel, but inwardly by the effectual working of his Spirit, according as it pleased and seemed good to God from everlasting to decree within himself concerning us.

Secondly, For the number and proportion, 'Few are chosen.' There seemeth to be a doubt about the word 'few,' since they are a multitude that none can number; few not in themselves, for when they are all gathered together, they make a great congregation of righteous ones: Ps. i. 5, 'Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.' But comparatively in regard of the multitude of those that perish in their sins; some are without the pale, as whole droves of nations spilt upon the great common of the world, that do not own Christ, and are not gathered into his fold, and within the pale. There are few penitent and sincere believers, who are fit to partake of the gospel-feast; they indeed come, but not with a wedding-garment, do not adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour with a holy conversation, flowing from faith in Christ and love to God.

Thirdly, The causal particle is to be observed, 'For many are called but few are chosen.' This is rendered as a reason of the foregoing difference; it is the Lord's mercy to call both, but his singular mercy to elect any. They that are only called and act not worthily, bear the just punishment of their neglect and contempt; they that obey the call must not ascribe it to themselves, but to the grace of God, who giveth them the Spirit, and faith; and the first rise of this grace that cometh to us is in election.

Doct. The reason why any miss of the grace of the gospel is long of themselves; and why others receive it in a more worthy manner, is the mere discriminating grace of God.

I shall handle this point in these considerations—

1. Since all men sinned in Adam, and are guilty of the curse and eternal death, God had done us no injury if he had left us to perish in this estate. That all the world are become guilty before God, both by reason of original and actual sin, is plain: Rom. iii. 19, 23, 'What thing soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.' They are ὑπόδικοι τῷ Θεῷ, 'guilty before God;' that is, in a damnable estate, and obnoxious to the righteous judgment of God; and ver. 23, 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God;' that is, his glorious image. Thus all men being found sinners, are justly punishable by God, and therefore God had done us no wrong if he had left us as he found us; as the angels that sinned were not redeemed: Heb. ii. 16, 'For he took not on him the nature of angels,' οὐκ ἐπιλαμβάνεται; he laid not hold of the angels; 2 Peter ii. 4, 'God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell.' He might have rejected the one as well as the other, and thrown off the whole race of mankind presently upon their disobedience, as he did the

evil angels; but the benefit that was denied to angels was given to man, for God would not wholly lose his creation of them.

2. This was the great love of God, that he provided a redeemer and saviour for us, that whosoever would believe on him should be everlastingly happy: John iii. 16, 'For God so loved the world, that he sent his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life;' 1 John iv. 9, 10, 'In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.' Thus was God's unspeakable love expressed to mankind, that he provided so costly a remedy for us as his eternal Son to assume our nature, and die for our sins, that he might offer pardon and life to us upon gracious and commodious terms; namely, the thankful acceptance of this blessed saviour to the ends for which God sent him. His sparing us showeth that we are not secluded from all possibility and hopes of recovery; that we are not *in termino*, put into our final estate presently upon our sin, as the fallen angels were; this is some comfortable intimation and probable hope to us; but his providing a remedy and ransom for us, the benefit of which shall redound to us as soon as we repent and believe the gospel, this is much more an eminent manifestation of his love. It greatly importeth our comfort and benefit to know God loveth us, and we are poring and prying here and there to find arguments and tokens of his love: oh, that I could know that God loveth me! But we overlook the signal demonstration and manifestation of it, and so, as it were, seek the sun with a candle, while we look to particular tokens and signs, and do not take notice of this great evidence of God's love, that Jesus Christ was sent of God to accomplish man's salvation, to work it into our thoughts.

[1.] Consider who sendeth, or gave him. God sent him and gave him. The law which condemneth us is the law of God; the wrath and punishment which we fear is the wrath of God; the glory and blessedness which we expect is the glory of God; the presence into which we come when we make prayers for any mercy and grace to help us is the presence of God. Whose favour is it that we seek, but the favour of God? Now God gave his Son, and sent his Son to recover us; he laid this office and burden upon Christ.

[2.] The person who was sent, Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son: Rom. viii. 32, 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?' He would not trust an angel with this charge, but sent his Son to bring about the everlasting purpose of his grace concerning our recovery. God sent his people several messengers, but at last sent his Son. This should awaken us: 'Surely they will reverence my Son.'

[3.] The end why he sent him. First, with respect to Christ, to be 'a propitiation for our sins,' 1 John iv. 10; that God might show himself placable and propitious to mankind, his justice, holiness, and hatred of sin being sufficiently demonstrated in the sufferings of Christ, and so hath found out such a way for our good as is fully consistent with his own honour and glory. Secondly, with respect to us, to what we are to enjoy: 1 John iv. 9, 'That we might live through him.'

This life is opposite to the death incurred by sin, and by it is meant that whole estate of grace to which we are restored by Christ, and chiefly our blessed and eternal life in heaven. We were in an estate of death when the doors of mercy were first opened to us; we were dead as to the sentence of the law, dead as disabled for the service of the Creator, and from both excluded from the state of the blessed, and liable to eternal death. Now Christ came that we might not perish, but have everlasting life through him; now they are worthy to perish for ever who love death rather than life, as all do that for base lusts and paltry vanities hazard their own salvation.

[4.] The way how all this is applied to us is by faith: 'That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,' John iii. 16; and John vi. 29, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' This is the great duty which God requireth of us, faith in this Saviour that is given, that we should own and receive him to be what he is, and to do what God hath sent him to do, trusting ourselves entirely on the merit of his sacrifice and intercession, and taking the way that he prescribeth, that we may be everlastingly happy.

3. To bring about this faith in Christ crucified, he sendeth messengers with these glad tidings where he will, and to whom he will; for God is a free benefactor, and may do with his own as he lists. The dispensation of means as to the event is governed by God's providence; the general grant is, 'Go, preach the gospel to every creature,' Mark xvi. 16. That joyful news is to be published to all nations, that believers shall be saved. No sorts of people are secluded out of our commission; how else can they believe? Rom. x. 14, 15, 'How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?' Believing is not possible without hearing, and hear they cannot except they be preached unto, and that cannot be till God find preachers for them, fitting them with gifts, and furnishing them with abilities, and opening in the course of his providence a way for them. This is that which is represented in this parable, by sending forth his servants to bid his guests to the marriage. Now it is a great mercy and favour vouchsafed to us that we have a call, or are allowed the means of salvation: Acts xiii. 26, 'To you is the word of this salvation sent;' not brought, but sent. The journeys of the apostles were guided and directed by the Spirit, as well as their doctrine. It is a message from God; and hereby they are left without excuse, who have the way to heaven laid open to them in the gospel, and will not walk therein.

4. The gospel, where it is sent, prevaieth not on all alike; some believe, and others are hardened: Acts xvii. 4, 5, 'And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. But the Jews who believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.' Some believe it with a lively, others with a dead faith, live not answerably thereunto. Certain it is all have not the faith of

God's elect. They that believe not this gospel, the wrath of God abideth on them; but those that receive it with a true and lively faith are freed from the wrath to come and eternal destruction, and have pardon of sins and eternal life bestowed on them: John iii. 36, 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.' He that giveth up himself to Christ to be saved and governed by him is in a course that will at length bring him to all felicity eternally; but, on the contrary, he that neglecteth or despiseth the offers of grace is inevitably under the wrath of God due to him for his former sins, and the more due for this additional great transgression, slighting the methods of God for his recovery. Well, then, there is a difference. Now the cause of this difference must be inquired into. Therefore I shall prove two things—

(1.) Those that believe not, or receive not the gospel in a more worthy manner, the reason of their unbelief is not in God, but in themselves.

(2.) Those that believe with a true and lively faith have it not from themselves, but from God, and that by virtue of his election. And so in both these instances is that of the prophet verified: Hosea xiii. 9, 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help.' That God vouchsafeth this benefit to any, it is grace; for all others who are passed by, there is a concomitant unworthiness, which is justly chargeable upon themselves, and leaveth no blemish on God's counsels and decrees.

First, That it is long of themselves that any miss of the grace of the gospel.

1. They have a like favour in the outward means and offers as the elect have; for both are called, as in the text. God offereth them mercy, not as elect, but as sinners and miserable. Now, when God hath set open the door to sinners, and tendered them mercy when they deserved misery, and so brings home life to their own doors, and leaves it merely to the acceptance or refusal of their wills, surely the call should prevail with them more than it doth. They have the same favour with the elect; it is the same God, the same heaven, the same Christ, and the same promise that is set before all. Is not Christ and life offered to you as well as them? Now the very offer should be a comfortable intimation to us. It was taken as a ground of hope to the blind man that Christ would heal him: 'Arise, be of good comfort, he calleth thee,' Mark x. 49. God by calling offereth a remedy, which, if we neglect and despise, who is in fault? It is our own blame, and will be our condemnation: Heb. ii. 3, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' God by his call bringeth salvation to our doors, leaving it at our choice, and we will not accept of it; what is this but obstinacy and rebellious contempt? If we had never heard of Christ, nor by such a lively dispensation as might awaken our thoughts, it were then another matter; but when light shineth round about us, and would fain break in, and we shut our hearts against it because of those poor inconsiderable pleasures we find in it sin, is obstinate infatuation.

2. God's call is earnestly and affectionately managed, by warning, teaching, and persuading: 2 Cor. v. 20, 'We pray you in Christ's stead

to be reconciled to God ;' Col. i. 28, ' Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.' When God giveth such skill and will, such compassion and diligence to his messengers, should it not be noted ? They warn of danger, teach, and mind of duty. God's call is so affectionate, that it is compared to the clucking of a hen, Mat. xxiii. 37. Now what would you have God to do ? To force you by his absolute constraining power, and, whether you will or no, drive you out of your flesh-pleasing course ? Consider how unbeseeing it is to the wisdom of God that men should be holy by necessity, and not by choice ; then goodness would be a natural, not a moral perfection, as burning is to fire ; and it were no more praiseworthy to mind heavenly things than it is for a spark to fly upwards, or to be humble and lowly in spirit than for a stone to move downward. Therefore when God doth entreat and importune you to accept of his grace, what would you more ?

3. Besides the call, there are certain means appointed by God in order to their salvation, which certainly they are bound to use, otherwise their omission were not their sin. Now, if they will not apply their minds to meet with God in his appointed means, the fault is their own, and so their punishment just. Certainly it is the duty of carnal men diligently to hear the word ; and God justly forsaketh them if they refuse this help : Acts xiii. 46, ' Since ye put away the word of God from you, ye judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life ;' that is, become unworthy and incapable of receiving benefit by the gospel, and that in the conviction of their own consciences. God justly forsaketh them that part with him at the outer door, and shut out the light of the word, and will not hear what is for their eternal comfort and benefit. Certainly it is the duty of carnal men to desire, ask, seek God's regenerating grace. If it be not worth the asking, it is worth nothing : Mat. vii. 8, ' For every one that asketh, receiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth ; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.' Surely this is the way of obtaining, viz., by prayer with constancy and importunity for what is necessary for us. Now, if men will not ask, why should God give ? Certainly it is the duty of carnal men to avoid impediments ; not to strengthen their chain, and make their clog more sore and heavy, and make their conversion more difficult ; as it is, the more you are biased by a sinful inclination, and suffer it to grow upon you. Either vainglory : John v. 44, ' How can ye believe, that receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only ?' Or voluptuous living : Luke viii. 14, ' And that which fell among thorns are they, who, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches, and the pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.' Or by worldly cares and desires : 1 John ii. 15, ' Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world : if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' Now if they gratify what they should crucify, and indulge these corruptions, and feed them rather than mortify them, where must or where will the blame of them lie, on God or men ? On themselves, who will not ' frame their doings to turn to the Lord,' Hosea v. 4. They do not put themselves in a way to bridle and retrench their lusts. Further, they

are to consider their ways : Ps. cxix. 59, 'I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies ;' Lam. iii. 40, 'Let us search and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord ;' that is, say, What am I ? what have I been doing all this time ? what shall become of me to all eternity ? Now if men will not ask themselves, What have I done ? how can they fret and murmur against the Lord, when they are plainly careless creatures, and will not mind the great business of mankind.

4. Besides outward means, there is much common grace to help them nearer to the state of salvation ; for we are told there are some that are 'not far from the kingdom of God,' Mark xii. 34 ; that have a good degree of the knowledge of religion, and some kind of liking and affection towards it ; that, besides the outward means, have much common grace given them to do much better than they do. To most that live within the hearing of the gospel, there are vouchsafed the strivings of the Spirit, as appeareth by these texts : Gen. vi. 3, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man ;' Acts vii. 51, 'Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost ; as your fathers did, so do ye.' They have this common grace to prepare them for further good ; but this gracious benefit they turn to their own destruction, for often it doth but kindle their rage, while they are convinced of a way which they have no mind to. Others have a further degree of common grace ; they are not cut at heart, as Stephen's hearers, but pricked at heart, Acts ii. 37 ; they have knowledge of God's will, the sense of sin, fear of punishment, thoughts of deliverance, some hope of pardon. Now, did you improve the grace of this help and common work as far as you can, it were another matter ; when men do not that which common grace enableth them to do, nor take the advantage when the waters are stirred, and therefore their condemnation is the more just, it is long of themselves.

5. Their pleas against God are altogether vain. Solomon telleth us Prov. xix. 3, 'The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord.' Man draweth on his own destruction, and then murmureth as if the fault and blame were in God ; therefore the plea and false conceit by which man impeacheth God may be reduced to these two heads—(1.) Want of power ; (2.) Hope of success or acceptance.

[1.] They cannot plead want of power ; for man as man hath great advantages, much more as assisted by common grace. For—

(1.) Man as man hath reason to understand much of good and evil : Rom. ii. 14, 'For when the gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not a law, are a law to themselves.' And one that liketh not to leave his lusts for Christ may know so much of the wisdom and happiness of those that consent to do it, as to wish that he had a better heart, that he might not be damned : Rom. ii. 18, 'And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are excellent ; being instructed out of the law ;' Num. xxiii. 10, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.'

(2.) Man hath a conscience to accuse or excuse : Rom. ii. 15, 'Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else

excusing one another.' Conscience is applicative reason, and so such a one is self-condemned.

(3.) Man hath self-love, and a desire of felicity, and an unwillingness of misery, and a fear of wrath: Rom. i. 32, 'Who knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death;' Ps. iv. 6, 'Who will show us any good?' Man hath misery and necessity to move him: God worketh on it: Ezek. xxxiii. 11, 'As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?' So the apostle worketh on a common principle: 1 Peter iii. 10, 'For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.' Now, if you will not act as a creature in misery, or a creature that desireth happiness, you do that which is unmanly.

(4.) Death is at hand, which will convince us of our foolish choice, the feet of our judge are even at the door. Therefore, though the unbeliever may secure his conscience while he liveth, yet when he hath had all the pleasure that sin can afford, he must lie down in the dust, and then what becometh of his carnal happiness?

(5.) By common grace he is convinced that there is a happiness, and that our happiness lieth not in those things wherein men ordinarily seek it, but in God alone; that there is no coming to God but by Christ; that all men have some means and duty appointed them to seek that grace that may convert them, and many convictions of sin and motions to excite them thereunto: Prov. i. 23, 'Turn ye at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you.' Now if men be unwilling to use the means as they are able, to hear, read, pray, and meditate, or what should affect them, unwilling to receive the inward motions of the Spirit, which should convince and turn them from their sins, if they do not only smother and oppose reason and conscience, but resist and quench the Spirit, and, on the contrary, eagerly turn their thoughts and affections after vanity, now see if their plea be just against God.

[2.] Want of success and acceptance. If they do all that they can, will God give them grace? I answer—

(1.) It is a stated rule that God forsaketh none but those that forsake him first: 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, 'If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever;' 2 Chron. xv. 2, 'The Lord is with you while you be with him; and if you seek him, he will be found of you; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.' Those whom he deserteth he forsaketh not, and ceaseth not to promote them in the true way of conversion, till he is forsaken by them, or they become guilty of the voluntary neglect and refusal of his initial grace.

(2.) They have many hopeful encouragements, though no certain infallible promise: Luke xi. 13, 'Your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him;' Lam. iii. 25, 'The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.' Christ allegeth proverbs: Mark iv. 24, 'Take heed what you hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again; and unto you that hear shall more be given.' Certainly the serious use of means is not in vain, nor is the performer like to lose his labour.

These scriptures, if they contain not a promise, yet they show the usual practice of the Lord's grace ; there is sufficient encouragement to use the means.

6. The plain next causes are conspicuous and evident, and they are three—

[1.] Depraved habits of soul : John iii. 19, ' This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.' There are nothing but base lusts which detain them from a hearty acceptance of pardon and life by Christ ; so man is the more condemnable, that for paltry vanities he turneth the back upon this grace.

[2.] Voluntary neglect and sloth ; they are idle and carnally secure : Mat. xxv. 28, He was a naughty servant that hid his talent in a napkin. Negligence in a matter of such importance is contempt or despising God and his grace.

[3.] Enmity and averseness from heavenly and holy things : John iii. 20, ' For every one that doeth evil hateth the light.' We have an instance : 1 Kings xxii. 8, ' The king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is one Micaiah, the son of Imlah, by whom ye may inquire of the Lord ; but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.'

Secondly, If any receive it, it is the mere discriminating grace of God : 1 Cor. iv. 7, ' Who maketh thee to differ ?' The discriminating or differencing of men equally guilty is wholly to be ascribed to the Lord's grace. The elect were not better nor more worthy than others, but equally involved in the common guilt and misery, but the Lord made the difference. This will appear if we consider—

1. That none of themselves can repent, believe, and obey the gospel. The understanding is dark, and must be illuminated ; the will is carnal and unholy, and must be turned from the world and the flesh to God, 1 Cor. ii. 14, Rom. viii. 7. A man that is disposed to a fleshly, worldly mind and life, hath no disposition to love God above all, and to believe in Christ, and repent of sin, and live a life of holiness. An enemy of God cannot love him above all, nor he whose heart is set¹ upon him live a holy life ; but such is man in his natural estate : Col. i. 21, ' And you that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.' A sensual man cannot seek eternal happiness, but such are we : 2 Peter i. 9, ' He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off.' Therefore there is no way to cure our enmity and pravity without grace, nor to heal them without the Spirit of God, who were so corrupt as that they could neither understand nor receive the gospel.

2. The elect do not so behave themselves but that for their negligence and resistance they might justly be forsaken of God ; but God dealeth not equally with all that are of equal merit : ' We ourselves were sometimes disobedient,' Titus iii. 3 ; Eph. ii. 3, ' Among whom we had our conversation in times past, fulfilling the wills of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as others.'

3. That faith in Christ Jesus, and salvation by him, is the mere gift of God : Eph. ii. 8, ' For by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God.' The Lord might have justly

¹ Qu. ' not set ' ?—ED.

left us without calling or changing us, and we could not change nor turn ourselves: Phil. i. 29, 'For unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.' So that God's grace is the chief cause why we differ from ourselves and others.

4. That this grace is given to some and not to others, floweth from God's eternal decree: 'Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world,' Acts xv. 18; Eph. i. 11, 'Who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will.'

5. This eternal decree is a free election, or the mere good pleasure of God, giving faith to some and not to others: Acts xiii. 48, 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' Christ traced it no higher: Mat. xi. 26, 'Even so, Father, because it pleased thee;' Rom. ix. 11, 'For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.' The children had not done good or evil, whereby they might be differenced from one another, that the purpose of God, or his gracious decree of choosing some in Christ might stand; so that his electing grace is the chief cause why we differ from others in faith and godliness; he gave us that good whereby we differ from them. The purpose of God goeth before his calling, and freely layeth the foundation of it; it is not an approbation following, but a foregoing operative election. Men may give an approbation following, that know not what may come hereafter, but God calleth us to the grace he hath provided for us.

Use 1. To press us to make our calling and election sure: 2 Peter i. 10. We are all called, but are we effectually called with a calling that floweth from election? Now we cannot see the certainty of our election till we believe with a true, firm, and lively faith in Christ Jesus: 1 Thes. i. 4, 5, 'Knowing, brethren, your election of God; for our gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.'

2. Love God fervently: 1 Cor. viii. 3, 'If any man love God, the same is known of him.' The ardency of our love is a sure sign of our election: 1 John iv. 10, 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.'

3. Filial fear of God: Phil. ii. 12, 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.'

4. Till we obey him carefully: Eph. i. 4, '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.'

5. Mourning for sin after a godly sort: Zech. xii. 10, 'They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son.'

6. A hungering and thirsting after righteousness: Mat. v. 6, 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.'

7. Purifying ourselves yet more and more: 1 John iii. 3, 'He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself as Christ is pure.' Many think the doctrine of election destroyeth these things. No; it begetteth them. Did you ever know what love, and thankfulness, and delight

in God and holiness is? What doth feed them but God's free love in Christ?

Use. Get your hearts affected with this free love and grace of God.

1. Here we see all God's blessings in their first rise, fountain, and bosom-cause, which is the eternal elective love and grace of God.

This was that set all the wheels a-going. The efficient cause of all this difference between us and others is God, the meritorious cause is Christ, the powerful agent is the Spirit, that softeneth the hard hearts of the elect, and inclineth them to believe in Christ and love God. But what moved all? His purpose of grace, which is brought to pass for us, imparted to us immediately for Christ, in Christ, and by Christ: 2 Tim. i. 9, 'According to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.' And Christ hath procured the Spirit to cause them effectually and infallibly to believe, repent, and obey: 1 Peter i. 2, 'Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.'

2. Here we see the rich preparations of grace, and the disposal of all those means which conduce to our good, both natural and spiritual, both of education, acquaintance, relation, and everything else that might work for us; to order all these circumstances of our lives, when we knew not, nor thought of any such matter. Then for spiritual helps: 2 Thes. ii. 13, 14, 'We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the Lord Jesus Christ.' It was for a while shut up in the will of God, but then it exerted itself to bring about the good intended to us; there we see the distinguishing love of God. Election is not a taking of all, but some, passing by others; all are not called: John xiv. 22, 'Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world?' Surely not effectually called: 1 Cor. i. 29, 'Not many mighty, not many noble are called.' Not those of highest abilities and esteem with men: Mat. xi. 25, 'Father, I thank thee that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent.'

3. Here we see his preventing love, which excludes all boasting or glorying in ourselves: Eph. ii. 9, 'Not of works, lest any man should boast.' It is not in the men themselves, but in the free grace and love of God, who hath given his first elective love, without all actual or foreseen worthiness in us.

4. We see his personal love to us in particular: Gal. ii. 20, 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me;' Eph. i. 13, 'In whom after ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.'

5. This is that love which is the ground of our solid comfort in all conditions: Luke x. 20, 'Rejoice that your names are written in heaven;' and whereby all things are sanctified to us, and we to God: Rom. viii. 28, 'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, and are called according to purpose.' And it is an everlasting love: Ps. ciii. 17, 'The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.'