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of address notices to:

The Predestinarian Business Office  
% Grady E. Dearman  
206 Opal Drive  
Laurel, MS 39440

EDITORIAL STAFF:  
Grady E. Dearman  
206 Opal Drive  
Laurel, MS 39440

Woodrow W. Hudson  
208 Fredrick Street  
Bastrop, LA 71220

Stanley C. Phillips  
Route 4, Box 157  
Quitman, MS 39355

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a very preceptive mind with a simple iron-clad logic. He did not desire it, nor strive for it; for he was very *anti-systems* in religious thought. Since the rise of the Modern Missionary system, the Predestinarian Old School Baptists have been repeated charged falsely as believing that God is the author of sin: and of being non-evangelical because we oppose the novelties of modern so-called "evangelism." Hopefully, this article will reinforce our views along Biblical revelation.]

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"Then flew one of the Seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." — Isaiah 6:6, 7.

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#### SERMON BY JOHN LELAND

[Editor's introduction: This selection is for a specific purpose, even though it is rather long. John Leland was one of the foremost Old School Baptist elders during our late Colonial and early Frontier period. It is believed that he baptized more converts than any other minister, and he established many of our churches in Virginia. During the Great Baptist Separation, he cast his lot with the Old School party, and was a frequent contributor to the columns of the *Signs of the Times*, edited by Gilbert Beebe. In addition to his ministerial gifts, he was the leader of the Antifederalists in Va., and drafted the *BILL of Rights* in our Constitution, particularly to give freedom of religion to all people, and specifically to the persecuted Baptists. He is not noted as a deep theologian, although he possessed

With more than eastern pomp of diction — in language sublime, beyond the power of art — the sacred poet here represents the Almighty, in awful emblems of divine majesty. Uzziah, the king of Judah, with a complex character, had reigned upon the throne of the house of David for more than fifty years: but kings, as well as slaves must die. In the year that Uzziah died, the prophet Isaiah had a vision of the King, the Lord of Hosts, sitting upon a throne, more resplendent than the ivory throne of Solomon — higher than the heavens — with a train which filled the superb temple of glory, while the dazzling seraphims, with veiled faces, clapped their golden wings, and proclaimed, “the whole earth is full of His glory.”

Whoever reads the visions of Isaiah, Ezekiel and John, will not hesitate to pronounce them the same in substance. Isaiah calls these winged songsters, *seraphims*. Ezekiel calls them *living creatures* and *cherubims*. John calls them *four beasts*, but their appearance and employment is the same in all their accounts, except the more particular description given by some, which is omitted by the others.

Various are the opinions of men respecting these seraphims, and perhaps no man can certainly tell what or who they represent. The greatest number of expositors, however, that I have read after, conclude that the angels of God are intended. They seem to imagine that their appearance and employment are too celestial to be accommodated to any beings on earth. But one insurmountable difficulty attends their account. In Revelations, 5:9, they sing to the Lamb, “Thou wast slain and hast *redeemed us* to God by Thy blood.” If angels in light were *confirmed* by God in a Mediator, which is highly probable, yet, as they never left their first estate, it cannot be admitted that *they* were ever *redeemed* by the blood

of the Lamb. Of course then angels cannot be intended.

With all the embarrassments that attend the interpretation, yet, with Dr. Gill, it appears most likely to me, that the ministers of the Gospel are to be understood by these singular creatures. In this light, therefore, I shall consider them. And, as there is the most minute description given of them in the first chapter of Ezekiel, I shall make many of my bearings upon that chapter.

They are there said to be *Living creatures*. Ministers are creatures, made by God, and poor feeble creatures they are - earthen vessels, subject to human passions and frailties, But yet they are living creatures, being raised from the death of sin to the life of holiness. Though they die daily, and are crucified with Christ, yet they live, and the life which they live is by the faith of the Son of God, who lives in them. Their number is *Four*. Reference may here be had to the four principal standards of the Hebrew camp in the wilderness, on which it is said, the four emblems of a lion, ox, man, and eagle, were inscribed: or to the four evangelists who wrote the Gospel, and all their successors in the four quarters of the world.

*And every one had four faces. First, the likeness and face of a man.* Ministers are men, not angels — their work is among men, unto whom they are sent, and they should ever remember that **THEY ARE BUT MEN**. To prevent Ezekiel from being self-exalted through the abundance of sublime revelations, he is called the *son of man* about thirty times.

*Second. The face of a Lion.* The righteous are bold as a lion, and surely ministers, who are clothed with the garments of salvation, and the robe of righteousness, may, ought to be, and are, bold as lions. Peter and John, though unlearned and ignorant, by their

boldness, made the rulers and elders of Israel marvel. They spake the word of God with boldness. The religion of Jesus makes men bold, but not impudent — modest, but not shame-faced and hypocritical.

Third. *The face of an ox.* The Israelites were not to muzzle the ox that trod out the corn, which Paul says, was written for the ministers. Much increase is by the strength of the ox. Ministers are patient and laborious, like oxen, bending their neck in obedience — drawing the plough of God's word, to break up the fallow-ground of the heart.

Fourth. *They four had the face of an eagle.* As lions are the strongest among beasts, and turn not aside for any — disdain all subtle arts, and trusting alone to their strength - so eagles are the kings of the air, taking the loftiest flight of all birds, having the keenest eyes of any, which can gaze on the sun without winking, and fixing their eyes on the sun, will steer their course upwards, until they lose sight of the earth. So the ambassadors of Christ take their lofty flights to the throne of God - having their conversation in heaven - gaze on the Son of Righteousness by faith - and are so allured by heavenly objects, that they lose sight of earth and earthly things; and, like the eagles, where the slain are, there is she: where Christ, the slain Lamb - the sacrifice for sin, is revealed in the Gospel - there the preachers dwell.

It is moreover said, that these living creatures *were full of eyes within - before and behind.* Ministers have *eyes within*, to see their own corruption and weakness; *eyes before* to look unto God for instruction and strength; *eyes behind* to see the world lying in wickedness, and also have an eye over the saints, who are following them, as they are following Christ.

These Seraphims *had every one of them*

*fixed wings.* Ezekiel speaks of but four of them, but Isaiah and John describe six. *With twain he covered his face.* Repentance and humility cover the face of the minister of Jesus, and, indeed, the face of every human saint. As creatures, we are needy — as sinners, we are guilty; as creatures, we would be humble — as sinners, repentant; that, as creatures we may be supplied, and as sinners be pardoned. The call to the ministry does not exalt the preacher to be Lord over God's heritage, (as His minister, that is. Ed.) nor deliver him from the internal mass of corruption, or the outward adversities of life: hence humility and repentance ever cover his face.

*With twain he covered his feet.* That is, he runs as if he flew: at least, like the ostrich, his wings assist his feet. Fervency and resolution are subservient to his feet. When the preacher turns his course to heaven, with what fervency does he pursue the road of prayer, and with what resolution does he resist the fiery darts of the wicked — the accusations of Satan — his inbred unbelief at the delays of divine beneficence. When he steers his course among men, with what fervency does he run to and fro; being fervent in spirit, he speaks and teaches diligently the things of the Lord, with a resolution so great that neither entreaties nor threats can prevent him from finishing his course with joy.

*And with twain he did fly.* Faith and love are the two wings with which he flies. Faith in God — in the mediation of Christ — in the divinity of the Scriptures — in the accountability of all rational beings — in the resurrection from the dead, and a future state of reward and punishment; together with love to God — to the Gospel, and to the souls of men, constrain him to preach and bear him up as on wings. By these six wings the heralds of Christ fly through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth.

*When they went, their wings were lifted up, but when they stood, they let down their wings.* When ministers are engaged in preaching, and repentance and humility, fervency and resolution, faith and love are all in lively exercise, how charming is their voice, how beautiful their feet; but when they cease, and attend to the lawful callings of this life, to provide necessary things for their own houses, and those heavenly accomplishments do not appear, how different they seem to be: a bystander, with difficulty believes them to be the same men.

*And their feet were straight feet.* It is required of stewards that a man be found faithful. A bishop must be blameless — must have a good report of them who are without — must be an example to the flock — a pattern of them that believe — must make straight paths for his feet, and walk uprightly without crooking in conversation or practice.

In some preachers, there is so great discordance between their preaching and conduct, that when they are in the pulpit we wish they would never come out, and when they are out, we wish them never to ascend it again: but the true ministers of Jesus have straight feet. The sense of the phrase, however, seems to be, that they were cloven-footed like an ox or calf. Beasts of prey have crooked feet, at least crooked claws in them, with which they devour the lives of others; but the ministers of Christ carry neither mental or material weapons to deceive the souls, or destroy the lives of men with. Like the clean beasts of Moses, they chew the cud of God's precepts and promises, and are cloven-footed, without claws to devour.

*And they sparkled like the color of burnished brass.* Ministers like John the Baptist, are burning and shining lights, and, like the prophet, are like iron pillars and a brazen wall. It is further added, *their appearance was like unto burning*

*coals of fire,* to consume the chaff and stubble of error and hypocrisy, sin and self-righteousness: and also to warm the affections and soften the hearts of the saints, as well as to frighten and drive off the wolves and dogs, and all the enemies of the flock. *And like the appearance of lamps, it went up and down among the living creatures.* From this it seems that each cherub had a lamp in his hand, and as they sometimes were rising on their wings, and at other times standing on their feet, the lamp of each went up and down among them. The word of the Lord is a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path, and preachers hold forth this word of life, the entrance of which giveth light: preach the word, the sure word of prophecy, which is a light shining in a dark place, and thereby enlighten the children of God to walk on in this world of darkness.

*And the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning.* The light of Scripture is bright. All the mighty volumes of philosophers are trifling to the Bible. They give no account how sin can be pardoned, or the dead raised, but the sacred volume informs us how the first can be, and assures us that the last shall take place: and from this fountain of bright light, lightning proceed. When ministers have their wings up — full of burning love — holding up the lamp of the Gospel, and succeeded by the Holy Ghost, the effect on the hearers is frequently like a flash of lightning. Lightning will burst the strongest wall; break down the loftiest tree; follow the vein of a tree from top to bottom; melt the buckle in the shoe, and spare the man who wears it; kill the child unborn without injuring the mother, etc. All which seems to be expressive of the power of the Gospel in the hand of the Spirit, when ministers are proclaiming the Truth. This word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged

sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It tears off the veil of the heart; rends the stupor from the conscience; removes the film from the eye of the soul; lays death naked, and destruction without a covering; destroys self-righteous props and hypocritical hopes, and teaches the sinner that he must perish forever unless he repents of his sin, believes in the Saviour, and submits to His laws.

When preachers are thus assisted, and thus succeeded, it may with truth be said, *the sound of the cherubim's wings is heard, even to the outer court, as the voice of the Almighty God when He speaketh.*

When Isaiah had this vision of the King, the Lord of Hosts, on His dazzling throne of glory, and saw the splendor of His attendants, and heard their celestial doxology, he cried out, woe is me! Unlike those shining songsters; unfit to dwell among them! this body of sin renders me obnoxious, and sinks me beneath a heavy wo; nor can I extricate myself, *for I am undone!* Undone in character, for I have risen in rebellion against the Lord of Hosts, and am guilty of high treason. Undone in health and strength, for the first born of death is in my tabernacle. I am reduced to perfect weakness, and my obstinate disease will reduce me to the caverns of death. Undone in interest, being a fugitive and bankrupt, owing ten thousand talents, and having nothing to pay; nor can I solicit remission from my creditor, in a manner that becomes His majesty and my own wretchedness, *for I am a man of unclean lips.* Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. My heart abounds with corruption, which vitiates all I say and do. Had I the hallowed lips of these seraphims, how would I address the throne of glory, and plead for my life! but now, like a crane or a swallow, so do I

chatter; I mourn sore, like a dove; nor can I expect relief from any around me, *for I dwell among a people of unclean lips,* who are in a state of apostacy like myself, none of whom can, by any means, redeem a brother, nor give to God a ransom that he should still live, and not perish. But, ruined and unclean as I am, and vile as all my fellow creatures are, I did not perceive it till of late. While I only heard of God with the hearing of the ear, and was ignorant of the nature of the divine law, I conceived myself to be better than my neighbors; worthy of heaven, and peculiarly interested in the favor of God. But now *mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts,* which discovers to me how wretchedly I am fallen from that image in which I was created. Now I see the holiness, justice and goodness of the divine law, whereby sin revives, and I see how unclean I am. In the presence of the Lord of Hosts, and the holy throng of seraphims. I abhor myself, repenting in dust and ashes.

*Then flew one of the seraphims.* By special commission from the Lord of Hosts, He came, not reluctantly, but of a ready mind; He flew on wings to my relief. I did not go to Him, nor meet Him half way, but He came *unto me,* not empty handed, but *having a living coal in His hand.* An emblem of the promise of eternal life through the Mediator; which promise God made are time began to Christ the Lord, and revealed it unto men in ancient times; which runs through the Old Testament like a golden cord, and which was sent unto them that believed by the apostles. But this coal, which ever lives, ever glows, and never burns out, cannot be taken by merely human hands, but *with the tongs* — the dispensation of the Gospel. Though men, as such, cannot lay hold of, carry, and apply this coal to its designed use; yet, by the dispensation of the Gospel, committed to their trust, the ministers of Christ can and do. This

promise comes to penitent sinners, through Christ; who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself to God, who was Himself priest, offering and altar. Hence this coal is said to be *taken from off the altar*.

*And He laid it upon my mouth.* Which encouraged him to pray; enabled him to offer the calves of his lips in praise, and prepared him to speak to the people, unto whom he was now sent. *And said, lo, this has touched thy lips.* For the purpose just mentioned. *And thine iniquity is taken away,* through the atonement of Christ, who was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. *And thy sin purged,* by the grace of God, which is shed abroad in the hearts of men, by the Holy Ghost, through the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.

It is probably that the narrative, which I have been animadverting upon, is a history of the first conversion of Isaiah to God; if so, then, like Paul, he was called to the prophetic work at the time when he was called out of darkness into the light of truth. He began his prophecies in the days of Uzziah; and, if not until the last year of his reign, this vision was his inauguration. But, if he had begun before the year in which Uzziah died, then this vision was made to him, to prepare him for greater usefulness.

At the close of this vision, Isaiah *heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send? and who will go for us?* To which the prophet answered, *here am I, send me.* *And He said, go.* And as the seraphim has done to you, so do you to all humble penitents. Whenever you find any person lamenting thus, "Wo is me, for I am undone," fly with all speed to administer relief, and say unto the penitent, "thine iniquity is forgiven, and thy sin purged."

In this view of the subject, the character of an humble penitent, and work of a Gospel-preacher, solicit the

attention of this august assembly.

Though repentance can never atone for the crime, yet it is *an essential characteristic* of the sinner who shall find pardon and salvation. There is one excellency of mind which is preferable to repentance, and that is innocence. It is better to be innocent, free from any crime, than it is to repent of a crime committed. But when men have become criminal, repentance may be considered a qualification of the first grade. That all have sinned, is certain, and, therefore, to expect salvation by innocency, is out of the question.

Such is the relationship between the Creator and rational creatures, that, whatever the Creator *reveals and commands, the creatures are under obligation to believe and obey*; and no place or condition that the creatures can be in, does in any wise free them from this obligation. The apostacy of men, therefore, forms no good excuse for them to disbelieve or rebel, either in this life or in that to come. (Editor's note: We are not certain whether we fully agree with him or not. If Leland means that the reprobates are obligated to believe that Christ died for them, as He did for the elect, then we disagree. If he means that the generality of man-kind are obligated to believe all commandments given them, by whatsoever means He employs to direct them; and they are obligated to obey such commands, and believe in Him as their Creator, then we agree.) That all men, everywhere, are commanded to repent, is certain; and he who does not obey this command, condemns the law and lawgiver, and pleads for the usurpation of sin. Such, however, is the apostacy of men — so great is their obstinacy, pride, rebellion and love of sin, that neither the precepts of the law, the threatenings of God, the lashes of conscience, the pangs of death, nor the torments of hell, will bring them to *that*

repentance, to which is annexed forgiveness of sins. Until the Lord works first in the human heart, by His gracious influence, nothing is to be expected, to purpose. In the change of mind, commonly called *conversion*, or in the *new birth*, there are three distinct things to be conceived of.

First. *The communication of divine life.* Not the same life that Adam possessed in innocency, for that was lost, whereas this which is given is called *eternal life*. In some respects, it is like the Adamic life, in that it makes us love holiness, and take complacency in the character and *government* of God. In other respects, it is inferior, not delivering us from all moral evil; but, in other respects, vastly superior, being eternal in its nature, and tending to a station far more exalted. Whether this grace is called living water — incorruptible seed— new creation — an unction from the Holy One, or by what name soever, it *comes down from God, through the Mediator*, and rectifies all the powers of the soul. This lays a foundation for *spiritual instruction*; for, as well may a lifeless corpse understand natural things, as a natural man understand spiritual things. In this *detached part of the work*, the preachers and preaching are *out of the question*, Christ having reserved the power to do this in His own hands. It should be carefully noticed, that a *change of heart*, is one thing, and the information of the mind, another. When the soul is renewed, *then follows*:

Secondly - *An active and voluntary turning to God.* In this stage of the work, nature and grace, sin arid holiness, truth and error, darkness and light, ignorance and information, hope and fear, desire and languor, Christ and Satan, all assail the soul. Some are held years in this restless state, and others but a short time. But, notwithstanding all embarrassments, the soul is willing, and comes to

Christ voluntarily, and chooses the good part. *After* men repent and believe, and *before* they are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, their views are accurately described, by the prophet, in my text. “Wo is me, for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips.” Or thus: “Lord, I am a sinner, and deserve to perish. Thy character is good, Thy law is just, but I am carnal, sold under sin. If Thou sendest me to hell, I cannot impeach Thy righteousness; but, oh! spare me, if pardon may be had. My sins are many and great, and my best works need to be washed, as well as my soul. I have no hope, but in Thy mercy, through the mediation of Christ. At the feet of Jesus, I cast me down, and, if I must perish, I will perish there”

The Bible is full of encouragements, invitations and promises, to such *gracious penitents*; all these promises of God are in Christ Jesus. From this Altar, the preachers may take their living coals, and ministerially apply them to all such humble mourners. For, if preachers and preaching are excluded from the first part of the work, yet in the stage of which I am now speaking, they are workers together with God.

But, Thirdly. *Free Pardon*, which is graciously bestowed by God, and gratefully received by the returning, humble penitent. It is not to be wondered at, that those who believe that pardon of sin is the change of heart, that men are not renewed until they obtain sealing deliverance, should have so high opinion of the self-exertion of natural faculties, to forward them on to a change of heart; for they well know that before they obtained pardon, they had sorrow for sin, longings after God, love to the saints, and a regard for the worship of God, and perhaps found the pardon of sin, while they were praying and striving for it. Taking it for truth, that they were not *graciously*

changed, before they obtained pardon and deliverance, they suppose that others, in their *natural* state of mind, can do what they did. Hence the opinion, that self-exertion of the natural powers greatly helps the sinner, and lays God under obligation to bestow pardon. I cannot by any means concede to this opinion, for a multitude of reasons; but am full in belief that the exercises of humble penitents, *before* they receive a *sealing pardon*, are as acceptable to God as the exercises of those who have had the forgiveness of sins sealed to them, and equally bring them within the compass of the promise, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” For I cannot conceive of any difference of internal character between them. No difference in the subjects; the difference is objective; one having the comfort of believing his sins pardoned, and the other without that comfortable hope. Men are either for Christ or against him, enemies or friends, dead or alive; no medium can be conceived of. To say that a sinner has spiritual light, but not life; that he is quickened, but not renewed; that he mourns for sins, but does not love holiness; that he feels the burden of sin, but has no gracious sensation; that he loves the saints, but is not born of God, &c., to me is perfectly absurd!

From the moment a sinner receives the grace of life (infants and those who are incapable of *reflection* excepted) he begins to cry like the leper. “unclean, unclean.” (Note: most people assume that infants cannot hear, feel, or believe; although John the Baptist did. We are not willing to say they are incapable of reflection; but only willing to admit they are unable to communicate such to us — S.C.P.). Or like the prophet before us, “wo is me, for I am undone.” And not only *continues this* cry, until he obtains pardon, through Christ, but on thereafter as long as he draws mortal breath. For when a penitent

receives pardon of sin, it only gives him new arid pleasing views of his state, not of his internal character. Of course repentance is not an exercise, confined to the period between being changed and pardoned, but *continues to operate* in the soul of a saint through his whole pilgrimage on earth. The complaint of Isaiah, “wo is me” etc., was not the complaint of a backslider, fallen from grace; for these things said Isaiah when he saw His glory and spake of Him. Now, as the saints are constantly sighing and crying, repenting and lamenting, (at least these complaints are mingled with all their heavenly joys,) ministers, like the seraphims, are sent by God, with a “Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people, saith your God” — “feed My lambs and sheep” — let your profiting appear to all; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,” etc.

Nor is the preacher to confine his address to penitents alone, but is commanded to preach the Gospel to every creature. There is no article in Christendom, in which ministers are more divided, than in that of addressing a congregation of sinners, as such. Most of the addresses of the prophets, were unto the children of Israel, a people in circumstances dissimilar from all other nations, or unto other nations in their political capacities; for which reasons, a Gentile Gospel preacher cannot find a sure example in the Old Testament. Jesus Christ, who spake with authority, spake as man never spake, confined His ministry to the twelve tribes, which still continues the difficulty of finding a sure precedent in the four evangelists. But when we come to the tenth chapter of the Acts, we find something direct. Peter was called by a *heavenly vision* to go and preach to a Gentile congregation, the principal of which was *warned by a holy angel* to send for Peter; and who, with the congregation, presented themselves



before God, to hear all things which God commanded Peter to preach. Here the drama opens. Here the first Gospel sermon was preached to the Gentiles. From this instance we may expect the best pattern. And what is it?

After Peter had introduced the subject, of declaring his conviction that God did not respect the Jews more than the Gentiles, but equally accepted those of all nations, *who feared Him and wrought righteousness*; and spoken a little of the word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, who was Lord of Jews and Gentiles; that this word was published from Galilee, through all Judea; testifying that God had anointed Jesus Christ with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed with the devil; he then proceeds to the main business of his calling: “And we are witnesses of all things which He did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and showed Him openly, riot to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it was He who was ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and dead. To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.” This short sermon was delivered extempore. Without abstruse questions or metaphysical niceties, the preacher gave a detail of important facts and doctrines, in the most simple manner, in which we discover the following truths:

1. That God does not respect the person, rank or national character of one man more than another.

2. That He accepts of such, and only such, as *fear God and work righteousness*.

3. That the word of the Gospel, which was first sent to the Jews, by John, and afterwards prevailed abundantly, proclaimed peace to men, through Jesus Christ.

4. That Jesus Christ is Lord of all worlds, nations and beings.

5. That the work of Christ on earth was doing good, and healing all that were *oppressed of the devil*.

6. That the miracles, precepts and examples of Christ were incompetent to save men. That without the shedding of His blood there could be no remission of sin. That the Jews contrived His death; - slew Him and hanged Him on a tree; they meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. That He died both as a martyr and Mediator.

7. That He was raised from the dead on the third day; being the first born from the dead; thereby, opening the way for the resurrection of all men.

8. That ministers are commanded to preach and testify, that this same Jesus, Who died and rose again, is ordained of God to judge the world, both those who are living and those that are dead.

9. That the prophecies of the Old Testament united in the truth of Christ's character; that whosoever believeth in Him, shall receive remission of sins.

10. That ministers are only witnesses to declare the truth, Christ having *reserved the power of changing hearts in His own hands*.

These seem to have been the main topics of Peter's sermon, the language of which, to all Gospel ministers, among the Gentiles, is. “Go ye, and do likewise.

As Peter spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell upon all those that heard the word. While the truth fell from Peter's lips, the Holy Ghost fell from heaven, which, when Peter beheld, he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the

Lord. The baptism of the Holy Ghost is not an essential prerequisite to water baptism, but repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus, are essential characteristics; but the baptism of the Holy Ghost does not exempt the possessor from the obligation of water-baptism: hence the injunction of Peter.

On the whole, may all of us, who are ministers of Christ, take Peter for our model in preaching, and may we meet with at least a portion of the same success.

Another article, which the foregoing discourse and the solemnities of this day seem to call for, is a *description of a ministerial call*: That is, how men are called to the ministry.

*First.* The call to the ministry does not depend upon the brilliancy of natural talents. The mysteries of the Gospel are hidden from the wise and prudent. The world by wisdom know not God. Natural talents furnish men for usefulness in the things of this world, but do not qualify them for Gospel ambassadors.

*Second.* Nor does it depend upon the acquisition of schools. By some, (now by all — Ed.) the striplings of genius, or striplings without genius, are sent to school with the avowed purpose of preparing them for the ministry; as if the preaching of the Gospel was but the declension of nouns, or the conjugation of verbs, with the knowledge of a little Greek and Latin. Supposing, however, they excel, and equal Newton, Milton, or Jefferson, they are but prepared for the study of astronomers, the closet of the poets, or the chair of state. Amos was a rustic herdsman; John the Baptist was brought up in the wilderness; and the apostles, for the most part, were ignorant Galileans, who followed the trade of fishing; yet these were called by God, while the learned among them were neglected.

*Third.* It is not included in a gracious call out of darkness into the marvelous light of the Gospel; this call is experienced by all the saints, but all the saints are not preachers.

*Fourth.* It is not subservient to the will or choice of men. Where preaching is a lucrative business, the avaricious may choose it; where it is honorable, the proud may desire it; where it is attended with ease, the indolent may covet it; but all these are ignorant of it.

*Fifth.* It is not miraculous. It is true that miracles have sometimes attended the commission, as in the case of Moses, Jeremiah and Paul. But the commissions to the twelve, and to the seventy, were without miracles, which prove that miracles are not essential to the call. If the call was miraculous, we should have as good reason to believe that God would call infants, idiots or dumb men, as any others; but this we know is not the case.

*Sixth.* The call is by *special mission*. Men, who have the common use of their senses; who are delivered from darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God, receive a *special gift* to qualify them for the work of the ministry. When Christ ascended on high, he redeemed gifts for men, and these-gifts He bestowed on them: and He gives to some apostles, to others prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, etc. This *spiritual gift* includes two things. First, the *furniture of the mind*: and secondly, a *constraint* to improve. By the furniture of the mind is not meant extraordinary endowments of talents or science, but a gift bestowed with the commission. It is a treasure given to earthen vessels; a dispensation of the Gospel committed in trust. When Jesus was on earth, He called to Him whom He would, and sent them to preach; so, in every age, the call depends on the will of God. Whether the persons

called excel in science or not, when they are sent, they have a roll given them to eat. The great decree of salvation is opened to them, and words and arguments given them to communicate it to others; and yet what they thus receive is but a small part of the treasure, for they have the key of the kingdom of heaven given to them, to unlock the treasure-house (the Bible) and constantly draw things new and old out of that sacred treasure, as occasion calls, in their ministrations. When they have eaten the roll and received the key, they feel such *constraint* to run and point out to men their ruin, and the way of recovery, that, like the prophet, they say, "here am I, send me." They have such love to God; to the Mediator, to the Gospel, and' to the souls of men, that like Paul, they declare, "the love of Christ constraineth us." And like him, they will neither be disobedient to the heavenly vision, nor confer with flesh and blood.

The customary address to the candidate elect. I shall pass by, reserving that part of the solemnities for my worthy brother, who is assigned to administer the charge and whose age and experience qualify him in an eminent degree for the task. But when I look around me, and see nearly one thousand souls assembled in this grove, to hear arid see what is said and done today. it affects my heart. Pardon the falling tears. I learned to weep over a multitude. of Jesus. Seeing the multitude. I feel compassion swelling my aching breast. Were my talents equal to my wishes, I would bring forth the riches of the Gospel, and hold them up in all their winning forms. But (applying the words of the prophet to myself) by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small?

Without attempting to solve the questions, how it was possible for sin to take its rise among sinless creatures; whether sin was necessary or otherwise; whether God decreed it or not; what part

of Adam's transgression and corruption of nature is attached to us; whether the atonement of Christ is infinite or limited; whether apostacy has affected the will only, or equally all the faculties of the soul; whether the debility of a sinner is moral, natural, or both; whether the want of the holy unction is a crime or not; I say, passing these questions, and a thousand more, which puzzle the minds of men, I would aver, that my hearers, in their natural estate, are such guilty rebels and bitter enemies of God, and a life of holiness, that notwithstanding all the warnings of God; the reproofs of ministers; the laws of state; the sword of magistrate; the ethics of philosophy; the pangs of sickness; the fears of death; the threatening of future torments, and the glories prepared for the righteous, they will choose the road that leads to death. "The wicked will do wickedly." The same disposition, which neglects the love and service of God for one minute, would for one eternity. I, therefore, utterly despair of ever seeing a single sinner in this attentive assembly ever turning to God, until the Lord touches his heart with the finger of His gracious power.

If men are ever honest, they will be honest when they pray; and it is a matter of notoriety, that, whenever good men pray for themselves, or for others, their language is: "Lord, have mercy on me, or I perish — Lord, have mercy on these poor, needy, guilty sinners; turn them, O Lord, and they will be turned; opened their eyes to see, their ears to hear, and their hearts to understand. Grant them repentance and remission of sins, in the name of Jesus Christ." How would my poor soul rejoice to see the goings of my God and King; to hear the sound of His goings in the top of these oaks, or rather from the mouths of these people.

It is possible, yea, (from the attention of all, and the tears of some,) it is probable, there may be some brokenhearted, heavy-

laden penitents in this assembly; some, who see the extent and propriety of God's law, and the evil nature of sin; who feel the plague of corrupt nature, and the painful load of guilt; who see the imperfection of all their works, and the vitiation of all their powers; who discover the excellency of true religion, and long to possess it; who entertain no scruples about the power of Christ to save, but question His willingness to receive themselves, who are so vile; who do not hesitate to bear all reproaches that attend religion, but fear they shall perish at last, for want of it. If such there be among you today, in addition to the complaint of the prophet, "wo is me, for I am undone," you make the inquiry, "what shall I do to be saved?" and subjoin (perhaps Leland meant *subrogate*) the prayer of the publican: "God, be merciful to me a sinner." To such I would address myself, and fly, like the seraphim, with a promise of eternal life, to administer relief. Your case is very uncomfortable, but not desperate. Had God been disposed to slay you, He would not have shown you such things as these; and, as He has begun to teach you, you will see greater things than these. Verily, you are Galileans, for your speech agreeth thereto: and He that has begun the work will finish it. He that has raised you out of the grave of carnal security, will loose you and let you go. He that has opened your eyes to see your dungeon and chains, will also bring you out of the prison-house, and set you free. Today He is willing to receive such of you; He calls you to come; He commands you to believe. Nor is there any danger of your being damned, if you see yourselves bad enough to be saved wholly by grace. Then, like the blind and the lame, come to Jesus, and He will heal you. If your father and mother forsake you for your religion, the Lord will take you in. His promise stands thus: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh

to me I will in no wise cast out." Then stretch out the withered hand, and touch the hem of His garment; cast away your clothes, and come unto Him begging, and you will receive the sight of pardoned sin.

Preached at Ankram, Dutchess County, N. Y., at the ordination of Lu man Birch.

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## SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD OVER ALL THINGS

By. S.C. Phillips

The Confession of Faith of 1689, Chapter III, begins with the statement, "We believe that God hath *decreed all things whatsoever come to pass,*" and clearly states that "God is not the author of sin, nor does He have fellowship with any therein." Thus we believe also. The Lord willing, we shall discuss this chapter in two parts. The July issue should have to do with "God does not have fellowship with those in sin.

In modern religious concepts, there are found two very strange contradictions: (1) multitudes of so-called ministers spend much of their time preaching on futuristic and sensational prophesies while they out rightly oppose the sovereignty of God and predestination. A more inconsistent foolishness one cannot imagine; for if there be no predestination of future events, by what means, then, can any certainty of their occurrence be predicted? (2) the largest group of moderate Calvinists in this country preach that God is sovereign over His heavenly estate in the "eternal salvation" of His children; but exercises no authority over His earthly and spiritual kingdom in this "time world;" rather leaving each of His redeemed children to work out their own salvation according to their own freewill, "choosing this day whom they will serve" whether it be the gods of their Gentile fathers on the other side of the flood-waters, or the false gods of the

Amorites; or be obedient children of God in order to gain special blessings in time by their own merits. This, too, is a glaring inconsistency.

That one can preach that Christ is *King* over His spiritual kingdom and church, and yet not be sovereign over His created subjects seems to be an irreconcilable contradiction; for, to be an absolute monarch necessitates an absolute reign. One cannot be an absolute monarch and allow his subjects democratic rule. These two positions are mutually exclusive.

How would it fare for one to be the “Head of His body, the church,” yet have one eye looking toward heaven and heavenly things, and the other toward the earth and earthly things; one foot attempting to walk in the strait way, and the other attempting to walk in the broad way; or, one hand reaching by faith to the promises of God, and the other clasping the treasures of Egypt? Would such a body (each member thereof with an independent will of its own) not be a schismatic and deformed body? Would this not deny the Head of His control, wisdom, understanding, and will? Certainly it would!

If God is not King in Zion, then where is He King? If Christ is not the *Head* of His church, then who is? We firmly believe that God is sovereign over His creation and His kingdom, and “Head over all things to His church.”

Our Confession does not say that “God *predestinated all things, both good and evil*” as it is often reported. It says, in stronger language, “God hath decreed all things whatsoever come to pass...” We have no objection to one saying he believes that God *predestinated* (rather than “decreed”) all things” if it is clear he is acknowledging God’s absolute sovereignty over all things; nor do we object to one not prefixing the word *absolute* to predestination of all things if it

is clear he is not limiting His sovereignty over all things. If predestination is rightly understood, the prefix is unnecessary. But we cannot have fellowship with any Arminian concept which denies the Lordship and dominion of God in any branch of His government, for such a god is not our God - “the King of kings and Lord of *lords*,” of whose “powers that be are ordained of God.”

The eternal *decree* of God respecting His angelic and Adamic creations falls into Scriptural branches which we shall attempt briefly to present in this article.

First, the *decree* of God respecting His felicity towards men include the *predestination and election* of those He loved, with an everlasting love, to salvation in time and eternal glory, to the praise of the glory of His grace. (Eph. 1:4-11).

Second, the *decree* of God relative to those whose standing was riot in Christ before the world began includes the *perdition and reprobation* of the wicked to judgment and damnation, to the praise of His justice and holiness. (Jude 4.)

## I. The Decree Of Predestination and Election

The apostle to the Gentiles wrote “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, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” (Eph. 1:3-6)

We understand that all spiritual

blessings are the free gifts of God to His people as viewed *IN Christ*,” and was given them before the world began. These blessings are enumerated in the verses that follow, to wit: their “election” to holiness; the “adoption” as children; , their “acceptance” in the Beloved; “redemption” through His blood; the “forgiveness” of sins; the “knowledge of the mystery of His will,” that in the dispensation of the “fulness of *times*” that He will “gather together in one *all things in Christ*;” the obtaining of an “inheritance;” the “sealing of the holy Spirit of promise” which is the “earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchases possession: and all this is “to the praise of His glory, rather than to the praise of their most diligent works. It is all of free grace!

Within these verses is found the difference in our faith and that of the legalistic Calvinists. We believe the chosen were “in Christ Jesus,” rather than “in Adam,” and we further believe they were chosen that they “should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” and that experimentally in this time world. If He merely elected and predestinated them to eternal salvation in heaven, as some proclaim, then none of the enumerated blessings are needful. To heaven they would go whether Christ died for them, the Spirit called them, or sealed them until the redemption of the purchased possession, or not! Indeed, there are such who advocate such error.

The Church was chosen in Christ and blessed with every spiritual blessing, before the foundation of the world, and had its standing in Him (representatively) before Adam fell. They were not, as others affirm, chosen *in Adam* - that is, that God foresaw the fall of Adam and his posterity in him, and then rushed in with a make-shift emergency rescue plan to save and bless some of them upon certain, or rather, uncertain, conditions.

This is made clear by the apostle when he said, “(for the children [Jacob and Esau — twins) not yet being 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;) (Rom. 9:11) And what is this “purpose of God” which is according to election? Not election itself, but according to it. That purpose is stated, .1... they which are the children of the flesh, these are *not* the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed,” (vs. 8) and the whole chapter is devoted to the proof thereof.

Our differences with others will not be so great relative to the predestination of God in the election of children by Jesus Christ; but rather upon their denial of God’s sovereignty and dominion in it. When Paul wrote that “we know that *all things* work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose,” (Rom. 8:28) he places it squarely in the sitting of God’s eternal counsel, which He says again, “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of *HIM WHO WORKETH ALL THINGS AFTER THE COUNSEL OF HIS OWN WILL*: that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted (a time experience) in Christ.” (Eph. 1:11) And by what great means did we obtain that predestinated inheritance? Certainly so long as the “testator liveth” the testament is not in force (Heb. 9:16-17). So when did the election obtain it? Was it not as recorded, “For of a truth against Thy Holy Child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to DO whatsoever *Thy hand and counsel determined before to be done*.” (Acts 4:27-28) Now, is this one of those “all things” which work together for good to those that love God? Shall any

child of God say, nay? Was this a *time event*? Was it conditional with “ifs” and “admonitions”? Was it a righteous act? Let the reader judge. Again, is it not recorded: “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel (“to fix - ordain - appoint - determine - predestine: *Strong’s Analytical Concordance*) and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” (Acts 2:23)? Was it, or was it not, predestinated? And, can we not clearly see that they did it as freely and without compulsion as if no higher counsel was involved; but which in fact was, and had been revealed by the prophets from Adam to John to the most minute detail?

Our opponents agree with us that the elect are “predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ,” at least in phraseology. However, we differ as to the meaning of this conformity. We believe it commences in regeneration and continues through sanctification of the Spirit, which work is in the earthly sojourn of the saints (or “time” experience) and is completed in the redemption of their bodies in their glorification with Him. Their view is: that one can be born again, yet never believe (and hence not be justified by faith), repent, or maintain good works, and yet after death reap eternal salvation. Many of our readers will find this surprising since it is without Biblical or experimental proofs; yet it is advocated by the majority of the Primitive Baptists in this country. It is a denial of Holy Spirit sanctification as the experience of the saints. It disputes the promise of Christ that the Holy Spirit will “convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.”

The elect are “predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ.” It is illogical and unscriptural to assume they can be conformed to His heavenly image and by-pass the sufferings of Christ in His people, when it is an established fact that

He took “on Him the form of a servant and was made in die likeness of man: and being found in die fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Phil. 2:7-8) His image is that of both God and man, being both spiritual and corporal, arid thus in order to bear His image, we are made in the image of the spiritual as the sons of God. Any admonitions given to the believer are both to the spiritual and to the fleshly — and to none others.

The elect are chosen “to salvation.” Not chosen to heaven, but to salvation. They are saved from condemnation with the world through eternal election by virtue of their standing in Him as their Federal (and actual) Head from before the foundation of the world. They are saved prior to their holy calling by their position in Christ. As it is written, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;” (II Pet. 3:9) and as Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James wrote to them that are sanctified, saying they were “.. sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” (Jude 1) It is certain then that it is God’s will that all the elect be brought to repentance in this time world and it is “the will of God, even your sanctification,” which is in time also.

The elect are partakers of all things which work together, or jointly, for their good. “For whom He did f6re-know, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them *He also called ...*” (Rom. 8:29) Does He call them all, or just some of them? In other words, does He predestinate to eternal salvation in heaven, but *fail* to call them in time? Do any of the elect “miss

the blessings of time salvation"? *Indeed not!* For it is to salvation, and in time, that they are called by the Holy Spirit. It is in this time world that they are "called to be saints," (I Cor. 1:7) were "called to fellowship," (I Cor. 1:9) and He has "called you out of darkness," (I Pet. 2:9) etc. There are many more such proofs.

The elect are saved in regeneration from spiritual death and alienation from God. They are saved in sanctification from the dominion of corruption and sin. In other words, salvation is the whole and complete deliverance of God's people, and which salvation is never completed in this time-world, for it is written, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ;" (Phil. 1:6) and "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith UNTO SALVATION ready to be revealed in the last time." (I Pet. 1:3-5) None of this salvation is conditioned upon the will or work of the creature. nor is it reserved for any but those who are kept by the power of God through faith.

## II. The Decree of Perdition and Reprobation

While it is most edifying to a child of God to speak of election, such a subject is not good news to those not elected. Certainly there can be no "election" unless some were chosen from among others who were not included in that decree.

There are two broad headings to the subject of perdition: (1) The perdition of *nominal believing reprobates* found within

all religious societies - including the true church; and (2) The perdition of the *wicked and unbelieving* reprobates - the non-elect who have no religious inclination, such as atheists and Marxists, etc.

Jude speaks of the first when he says, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained (preordination, or foreordination) to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness and denying the only Lord (despotes) God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." (Jude 4) Jude makes it very clear that these men were ordained "before of old" to this condemnation.

Paul wrote the Thessalonians relative to the working of the mystery of iniquity and they who follow "*that Wicked,*" saying of them, "*And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*" (II Thess. 2:11-12) The context draws a strong contrast between the reprobate and the elect, for he continues, saying, "but 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:*" (verse 13). Now brethren, what is this that we hear about the elect never having to believe the truth and thereby only miss their "time salvation," but shall be eternally saved after all? How does it compare with the above two classes of people? In verses 11-12, those "who believe not the truth" are those to whom God has sent "strong delusion" to "believe a lie and be damned" whereas, regarding the elect, they are "chosen to salvation" through both sanctification of the Spirit, and "belief of the truth." How does this classify Arminians and other religious unbelievers? On which side does



it place all false religious worship?

Believing the knowledge of the truth to be a covenant promise to the elect, as it is written: “But the anointing which ye have received of Him *abideth in you*” (sanctification of the Spirit), “and ye need not that any man teach you: *but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye SHALL abide in Him,*” (I John 2:27) we believe God is faithful to His promise, and the elect shall be sanctified through the truth. Certainly they cannot be thus sanctified through heresy and unbelief.

It is argued by many that the “all things” which work together for good to those that love God are limited to foreknowledge, predestination (to glory only), calling, justification, and final glorification. The context of Romans 8 and the experience of God’s people prove otherwise. The “all things” which work together for good are only limited to the *objects* of His love - to “the called according to His purpose” - and not to unbelievers.

The context cannot be grammatically broken at verse 31. It must include those verses which enumerate the “all things” Paul use to establish his doctrine. They include the death of His Son (vs. 32), His blessed intercession (vs. 34), the security of the love of Christ (vs. (vs. 35), tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword (vs. 35), and perseverance through death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth, or any other creatures (vs. 38-39); none of the latter being able to separate a one of them from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And why should anyone wish to separate any of these things from the “all things” which work together for our good? Only for the sake of argument

against the sovereignty of God over them; there can be no other rational reason to do so!

Why has there been such opposition to the use of the word *predestination* when referring to the decree or counsel of God? The primary reason is that “men love darkness rather than light” and by using the carnal logic of the natural mind (“which is enmity to the law of God”) they are thus blinded to His daily sovereignty in providence on earth, and in their lives. Yet, we never read in the past of these particular arguments when men attended the classical academies of our early educational system. Today, classical studies in the ancient languages are missing. Many have adopted Thomas Aquinas’ definition of *predestination* from the latinized word. Simply: “Pre” means “before”, and “destination” where one is going; or, predestination – “*fatum necessitas*”- *fate compelling*. *But, this is the Latin heresy*. The Greek root word is the “will of God” and with its prefix and suffix means “counsel”, “predetermination”, foreordination,” etc. Since this is not a word study, we pass on.

## 2. The Perdition of the Ungodly and Unbelieving Reprobates

As surely as some are elected from among others, then others are not chosen to salvation; and multitudes of these never enter into religious societies, and many embrace anti-Christian religions and revolutionary philosophies. In the new song recorded in Revelations 5: 9, 10, we find these lines: “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast *redeemed us* to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation: and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.” Some are redeemed, but

they were redeemed *out of* every nation, etc., leaving the remainder unredeemed. And who are the unredeemed ones? They are those .... - whose names *were not written* in the book of life from the foundation of the world.. .“ (Rev. 17:8)

There is an altruistic sentiment in our nature which tempts us to entertain brighter hopes for the non-elect than the Scripture affords. The Biblical presentation is indeed a hard and harsh doctrine to our humanitarian sympathies. Yet the Biblical revelation is clear: God did not merely “pass them by” with no notice in His election of grace. Paul made no attempt to excuse God when he wrote: “What if God, *willing to shew His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath FITTED to destruction.*” (Rom. 9:22) No harsher words (to man) can be found in the writings of man! Not only does God use the wicked to make *His power known*, but also these vessels of wrath are *fitted*, or made fit, to destruction. Peter confirms the same when he wrote of them “as natural brute beasts, *made to be taken and destroyed*” and identifies them as those who “speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall *utterly perish* in their own corruption.” (II Peter 2:12)

Is this hard doctrine? We often find our natural heart recoiling from the unpleasantness of the thought. But, it is the word of God, and we fully believe it. This hard doctrine is no longer preached in public. The consequence of such neglect is a carelessness on the part of so-called “Christians” to give “all diligence to make their calling and election sure.” And on the part of the rest, lawlessness and every evil way is accepted upon the norm that “God loves them!” But if that be the manifestation of the love of God, we hope He doesn’t love His people in the same manner!

Neither is it by chance, nor by foresight of events, that God uses the reprobates to His own end. Historically, the Assyrians conquered the Egyptians, and it was an Assyrian Pharaoh who was the king “which knew not Joseph” and afflicted the people of Israel in the days before Moses. Was this by chance? No! God had said to Abraham, “Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward they shall come out with great substance.” (Gen. 15:13, 14) As that decree neared fulfillment, Joseph was sold into bondage, imprisoned, raised up, and installed as a leader within Pharaoh’s court. Afterwards, the Assyrian Empire gained the land of Egypt.

The drama of Biblical history increases. Joseph’s brethren “thought evil against him, but God meant it unto good to *bring to pass*, as it is this day, to save much people alive.” (Gen. 50:20) It was upon the fulfillment of this decree that we read, “For the Scripture, saith unto Pharaoh, even for *this same purpose* have I raised thee up, that I *might shew* My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth.” (Rom. 9:17)

A modern American may not believe that Pharaoh was “fitted” by God to destruction, but all the ancient Hebrews could well comprehend it as they saw the waters of the Red Sea close over Pharaoh and his host! And how they were made to rejoice in it! “Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath *He thrown into the sea*. The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and, I will prepare Him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will

exalt Him. The Lord is a man of war: The Lord is His name.” (Exodus 15:1-3)

Brethren, whether our natural minds or sentimental natures agree; our God is sovereign over all things. The testimony of the volume of the Book is that nothing is outside His decree, nor can anything pass over the bounds thereof. To a poor weak and trembling sinner, with no arm of defense capable of sustaining him, the sovereign God is His present help in time of need. A *living* faith causes him to rest the affairs of his soul and body in the hands of Him who has demonstrated His power to save. There is indeed comfort in the doctrine of God our Saviour, and the heart is often made to rejoice therein.

A serious warning is necessary to the church in our day. Among Primitive Baptists there has been a developing tendency toward *universalism* in the last thirty years. Large numbers believe that pagan idolators, all natural Jews, and all so-called “Christians” are elected to an “eternal salvation” apart from any knowledge of Christ Jesus or experience of grace. As one elder said, “The very fact that you are sitting in this meeting house is a proof you are a child of God!” The beginning of this development coincided with the rise of the Progressive Era when Americans responded to the imperialism of Rudyard Kipling’s call to

“Take up the White Man’s burden  
Ye dare not stoop to less –  
Nor call too loud on Freedom  
To cloak your weariness.”

In that movement Americans generally agreed with President McKinley (and believed him) when he said, “an inner voice seemed to tell me to take the Philippines and christianize and civilize them.” The general tone of that age was universal altruism, and the first movement among Old School Baptists toward progressivism is from this date. Being unable to respond to this call as did

the New School groups (due to their own anti-missionism), they responded doctrinally - God loves all these heathen (they reasoned) and would house them in glory just as they are — unconverted idolators. But this presented a problem - how could they be saved apart from a knowledge of Christ?

The next step was simple: These poor heathen only missed the joys of their *time salvation*. It is *not* coincidental that there is no reference to a *two-salvation*, or *time-salvation* prior to the Spanish-American war in any Old Baptist literature. There was no need for it before.

What was overlooked were all the Scriptures relative to *perdition*. When Christ prayed for His disciples, He referred to Judas, saying, “...I kept them in Thy name: those that Thou gayest Me I have kept, and none of them *is lost*, but *the son of perdition*; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” (John 17:12) Now, this son of perdition was lost — even if some argue that he being a Jew was a “poor little disobedient child of God”!

Peter says of the ungodly, “But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of *judgment and perdition* of ungodly men.” (II Peter 3:7)

Those whose names *are not written* in the book of life from the foundation of the world, with the beast, “shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, arid go *into perdition* ...” (Rev. 17:8, 11) We have never heard yet *that* place referred to as eternal salvation.

Paul told the Philippians that “*in nothing*” be “terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of *perdition*, but to you of salvation, and that of God.” (Phil. 1:28) The very “man of sin” is referred to as “the son of perdition.” (II Thess. 2:3) Paul exhorted Timothy to warn those who are rich that

such foolish and hurtful lusts “drown men in destruction and *perdition*.” (I Tim. 6:9) Finally, the writer of Hebrews gave strong consolation to the saints, telling them, “But we are *not of them* who draw back unto *perdition*; but of them that *believe to the saving of the soul*.” (Heb. 10:39)

It is clear from the Scriptures that “as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” (Acts 13:48) We have no record of any others, and as pertaining to such, have only conjecture and carnal sympathies as a basis for any hope for unbelievers.

The government of God extends, then, to include “all things.” He is sovereign in creation - which is a present-perfect tense. That is, He is now “*upholding all things by the word of His power*” (Heb. 1:3) and “... all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.” (Col. 1:16-17) He is sovereign; surely, in His grace; for “Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.” (Rom. 9:18) He is sovereign in His providential government over the affairs of this world, for “The powers that be are ordained of God,” and He is the “*King of kings, and Lord of lords*.” In His infinite wisdom and mercy, He so ordered all things that they work together, or interstitially, for the good of His people, and redound to the glory of His grace.

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**“FEED THE CHURCH OF GOD”**

By John Wingfield

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.” - Acts 20:28.

We want our readers to notice that the apostle Paul *was talking to the elders of the church*. If you will go back to the 17th verse of this chapter you will see that Paul sent to Ephesus and called some of the elders together, then proceeded to testify to them. He had several things to say concerning his own ministry; and theirs as well. Therefore, we do no injustice to the import of his remarks when we assert that they are addressed directly to the elders of the church.

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves...”. Clearly, the apostle intended to admonish his brethren. Some believers in our day may fail to grasp the importance of admonition. Indeed, it may be one of the most neglected and least understood aspects of the gospel ministry. In our judgment the lack of Scriptural admonition has had certain harmful effects on the general condition of the churches which hold to the doctrine we all love.

The Lord Jesus Christ made it clear to His disciples that He had given them many things for examples, and He commanded them to observe those examples faithfully. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them *to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matt. 28:19,20).

Please observe that the Lord’s disciples were to *teach* as well as to *preach*. By tracing the earliest history of the Church we find that they “took heed” and obeyed earnestly. “And they (the apostles,

including Peter) departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to *teach and preach* Jesus Christ.” (Acts 5:41-42)

Now, could a successful case be made by anyone that it is unnecessary for the elders of the church to “take heed” unto themselves? What Scripture would one use in so doing? It might be helpful to point out that *they were not teaching unbelievers* to “know the Lord.” Rather, they were instructing believers in the “way of God more perfectly”, as did Aquila and Priscilla with Apollos. We see nothing at all wrong with following their example. (It is a sad commentary on our age that such an argument is ever needed — Ed.)

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock....” How momentous and how awe-inspiring is this solemn responsibility! Indeed, it is no small wonder that one of the apostles spoke of serving the Lord “with reverence and godly fear.” Even the use of the word “flock” has spiritual significance here. The Lord is spoken of as the “Great Shepherd of the sheep,” and the Church consists of His sheep, His flock; yea, even His very body. He watches over them day and night, and His love is ever around and about them.

“Thy flock, thine own peculiar care,  
Tho’ now they seem to roam uneyed,  
Are led or driven only where  
They best and safest may abide.”

Moreover, the relationship between the Lord and His Church is so unique that He is said to be the Head and she is the Body. We can prove by the Scripture that an offense against the one is an offense against the other. When the apostle Paul was struck down on the road to Damascus by a light from heaven and he cried,

“Who art Thou, Lord?” he heard these words: “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” (Acts 9:5) According to the Scripture Paul was engaged in persecuting the Church, yet Jesus said that Paul was persecuting Him! The conclusion *must be drawn* what is done unto one of His (yea, even the *very least*) is also done unto Him!

O brethren, how these thoughts cause me to quake and to tremble! My heart cries out with the disciples that fearful question, “Lord, is it I?” I feel no urgency to examine my brother now; I am only concerned with examining myself. As I am led to do that the thought returns: how awesome a responsibility is the oversight of the flock of God!

How, then, should the elders of the church — the “ensamples to the flock” — approach the Gospel and how should they *conduct themselves*? What is the first element of teaching, if it is not *the setting of a good example*. “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” Do you remember those words, dear brethren? Do you recall who uttered them, and do not they confirm our precepts?

Over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.... We now consider the nature of that call of men as ministers of Jesus Christ —who is the great High Priest of every believer. The Holy Ghost (or Spirit) of Almighty God sets apart and gives to certain chosen vessels the responsibility for overseeing the flock of God. This is a *spiritual* sanctification of such an holy nature that Paul warned the church to “lay hands suddenly on no man.” Furthermore, no man can take this honor to himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. (Heb. 5:4)

The ministers of Jesus Christ are the under-shepherds of His flock, the

“captains of hundreds,” the stewards of God’s heritage. They are no different in *the flesh* than other believers, but there is a requirement placed on them which no person can share. “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” (I Cor. 4:2). For the Lord is going to cause every one of His servants to give an account of his stewardship. “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as *they that must give account*, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.” (Heb. 13:17)

Dear brethren, this matter grows wider and deeper as we go from line to line, precept to precept. It seems that the more we meditate upon the precious doctrine of God our Saviour, the more His blessed countenance shines over our pathway; the more clearly we can see our own insufficiency, and realize how little we really know. We are much like the blind man whose eyes Jesus anointed with clay and opened with the water of Siloam: we know only that whereas we were blind, now we see.

“...To feed the church of God..” This simple, yet all-encompassing, statement calls to mind the talk Jesus had with His servant Peter, recorded in the last chapter of John. “So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, *Feed My lambs*. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, *Feed My sheep*. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me? And he said unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee. Jesus saith unto him, *Feed My*

*sheep.*” (John 2 1:15-17) Our quotation will stop here because our point is made. But read on for yourselves, dear brethren, and see what Jesus told Peter next. It will become obvious that before we can see Jesus face to face and be crowned with glory we must first be made conformable to His image.

Whenever we undertake to ordain a minister we conclude the work of the presbytery by giving the one set apart a charge. Certainly, no one ever gave a clearer or more direct charge than the one Paul gave to Timothy: “*Preach the word.*” Paul knew, as he wrote, that the Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. When once the Spirit has performed the work of quickening a dead sinner the Word of God is then applied. By the Word of God is the heart pricked and the conscience stirred to the loathsome nature of indwelling sin. By the Word of God a convicted soul is driven to repentance, seeking deliverance and rest. By the Word of God the Gospel of God’s saving grace is ministered as a healing balm to a sin-sore creature. By the Word of God a saved sinner is comforted and built up in the most holy faith. And *God chose to use the elders of the church* to minister the Word which feeds the souls of His hungry and thirsty children.

“... Which He hath purchased with His own blood...” For God the Son to give His life’s blood for someone necessarily shows that they must be very precious to Him. Not only are they precious to Him while they live but they are precious to Him even in death, as it is written, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” O, how precious also are the blood-bought saints of God to our very hearts and minds! How we do sometimes yearn for that time when we can walk together down the golden streets, free from every sin, every creature weakness and failure, every

heartache and burden, every strife and division, every conflict of life! What a precious, wonderful, glorious hope of life and immortality our heavenly Father has given to us wretched, hell-deserving sinners!

Knowing this, then, and loving it the way we feel that we do, how should we elders walk and conduct ourselves in the church of God? Would we knowingly contaminate and defile the Lord's body with false doctrine, or hurtful words, or bad judgment and bad examples? Would we take the solemn risk of offending one of His little ones by contending for any faith than that which was once delivered to the saints? Would we willingly cause any one of the flock of God to stumble by our testimony or example? Would we urge the church of God to carry out its affairs in any other manner than what the Lord has clearly instructed us? What shall we say to these things? "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood."

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## THE CHURCH AND CONGREGATION

When a penitent believer is baptised into the watery grave to arise in newness of Christ, he puts on Christ in a visible and manifestly way. He does at that time satisfy one of his chief burdens, and in being thus added to the church becomes a partaker of two other great benefits which surpass any former experiences he has yet enjoyed - communion and feet washing. When these are engaged in with the overflowing presence of the Holy Spirit, there is nothing so sacred and solemn and heavenly that can be experienced in this tabernacle of clay.

As a minister performs his holy service to the church of the living God, there are

almost never a time when there are not many under his service who have not yet been added to the church by baptism, and yet have been brought very sovereignly and effectually to seek evidences of their own election and calling. In addition, among the congregation are those whom the Lord God has providentially directed before the Gospel ministry for reasons known only in His secret counsel.

All three of the above classes of hearers have their decreed place in that assembly, and the minister's heart yearns for the revelation of salvation to them all. He must preach the depravity of each one present and the just and holy demands of the law of God; yet he knows that it will avail nothing to a soul until "the commandment comes" in power; and when it comes, it administers death to the sinner. He would spare them this if he could, on the one hand, yet must not fail in his administration - for unless they die to the law, they cannot live unto righteousness, nor be married to Christ. He must preach the fulness of salvation, and Christ as the end of the law for righteousness to every believer.