

THE
PLEASURE OF GOD

IN
THE SALVATION OF HIS PEOPLE:

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF

A DISCOURSE,

PREACHED IN YORK STREET CHAPEL, ST. JAMES'S,
NOVEMBER 26, 1815.

BY JOHN STEVENS.

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1844.

ADDRESS
TO
THE FIRST EDITION.

*To my Spiritual Brethren in Christ Jesus, who have desired
and encouraged the Publication of the following Discourse.*

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

In compliance with your urgent request, I here present to you the substance of the Discourse delivered in your hearing, on the Sovereign Pleasure of God, as made known in the Salvation of his People; hoping that, as you profess to have heard it with much spiritual edification, you may, through the good Spirit of our God, peruse it with further benefit; and be excited again to glorify that sovereign favour, by which ye are raised to anticipate complete salvation and eternal glory.

Peace be with you, and with all the Brethren, always, and by all means.

So prays

Your willing Servant and affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

THE
PLEASURE OF GOD

IN THE
SALVATION OF HIS PEOPLE, &c.

He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.—*Psalm* CXXV. 3.

THIS Psalm commences with an address to the God of Israel; in which he is magnified above all the lifeless idols of the heathen world, which were indebted to their worshippers for their shape and features. The deluded admirers of those helpless deities were disposed to boast of their vanities; especially on account of their being visibly present with them; while Israel's God was unseen and dwelt in his own eternity. It pleased these infatuated idolaters, when opportunity was presented, to deride the Israelites, by saying one to another, *Where is now their God?* The devout Psalmist answered, *Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.* Thus he magnified the sacred name of JEHOVAH ALEIM* above all the dunghill gods of heathen lands, whose foundation is in the dust. *This God of Israel is our God, my friends, for ever and ever; and he will be our Guide even unto death.* He worketh all things after the counsel of his own eternal will, while the idols of the nations have no knowledge; and being the workmanship of their worshippers, they must, of course, be subject to their pleasure. The God of Israel sustained his people, and carried them all the days of old, when benighted heathens were carrying about their earthen gods upon their camels' backs. Much labour and expense attended the beautifying of these corruptible things, for they could not beautify themselves, nor shed any glory upon their votaries; but the God of Israel formed his people, and put a comeliness upon them, and caused them to shew forth his praise: and while he could

* ELOHIM as some pronounce.

not be shut up in a room, nor stolen from his people, as the gods of the nations were; nor was he to be seen and handled, as their vanities were; he ruled over all without control, and performed his sovereign pleasure in the heavens above and the earth below. *Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.*

Jehovah, our God, taketh pleasure in shewing forth his sovereignty to his people; and they are delighted with his inimitable condescension towards them. Encouraged by his goodness, and strengthened by his might, they, with unfeigned reverence, adore his greatness, and rely on his boundless mercy for a free and full salvation. A sight of his eternal excellence feeds their humility, and perishes their pride and vanity. They cheerfully celebrate his ineffable perfections in undissembled praises; extolling him in their songs as the God of everlasting salvation. In this stupendous plan of ancient grace, his attributes shine with inexpressible glory, affording, to spiritual minds, a sweet antepast of the refined delight that fills the world of vision where the great Redeemer dwells.

The wisdom of God has never been directed, controlled, or perplexed. His grace is neither deserved nor deficient; neither conditional nor ineffectual. His eternal will has never been hindered, guided, or determined, by the acts of men or angels. His power is infinite, and 'what his soul desireth that he doeth.' A preventable hand of power cannot be divine. *He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.* His sovereign pleasure is evinced in the creation of the world, and also in its support and government. The formation of the universe was for his glory, in, and through Immanuel, and his seed: all things are for him. In this lower world the grand scheme of grace was to be opened, and the upper world was ordained to be peopled from this. And this world will abide until all the chosen seed are gathered in, and the mansions of glory are all occupied by those very persons for whom they were eternally ordained. The whole church of God was appointed to arrive in supernatural perfection and honour, by passing through earth into Heaven, and through nature and grace into open glory. I intend to take a brief view of the pleasure of God, as manifested in the certain and sovereign salvation of his people, in three particulars.

First, In their eternal election.

Secondly, In their certain redemption.

Thirdly. In their true conversion ; briefly showing the manner of his dealing with them, from their spiritual birth to their arrival in glory.

On the first and second heads, I shall be very concise, as my main design is to attend to the different manners of God's dealing with his chosen, in bringing them to a saving knowledge and enjoyment of himself.

First, With regard to the election of his people, the eternal God of Heaven has done *as he hath pleased*. *There is a remnant according to the election of Grace ; and the election have obtained salvation, while the rest are blinded . For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be (made known as) the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. Who then shall lay any unforgiven offence to the charge of God's elect? He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, according to the good pleasure of his will.* Rom. viii. 29—33 ; and xi. 5. Eph. i. 4. The elect of God dwelt on the apostle's mind, in all his ministry ; and the sufferings which he endured from the enemies of God and truth, he endured for their sakes. Hear his words ; *Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.* This great servant of the Lord evidently kept election in view in all his labours ; and also let his hearers know that he did. He neither esteemed it a dangerous nor an unuseful doctrine. It is, however, much to be lamented, that, in our days we have not many ministers of the apostle's mind on this important point. Notwithstanding the dislike which is so generally shown to this fundamental doctrine, so long as the Bible is read, it cannot be quite forgotten ; and while the Holy Spirit continues to *set apart* a people for God, by a distinguishing and invincible work of grace in their hearts, irrefutable evidence of its truth must be near at hand.

In this wholesome doctrine of eternal grace, the God of glory shows forth his superior pleasure. He was under no necessity to choose any of his creatures ; therefore in the words of our text, we may say, *He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.* Had he chosen none, no perfection of his nature had been denied ;

but since it hath pleased him to choose many, it necessarily follows, that his perfections must be thereby glorified. For what ever is, *according to the good pleasure of his will*, is also *to the praise of the glory of his grace*. Eph. i. 5, 6. For God to make an election of angels and men,, that should not redound to his own everlasting praise, would be to deny himself, and give away the glory which is due to his name. I am aware this doctrine of election is denied by many; but it will never be refuted by any. The ranks of its enemies have been broken, by its sovereign and conquering power; and among its warmest advocates, we behold many who were its bitterest foes! Many who have fought ignorantly against it, have been captivated by its influence, and delighted with its salutary effects. It has humbled many of its opposers, but has lost none of its objects. It is truly confounding to human pride, and suffers no man to glory save in the Lord alone.

But that those who are its objects should be taken, and not others, can only be accounted for in the pure sovereignty of God: herein, *he has done as he hath pleased*. Nothing but grace appears in this eternal choice, and to this high cause are all the elect of God ever willing to ascribe it entirely: nor do we see, when the persons chosen are made manifest to us, any reason from their character, to attribute it to any other cause. Why one of the two thieves, who were crucified with our Lord, should be taken to Paradise, while the other was left to perish in his sins, no other cause can be assigned, but the sovereign pleasure of God. It is certain that his good works did not influence the God of salvation to elect him for Heaven, because he had performed none: nor is election according to works, but according to the riches of Jehovah's grace. And, if we observe what the apostle says to the church at Corinth, we must conclude, that the reason of their being chosen in distinction from others, was not the superiority of their moral character to that of other men. His words are these, 'Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves, with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God: and *such were some of you*; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. Here, again, we can discover no reason to imagine, that election stands upon the character of the persons elected. Those Corinthians were certainly saved by that grace which is sovereign and free; and without any

such thing as conditionality or prerequisites. Nor can it be supposed, that they were first washed and sanctified, and then chosen; for we are chosen to be holy and without blame before him in love. Election is the root of sanctification, and is as necessary to it as life is to action. Interest in Christ is the ground of all enjoyment of Christ. God has made choice of the worst of men for himself, as is plain from the preceding passage of his own word; he has washed the filthy,—made the unjust righteous, and sanctified the unholy: here it is said, such *were* some of you; not such *are* some of you. Here is no encouragement to vice, though grace is exalted to the utmost. The profane man and the Pharisee are alike left out of the acknowledged tribe of believing saints, in this highly distinguishing dispensation of the Lord, *he has done whatsoever he hath pleased.*

The sovereign pleasure of God is also seen in attending to *the number of his chosen.* Why the number should be exactly what it is, neither more nor less, can only be resolved by the idea of the divine pleasure;—*He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.* The number of the Lord's chosen we know not, but He does; for *the Lord knoweth them that are his.* He will neither augment nor diminish the number; as he saw no reason for its being greater or less than what it is, *before* the world began, so it is impossible that any new reason should arise *after* the world began, to move him to alter his decree. It is a great number that no man can number; and the whole shall appear before the throne of his glory, in the day of their open distinction from the rest: his chosen sheep will then be finally separated from the goats; and had he desired more than those who will be finally saved, he would certainly have chosen more to salvation; and it was only necessary for him to will it so to be, and the event would have answered to his pleasure, beyond all reasonable question. But the hacknied idea, of his wishing to save all, when he has declared, in his own word, that he has only chosen some, is foolish, unscriptural, and wicked. If the Scriptures be duly regarded, they will inform us, that though Esau was Jacob's brother, yet the Lord Jehovah loved Jacob, and hated Esau; and that, while Jacob no more deserved his regard than did his brother Esau! Malachi, i. 2, 3. God is a sovereign; and *he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.* And *is it not lawful for him to do as he will with his own.*

As to the ends, to which they are elected, likewise, he hath done as he hath pleased. They are chosen to the glory of God

in Christ, and for the glorification of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In their salvation, the eternal attributes of God are to be illustrated and glorified for ever. They are chosen in and for the Son of God, who is their heavenly Head, and ever-living Husband;—and they are chosen to see and inherit his glory, which he had with the Father before the world was. These highly-favoured people, are also chosen to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, even to be holy and blameless in the presence of God for ever: they are chosen to worship God on earth, and afterwards to adore and praise his sacred name in Heaven; and there to know and love one another, according to the nature and order of the perfect world above. A selection secures these happy ends, we cannot sufficiently extol the doctrine, or admire the grace, that thus determined the honour of God, and the happiness of his people, to stand inseparably united to all eternity; and secured the whole beyond the possibility of disappointment, in the all-sufficient, the ineffably glorious, and adorable person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally: *As to the means by which, and the states through which they are chosen to arrive at their ultimate honour and happiness*, God's sovereignty is shown. For they were chosen to obtain eternal life, by passing through three different states or conditions of existence:—*innocence, depravity, and spirituality*. In Eden, mankind were innocent, in their common parent; by the Fall, they became guilty and unholy through him: and, by regeneration, the elect are all made spiritual, and are preserved in that state unto life eternal. Although the elect were considered as unfallen, by God the Father, in his act of choosing their persons, yet, the end to which they were chosen, involves the idea of the Fall through which they all pass, to their ordained and final enjoyment of God in Christ. But, in all this appointment of the way of bringing his people to everlasting glory, the eternal God *has done whatsoever he hath pleased*. I shall now proceed to my next head of discourse, and observe, that,

Secondly, The sovereign pleasure of God is displayed in the certain redemption of his elect from their fallen estate to spiritual and eternal life. In this great work, *He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased*. It is true, that the unalterable decree of election rendered redemption unavoidable; notwithstanding, it is impossible that it could ever become undesirable, in the eyes of the God of everlasting love. It pleased him to choose them,

therefore it must be pleasing to him to redeem and possess them. They were chosen to obtain salvation and eternal glory through redemption; and the Son of God was chosen to redeem them from all iniquity to God. Redemption is the great and main channel, through which the river of boundless grace flows out from the eternal throne of the triune God, to an elect world. All spiritual blessings were ordained to reach the sinner, through Calvary's free and complete redemption. This blessed work of Immanuel is governed by election; on which, as upon its proper basis, it securely rests. And in this solemn and wondrous transaction of Christ Jesus, good pleasure is for ever displayed. It pleased the Father to appoint the Son, who is Lord of glory, to ransom his chosen family from deserved death, to endless and given life. *It pleased the Lord to bruise him*, on whom, by imputation, he had laid the sins of his elect, in the ancient covenant of his grace. Thus, that a peculiar people should be redeemed, arose from their having been chosen from everlasting in Christ, as their heavenly Head. On his Headship by grace, is founded his Suretyship in mercy: He, being their Head, became also their Saviour. He covenanted as their representative, and therefore died in their stead. He accepted the imputation of their crimes; and by thus being made sin, he became the lawful victim of punitive justice, and the all-sufficient Saviour of his lost people. In him the Father is well pleased; and by him, *He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.*

These, for whom he suffered unto death, he redeemed unto life; for them he rose, and lives, and reigns; and to them he says, *Because I live, ye shall live also.* God accepted the life of the Head, as an atonement for the sins of the members; and pardoned for ever the many offences of many persons, by the one sacrifice of one person. In the divinity of our Lord's person is founded the worth of his sacrifice; and, in the nature of his covenant, is the foundation of the prevalence of his sacrifice for some and not for others. The worth of his atonement does not arise from the appointment of it, but it is appointed because of its intrinsic worth. This finished work is not only satisfying to God, as lawgiver and justifier, but it is satisfying to himself: *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.* And in this blessed performance of the truly great High Priest, the family of God is well satisfied; it is what they want, and it is all they wish. This comprehends a full and free discharge from condemnation; and while Justice hereby receives its utmost due, and the law a complete fulfilment, the redeemed obtain an

everlasting pardon, to the praise of inflexible equity and distinguishing grace.

Furthermore, In this blessed mystery of wisdom, which God ordained before the world, to our perfect salvation and glory, his supreme pleasure is pleasingly made known to the church. Many inquiries might here be made by thinking minds, to which no answer could be returned; but that *He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased*. Why the Son of God the Father should take flesh *at the time* he did, no reason can be assigned; but that it was the divine will that so it should be: and why he was ordained to spring from *Judah*, rather than from any other tribe in Israel, we know not; but thus *it pleased* the most high God to determine the matter. Nor do we know any other reason than the sovereign pleasure of God, for his being of the house and lineage of David; and, on the same ground, we might account for Mary being his mother, Bethlehem the place of his birth, Nazareth his dwelling place, Judas his betrayer, Pilate his Judge, Calvary the place of his crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea's new tomb his sepulchre, and Mount Olivet the spot from which he ascended to the celestial world. Sovereignty is reflected through all his undertaking and services, and evidently runs through the whole plan of eternal redemption. *The Son of man went forth as it was determined of him*, as to time, place, manner, and circumstances: but why all these things were thus ordained, is known to God alone. What was needful to be declared is not concealed; and with the judgment of infinite wisdom, and the bestowments of boundless favour, we have the highest reason possible to be satisfied. *God hath done whatsoever he hath pleased*.

Once more. Complete redemption is in Christ; he has made ample satisfaction for sin, and paid the stipulated price of Zion's freedom, and has also brought in everlasting righteousness, for the full and everlasting justification of his redeemed ones. Jesus *hath saved* his people from wrath to come; therefore they are called to exult in *a finished salvation*. It is reported that some men, who are considered to be ministers of Christ, object to this idea as erroneous and injurious; but, surely, the truth of the sentiment is too manifest to admit of serious controversy; and if it be truth, it will injure neither preachers nor hearers; and if salvation is not finished, who is to be the finisher; What more is requisite to be done that it may be finished? *There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins*. Justice is fully atoned,

the *law* is completely fulfilled, *sin* is put away, *God* is reconciled, *peace* is made, *righteousness* accomplished, *the curse* removed, *the church* redeemed, *all the conditions of the covenant of grace* performed, *the way into the holiest* made manifest, by the ascension of Christ and the gift of the Comforter, and *the principalities and powers of darkness* spoiled. Now, what more, I ask, is necessary to sanction the doctrine of a *finished salvation*? What can be mentioned that would add to the certainty, the propriety, or the permanency of the salvation of God's elect? When Jesus exclaimed on the cross, *It is finished*, surely he meant that the salvation which he came to accomplish was *then finished*; and who, of all the guilty sons of Adam, will dare to aver, that God has commanded *him* to finish the work of salvation, which the Saviour has left incomplete? With the Son of God, his Father declared himself well pleased: surely he was not pleased with a defective performance, with an *unfinished* salvation! They who are determined not to preach a *finished salvation*, must, of course, be resolved upon a conduct that denies both the Father and the Son, and represents the Holy Ghost as a spirit of falsehood! Such men make it too manifest that they are siding with the enemies of the cross of Christ: they cannot be the faithful publishers of God's salvation, but of some human device, to which, through darkness and depravity, they are pleased to give the preference. Still, their being thus left, awful as the thought may appear, is a further illustration of the words of our text: *God hath done whatsoever he hath pleased*. As we also read in Peter, 'Unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, *whereunto also they were appointed*.'

With respect to the manifestation of this great salvation, and the inward application of it to the hearts of those for whom it is provided in Christ, it is not finished. There are other sheep for whom the Shepherd died, who are not at present brought into the visible fold of Christ's church. But those will all be brought in, on the ground of a finished atonement, and a complete righteousness, standing in Jesus for them. The Holy Ghost is sent to apply a finished salvation to the consciences of all the redeemed. When the work of the Holy Spirit is as fully completed as is that of the Mediator, the church will appear in a glory, of which, at present, our conceptions are of necessity very imperfect; only, this we know, the members shall be like

their Head; for it hath pleased the eternal Father of our Lord that his chosen should come to the knowledge of his perfections, to the image of his Son, and to the glory of his kingdom above, by salvation, as first finished on the cross *for them*; and secondly finished by the Holy Spirit *in them*: and the latter is founded upon the former. But I must now endeavour to show you.

Thirdly. That the sovereign pleasure of God is manifested in the *conversion* of his chosen and redeemed people, and in *the manner* of his dealing with them, from the day of their spiritual birth to their arrival in the heavenly kingdom. They live and die under the reign of his supreme pleasure, as it is extended to them, through the redemption of the Son, by the office of the Spirit. Here I feel it needful to take notice of the mistake into which some good men have fallen, by attempting to make their own experience, *in every particular*, a rule whereby to judge of the state of their professing brethren. Without an experience they could not judge at all; yet, by a wrong use made of their own feelings and exercises, in certain respects, they are liable to form a wrong judgment. Thus, some there are, who, on hearing that another has not been brought to enjoy the hope of eternal life exactly as they have been brought, immediately cast such a person away, as having neither part nor lot in the matter. This, I believe, is a great error, and one that has a very injurious tendency; for it not only hides the lines of divine sovereignty, which are discoverable in the various ways by which the Lord gathers the once alienated hearts of his chosen to himself; but it also tends to divert the mind from a due attention to the sacred Scriptures, which are the only sure test of true character, and the best guide to a safe and profitable conclusion. The work of the Spirit on the heart, and the word of the Spirit in the hand, are both essential to a right and useful knowledge on this important subject. We may often observe, also, that this mode of judging the hearts of others, just complained of, has a bad effect upon the spirits of those who sit in judgment; who are too apt to become extravagant in their ideas, both concerning themselves and others. Hence arises an unjustifiable severity in their conclusions concerning their professing brethren; and, at the same time, there is great danger of such judges becoming unjustifiably partial towards such persons, as may seem to have moved exactly in the track by which they have been led, and *in which* they, without due reason, are looking to see every convert walking home to God. The Most

High is a sovereign Lord, and loves to evidence his supremacy in the conversion of his people, as much as in his election of them : in both, *He does whatsoever pleaseth him.*

It is not designed, by the preceding observations, to plead for an unscriptural charity, nor to encourage a carelessness about the true evidences of genuine Christianity ; but we are not to set up false evidences, nor to lay an undue stress upon mere circumstantial differences ; but to aim to discover life by the feeling it produces, and the light and action that spring from it, always remembering, that a state of grace will shine forth with a superior brightness, where great gifts are at hand to make the display : yet it does not necessarily follow, that such a man's heart is as much more freed from the prevalence of evil, as his verbal statement is superior to that of his weak brother. Some, who have but *little* gracious experience of truth, will seem to have *much*, by reason of their gift in setting it forth ; while others, who have much feeling, a great tenderness of conscience, with a good degree of love and reverence, will seem, especially at certain times, to have very little, and perhaps be strongly suspected by their brethren of being destitute of all true experience. Again, I say, God is a sovereign, and he delights in shewing it ; and in the hearts of his people it is manifested. In his dealings with them, *He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.* The God who made us, has certainly an indisputable right to do as he will with the works of his own hand ; and the righteousness of his nature will for ever afford his people ground of assurance, that he will never do any thing unjust. His different manners of dealing with his chosen are no denial of his true character ; but, on the contrary, they serve to illustrate his sovereignty to the eye of Faith, and, in a thousand instances, display his wisdom and prudence.

Before I take up the point intended to be pursued more particularly, it seems needful to observe, that in certain respects the Lord dealeth with his people all alike ; while in other points he is pleased to treat them very differently. He dealeth with them all *as sons*, as to the love wherewith he loves them. They are all loved alike in Christ their Head and Saviour, though to some this love is made more abundantly manifest than it is to others. The love of God is so perfect in itself, that it can neither increase nor decrease ;—it can neither be purchased nor forfeited,—for it is free and unconditional. This great love of God is extended to the whole elect world in their elect Head, and

every represented member is loved with the same eternal and unchangeable love; and therefore are they drawn to Christ, and made partakers of all spiritual blessings. They are all alike the sons of God, being *predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will*. And to them the Holy Ghost is a Spirit of adoption; by him they are quickened, and led into the knowledge of God as their Father, and by him they are brought to cry *Abba, Father*. For this family, an incorruptible inheritance is provided in Heaven, and they are all equally heirs of that immortal heritage. They are all alike redeemed, justified, pardoned, and regenerated, and are preserved to eternal glory. In these respects, God is *pleased* to treat his people all alike, and they are joint-heirs with Christ of all the fulness of God. The words of the Psalmist are applicable again here, for *He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased*.

I now return to observe, that, in many particulars, God is pleased to deal very differently with his chosen.

1. *As to national distinction, and the order of time chosen with regard to Jews and Gentiles*. The Jews were set first, for some thousands of years, while the Gentiles remained in their ignorance, and the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men, Gentiles as well as Jews, to repent. He long confined his worship to the Jews, but we can render no other reason for his so doing, except that, in this also, *He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased*. And who can help observing the evident display of his sovereignty in this undeniable event? It shows, however, that he, in those early days, did not seek the salvation of all men without distinction; but sought out his elect only; and it is more than probable that he is doing the same in our own times. But if this be granted, must we not conclude that many modern religionists are far more zealous than wise? In seeking the conversion of sinners, we are called to remember, that, to change their hearts and ways is the work of omnipotent favour, and that this work is never uncertain, either as to the persons who shall be converted, or the time when, and the means by which it shall be effected; for they are all determined by that Great God and Saviour, who worketh salvation in the hearts of his elect according to the counsel of his own will. *He doeth whatsoever he pleaseth*.

2. *As to the age in which the chosen people of God are converted and brought near unto himself; he doeth as he pleaseth*.

His sovereign pleasure as much appears in the acts of his power in converting his people, as it does in the act of his will in ordaining their conversion. Grace reigns supremely in both, and this becomes the song of the converted, when they are brought nigh to God. God's new-born singers are led to exult in distinguishing grace, as the sovereign and unalterable cause of their complete salvation. Some are called out of darkness into marvellous light in *the days of youth*. 'It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.' The advantages are great, for they are thereby prevented from many evils, and are kept from forming such connexions with the ungodly as would be sure to prove injurious to themselves, and dishonourable to God. Thus a young man who is brought to the knowledge of Christ by the Holy Ghost, before he has entered into the married state, has the advantage of his brother, who has been called since he was married, and who has a carnal woman for his companion. And let all young persons, who are single, take notice of this matter seriously; for they have no authority to marry, except to such as are in the Lord: at least it is their duty to seek for scriptural evidence to this effect, to the best of their ability. I fear this is too often disregarded; but it is impossible that such neglecters of the Lord's command should escape the smart attendant upon a spirit of disobedience. Females, especially, often find their yoke made heavy by putting themselves under the authority of carnal men: for they shortly find, in the general, that hatred to God will not be bound in restriction by natural bands, for any length of time, or to any certainty. But the honour of God should be esteemed above all carnal gratifications, and persons unyoked should constantly pray to be kept from forming any forbidden alliances, and guard against the falsehood and flattery of the human heart. No tale is to be hearkened to that is contrary to the word of God,—no happiness anticipated, where God is daringly denied. *He that knoweth his Lord's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.*

But, to return to the point; why some should be called by grace when young, while others live many years in the slavery of corruption, we know not; we can only say, *He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased*. God is a Sovereign, and whatsoever his soul desireth, that he doeth; but as he never can desire a wrong thing, so he never can do unjustly or unwisely. The perfection of his character is the safety and delight of his people. Further, It is his pleasure that some of his chosen should be brought to know themselves and him, when surrounded with

the pressing concerns of this mortal life, and after its anxious cares have gained a powerful hold. But it matters not how busily the poor sinner may be employed, when the Saviour says, 'Follow me,'— he must arise and go after him. The man of business, who has often said he had something else to do, and could not spare time to run after religion, is presently able to find time, when the hand of the Lord has reached his heart, and formed a new spirit within him. As a new man, he has a new sight of things; he elects a new path, and new prospects are continually opening to his view.—Dead to the notion of human merit, he ceases to hope in himself; and raised up in the quickening energy of the Holy Spirit, he looks to the work of his Surety, as opened to his perception in the doctrines of grace. But, why this change did not take place sooner, or why it has taken place at all, we can render no other reason than that *God hath done as he pleased.*

Some few of God's elect are suffered to remain in the servitude of sin and Satan, until they are covered with hoary hairs, and are nearly arrived at the foot of the hill; until the sun is nearly set, and the evening of life is come. But, if not before, at the eleventh hour these servants shall be hired; and, though they are almost immediately released from their gospel service and suffering, yet they every one receive a penny, and are as truly loved and saved as those who for many years have followed the ark of the Lord, and wrought in his temple service. Some are to live to old age in the ways of God, and others are shortly removed to their heavenly rest. But why are these differences evident in the lot of the just? The answer again returns: *He hath done whatsoever he pleased.* God delights in displaying his sovereignty, and wise men admire it with reverence.

3. As to the *manner* of his love and power in bringing his chosen seed to *know* and *enjoy* his great salvation, *He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.* They are all converted at *the time* he fore-ordained, and by *the means* which he was pleased to appoint; but he does not deal with them all exactly in the same way, neither are they all circumstanced alike at the time. They are all alike dead in trespasses and sins, and are under the awful and irrepeatable sentence of a just law; and, though they are not left to endure the curse of the law, it is not because they did not deserve it, or because it could not in justice be inflicted upon them; but because the eternal Son of God had undertaken to bear it in their stead. But their circumstances greatly differ;