

**DISCOURSES,  
ON THE  
SOVEREIGN AND UNIVERSAL  
AGENCY OF GOD,  
IN  
NATURE AND GRACE.  
BY THE REVEREND  
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# DISCOURSE I.

EPHESIANS I, 11.

WHO WORKETH ALL THINGS AFTER THE COUNSEL.

OF HIS OWN WILL

THE apostle has, in the former part of this verse, a manifest allusion to the division of the land of Canaan by lot to the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, the whole disposal of which was of the Lord, Num. xxvi, 55.

Prov. xvi 33. He thus directs our views into the infinite wisdom of God, “in whom also we have obtained an inheritance?” God had, in the depths of infinite wisdom and absolute sovereignty, ordained this inheritance for them, “being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things *after the counsel of his own will.*” And since we have but just emerged out of non-existence and know nothing but as omniscience holds up the lamp, it surely becomes us to awaken all the powers of our souls to attention, and to spend months, nay, years on this sublimest of all subjects. For it proves a divine agency in the production and management of all of all things. “God worketh all things,” not blindly, nor as present unforeseen circumstances may require, but after a certain, determinate and immutable pattern, “after the counsel of his own” unalterable “will.” I shall therefore in humble dependence on divine aid show— FIRST, That God’s agency produces and manages all things.

SECONDLY, That God’s own will is the only rule, by which he makes, governs and directs all things. I am then, in the first place, to show, that the agency of Divine Providence produces and governs all things.

This is certain, that the soul when awakened to an impartial inquiry after immortal good, cannot rest short of the enjoyment of a being, who is both able and also determined to do whatever is best to be done, and prevent what is best to be prevented. He must therefore be possessed of absolute perfection, and thus be worthy of divine adoration, and the most unlimited confidence. He must indeed “work all things according to the counsel of his own will,” that the soul may cast itself and all its concerns on Him, to be managed and disposed of by him according to his own pleasure. Take

from such a soul faith in the divine agency managing all things, and you leave it full of painful apprehension, not knowing where things may terminate, however promising in their first appearance: But restore to it again faith in that agency, and it will see all things moving on toward the most noble end. It will, with Abraham, “against hope believe in hope.” Though it sees not into futurity, yet it says, “the Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup; thou maintainest my lot: the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage,” Psalm. xvi, 5, 6.

It is also certain, that since God has brought all things into existence, he must have an undoubted right to govern and direct them. “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein.” Now it is universally allowed, that everyone has a right to do what he will with his own. We, and all we have, are absolutely the Lord’s by creation and providence. How then shall we censure infinite wisdom and goodness for governing and directing all things according to his own pleasure.

None but God, who is omnipresent, infinitely wise and good, is fit to govern the universe. For all things require infinite skill, goodness, presence, power and patience to manage them. Even one of the smallest particles is of too much importance for any besides God to manage. If misplaced, it might overthrow an empire, give a shock to the world, and extend its influence into eternity. It might even frustrate the wisest purposes of Jehovah, and cast all things into irretrievable disorder and confusion. \* God undoubtedly formed the most minute particles to answer some very important purpose in the plan of his government. His character requires him to make them subservient to the grand design for which he created them, and not be baffled by the workmanship of his own hands.

Their importance, either in themselves, or in their connexion and consequences, is so immensely great, that none but God is fit or able to manage them. Since God could make nothing in vain, we must conclude that every atom has its importance in the natural world. The whole globe is composed of atoms, which, when separated, elude the most piercing eye of mortal man. Now which of all these shall be neglected? If one, why not

another—why not all—all material nature? And so all things run into irretrievable confusion and rude disorder.

If things in the natural world be of such consequence, surely those in the moral world are of too great importance to be trusted in the hands of any but God. Hence you find the scriptures ascribing the management of all things to God's infinite wisdom and power in the following explicit manner.

Eph. i, 11. "God worketh all things." Heb. i, 3. "Upholding all things." Rom. xi, 36. Of Him, *in creation*, through him, in *providence*, are all things. Col. i, 17. "By him all things consist." The subject requires a particular detail.

\* There could be no certainty with respect to the period of men's lives, on which much depends. For it might light on the eye, and bring on an inflammation, which would produce a mortification; or, it might fall on some part of the lungs, and bring on a consumption, and, in consequence, the death of an Abraham, an Isaac, &c. and so frustrate even the plan of man's salvation. Now, as their consequences may extend far, very far, beyond this world, because their divine author directs everything with reference to *eternity*; so it is necessary and desirable, that every atom, or mote, which plays in the sunbeam, should be conducted, in all its various motions, by the unerring hand of Almighty God.

I. God forms the embryo in the womb. Job. x, 9, 10, 11. "Thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again? Hast thou not poured we out as milk, and curdled me like cheese? Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh; and hast fenced me with bones and sinews." Psalm. cxxxix, 14—16.

Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." Souls are not generated by parents, but

immediately created by God, in that very act, by which they are united to their respective bodies. For souls are not composed of parts, consequently they are indivisible, and therefore cannot be communicated to children. Eccl. xii, 7. "The spirit shall return unto God who gave it." God gives the spirit. Isai. lvii, 16. "The souls which I have made." God made the souls which were in Isaiah's time.

Zech. xii, 1. "The Lord formeth the spirit of man within him." As God made Adam, and breathed into him the breath of life, so he creates the spirit in the body after it is fashioned. God is therefore "the Father of spirits." Heb. xii, 9. For "he fashioneth their hearts alike." Psalm. xxxiii, 15.

How plain is this also from Rom. iv, 17. "I have made thee a father of many nations, before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." *I have made*, (tetheika) constituted or appointed thee a father of many nations. God had appointed Abraham to be the father of many nations, before him whom he believed, even God who quickeneth the dead; that is, quickeneth Abraham's body, which was dead with respect to generation, and Sarah's barren womb. Abraham was about an hundred years old, and Sarah, beside her natural barrenness, was past the time of life to bear children. The apostle, therefore, compares the conception of Isaac to the first creation, when God, by his omnipotent command, called things which were not into real being; And Abraham knowing the Almighty power and immutable faithfulness of God in fulfilling his promises; "considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb;" Thus "Abraham against hope believed in hope." For he knew that God, who, in the first creation, had, by his power, called things which were not, into being, would by the same power produce Isaac the child of promise; Some indeed carry their opinion of human agency to such lengths as to make man almost independent of God.

They hold; that God made only Adam's soul; that Eve's soul was formed out of Adam's; that part of Adam's soul was communicated; by natural

generation to his children; that his sons, who begat children; communicated in like manner, a part of that soul, which they derived from Adam's to their children, and so of all men; and that man begets man independent of divine agency. The futility of this, opinion is easily exposed. — It makes all souls a part of Adam's. Though you divide Adam's soul into ever so many parts, yet it will take all those parts to make up his soul again. — The absurdity is too glaring to dwell upon; for upon this plan it makes all souls but one soul. On this ground, how can some delight in objects which others view with abhorrence.' How can some rejoice, while others weep? If all souls are one, why cannot they look as easily into other minds as into their own? And all souls must with respect to happiness, or misery be in the same condition with Adam's: For it takes the whole to make up his soul.

If souls were generated by parents, they would be subject to corruption, and the doctrine of the immortality of the soul would be destroyed.

I. Jehovah governs the empires and states of the world, together with every individual person in them: he presides, the God of armies, to determine their movements, and on which side, and by what means, victory should declare in the day of battle.

Hence the Assyrian, who in Isaiah's time, was the most potent monarch in the world, could no more move without God, than the axe without him that heweth therewith, or the saw without him that shaketh it. God saith, Isa. x, 5, 6. "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mind indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the street." God influenced and sent the Assyrian with his army on this errand. He employed him "as the rod of his anger," or the instrument in his hand, to correct a disobedient people.

And as God did not force, but powerfully influenced his will to fulfil the divine purpose in the correction of a sinful people; so he felt himself free, under no compulsion, while he acted as the rod in God's hand. Ver. 7. "Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in

his heart to destroy and to cut off nations not a few.” So secret, though efficacious, was God’s influence, that he did not think of acting only as the instrument in God’s hand. For it appears from the 7th to the 15th verse, that the Assyrian was a free-willer, imagined he could do whatever he pleased, had a self-determining power, acted from the powers of his own free-agency, and disbelieved the influence of God. But to reprove him and all others of a like opinion, God saith, verse 15, Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith, or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood.” God compares himself to the carpenter, who made use of the Assyrian as his axe and saw, which must have lain inactive unless moved to action by some agent. By this example he shews the egregious vanity, folly and presumption of those, who suppose they can act without God’s previous and immediate excitation to action. “Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood.” The Assyrian, as the second cause, could no more act without God’s previously exciting him to action, than the rod could shake itself, or the staff could lift up itself, which is impossible. From this it appears, that the Assyrian held, as many do in our day, that the creature acted as he pleased by the powers of his own free-agency, that the decrees and providence were conditional, that the creature, by performing the condition, regulates and adjusts the will and providence of God, consequently that man was the independent master of himself and God dependent on the creature. This is for the axe to boast itself against him that heweth therewith, and for the saw to magnify itself against him that shaketh it, “as if the rod should shake him who lifts it up, or as if the staff should lift up the man who uses it,” for so the words may be rendered.

We are told in II Sam. xxiii, 10—12, that Eleazar and Shammah obtained a great victory over the Philistines, and had the praise of being great heroes, yet, in both cases, it is said, “the Lord wrought a great victory.” They were valiant; but their valor was from God. They were victorious,

but divine agency wrought the victory. God made use of them as instruments to fulfil his will.

In the xiith chapter of Job, from the 6th verse to the end of the chapter, we have an account of the absolute and uncontrollable agency of God over all the devices and passions of men. Verse 17. “He leadeth counsellors away spoiled,” causes politicians to leave their seats, “and maketh the judges fools;” causes those at the helm of government not to know what measures to take, verse 18. “He looseth the bonds of kings,” dissolves the power by which they keep all orders of the state in subjection, “and girdeth their loins with a girdle;” binds kings with the cords of a captive. Verse 19. “He leadeth princes away spoiled,” leads governors of provinces into captivity, “and overthroweth the mighty,” defeats the commanders of armies in the field of battle. Therefore, “the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will,” Dan. iv, 17.

Examples are endless: let it suffice, that “the battle is not to the strong, nor the race to the swift.”— See also Psalm. xxxiii, 16, 17.

III. The agency of God, by which all things are produced, does not consist in merely preserving the creatures’ strength, nor in giving them a law for the regulation of their actions, nor in giving them a general principle of motion to be determined by themselves; but, it consists in the immediate, previous and predeterminate impulse and excitation of the creature to action. Prov. xvi, 1. “The preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord.” Verse 9. “A man’s heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps.” Chap. xx, 24. Man’s goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?” Chap. xxi, 1. “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord; as the rivers of water, he turneth it whithersoever he will.” Jer. x, 23. “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not of man that walketh to direct his steps.” Phil, ii, 13. “God worketh in you, both to will and to do?” How plain it is from scripture, that the agency of God produces and manages all free actions of rational creatures; such as the preparations of the heart, the answer of the tongue, and the steps of a man’s foot. The infallible certainty of every action may, therefore, be proved from that subordination by

which all creatures depend on God for their operation. For when God excites the creature to action, it cannot possibly suspend its operation. Because the influence of an almighty agent cannot be defeated by dependent dust and ashes.

Were not the agency of God invincible, these three dreadful absurdities would follow: 1st. That the creature had power to defeat, or establish the whole plan and providence of God, by nullifying or ratifying the divine agency: 2d. The creature must have this power independent of God; for God will never assist the creature to baffle and defeat his own influence; because that would be acting against himself: 3d. As the ability to act arises from the essence, and the action proceeds from that ability, so whatever has its essence or being from another, must also have its ability and operation from that other. Consequently, could any creature produce an action independently of God's influence or agency, then God was not its creator.

The scriptures, therefore, ultimately resolve all things into the sovereign good pleasure and free will of God. Luke x. 21. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." Psalm. cxv, 3. "Our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatever he pleased." Psalm. cxxxv, 6. "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and in all deep places." Dan. iv, 35. "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will, in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him what doest thou?" God works all things, throughout all his dominions, as he pleases: *and none can stay his hand, stop the agency of his providence, or say unto him, what doest thou?* none have a right to call him to an account for what he does.

The word of; God is plain, and shall we not all believe him?

Isa. xlv, 7. "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I, the Lord, do all these things." Amos iii, 6. "Shall there be evil in a

city, and the Lord hath not done it?” Ex. xiv. 4,17. “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, that he shall follow after them, and I will be honored upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host: I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians: and I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host.” Chap, ix, 16. “And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power, and that my name may be declared through all the earth.” Rom.ix, 17. “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.” Deut. ii, 30. “Sihon would not let us pass by him; for the Lord thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand.” Prov. xvi, 4. “God hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.”, Deut. xxix, 4. “The Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.” Rom. xi, 7, 8. “The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.

According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this day.” Isa. vi, 9, 10. “Go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not: and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.” John xii, 39, 40. “Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.” Ezek. xxvi, 10. “Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments, whereby they should not live; and I polluted them in their own gifts.” God’s agency certainly produces all actions what, ever either effectively, or permissively, according to the nature of the case. This is plain from the example of Joseph.

God revealed his purpose, in part, to Joseph, relative to such exaltation, that his father and brethren should bow in obeisance to him. Joseph communicated this to his brethren and they resolved if possible to defeat it. “Let us slay him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams.”

But God would not permit them to kill him, but permitted them to cast him into a pit, and before they had time to devise more mischief against him. By his providence a company of Midianitish merchantmen passed by that way. The thought then occurred to them, that it was better to sell than to kill him. Though God permitted, overruled, and directed the whole affair, “after the counsel of his own will,” yet he did not take away the freedom of their will. They felt themselves at liberty, and acted just as they pleased. They would have acted equally free had God hindered their selling, which he could have done as easily as he hindered their murdering of him. It is plain there was a divine agency in the whole business.

Gen. xlv, 7, 8. “Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God,” who had the ordering of the whole affair, “sent me before you to preserve life— God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.” When Jacob was dead, they sent a messenger before him to intercede for the pardon of their base treatment.

Gen. 50:16, 17. “Forgive I pray thee now the trespasses of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did evil unto thee.” Afterward they venture into his presence, and implore his pardon; saying, “we be thy servants,” we are guilty, and surrender ourselves to thy disposal. Joseph replied, “fear not” any harm from me, “for am I in the place of God?” the righteous Judge, whose pardon ye truly need. But as for you ye thought evil against me; “but God,” who had the whole ordering of the affair, “meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive.” Joseph, being a prophet of the Lord, saw the hand of God in the whole affair, permitting, overruling, and directing his brethren’s sin, for wise and noble purposes.

He saw that “God meant” he should be sold, and indeed that “it was God who sent him hither,” and that his brethren, were only the instruments by which God’s permissive will was accomplished. He saw their accomplishing the permissive will of God did not exculpate their conduct. They were not praise worthy for fulfilling the permissive will of God, because they acted to serve their own lusts and wicked propensities. But

God over-ruled the whole affair as “he meant” that it should be. God ought therefore to have all the praise of all the good which he brought about by the instrumentality of these wicked agents.

IV. There is certainly a divine agency even in those things, which appear accidental to us. Matt, x, 29, 30, 31. “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered; Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.” Our Saviour’s argument is, conclusive. He reasons from the less to the greater. If those apparent accidents which reach the life of a sparrow, valued at only half a farthing, are ordered by the Hand of providence, much more those, which reach, the life of man. Therefore, God added fifteen years to Hezekiah’s days, Isa. xxxviii, 1—5. Not to the days, God had appointed he should live, but to the days he had already lived. Hezekiah had been sick unto, death; his disease was in its own nature mortal; and he would have certainly died, had God left him to the strength of his disease. Verse 1. But God wrought a miraculous cure, that he might not die till the expiration of those fifteen years, which constituted his appointed time. Thus God will rather work miracles for the preservation of a man’s life, than he should die before his appointed time. God will so over rule all, sickness and accidents, that death shall surprise no one till his appointed time has fully come. The death of Ahab, who fell at Ramoth-Gilead, is called accidental. “A certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel,” but it was all agreeable to the will, and through the providence of God. I Kings xxii, 20—23. “And the Lord said, who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner; and there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the Lord said, thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets.”. God’s dominion over men is, therefore, so absolute and sovereign, that he may dispose their life and death as seemeth good in his

sight. 1 Sam. ii, 6. “The Lord killeth and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.” Deut. xxxii, 39. “I kill, and I make alive, I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.” Psalm xc, 3. “Thou turnest man to destruction.” V. I will carry the divine agency still farther. For such is man’s absolute dependence on God, that he is not only incapable of action, but also of thought, without divine agency. 2 Cor. iii, 5. “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God.” We are not sufficient of ourselves even to think, consequently we are dependent on divine agency for thought — “God worketh all things.” God’s powerful agency in providence does not make him the author of sin, for though the attraction of the sun be so powerful as to extract noxious vapors from the earth, yet the sun is not the cause or author, of their pernicious qualities. These are owing to the badness of the place, from which the vapors arise. In like manner God’s being the first cause of all actions, does not make him the cause, or author, of the sinfulness of any action whatever. The sinfulness of any action does not arise from God’s agency, but from the polluted nature of him who does the action.

He must be blind indeed, who cannot see a material difference between an action and its qualities. An action is one thing; its qualities quite another. Stoning a man, in obedience to God’s command, for sin, was a virtuous act.

Stoning Stephen contrary to God’s command, for faithfulness to God, was a vicious act. Both acts were the same: namely, stoning: but the one was a good, the other a bad action.

Divine agency, produces some things without the intervention of any second cause, as in the work of creation. Sometimes God makes use of means, or second causes, to accomplish his purposes. These are of three kinds. 1. *Unintelligent instruments*. He causes the sun to give light and heat to the world, for which we ought to glorify him as much as though he warmed and enlightened the earth without this cause. 2. He makes use of *intelligent wicked agents* as instruments, with which to do good. He made use of the crucifiers of Christ as instruments of bringing about

infinite good; but *all* the glory of this infinite good, which God brought about by their means, ought to be ascribed to God. Certainly, the malicious Jews deserved none of it; for what they did was done with wicked hands and bad designs. “But God meant it unto good to bring to pass as it is this day, *to save much people alive.*” Whatever good is eventually brought about by the means of wicked agents, is therefore to be ascribed to *him* who directeth the steps of man, and turneth the heart of man withersoever he will. 3. He makes use of *intelligent holy agents* to accomplish his designs. He sends his angels to fulfil his will, to carry his word, to guard his saints; but still God ought to have the praise of all the good which they do, as much as though he had made use of unintelligent agents.

God made use of St. Paul, to destroy Satan’s empire in this world. Paul was eminently successful; but his success depended on divine agency; he was only an instrument in the hand of God. “Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase” All second causes are therefore so many effects caused by God, who is the first cause.

From a view of what has been said, we may easily see that the agency of God is usually so hid behind *second causes*, that we often cannot discern, or distinguish it from them. Instead of taking occasion from this to deny the providence of God, we ought to be filled with the greatest humility and self-abasement, as well as profound admiration of the infinite wisdom of God; because his almighty agency is no less efficacious on account of being insensible and invisible in its operation.

I wish to be a little more particular respecting the *special agency* of God in the salvation of men, for much confusion has risen in the minds of men *from misunderstanding it*: Some imagine themselves so far independent of God, as to be able, by the powers of their own free agency, to control their wills and become holy at any time, with little assistance beside their own. And since man must be active in his salvation, they suppose that human and divine agency with equal power concur in the same act. This

concurrence they call cooperation. God and man, they say, cooperate, as if they were similar agents.

This scheme is very dangerous. It robs God of his due, misleads the ignorant, and offends the discerning, as appears from what follows.

The true state of the case can be known only from the execution of the plan of salvation. By properly considering this, we find the things to be done in order to the salvation of a sinner, to come under three distinct particulars. 1. *The things done for us.* These are all the things which belong to the atonement and intercession of the Son of God, in which our agency has nothing to do. 2. *The things done in us.* These are the renewal of our nature, the implantation of faith, repentance, nourishment of these by the same spirit. All these are the proper work of divine agency alone.

3. *The things done by us.* These are the diligent exercise of all holy graces. The exercise of these comprehend all the duties belonging to godliness, righteousness and sobriety. This exercise is human agency.

From this view of the subject, it appears there is no such thing as co-operation between God and man, as agents of equal power. For God's work is first, man's work is second in the order of time. The invincible and persuasive call of God precedes our dutiful obedience. He draws before we run after him.

Besides God's work and man's work are not of the same sort. For instance, God gives faith, and the creature exercises it; but God does not exercise faith, nor does man give faith. Christ gives repentance, and man repents; but Christ does not repent, nor does man bestow on himself any power or ability to repent.

God's agency of grace is *invincible*. Though he works grace in the heart by the almighty power of his spirit, yet he does not force the will. It is a faculty, which may be influenced, but cannot be forced. He powerfully enlightens the understanding, which is the principal faculty in our nature. By this, the sinner sees his awful condition by nature, the infinite evil and vileness of sin, its loathsomeness in the sight of a holy God, and infinite hatefulness in his own view. While he possesses this disposition and

temper of mind, he is constrained by grace, and he cannot possibly do otherwise than choose to hate and avoid sin: And this choice is free; because it arises out of the prevalent disposition of the heart, which is caused, and nourished and preserved by the spirit of God.

God also convinces the sinner of his unspeakable necessity of Christ as a Saviour, works in him the love of God, and an habitual delight to his holy law. Now while he possesses this temper of mind, he cannot possibly but choose Christ for his portion, and to delight in the holy commandments, because his choice arises freely out of the holy prevalent temper and disposition of his heart, which is caused by God.

The testimony of scripture is explicit on this subject. I Cor. "God worketh all in all." Isa. xxvi, 12. "Thou who hast wrought all our works in us." Eccl. iii, 14. "I know that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it; and God doeth it that man should fear before him." 2 Pet. i, 3. "His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." John i, 13. "Which were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Isa. lxv, 1. "I am found of them that sought me not." John iii, 27. "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." Acts v, 3. "Him [Christ] hath God exalted to give repentance." Heb. xii, 3. "Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." From this view of the subject all boasting is excluded, true humility promoted, the creature debased, and God alone exalted; consequently creature happiness advanced.

## DISCOURSE II

EPHESIANS I, II.

WHO WORKETH ALL THINGS AFTER THE COUNSEL OF HIS OWN WILL.

*Secondly*, I SHALL proceed to show, that the counsel of God's own will is the only rule according to which he makes, governs and directs all things.

The counsel of God's will signifies his decree—the decree is called the *counsel of his will*, to show that his willing a thing to be done is instead of all consultation; his will, is his counsel; his immutability, infinite wisdom and understanding preclude all necessity of consultation or deliberation, therefore the decree is not called *the will of his counsel*, as if he deliberated, and then chose in consequence of that deliberation; but it is called *the counsel of his will*, to show that as men's determinations are usually the most wise and stable after much deliberation, so the decree signifies the most wise and immutable determination of God, with respect to the future being of things.

Now the scriptures are very plain and positive in declaring, that God decreed or foreordained all things that come to pass in time. God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will or decree. Isa. xliv, 7. "I appointed the ancient people, and the things that are coming and shall come." Dan. iv, 24. "This is the decree of the most High," Zeph. xi, 2, "Before the decree bring forth." With respect to God the decree is one. Job xxiii, 13, "He is in one mind, and who can turn him?" And therefore called *the counsel of his own will, decree, purpose, counsel, &c.* In this respect the decree does not differ from the divine essence, and therefore called decree, statute, &c. in the singular number. By one act of his infinite will he decreed all things that come to pass; but with respect to us, the decree is considered as manifold. Hence we read of God's thoughts and counsels, in the plural number. In like manner we distinguish the decree into *effective* and *permissive*. The effective decree respects all good actions.

The decree being an immanent act, does not effect anything, but it is so called because he decreed to effect, or work all the good that comes to pass, and also all actions considered abstractedly from their wickedness.

Hence, with respect to the great calamity of God's church by wicked men, God is said "to have done whatever he pleased." Psalm cxv, 3. The permissive decree, respects the sinfulness of wicked actions. He decreed to permit, that is not to hinder it. For had he hindered sin, it could never have been. Acts xiv, 16. "He suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." He did not decree to work sin, but to permit, or suffer it to be done by others. And all the sin God has decreed to permit will certainly come to pass.

Hence our Lord says, Matt, xviii, 7. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it *must needs be* that offences come: but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." The rise and progress of Antichrist and Mahometanism and the cruel persecution of God's people by them, were among those things "which *must* shortly come to pass." Rev. i, 1.

Sin does not follow the decree by an absolute necessity of co-action or compulsion which destroys human liberty; but by a moral, consequential necessity, which arises out of the prevailing disposition of him who commits it, and which is altogether consistent with human liberty. It is sufficient to constitute human liberty, or free will, that a man act from choice, and without constraint. Besides, men do not sin to fulfil the permissive decree, which is secret till revealed, or manifested by the event, but to serve their own base lusts.] God's will of decree, and his will of command, are one and the same, not contrary wills in God. His decree determines what shall be done, his command shews, not what shall be done, but what is man's duty to do. Both are from the same will of God. For example—God had decreed that Christ should die by the hands of wicked men, yet he commanded them, "thou shalt not kill." But this command did not shew that God willed Herod, Pilate, Jews, and Gentiles should not kill him, but only that he willed to make it their duty not to kill him. Again, God decreed that Abraham should not actually offer up his son Isaac, yet he decreed also to command him to offer him up, and to

make it his duty to apply himself to that purpose, in order to manifest to succeeding ages the faithfulness of his servant Abraham. God's will of decree is a secret till revealed, and therefore cannot be the rule of our duty; but his will of command is given us for the rule of our conduct.

Deut. xxix, 29. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." To proceed to the proof of our position.

If God made the world, he must, in the very nature of things, have pre-determined what kind of a world he would make; what proportion of it should be land, and what proportion of it should be water; where every spring should be, and what course it should run. For "he worketh all things after the decree." If he made creatures, he must have pre-determined how many—what kinds—what qualities—properties—uses—dependencies—the places of their abode, and their final destination.

Does he not say, and shall we not all believe him? "I will do all my pleasure." God then has made and governs all things according to his own judgment and pleasure.

This is proper and right; because it is a wise administration. "Shall any teach God knowledge? O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Now if God does, in fact, govern the world well, then he did well to determine in eternity to govern it just. For what he has a right to do in time, he certainly had a right to determine in eternity to do.

We are certain, from the supreme perfection of Jehovah's nature, that all his plans are laid in infinite wisdom and understanding. Whence Paul, discoursing of eternal predestination, concludes thus, *O the depths!*—Of what? an arbitrary will, and an absolute sovereignty, detached from wisdom and understanding? No: *but of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.* We are certain God's whole stupendous scheme is full of wisdom and beauty, even though its unsearchable greatness confound our weak understanding, and overwhelm our feeble minds.

A plan chosen by infinite goodness, and laid in the depths of divine wisdom, and carried on by infinite power, must be *immutable*. For how can such a plan be made void? God's counsel stands. He will do all his pleasure.

It was absolutely necessary that God should determine to govern the world after the counsel of his own will; that is, in a sovereign manner. For were the wisdom of all men and angels centered in one being, his wisdom would be only folly when compared with God's. How much better then, that God should govern the world according to the eternal plan of his own mind, than according to the wishes of men, or angels charged with folly? All wise men would, therefore, wish to have God to direct all events according to the counsel of his own will; because that is the wisest and best. Indeed, no other is able to govern it besides God, nor to teach him knowledge how to govern it. He must, therefore, govern and direct all things and events according to the eternal plan of his own mind. He says, (and shall we not all believe him "he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.") And to object against his determining in eternity how he should govern and direct in time, is to object against all divine authority.

Such an objection, if allowed to operate, would as effectually dethrone Almighty God, as atheism itself. We cannot possibly form just becoming ideas worthy of God, unless we believe him to have willed in eternity how he would act in time, and to have determined all things, which he himself would do, or permit to be done, from the beginning to the end of time, and without whose effective or permissive will nothing can be done, not a sparrow die, nor a hair fall from our head.

Should God decree at any time what he did not always decree, then he could not be unchangeable; and if he did anything without having decreed it, would be a manifest imputation on his wisdom. He must work all things after the counsel of his own will. He must be the first great cause of all causes, himself dependent on none, in order to act in character.

That God has predetermined all things in eternity, appears from his prescience, which none but those who are hard pressed and puzzled by arguments drawn from God's foreknowledge, and consequently, by a

sacrilegious audacity, go about to rob God of his omniscience, will presume to deny. For an unalterable decree is the only ground on which foreknowledge and providence can stand. Unless God had unalterably determined the existence of every person, thing and event, they could not possibly have had any certain futurity or after being, consequently could not have been certainly foreknown. Besides God must regulate every particular of his providence according to this predetermined plan, else he would be liable to unforeseen emergencies, and act either ignorantly, or against his own will. As every rational agent predetermines what kind of work he will do, the manner, the means, and the time of doing it; so God from all eternity determined what should be done in time, which determination is the rule according to which he worketh all things. He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. God knew what he willed to do himself, and what he willed to permit others to do, and this constitutes his certain foreknowledge. God does not depend on the creatures for his knowledge, consequently he foreknew all things independently of every consideration whatever out of himself, and therefore in consequence of his own decree to do or to permit them.

The only way to evade the force of this argument is to say, that he foreknew all things from some cause or number of causes, out of and independent of himself, and prior to his will and knowledge of them, and so make him a dependent being. — To say then that God foreknew all things is the same as to say he predetermined all things.

Some would persuade us that the divine will is undetermined and mutable, that man can act as he pleases by the powers of his own free agency, that God's decrees are temporary and conditional; that the creature, by performing the condition, regulates and adjusts this mutable, undetermined will of God; because the creature, being master of his own will, determines the will and performs his action prior to the decree; and then God makes a conditional decree to suit that action to which the creature had determined himself: that the decree being only a conditional one, the creature can break or set it aside at pleasure, and cause God to decree again whatever the creature pleases; and that the decree or final determination of God's will depends on the self-determined conduct of

mortals; consequently that man is the master of himself, as well as of God's decrees, and so God depends on the creature for the final determination of his will.

The futility of conditional decrees is easily exposed.

They make God's conduct to be influenced by, and to depend on the creature's, and so destroy his wisdom, sovereignty and immutability. They represent the creature as regulating and determining the will and conduct of God, and so make him dependent on the creature. Conditional decrees are therefore expressly contrary to what is taught in the bible. Prov. xix, 21. "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." Prov. xvi, 9. "A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps." "The counsel of the Lord shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." Isa. xlvi, 10. Because "the Lord of hosts hath sworn, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand." Chap, xiv, 24.

As God's adorable will is the only rule of his conduct, so his infinite perfection cannot will anything but what is perfectly just and equitable. It is therefore criminal, because it is enmity against God, to prescribe rules for his conduct, or to call him to an account for what he does, as appears from Rom. ix, 19, 20,21; where Paul, purposely treating of eternal, unconditional decrees and providence, introduces an infidel with this objection in his mouth, *Why then does God find fault, for who hath resisted his will?*

Why does God find fault with any? for all, it seems, act just as God willed they should. He answers, *Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God?* None but an infidel will ever make the same reply against God. He then shows the wickedness and unreasonableness of the objection: "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" How can we conceive of God so far beneath the potter, as that he has not a right to raise up vessels for what purpose he pleases. His sovereignty makes him not accountable to creatures for what he does. Job xxxiii, 12, 13. "God is

greater than man; why, dost thou strive against him? For he giveth not account of any of his matters.” The reason why he hides the gospel from some, and reveals it to others, is because it “seems good in his sight to do so.” Luke x, 21.

Since God is absolutely independent, and all creation totally dependent on him, I cannot but stand astonished at the pride, vanity, and presumption of those impotent mortals, who consider themselves as possessed of unlimited freedom, and a power of self-salvation. They imagine themselves able to frustrate the designs of infinite wisdom, and to defeat the influence of an almighty agent.

This the serpent preached to our mother in the garden, *ye shall be as gods*; and now he flatters her apostate sons, that *they are gods*. A doctrine so contrary to scripture and reason, to what we daily feel and experience, one would be apt to think could never gain the least degree of credit.

But strange as it may appear, since it flatters the haughtiness of the depraved heart, the deception is admitted; and the father of lies is believed, in this instance, at least, to speak the truth.

Now the inspired doctrine of decrees lays the axe at the very root of this *potent* delusion, by flatly declaring, that *God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*; that all things are through God. And indeed, I cannot; for my own part, see any medium between absolute decrees and downright atheism. For, if the world had a creator, it must have a governor; and if it has a governor, then his own will of decree must extend to all things without exception.

Some will tell us, that God is bound to do all he possibly can to prevent the existence of both moral and. natural evil; if so, then it would inevitably follow, since innumerable evils do exist, either that God was not almighty, or not infinitely wise; and so not God. But if he be possessed of these perfections, and bound to prevent evil, but did not, then he was not infinitely good; because he did not prevent the evil he was bound to prevent. On this supposition, there can be no such thing as moral government: for, by the sup-position, God is the only being that can be

under law; for it supposes, that if any do evil, it must be his fault to let him do it.

Some represent God as bound to prevent evil, and trying to prevent it; but frustrated by Satan. They suppose since it does exist altogether against his will, that he now endeavors to check and conquer it, but is altogether unable to succeed according to his wishes. But how shocking to a pious mind is such a blasphemous supposition, which represents the devil as able to bring God into straits, disconcerting his plans and confusing all things in this wicked world, without any prospect of wise and noble ends to be answered thereby.

How satisfactory and consoling, on the contrary, to such a mind to know that sin exists through the wise permission of God, and is under his controllable government, that he sets exact limits to it, and will, contrary to its own natural tendency, and the design of transgressors, eventually bring good out of it, by making it subservient to his own glory. This view of the subject made Asaph say, Psalm. lxxvi, 10, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." What bright prospects of a happy issue appear, and consequently what cheerfulness must it afford us to perform our duty, when we are assured, that God rules, and that all things, which concern us, whether good or evil, are ordered in infinite wisdom, in the best manner, and for the best purposes.

Had God willed to hinder the fall of Adam, why did he not make his will unalterably determine to good? He was able to have prevented his fall. He was wiser than the tempter. He could have prevented it, had he willed to prevent it. It was in his power to have hindered it, had it been his pleasure to do so. But he did not prevent it; consequently willed not to prevent it. For "he does all his pleasure;" therefore he willed to permit it. "For who hath resisted his will?" Indeed, whatever he permits, he permits willingly and freely. None can force him to permit. He cannot act, nor permit anything to be done against his will. For "he does all his pleasure, and worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Had God willed to hinder sin, we must then suppose, since it does exist, that he was not infinitely wise to devise means to prevent it; or, that he was not powerful

enough to put those means into execution, and so could not prevent it; Or, through a defect of goodness forbore to hinder it. But neither of these suppositions can be true: for they would rob God of his essential perfections. Now to avoid these blasphemous suppositions, we hold, that God willed the permission of sin. And it is evident since sin has come into the world, that the divine perfections did not require him to prevent it. But if God foresaw, as he certainly did, that if he created man in such a condition, and placed him in such circumstances, he would fall into sin, (and the event must answer the foreknowledge of God) wherein is he any more benevolent than if he willed the permission of sin? Why did God create man in such a state, and place him in such circumstances, since he knew man would certainly fall into sin, as he certainly did, unless he willed the permission of sin?

The only way to evade the force of all this reasoning, is to say, that God cared not what became of his creatures, whether they, were happy, or miserable; and then turn atheist, and deny the existence of an all-wise God, who can, and who does all his pleasure; and so persist in affirming that there is no such being in the universe as a God, whose wisdom cannot be deceived. But should you say, God was able to have hindered sin, but was unwilling to hinder it, then you grant the point contended for: because there can be no medium between willing and nilling.

God's permission of sin can in no wise detract from the infinite holiness of his nature. That he has permitted it, is plain, else he would have hindered it; for not hindering is the same as permitting. And if it be consistent with his holiness to permit sin and the condemnation of angels and men by means of it, as he certainly does, then his will to do so cannot possibly be inconsistent with that perfection. For what God does, he does willingly and freely. He cannot be forced to act, or to permit; consequently he must will to act, or to permit previous to his doing either; that is, he must will to act, before he does act. Whatever therefore God does cannot possibly be inconsistent with any of his perfections to determine to do. But God has permitted sin, therefore it was perfectly consistent for him to determine to do so.

Though God's holiness does not require him to prevent sin, yet it requires him to glorify himself by means of it when permitted. He will finally direct it to some wise and righteous purpose, else he could not permit it.

God willed from all eternity to permit sin and all its consequences. For what he once wills, he always willed; because he is unchangeable; and what is right for him to will in time, was right for him to will before time; and therefore in Prov. viii, 23—31, we find a *personal transaction* from *everlasting* expressly declared to exist between God and Christ, respecting the bestowal of special favor and love to sinful men. The words *brought up* have always respect to some special work or service, end or purpose, which is intended. And verse 31, makes it evident to be the work of salvation, which he had to accomplish.

With this the words of St. Peter agree, "Christ was foreordained before the foundation of the world," as the lamb, whose blood was to be shed for men's sins, 1 Pet. i, 18,19,20. If Peter's ideas of predestination be accurate, then they were eternal truths, that Adam should fall, and that Christ should die by the hands of wicked men. The supposition therefore that God would have sent his Son to take our nature on him, and die for us, had man never fallen, is unscriptural, without any solid foundation, and false. To affirm that God would have sent his Son to die, without a view to the salvation of sinners, is contrary to the whole manifest design of revelation, which shews, that the counsel of peace respecting his Son related to the delivery of the elect from sin. Whatever therefore God willed respecting sin, and redemption from it, he willed in absolute eternity.

Peter again expresses his sentiments of predestination thus, "him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." A more wicked action cannot possibly be committed than murdering the Lord of glory; yet it was unalterably determined of God. Indeed, God's foreknowledge of Adam's fall, and of Christ's death by those wicked agents, can be conceived of only in connexion with the unalterable decree. Consequently, Peter joins them together "Jesus was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. It was a determinate, that

is, an unalterable decree, not an undeterminate, or conditional decree. All the particulars were therefore determined as appears from the following statement. 1. The time of his birth was determined, Gal. iv, 4. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son." 2. The place of his birth was determined, Micah v, 2. "But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Matt, ii, 4—6. 3. His going down to, and departure from Egypt, was determined, Matt, ii, 14, 15. "And departed into Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, out of Egypt have I called my Son." 4. It was determined that Judas should betray him, Psalm. xli, 9. "Mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted" a part of the apostleship, "which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." Acts i, 16. "This scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, spake before concerning Judas." And Psalm. lxxix, 25. "Let their habitation be desolate." And cix, 8. "Let another take his office." Acts, i, 20. "For it is written in the book of Psalms, let his habitation be desolate, and his bishopric let another take." 5. The sum of money, which Judas was to receive, and the use that should be made of it were determined. Zach. xi, 12, 13. They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me cast it unto the potter; a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord." See also Matt, xxvii, 9, 10. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophet Jere-my, saying, and they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me." 6. The time in which he was to die, was determined, Dan. ix, 24. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon the holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and the prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy." These seventy weeks, or 490 years, are generally dated by correct writers, from the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, and ended in the year our Lord was crucified. At

so great a distance, the time was fixed on, limited, determined, and the exact computation of years foretold. 7. The manner and circumstances of his death were determined. It was determined that he should be crucified between two thieves. Isa. liii, 12. "He was numbered with transgressors." Psalm. xxii, 16. "They pierced my hands and my feet." Mark xv, 27, 28. "With him they crucify two thieves; the one on the right hand, and the other on the left; and the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, and he was numbered with transgressors." Matt, xx, 18, 19. "The Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, to mock, and to scourge, and to *crucify*."

I cannot help observing the particular providence of God, working this whole affair after the counsel of his own will; for the Jews often attempted to stone Christ.

John viii, 59, and x, 31, 32, 33, 39. But God would not permit them to stone him, because he was to be crucified. And after Christ was betrayed, "Pilate said unto them, take ye him, and judge him according to your law." They answered, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." But the providence of God was in this, "That the saying of Jesus might be" fulfilled "which he spake signifying what death he should die." Divine providence directed this whole affair according to the determinate counsel of God. For blasphemy, the crime of which they accused him, was to be punished according to the law of Moses, by stoning; but crucifixion was a Roman death. And the high priests and the Sanhedrim "sat in Moses seat." \* Matt, xxiii, 2. They met and acted often before and after according to their own law. By it they stoned Stephen for the same (alleged) crime of blasphemy, and brought Paul before their own judgment-seat\* Acts xxiii, 5. But God had decreed, that Christ should die no other way. Matt, xxvi, 53, 54, 56. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" — "But all this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." All this appears to be precisely the sentiment of the ancient church of Jesus Christ; for when assembled together, they affirm, that the heathen, and people,

kings and rulers, spoken of in Psalm. ii, 1, 2, were Herod, Pontius Pilate, &c. Acts iv, 27, 28. "For, of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles, and people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." God's hand and counsel had determined these wicked agents should do all these things. This "determinate counsel" was "before the foundation of the world, from everlasting?" As Christ's executioners did nothing but what "God's hand and counsel had determined before to be done," so the determinate counsel of God had irreversibly fixed even the manner, in which his clothes should be divided, John xix, 23, 24. "The soldiers took his garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part: and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said, therefore among themselves, let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be; that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, "they parted

**\* DR. DODDRIDGE and other learned writers maintain that the Jews at this time did not possess the power of condemning to death. The stoning of Stephen was an act of popular fury.**

my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots." Psalm. xxii, 18.

The prophecies of scripture are such a proof of Christianity, as infidels can never overthrow. They conclude equally as strong in favor of absolute predestination; for if the events were not decreed, they could not be known, and if not foreknown, they could not be infallibly predicted. To say, that events may be fore-known, without being effectively, or permissively decreed, would be saying either nothing to the purpose, or worse than nothing; for, if God can, with certainty, foreknow any event whatever, which is barely foreknown, but which he did not previously determine to accomplish or permit, and that event be so certain with God, as to furnish positive ground for unerring prophecy; then it would follow, that God is dependent, for his knowledge, on things known; instead of all things being dependent on him; and that there is some foreign chain of

causes, prior to the will and knowledge of God, by which his will is regulated, and on which his knowledge is founded.

God was as able in eternity to determine what my state should be at the day of judgment, as he possibly can be at that day. He can gain no knowledge by any thing that has been, or can be. And what will be just for him to do at the last day was certainly just for him to determine in eternity to do. Consequently, if it be just for him to punish any for their sins at that day, then it was just for him to determine in eternity to do so. No one in his right mind ever accused a chief magistrate of cruelty, or injustice, for letting the sentence of the law take place on a company of atrocious malefactors. Let it not then be thought hard, that God should have as much liberty, and as great a privilege, as we allow to a supreme magistrate here below. If the magistrate pardon some we applaud his clemency, but he is no less just in punishing the rest. And justice is not cruelty. Besides as God's mercy is free, with respect to the bestowal of it, so he may extend it to, or withhold it from, whom he pleases, Rom. ix, 15, 18. It is not, therefore, an act of partiality, but of free sovereign mercy to foreordain any one to salvation. For all were considered as under condemnation. And therefore, it would have been just, that all should have been destroyed.

For God was under no obligation to save one transgressor.

We could have no claim to his favor. And therefore it was not tyrannical in God to determine to punish the finally impenitent for their sins. He acted indeed as an absolute sovereign: but a lawful sovereign and a lawless tyrant are as great contraries as can possibly be. A tyrant is one who usurps authority which does not belong to him, or who abuses his right, and governs contrary to law. God cannot possibly commit either, of these acts of cruelty. He has as creator an unlimited right over both the souls and bodies of men, Rom. ix, 19, 20, 21. He is supreme lawgiver to the universe, and cannot act tyrannically in any sense of the word. Besides the agonies of the damned were in eternity perfectly known, and can no more affect the unchangeable God, at the day of judgment, than they did in eternity. For he can know nothing more of us at that day than he did in

eternity. And as his knowledge, goodness and mercy, can be no greater at the last day, so we may with the same propriety object against his disposing of us at that day according to his own judgment, as against his predetermining the manner of that disposition. This shews the wickedness and unreasonableness of objecting against the decrees of God.

Predestination, as it respects the final state of men, is usually distinguished into *election*, and *reprobation*. Of the former, I purpose to treat separately in a following discourse. Of the latter, the word of God, which is the only standard of truth, speaks thus: Rev. xvii, 8. “And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from? the *foundation of the world*” II Cor. iv, 3. “If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.” II Pet. ii, 8. “Being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed.” 2 Pet. ii, 12.. “But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed.” Jude 4. “Certain men crept in unawares, who were *before* of old *ordained* to this condemnation.”

We must distinguish between *nonelection* and *appointment* to wrath. The will of God was the cause of his not writing their names in the book of life from the foundation of the world. Their sin is the reason of their appointment to wrath. God does not condemn them because he has not chosen them, but because they have willfully transgressed his law. God was just and righteous in not writing their names in the book of life.

For he might, in point of justice, have left all men as well as all fallen angels to perish in their sins. His choosing others cannot possibly do them any injury, since their condition would have been as bad supposing none had been chosen; and their condemnation is most just and righteous, since they are punished for the omission of moral duties and willful disobedience. Nor does God punish them considered as men, but considered as transgressors of his most holy and righteous law; and as all sin is properly deserving of punishment, so they who are condemned are condemned most justly. The man must, therefore, be deaf to reason, who can suppose, that reprobation is unmerciful, tyrannical or unjust. — If God does in fact permit some to die in their sin, and then punish them for that sin, then he must eternally have willed to do so, because he must act in

consequence of a previous determination. Consequently there was a rejection of some from the foundation of the world. And God, who is the righteous Judge of all the earth, whose decree shall stand, and from whose sentence there is no appeal, has decreed, and his sentence will be, that those *whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world*, and die under the guilt of final impenitence, unbelief and sin, “shall go away into everlasting punishment.”

### **DISCOURSE III.**

*EPHESIANS I, 11.*

*WHO WORKETH ALL THINGS AFTER THE COUNSEL.*

*OF HIS OWN WILL.*

AS eternal predestination is the highest act of God’s sovereignty, so it must be a doctrine of much practical use. I shall therefore conclude this very important subject with the following practical uses.

Use first, for information. The scriptural doctrine of decrees and providence sets God on the throne and gives the creature his proper place. It puts the reins of universal government in the hands of Jehovah and allows the creature a subordinate agency. The decree of God, and the agency of his providence in causing choice, do not interrupt liberty, or creature agency in any sense or degree whatsoever. For as all free moral agency of creatures consists entirely of voluntary choice, or exercise of the will, so it cannot, in the least degree, be made up of any thing before or after choice. As choice constitutes the complete perfect liberty of moral agents, so nothing can destroy that liberty which does not destroy choice. But decreeing and causing choice cannot possibly destroy choice. Therefore, decreeing and causing cannot possibly destroy creature liberty. For there is as wide a difference between choice and its cause as there is between any other effect and its cause. Volition or choice is an effect of which God is the efficient cause. For “the king’s heart,” and consequently the heart of every man, “is in the hand of the Lord; as the rivers of water he turneth it whithersoever he will.” God then turneth the heart of man

toward whatsoever he pleaseth; and that as freely as the rivers ran in their channel. Thus, the preparation of the heart in man, and even the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord. We are led safely on then to this conclusion; that two distinct agents are concerned in every volition of moral agents: Namely, God's agency in causing volition, and the creature's in exercising it when caused.

God is a free agent in causing volition; the creature is a free agent in exercising it. Both agents are free. There is, however, this difference—God is an independent active agent: Man is a dependent active agent. That man's free moral agency is perfectly consistent with absolute dependence is evident from these words, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Now if Paul's ideas be accurate, then God's agency is the efficient cause of choice, or of men's will and activity, and yet man is free and active in working. God's working in man both the will and the deed is here considered the efficient cause, which excites him to "work out his salvation, with fear and trembling. God worketh in you to will." We all see then, God's causing volition, or choice, cannot possibly destroy, or curtail liberty, because man is dependent, and yet entirely free, since God works to cause the will, and even to change the will, without destroying the liberty. And if God can work in the creature to cause the will, and even to change the will, without destroying creature liberty, then it will follow, that his decree to do so cannot possibly destroy that liberty.

Use second, for information. The doctrine of decrees and providence discovers the most profound wisdoms of God in proportioning the means to the end. He has, appointed all the relations, connexions, dependencies, and the remotest consequences of all things, and can, therefore have no new thoughts or purposes, on account of his immutability. Isa. xlv, 7. "Who, as I, shall call, and declare it, and set it in order for me since I appointed the ancient people, and the things, that are coming, and shall come." Nothing can come on him by way of surprise; nor can he gain any knowledge by any thing that has been or can be; for he "has appointed all things that are coming and shall come." He knows his own appointment, and therefore knows all things. He knows all the free and

contingent actions of rational creatures, because he appointed them to come to pass, either freely or contingently, according to the nature of second causes. He had one eternal thought and purpose concerning them all. And no means can be so proper for the accomplishment of all things as those planned by the unsearchable depth of divine wisdom. And as he has appointed the means only to bring about the end, so the end, which is his glory, is infinitely more worthy and noble than all creation. We are commanded, “whether therefore we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of God.” He has made us for his glory and has therefore an undoubted right to dispose us in whatever way his infinite wisdom views most conducive to promote it. “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?”

Is thy eye evil because I am good?” They who imagine that God may not dispose things in such a manner as will finally tend to his glory, have an evil eye, and view things in a false light. Therefore “hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” “He hath made all things for himself;” that is for his glory. We ought ultimately to aim at his glory— Therefore to make self our end, or to act for our own praise and glory, is a base invasion of Jehovah’s peculiar right. Sincerely study therefore, in all you do, to aim at the glory of God.

Use third for humiliation—An honest consideration of the universal and sovereign agency of God, who supports the planets, and impels them, with neverceasing rapidity, round yonder central ocean of fire, and who upholds the entire universe by the word of his own power, will fill us with a deep humiliation from a sense of our own insignificance. This made wise Agur burst out in the language of deep humiliation and contrition of heart, when he considered the incomprehensibility of God’s plans and providence. Prov. xxx, 2, 3. “Surely I am more brutish than any man and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.” Reader, do thou go and do so to.

Use fourth, for reproof, to those who abuse the decrees. 1. By pleading the decree to excuse their own and others sin. Some wicked men of a profane and perverse turn, will pretend to excuse their own and others sin

thus: "It was decreed to be done, and I was forced to do it, and therefore it was impossible for me to avoid it, and I am not to be blamed." The only reply I think proper to make to this description of men is, that I have travelled many thousand miles, and spent much time, frequently the greatest part of the night as well as much of the day, in religious conversation, with men of various opinions, but never heard a predestinarian even suggest any thing of the kind. It is uniformly advanced by free-willers, who disbelieve eternal immutable decrees and providence. They do not therefore believe what they themselves say, when they cast such vile reflections on the wise purposes of God. This plainly shows, that there is little or no confidence to be put in any thing they do say. To combat the reflection would be vain and idle, since no body in reality believes it. But let them remember, that all their vain and irreverent trifling with God shall at last be turned into terror and despair, when it shall be said to them, "wherefore despisest thou the doings of the Lord." 2. To those who abuse the decrees, by separating what God has joined together.

Some wicked men, blasphemously abuse God's decrees, because they are unable to withstand the force of the arguments brought in proof of them, by undertaking to separate what God has joined together. — They will cast such reproaches as this: "Well then, if I be decreed from eternity to salvation, I shall be certainly saved, though I neither repent, believe, nor be holy." But let the objectors know, that in all this they are only imitating the devil when he tempted our Saviour. God had revealed his decree, that Christ should be kept from falling into sin and into untimely dangers and death, by a charge given to the angels over him, to keep him in all his ways. God had decreed to keep and preserve Christ by these means. But the devil thought to deceive Christ, and took occasion from the decree to tempt him to cast himself from the pinnacle of the temple, and suggested that let him do what he would, God would give his angels charge concerning him, and not suffer any injury to befall him; and therefore he might neglect the use of ordinary means, as if it were needless for Christ to go down the stairs of the temple, since God had decreed and promised to preserve him.

In this temptation, satan artfully left out such a part of the text which he quoted from the old testament as would wholly alter the sense of it. And the objectors precisely imitate this conduct of satan. Similar perversion to that of satan is in their mouths. One word of advice for them.

Since they imitate the devil and do his works; let them take heed, lest they be his children. For the child generally imitates its father.

That they are perverters of the decree is evident; for God has decreed to save the elect by means of working in them faith, repentance, and habitual holiness, but not otherwise. For all the means are decreed as well as the end, as appears from the 27th of Acts. When St. Paul and his companions, on their voyage to Italy, were overtaken with a violent storm and momentarily expected to be swallowed up in the sea, God was pleased to reveal his decree concerning them. God's fixed purpose was that they should get safe to land. God's decree respecting the end was absolute. It could not be frustrated. But the decree was essentially different from what the objectors represent, as appears from what follows. The sailors devised to leave the ship. When Paul discovered this, he said to the centurion and the soldiers, "except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." It was decreed they should be saved, and come safely to shore, by means of the skill and exertion of the sailors, but not otherwise. God had decreed all the means by which they were to be saved as well as the end. God had decreed to save them in this particular way. It was therefore the decree, which made it necessary for the seamen, who had the art of managing the vessel, to abide in it and employ their united wisdom in securing an escape. And as "there are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord that shall stand," and as a "man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps so the Lord's counsel stood; for though the sailors devised to leave the ship, yet the Lord directed their steps in the use of the means, which he had appointed.

But the objectors are evidently perverters of God's decrees.

For according to them, Paul and his companions would have come safely to shore even though they had been wholly inactive; or though they had tried ever so much to plunge themselves into the bottom of the ocean.

When they are confuted and unable to stand their ground, they will turn to perverting the decrees, and tell us, “that there must then be a certain number that will be saved, and another certain number that will be lost, let them do what they will, or let their character be what it may.” But this we see is evidently a perversion of God’s decrees. They do not give the least countenance to such a conclusion. It is not true, on the decreeing system, that any shall be saved, who continue in wicked practices to the end of their life, nor that any shall be condemned but for sin. Let these men duly weigh in their minds those weighty words, Isa. xlv, 9. “Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker; let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth.” Though they may pervert and ridicule the decrees of God before men, yet without speedy repentance, their iniquity will find them out, and they shall know, at last, the dreadful consequences of mocking God and deriding his decrees.

3d. To those who abuse the decrees, by affirming they can do whatever they please.

Some carnal men are so confident of the independent powers of their free-will as to make God’s will undeterminate and conditional, depending on the will and actions of the creatures he has made. And having done this, they will affirm “that their will is a “power by which they can do whatever they please, and; so, all depends on their own will.” But this scheme contradicts our reason and daily experience and gives the lie to every page in the bible. For by denying foreordination and providence, they, by a necessity of consequence, throw aside all the adorable perfections of the Godhead. For to be consistent with; themselves they hold that the divine will is in a state of indifference, undetermined, fluctuating, variable and. conditional, and that the creature, by its actions, determines and settles this will of God. Sometimes, they will change their ground, and hold that God’s will is settled and determined, but baffled and defeated by the very creatures he has made. On this ground they raise their vigorous opposition to the blessed doctrine of unconditional decrees and providence. The haughtiness of their carnal heart cannot relish, a doctrine, which, from its own genius and natural tendency, humbles man’s pride, strips off his natural haughtiness, and lays it in the dust, and causes all the divine

perfections to shine with unrivalled glory. It is therefore no wonder that we find the Holy Ghost reproofing them for sentiments which are so blasphemous and unworthy of God and injurious to the souls of men. Jam. iv, 13,14,15, “Go to now, ye that say, today, or tomorrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. — For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little, time and then vanisheth away: For that ye ought to, say, *if the Lord will*, we shall live, and do this or that.” It does not depend on. our own will, but on the will of the Lord whether we live, and do this or that. To suppose that a man can do whatever he pleases, is a base invasion by the creature of the unalienable rights of God, on whose will all events depend. For it is putting the creature in the place of God, as if its counsels must stand though contrary to God’s purposes. Besides it is a vain opinion for no one is Lord of his own life; neither doth the success of his purposes depend on his own will and pleasure, but on the Lord’s. For “there are many devices in a man’s heart, nevertheless the counsel of the Lord that shall stand.” God’s purposes shall stand let the creature’s be what they will. And therefore, we find our deepest laid plans often frustrated solely against our will. This taught holy men of old the most profound submission to the will of God. 1 Cor. x, 19. “I will come to you shortly if the Lord will.” It depended on the Lord’s will; Chap, xvi, 7. “I trust to tarry awhile with you, if the Lord permit.” Job i, 21. “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.” Reader, may the Lord’s sovereign disposal of all things after the counsel of his own will, have the like influence on thy heart.

I cannot dismiss this part without introducing a paragraph from the Rev. A. TOPLADY, a man of eminent piety and extensive erudition, who has been enabled by the grace of God to defend the doctrines of faith, with an untrembling hand and unfaltering tongue. “On the subject of liberty and necessity, I acknowledge that there is such a thing as free-will in God’s reasonable creatures; and, I believe, every Calvinist upon earth acknowledges the same. The point, in dispute between us and the Arminians, is not concerning the existence of free-will, but concerning its

powers. That man is naturally endued with a will, we never denied, and that man's will is naturally free to what is morally and spiritually evil, we always affirmed.

The grand hinge, then, on which the debate turns, is, whether free-will be, or be not, a faculty of such sovereignty and power, as either to ratify, or to baffle, the saving grace of God, according to its, that is, according to the will's, own independent pleasure and self-determination? I should imagine, that every man of sense, piety and reflection, must, at once, determine this question in the negative. If some do not, who are nevertheless possessed of those qualifications, I can only stand amazed at the force of that prejudice, which can induce any reasonable and religious person to suppose that divine wisdom is frustrable, and the divine power defendable, by creatures of yesterday, who are absolutely and constantly dependent on God for their very being, and, consequently, for the whole of their operations, from moment to moment." 4th. To those who abuse the decrees, by blaming any part of God's conduct.

Some quarrel with God's eternal counsels and the agency of his providence, by supposing "it would have been better had God ordered it thus and so." Remember, such language is citing God to answer at your bar. It implies a secret conceit, that you are wiser than he, "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." But you would have God to change the rule of his conduct, and to work all things after your own will, and to gratify your desires and appetites. By this, you accuse God of ignorance and folly, just as if he had not devised right measures for the administration of his government. It discovers a secret disposition to believe yourself so much superior to Deity, that you could contrive and dispose things better than he has done. This disposition argues the presumptuous boldness of a poor blind creature, an empty nothing, judging and censuring the counsels of infinite wisdom. The rich man, in torment, was of the same mind.

He was dissatisfied with God's moral government of the world and thought he could devise more effectual means to prevent the ruin of his brethren, than those of God's appointment.

Use fifth, for exhortation—1. Give all diligence, in a gospel way, to secure an interest in God through Christ.

God has, in his eternal counsel of peace, established all the means of grace and glory for the good of his dear children. O then come; come, take hold on God's covenant, and your soul shall live. If Jehovah be your covenant God, then all the declarations of his eternal purpose of love, mercy and grace, toward purpose of love, mercy, and grace toward his people, are yours. And nothing can hinder their accomplishment. "For what his soul desireth, even that he doeth." And therefore "his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." And God's faithfulness in fulfilling his promise is the strongest encouragement you possibly can have "to press forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." 2. Seek instruction from him whose counsel shall stand. Without him all your devices shall come to nothing. Solomon tells us that "there are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord that shall stand." O what a blessed thing to have counsel from him whose counsel shall stand. And St. Paul exhorts the Philippians to "be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God;" Phil, iv, 6. Away, therefore, with your distracting cares and fears, and cast yourself on God, for his blessed conduct. For "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." 3. Study to know so much of God's eternal purposes as he has been pleased to reveal in his word. But confine your researches after this knowledge to what he has revealed in his word by prophecies and promises. For his judgments, his decrees, are a great deep, and unsearchable by creatures. Yet an honest inquiry into these, with a humble dependence on God for a blessing, will open to your view an extensive prospect of God's purposes respecting his church to the end of the world. Daniel learned from revelation the very time, appointed of God, for the Jews to return from Babylon, Dan. ix, 2. God has revealed, in his word the time when all nations shall bow in holy obedience to his Son. Christian! should not this, rouse thee to an honest inquiry from God's revealed will, to understand those things which are shortly to be accomplished for Zion. Awake then all the powers of your soul; be meek, humble, and low in your own eyes,

put no trust in your own heart, have a deep and reverential awe of God in your own heart, and then you shall know much of the Lord's counsels; Prov. iii, 32. "His secret is with the righteous." 4. Cordially embrace whatever you find clearly taught in God's word. It was Gamaliel's advice to the Jews, that "if this counsel, or this work, be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." Acts v, 38, 39. Whatever flows from the decree and providence of God shall stand in spite of all devils and all men. "His counsel shall stand." Consequently, all opposition to the counsel and providence of God is both a sinful and a dangerous opposition. It is for a poor, dependent worm of the dust to enter lists with omnipotence. Go then, and speak of God's purposes as Laban and Bethuel did about Rebekah, "the thing proceedeth from the Lord, we cannot speak unto thee bad or good." Gen. xxiv, 50. 5. Study to yield unreserved submission to God's will in all your afflictions, for the most bitter ingredients in the cup of your afflictions were all determined in God's eternal counsels. Job v, 6. "Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground." They come not by chance but are determined in the unalterable counsel of heaven. Whence Paul admonishes the Thessalonians, "that no man should be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know, that ye are *appointed* thereunto." I Thes. iii, 3.

The reason why we are not to be moved by affliction is given: "God hath appointed us unto them." And that ye may patiently submit to them, consider: 1. That God saw fit you should have that particular affliction—therefore you should say with holy David, "behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." 2 Sam. xv, 26. And our blessed Saviour patiently submitted to all those agonies, which his Father had appointed for him to undergo. And if we be his children, we will follow his example, and say, "not my will, but thy will be done." For he has an unlimited right, as sovereign Lord, to determine, according to his own pleasure, the condition of all creatures, and is accountable to none. Job ix, 12. "Behold he taketh away, and who can hinder him? Who will say unto him, what doest thou?"

2. Consider, that every affliction was ordained for God's glory and the good of his people. Rom. viii, 28. All discontentment with affliction is therefore discontentment with God's glory and our own good. Though it should appear very dark and mysterious to us how such a particular affliction should promote his glory and our eternal good, yet we are bound to believe it even against natural sense and carnal reason. Hath he not said, and shall we not all believe him? that "he chastises us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." Heb. xii, 10. Though we cannot see how chastisement promotes our eternal good, yet God who is infinitely wiser can. This firmly believed, will produce comfort under afflictions, and an entire resignation to the decrees and providence of God. On the other hand, all fretfulness on account of affliction is criminal and makes the burthen heavier and more troublesome. O Christian, suppose then you had your choice, could you possibly wish God to change his counsels? since they are planned in infinite wisdom for his glory and your good. "No; O no," the language of your heart would be, what infinite wisdom has chosen is much more desirable than what I can possibly choose.

Notwithstanding we ought to submit to all God's providential dealings, yet several things should make a deep impression on our hearts. (1.) We should bewail our own and others sins. Saints in all ages have mourned for their iniquities, and those of a sinful generation, in which they lived. Though God decreed to permit sin and to bring glory out of it to himself, yet he is not beholden to sin for that glory. For the very nature of sin is dishonorable to God. And it is only through pardoning mercy and vindictive justice, that he brings glory to himself out of sin. (2.) We should mourn when the church is in great affliction. The saints of old "wept when they remembered Zion," Psalm. cxxxvii, 1. Though we should sympathize with God's dear children in distress, yet we ought to be so far satisfied as to reverence the all-wise God, for his designs of promoting his glory and the good of his church, by their affliction. All that great distress, which God brought on his people at the Red sea, was only a preparation for their more glorious and comfortable deliverance. It was to promote his glory and advance their interest. This shews, that we ought to wait

patiently till God has finished his work, lest for want of wisdom, we should, like the Israelites at the Red sea, form a wrong judgment, concerning the work which God is about to do.

Use sixth, for comfort. O how well is it for you, dear Christians, that all events are in the hands of God, who loves you, and stands engaged for you in an everlasting covenant. As all that can possibly befall you was determined in his eternal counsel, so ye need not fear. For he has given you the utmost assurance, that it shall be for his glory and your eternal good. O then, be not discouraged, but “look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith,” as you run in the Christian race set before you. For he hath commissioned his ministers, notwithstanding the great commotions and tumults that are in the world, to say to the righteous “that it shall be well with him.” Isa. iii, 10. And the preacher speaks in the language of assurance and triumph when he says, “surely I know it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him.” Eccl. viii, 12. As God works all things after the counsel of his own will and, in which, they were undoubtedly ordered in the wisest and best possible manner, and cannot fail. — Not one word of all that good, which God hath promised can possibly fail of its accomplishment. “For what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.” But he desireth the accomplishment of all his promises, therefore they cannot fail.

To conclude, let men of the greatest parts and the most refined wit devise the most subtle stratagems against God’s people, yet all their contrivances shall not stand against the wisely ordered counsels of Jehovah. “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; for it is written, he taketh the wise in their own craftiness. 1 Cor. iii, 19. And again, “the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain.” Chap, v, 20. And though “there be many devices in a man’s heart, nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.” God’s counsel shall stand against all devices: He has established A beautiful order in his eternal counsels, by which all events of providence are made subservient to his glory and the good of his people.

The grand design of God, in the decree, and in its execution in providence, is that the enlargement and stability of the Mediator's kingdom shall stand firm and immovable till time shall be *no* more. Reason's eye may behold things cloudy and tempestuous, but the eye of faith views them clear and serene. It views no disorder in the decree and providence of God. It beholds him *in one mind* making all things subservient to his glory in the salvation of his elect.

This is matter of joy, even of joy unspeakable and full of glory to thee, O Christian. And now unto him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, be ascribed honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

## **DISCOURSE IV**

*EPHESIANS 1, 3, 4, 5.*

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

THE doctrine of election, of which mention is here made, is as plainly taught in the bible, as that God made the heavens and the earth. But what it is must be referred to the decision of God's own word: And for the illustration of the doctrine, I would observe, that there is, 1. A national election to great honors, and special privileges; which shows, that God deals in a sovereign manner with men.

The posterity of Abraham are called an *elect nation*.

God separated them from the rest of the world. Deut. xxxii, 8, 9. "When he divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of

Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel,” they were his portion, and the lot of his inheritance. God did not choose, them because they were more in number than other people. Deut. vii, 7, “The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any other people; for ye were the fewest of all people.” Nor did he choose them, on account of account of any good disposition foreseen in them. Deut. xxxi, 27, 29. “For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am alive with you, this day ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death? For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves.” Isa. xlviii, 5, 8. “ I have from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it to thee. For I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb.” This shews that God gives or withholds his favors according to his own pleasure. 2. There is an election of certain persons by name to a political or ecclesiastical office. Cyrus was chosen by name to a great work. God’s *determinate purpose* respecting him was revealed in Isa. xlv and xlv, above an hundred years before he was born. God chose him to destroy the Babylonian monarchy, to deliver his people from captivity, and to rebuild his temple. He was not chosen on account of any worthiness in himself, for it is said, “he did not know the Lord.” Nor was he chosen, because he would be a valiant or victorious commander. For God endued him with a martial spirit, in consequence of his election to that office. “ Thus, saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron; and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden, riches of secret places, that thou mayest know, that I the Lord which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant’s sake, and Israel, mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.” God chose him to be the instrument, by which to perform all these actions.

Jeremiah was chosen before he was born, to an ecclesiastical office. Jer. I, 5. “Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” He was not chosen to this office on account of any foreseen willingness in him to accept or continue in it, for the contrary is expressly declared, ver. 6, and chap, xx, 7, 9.

The twelve apostles were also chosen to an ecclesiastical office. John vi, 70. “Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil.” This choice was undoubtedly to the apostolic office; for Judas was never chosen to eternal life, as shall be shown afterward. 3. There is also an election to eternal life, which Paul shows from the fate of Isaac’s sons. The divine counsel had put a difference between these twin brothers before they were born. Both lay struggling alike in their mother’s womb, when it was said of them, “the elder shall serve the younger.” God did not choose Jacob on account of any foreseen good, as appears from Gen. xxv, xxvii. It is indeed a strange account. But the meaning of it is given in Rom. ix, 11. “The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand: not of works, but of him that calleth.” What this election is, I purpose to explain in the following discourses, in which I will prove, 1. That this election is personal and by name. 2. That it includes all the means leading to salvation. 3. That it is an election in Christ. 4. That it is eternal. 5. That it is absolute. 6. That it is immutable. 1. We are first to shew that election to salvation is personal and by name. This is plainly intimated in these words of the text, “he hath chosen us,” that is, our persons; for he did not speak of a national election at Ephesus, but of a personal election of both Jews and Gentiles. And verse 1, he calls them the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus, without any distinction of nations. In the first ten verses he speaks of the elect in the first-person plural, *we* and *us*, to show that he included the believing Jews with the elect Ephesians. In the 11th and 12th verses, he speaks of the elect Jews only, “in whom also we have obtained”—“that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.” The Jews were the first who trusted in Christ at Ephesus, as appears from the history of their conversion. For Paul went to Ephesus,

and reasoned with the Jews in their synagogue, Acts xviii, 19. After this Apollos went to Ephesus, and by speaking boldly in their synagogue, mightily convinced the Jews, (*verses* 24, 26, 28.) before any Gentiles believed. For, sometime after this, Paul returned to Ephesus, and went into the synagogue, and after this, both Jews and Greeks heard the word. Thus, the gospel was the power of God to the Jew *first*, and also to the Greek, Rom. I, 16. And so these Jews trusted in Christ before the gospel was preached to the Gentiles. Thus, he plainly distinguishes the Jews, who first trusted in Christ, from the Gentiles, who afterward trusted in Christ, and of whom he speaks, verse 13. “In whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.” Besides the first-person plural generally signifies in this epistle both Jews and Gentiles, or Jews only. Chap, II, 14, 15, 16. “He is our peace who hath made both,” Jew and Gentile, “*one body*,” breaking down and abolishing the ceremonial ordinances, which had been a wall of partition between them. “To make in himself of twain one new man;” of two distinct kinds of people, one sheepfold; that he might reconcile both unto God—both Jew and Gentile. For through him we *both*, Jew and Gentile, have, &c. But the second person plural, *ye*, signifies. Gentiles. Chap, ii, 11, 12, 13. “Remember that ye, being in time past Gentiles,”— “but now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off.” Chap, iv, 17. “That ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles.” This shews, that God did, before the foundation of the world, predestinate, according to his own purpose, and to the praise of his glorious grace, the persons of *both* such Jews as believed and trusted in Christ before the conversion of the Gentiles, and also the persons of those Gentiles who believed and trusted in Christ afterward. To this testimony of the text others from scripture will now be adduced. 1. Our Lord plainly teaches this doctrine in many instances. When he foretold that the Roman armies would make such dreadful havoc and desolation on the Jews, as would even totally extinguish that people, unless God’s providence should restrain and limit them, he promises this restriction and limitation for the sake of such of “his elect” as were then unconverted, and such of the “elect” as were to descend from some of that age, that when they were renewed, they and those already converted might be preserved for propagating his kingdom in this world.

Mark xiii, 19, 20. "For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation, which God created unto this time. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days." In the 21st and 22d verses he foretold the rise of false Christs and false prophets, who would be so artful in their ways, and so plausible in their pretences, and so diligent in their exertions to seduce, that they would deceive and draw after them *the very elect*, were not their invincible perseverance in faith and holiness secured by the decree of election. "For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect." At another time our Lord complained of the impenitence of the bulk of his hearers, but comforted himself with the thought, that a goodly number, even as many as the Father had given to him, for his charge and care, should believe and be saved. John vi, 37,38, 39. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Sometime after this our Saviour declares, that he was under a necessity to gather all that belonged to this election into his church, that they might enjoy the blessings of the gospel; and that he could not otherwise discharge the trust, and fulfil the engagement he had entered into with the Father, and therefore his *redemption* was exactly of the same extent with the Father's *election*.

John x, 11, 15, 16, 26, 27, 28, 29. "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. And I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Again, he calls the elect, "the

men, which were given him out of the world.” John xvii, 6. “And they were given him by *name* as well as by number, and by those names he knew them.” ’John x, 3, 14. “He calleth his own sheep by name. I know my sheep.” And he appropriates them *personally* to himself. Isa. xliii, 1. “I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine.” It is worthy of our most profound attention that the Lord takes notice of their names as a special token of the peculiar regard he hath for their persons. 2. The personality of election appears from the example of Christ’s election. It was no uncertain person that was to be Christ and Lord. The Son of God could not assume any indeterminate body; he must take that very same body, which was prepared, or ordained for him. Heb. x, 5. “And he loved this body *before* the foundation of the world.” John xvii, 24. “And the determinate counsel of God particularized every circumstance with respect to this body, that it should descend from the seed of Abraham, the tribe of Judah, the family of David, the time, place and circumstances of his birth, life, death and resurrection.

Acts ii, 23, 24, and iv, 25, 26, 27, 28. Now as the election of the head was personal, and he must be head with respect to a body; so, all that should constitute the members of his body must be personally chosen, which appears from the example of David, who was a type of Christ. Psalm cxxxix, 16. “In thy book were all my members written, when as yet there was none of them.” If God was so exact and particular as to register in his book of common life every member of an earthly body long before it had existence, then he must have registered every member of Christ’s mystical body in his book of spiritual life long before they had existence: for the former was a type of the latter. 3. We may prove the *personality* of election from Christ’s death. He died not for himself, but for those whose cause he undertook. Psalm cxix, 122. John x, 15.

Acts xxii, 28. This made it necessary to be determined how many and who they were that should have salvation by him. For, properly speaking, bail or surety has always respect to a debtor or offender, who is known by name, otherwise giving surety would be an insignificant act.

Aaron’s typical priesthood illustrates and confirms this.

The high priest, on the solemn day of expiation, slew one of the goats on which the sins of all Israel were laid, and sent the other into the wilderness. All this was typical of Jesus Christ. But the question is, who were typified by all Israel? Surely not the Chaldeans or Babylonians, out of whom they were chosen, Gen. xi, 31; Josh, xxiv, 2, 3; nor the Egyptians, from among whom they were redeemed or bought, Deut. xxxii, vi; nor the Canaanites, whom they destroyed. For nothing could be more absurd than to suppose that Israel was a type of that world, out of which they were chosen, and from which they were many ways distinguished. Consequently, they typified the elect, who are Jews inwardly and therefore the true Israelites, whom the apostle distinguishes from all others by the name of election. Rom. xi, 7. And as the Israelites were chosen out of, redeemed and separated from all others, and were, in their measure, a holy priesthood; so they were a fit type, or figure, of those who were truly chosen, redeemed and consecrated a royal priesthood unto our God. 1 Pet. ii, 5.

Neither did the high priest make atonement for the national name or qualification of the Israelites. For he bore their names, which he knew to be Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, &c. Agreeably to this our great High Priest did not make an atonement for any national qualification, but “he laid down his life for his sheep. “John x, 15. And had he designed to purchase salvation for any that would believe, without determining the persons that should believe, God’s whole saving design respecting the children of men might have been 'totally frustrated, and the precious blood of Christ might have been shed in vain. Therefore, without such an election of certain determinate persons as we maintain, to whom the redemption purchased by Christ should be infallibly applied, God’s design could not possibly be secured, nor could Christ’s dying in vain be prevented. This absurd consequence of denying the doctrine we are supporting cannot be evaded by having recourse to the foreknowledge of God, and saying, he certainly foreknew that a great multitude would believe and be saved, and so was assured he could not be disappointed of his design, and that his Son would not die in vain; because we have proved already, that the foreknowledge of God necessarily infers his predetermination. For it is certain, that in the days of eternity, when all

things future had no being but in the mind of God, he could know nothing of them but what was his determinate will and counsel concerning them. Or, should the opposers of this truth affirm, that to prevent this disappointment, God will so order things that some will be inclined and disposed to accept salvation; this is in very fact to give up the point, and grant what we assert. For by this they must grant *a discriminating grace to be exercised in time*, which cannot be defended without allowing God to have previously determined to do so; because “he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will;” otherwise they must suppose new determinations in the divine will, which would be to suppose an imperfection in his wisdom and knowledge. All which is as plain a proof that those for whom he should die were chosen personally or by name, as that he should die for them. 4.. The *personality* of election may be argued from things of less importance., God did not create the earth to stand empty, nor any part of it to be inhabited by any nation, that should at random get possession of it. Deut. xxxii, 8. For “the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance,” and “separated the sons of Adam; he set the bounds of the people.” Acts xvii, 26. He “hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.” And his purpose to create each nation having the “bounds of their habitation determined,” must have been as ancient as his purpose to create those parts of the earth which he *divided* to them. His purpose determined their bounds, and the agency of his providence effected their settling within “the bounds he set for them.” Therefore, God told the Israelites, Deut. ii, 4, 5, “the children of Esau— shall be afraid of you; take ye good heed unto yourselves therefore. Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given mount Seir unto Esau for a possession.” And when the Israelites came to the wilderness of Moab, the Lord commanded them, verse 9, “distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them, in battle; for I will not give thee of their land for a possession, because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession.” God had determined these places for other nations and therefore he would not allow his Israel to inhabit one foot breadth of them. But how different from this was his conduct with respect to Sihon, king, of Heshbon, verse 24. “Rise ye up, take your journey, and pass over the

river Arnon; behold, I have given into thy hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land; begin to possess it; and contend with him in battle.” And with respect to Israel, God had not only determined the bounds of their habitation, but also had decreed what part of Canaan each tribe should possess. Gen. xlix, 13. “Zebulon shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships, and his border shall be unto Zidon.” And when Moses was dead, each tribe got their inheritance by lot in the very place which God had determined for them. Josh, xix, 10—16. And “Zebulon’s border went up toward the sea. And though the casting of the lot be a free thing, yet it was a mean appointed of God for the accomplishment of his decree, and under his direction. Prov. xvi, 33. “The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” God had determined the bounds and limits which every nation must inhabit. Now as earthly possessions are of no importance when compared with heavenly habitations, so the inference must hold, that if God foreordained certain nations to inhabit particular provinces on earth, much more must he have determined certain persons to inherit particular mansions in the kingdom of heaven. Indeed, the truth of this appears from our Saviour’s own words. For when the mother of James and John came to Jesus, and asked of him the privilege that one of her sons might sit on his right hand and the other on his left in his kingdom; though they were both believers, and perhaps the first for whom these seats were requested, yet he refused; saying, “to sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.” Matt, xx, 23. The sense is plain.

These seats were not to be disposed of at that time. It was determined long before who should have them. And they must be given to those persons for whom they were prepared from the foundation of the world. Matt, xxv, 34. Heaven was therefore prepared for the elect, and each seat was prepared for a certain elect person, and he must have it. The force of this argument will not be in the least impaired by the supposition that the mother of Zebedee’s children entertained the notion, that Christ was about to erect a temporal kingdom on earth, and came with the ambitious request, that her two sons might be his chief favorites and prime ministers;

for allowing that to be the case, yet the argument retains all its force; because he let her know that she mistook the nature of his kingdom, which was not of this world, and that the gifts and honors of it were long ago fixed, and were to be disposed of by him to those very persons to whom his Father in his everlasting counsel had assigned them, and to no other. “To sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give, save to those for whom it is prepared of my Father.” He could give them to those persons for whom his Father had made them, but not to others. For his Father knew what he was doing when he prepared them, and who should sit on them. 5. The bible plainly shews, that election is personal and by name. Rom. ix, 11, 12, 13, 18. “The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her [Rebekah] the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated— Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardeneth.” God’s purpose according to election respected not the qualification but the person of Jacob, for he was not yet born, neither had done any good or evil that God’s purpose of election might stand. — What Christ told his seventy disciples, that their names were in the book of life, must therefore be true with respect to all the other elect. Hence, we read of the names of Clement and others in the book of life. Phil. iv, 3.

*Secondly*, I proceed to shew, that election includes all the means leading to grace and glory. No words can possibly express an election, to all spiritual blessings more clearly than those in the text. “God hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, according as he hath chosen us.” God does in time, bestow all spiritual blessings on the elect, according as he chose them before all time. He chose them in order to bestow grace on them, in time, and glory when time shall be no more, that they should be to the praise of his glorious grace. All the precious, and valuable blessings of grace and glory are bestowed on the elect in consequence of their election to them. He blesses them according as he hath chosen them. Thus also, in Eph. ii, 10, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto* good works, which God hath before ordained,

that we should walk in them.” The elect are God’s workmanship, created in time unto such good works, as God “had before ordained,” that they should walk in them. God before ordained, that is, he from eternity ordained, the elect, to walk in good works, and in consequence of this, causes them, in time to perform these works. How plainly does it appear that good works are the fruits and effects, and not the cause of election; For in the plan of salvation, a certain order is observed. First, predestination to good works from eternity. Secondly, in consequence of predestination to good works from eternity, grace is given in time: And thirdly, glory shall be given when time shall be no more. All these links of the gospel chain are inseparable. They are so many parts of one magnificent undivided whole. The apostle saith, “We (the same we that were chosen before the foundation, of the world) are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.” Hence God does not eventually save an elect person before he creates that person unto good works. For as the end, and the means to accomplish the end, are inseparably connected together, both in God’s own purpose, and in his execution of it; so creation to good works always takes place between foreordination to holiness and the ultimate accomplishment of that decree. If St. Paul’s idea of pre-ordination be accurate, then it will follow, that neither faith, nor repentance, nor any other grace that accompanies them, can be in the least respect, casual, or conditional, or meritorious of election; for he saith “God foreordained that we should walk in them;” but he does not say, we were foreordained because we would walk in them, nor because we did walk in them. The truth of the matter is, God in eternity chose the elect to walk, to make motion and progress, in good works, in consequence of which he gives them his Holy Spirit to work faith, repentance and every other grace, which accompanies them. Any grace we exercise, and any duty we perform, cannot therefore possibly in the very nature of things, merit or entitle us to his favor. They do not make him a debtor to us, that he should bestow his favor in consequence of them, but they make us unspeakable and everlasting debtors to him; consequently, every grace wrought in us by the spirit is an essential branch and indisputable evidence of predestination to life. “God hath foreordained, that we should walk in

them.” They cannot, therefore, possibly have any influence in meriting our salvation; for we are foreordained unto them, and created unto them, not because of them. Besides inherent grace and eternal glory are already obtained, and infallibly secured to all the elect, by the merits of Jesus Christ. Therefore, in consequence of their foreordination to holiness, God works in them faith, repentance and holiness—justifying them by the merits of Jesus— sanctifying them by his spirit in order to qualify them for immortal bliss. Thus, God hath chosen his elect to all the means of grace and glory. “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.” The elect are predestinated to be saved by Jesus Christ, who was foreordained to be the principal mean of their salvation. I Thess. v, 9. “God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” Observe, God hath appointed the elect to salvation; but Jesus Christ is appointed to be the principal mean of procuring that salvation, being both the meritorious and efficient cause of it. Wherefore we read of “redemption by his blood,” “justified freely by his grace,” and of his being the “author and finisher of faith.” The elect were chosen to these and every other blessing of the new covenant, and our Lord Jesus Christ was foreordained to *accomplish* them all.

That election includes the means as well as the end appears from the indubitable testimony of St. Paul. II Thess. ii, 13,14. “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The apostle told the Thessalonians, in the preceding verses, of a dreadful apostacy, which should arise after the working of satan, with great power, signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; much like that foretold by our Saviour, “that if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect.” But in these verses, he comforts the believing Thessalonians, in their tribulation, by assuring them, that they could not possibly be carried away by that apostacy, because their salvation was infallibly secured by the eternal decree of election. “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath

from the beginning chosen you to salvation.” Now the question is, what are we to understand by the *beginning* from which the Thessalonians were chosen? I answer absolute eternity: because they were neither chosen, nor called, in the beginning of the salvation published by Jesus during his ministry on earth.

For during that time, he positively forbade his ministers to preach the gospel to any save the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Matt, x, 5, 6. Nor will sacred history allow the Thessalonians to be the first Gentile converts, as appears from the first seventeen chapters of Acts; consequently, the beginning, from which they were chosen, must signify eternity, as in Prov. viii, 23. The apostle John also uses the very same word to prove the eternal divinity of Jesus Christ. John i, 1, and 1st epistle i, 1. He uses the terms “from the beginning” and “in the beginning” as synonymous, to import eternity. God’s choosing the Thessalonians from the beginning is therefore of the same import with “his choosing the Ephesians before the foundation of the world.” And in this way only do the scriptures harmonize. Besides it can be true in no other sense of the word, that they were chosen from the beginning, for they were not even called by the gospel till long after it began to be published: And in the 14th verse he speaks of their being called as distinct from and in consequence of their election. “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth: whereunto he hath called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” They were elected to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth before they were called by the gospel. They were chosen to salvation from sin, and then called by the gospel to that salvation which was accomplished by the sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth.

That God has before all-time chosen certain persons, with a design to call, justify and sanctify them in time, and to glorify them when time shall be no more, appears farther from Rom. viii, 29, 30. “For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son--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.” God’s foreknowing the elect does not signify merely his

prescience, by which he foresaw all things at one comprehensive view in his own infinite mind from eternity. For in that sense “known unto God are all his works from eternity,” and also everything relating to all others, as well as to them. Whereas this is evidently a discriminating foreknowledge. He knows them as distinct from all others. “I know whom I have chosen.” Nor can it possibly signify his foreapproving them on account of faith and holiness foreseen. For he did not predestinate them *as conformed*, nor because he foresaw they *would* be conformed; but he predestinated them *to be conformed* to the image of his Son. And he chose them *not as holy*, nor for *holiness foreseen*, but he predestinated them “to be holy and without blame before him in love.” Then none of these, nor all of them put together, can be the cause of his foreknowledge.

Consequently, it must signify an act of his understanding whereby he wills to distinguish them from all others, as the objects of his special favor, and immutable love; and so called “his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself,” (Eph. I, 9,) in order to shew, that it is an act of absolute sovereignty, which is conducted with unerring judgment, the reasons of which lie wholly in himself. For God’s knowing, often signifies such knowledge as is with love and choice; as in Amos iii, 2. “You only have I known, of all the families of the earth that is, with a peculiar choice and love of your nation above all others; and 2 Tim. ii, 19. “The foundation of God standeth sure having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his.” This foundation is composed of those righteous persons mentioned in Prov. x, 25, who could not be deluded by the craft and cunning of deceivers; because they stood sure and immovable, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. Now this knowledge is plainly discriminating, compared to a seal, on account of which those, who are the subjects of it, stood sure and immovable. And Rom. xi, 2, “God hath not cast away his people, which he foreknew.” This people which God foreknew, cannot mean the whole body of the Jews, whom he chose in a national capacity; for it is plain, that *God had cast away* the bulk of them, and the apostle’s principal design, from the 11th to the 23d verse of this chapter, is to prove that God had done so. The *foreknown* must therefore signify the elect, who were among that nationally chosen body of people,

whom he had, in a still more distinguishing manner, chosen as the objects of his special love, to effectually call and eventually save. They are expressly called, (verses 5, 7) “a remnant according to the election of grace, which obtained,” in opposition to the bulk of them, “who were blinded.” The Socinians, therefore, judged rightly when they said, “Admitting the “infallible prescience of all future things, Calvin’s “doctrine of predestination of some by name to life, and of others to death, cannot be refuted.” God’s foreknowing the elect is truly of the same import with his purpose of predestination to life. The apostle therefore shews a most wise order and connexion in all that God brings to pass, which can never be broken asunder. For salvation takes its rise in the eternal counsel, free purpose, and electing love of God. Whom he did *foreknow*, and personally choose to salvation, them he did *predestinate* to all the means that lead to that salvation. God, viewing the fallen race of Adam ruined by sin, placed his eternal love on some of them, so that he foreknew them as objects of special approbation in Christ. *Effectual calling* follows after predestination. Whom he did predestinate, *them he also called*, by the powerful working of his spirit, to a thankful acceptance of, and firm reliance on, the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. For they are predestinated to be conformed to the moral image of his Son, which consists in knowledge, righteousness and holiness. All, without exception, whom he did predestinate, he either hath, doth, or will call out of the kingdom of darkness, from a state of spiritual ignorance and slavery to sin, into the kingdom of his Son. Upon this follows their justification. Whom he called, *them he also justified*, absolved from guilt through the merits of Christ. After these ensues their glorification.

Whom he justified, *them he also glorified*. Sanctification is here included in glorification. For sanctification is glorification begun, and glorification is sanctification completed. The apostle includes the one in the other to shew, that whoever is sanctified shall most assuredly be glorified. This is the golden chain of salvation, one link of which (blessed be God), cannot possibly be broken asunder. Whom he did predestinate, *them he also glorified*.

Of the same import are those words in 1 Pet. I, 2. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through the sanctification of the spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." If they were elected unto obedience and sprinkling of Jesus Christ, then they were not elected as obedient and sprinkled, nor because they would be obedient and sprinkled. If the elect are chosen unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, then obedience and sprinkling of his blood are consequences and fruits of election. This shews, that God has certainly chosen some to the means of salvation, and to salvation by those means. For the elect were chosen unto obedience and sprinkling of the divine blood, and consequently before they were obedient or sprinkled.

Therefore, an obedient walking in the Lord Jesus, and the sprinkling of the divine blood are both the fruits and evidence of eternal election. For the elect are chosen unto them. God also chose them through sanctification of the spirit unto obedience; that is, he chose them with a design to renew and purify them by his spirit, in order to engage and enable them to perform a course of holy obedience to his commands. The elect were therefore chosen *before* the foundation of the world to be sanctified by the spirit, and to be made obedient by a divine creation in time.

Our blessed Lord and Master taught the same doctrine.

John xiii, 18. "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, he that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." Now it is evident, that our Lord spake here of an election more peculiar and beneficial than to the apostleship; for they all had been chosen to that; but it was a discriminating choice of some of them, which did not extend to Judas. "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen." As our Lord spake not of all his twelve apostles in this place; so, it is evident that he spoke only of the elect ones among them; which proves, that Christ has chosen some certain determinate persons to salvation. This will appear more clearly from a consideration of the preceding verse: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." But our Saviour never expected Judas to do them. John vi, 64. "For Jesus

knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.” Indeed he could not possibly expect what he knew would never come to pass; and therefore he saith, “I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen.” He knows whom he has chosen, because he chose them, and not others—As if he had said, though I have chosen you twelve to the apostleship, yet I know which of you I have chosen to faith, habitual holiness, and final salvation, as well as to the apostleship: for one of you I have not chosen to grace and glory, but only taken him into the apostolic office, and have left him to the free choice of his stubborn and perverse will, and I infallibly knew from the beginning, that being so left, he would prove a perseveringly wicked person, and in the end a traitor, on purpose that the prophecy of scripture might be fulfilled. Psalm xii, 9. “Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted (a part of the apostleship, (Acts i. 17,) which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.” Therefore Christ did not speak of Judas in this election to eternal life; he was left out, that the scripture might be fulfilled.

Our Saviour speaks in John xv, 16 of an election to grace and habitual holiness in terms as clear as can be possibly spoken. “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain, and that whatsoever ye should ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.” As Judas was now gone and could not be included among the apostles at the time when our Saviour spake these words; so it is evident that he did not speak merely of choosing to the apostleship, to which he had chosen Judas as well as them; for he evidently speaks here of choosing them to saving and eternal blessings, and to be his friends through his spirit working faith and habitual holiness in them. Jesus Christ has then certainly chosen some to eternal life. When he is considered as Mediator we are said to be chosen in him, but when he is considered as God, we are said to be chosen by him. And nothing can be more evident than that his choosing them was prior to their choosing him: “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.” He chose them to active diligence in bringing forth fruits of holiness. “I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit.” He did not choose them because they did, or would

bring forth fruit, but he chose them, that they should go and bring forth fruit. He predestinated them to final perseverance in holiness. "I have chosen and ordained you, that your fruit should remain." The elect were given to him in such a manner that he will in no-wise cast them out for he has ordained that they should be a praying people, and that their prayer of faith should be answered. "I have ordained that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." It is impossible for words to prove more clearly, that God has predestinated the elect to good works, and to persevere in the fruits of holiness, and to have access to the Father through Christ, by the prayer of faith, that they may abound in good works to the praise of the glory of God's, grace.

## **DISCOURSE V.**

*EPHESIANS 1, 3, 4, 5.*

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

*Thirdly*, THE elect are chosen *in Christ*. *He hath chosen us in him*. The necessity of this may appear by considering, that as the old covenant had a head (Adam) by whom sin and death descended unto all his natural posterity, by virtue of their union and covenant relation with him, (Rom. v, 19) "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners so the new covenant required a head and mediator, that righteousness and life might flow from him unto all his spiritual seed. John xvii, 2. "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." xiv, 19. "Because I live, ye shall live also." Christ and Adam are in this sense represented as the two great covenant heads. 1 Cor. xv, 45, 47, "The first man Adam; the second and last man Adam." They are called the one, the *first*, the other, the *second* and *last* man, just

as if there had never been any beside themselves. And the reason is plain. Each of them stood the representative of his covenant seed. For as we destroyed in ourselves, by our apostacy in Adam, that principle which would have led to God as our happiness, and also contracted such obstinacy and opposition to God as would have forever kept God and us asunder, Rom. viii, 7, 8, had not God proposed to dissolve it by means of choosing in Christ; so, the elect were put *into* Christ by election, that they might, by virtue of their union with him, derive from him those benefits, the fulness of which dwells in him as the root. Thus Adam was a figure of Christ, Rom. iv, 14.

Now as Adam prefigured our Lord Jesus Christ, so much light may be given with respect to the doctrines of the gospel in general, and of election in particular, by considering the relation in which he stood with respect to mankind. His Creator made him *mutable*? yet he made him *upright*, perfectly innocent, without the least tincture of sin in his nature, so that all the powers and faculties of his soul were disposed to glorify God. Man being thus made in the image of his Creator, God made a covenant with him, the condition of which was, *do and live*, {or *sin and die*.} The happiness or misery of all mankind depended on the voluntary exercise of his free will. For man being endued by his Creator with sufficient abilities to stand, and constituted the representative of his off-spring, it was just he should be left to the freedom of his own will to choose obedience and live, or to rebel and die. Had he stood during the time of his probation; all mankind would have stood in him. And his obedience would have procured happiness for himself and posterity, not from the intrinsic worth of his obedience, but from the covenant of works which God made with him—*Do and live*. And it is as plain, that by his disobedience he communicated death and all its consequences to his posterity.

Paul, in Rom. v, states the comparison between these covenant-heads, and shews that the first Adam was the efficient effectual cause of communicating condemnation by sin to his whole posterity, and that the second and last Adam is the infinitely more powerful, efficient and meritorious cause of communicating salvation from sin to *all* his children. The comparison is this.

ADAM

By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned. verse 12

CHRIST

Much more then, being now justified by his blood we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. Verses 9, 19

The comparison is this. Adam's sin had sufficient efficacy to cause Sin and death to descend unto all his natural offspring; for he was a public person, their representative in the covenant of works, but Christ's blood has much more efficacy to save from wrath than Adam's disobedience had to produce it; for if we were reconciled by his obedience when in this state of enmity in which Adam left us, much more being thus reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

ADAM

But not as the offence, (so also is the free gift) for if through the offence of one many be dead. Verse 15

CHRIST

Much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. Verse 15

Christ and Adam are here represented as public heads, each communicating; the one, the fault of his sin to the destruction of his posterity; the other, a much more abundant supply of grace to his seed. This makes "the grace of God, and the gift by grace to abound much more" than the offence; for the comparison between the condemnation by Adam and the salvation by Christ is stated to show, not that objects of sin and of special grace were equally extensive, but to show the efficacy of the different causes, which produced those contrary effects. This super abounding of grace must therefore signify its prevalent efficacy; for it cannot include more than all sinful objects, and daily experience proves, that iniquity super abounds in the bulk of mankind.

ADAM

For the judgment was by one to condemnation ----death reigned by one. Verse 16

CHRIST

The free gift is of many offences unto justification; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Verses 16, 17

This comparison states, that in the judgment of God all Adam's posterity were brought into condemnation, by his first offence, which caused death to prevail, reign and triumph; but the special grace of regeneration and the gift of Christ's merits imputed, causes his posterity to reign much more powerfully in spiritual life; for his grace and righteousness has much more power to cause life than Adam's offence had to cause death.

ADAM

Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation. Verse 18

CHRIST

even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life. Verse 18

This comparison can with no propriety be understood to signify that all under condemnation by Adam are freely justified from that sentence; because the apostle's whole argument is, that the grace of God and obedience of Christ has *much more* efficacy to produce spiritual life in the elect, than Adam's offence has to keep them in death; and those justified from that sentence of condemnation, have a superabundance of grace, which all men have not. Consequently the argument is briefly this: As by Adam's offence, guilt came upon all his natural posterity, subjecting them to condemnation; so the righteousness of Christ comes upon all his spiritual posterity absolving them from condemnation.

ADAM

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners. Verse 19

CHRIST

so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Verse 19

Adam is here compared to a root, or stock, out of which sin grows up by nature, and is an inheritance, which we receive from him. Christ is also compared to another root, or stock, out of which righteousness flows by grace unto all his spiritual offspring. For as Adam's breaking the covenant of works made all his posterity sinners; so Christ's obedience in fulfilling the condition of that covenant, being reckoned to his posterity, constitutes them righteous in the sight of God; that whereas sin had abounded in them grace might "much more abound," "and reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Thus, Adam was a type or figure of Christ. Christ is expressly called the elect of God. Isa. xlii, 1. He was foreordained to the office of Mediator before the world was made. 1 Pet. i, 20. And all the treasures of grace were laid up for the elect in him. 2 Tim. i, 9. "Who hath saved us, and called us with, an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." God foresaw that Adam would fail in fulfilling the condition of the covenant of works and was not willing that all mankind should be everlastingly miserable. He therefore chose Christ in order to put the elect into his hands, that his purpose respecting them should not be frustrated. And before we fell, he settled the whole method of our redemption in the covenant of grace which he made with his Son. Isa. xlii, G. M I will give thee-for a covenant of the people." Zech. vi, 13. "And the counsel of peace shall be between them both." In this counsel of peace, or covenant of redemption, which God made with Christ, all things relating to man's salvation were settled and determined? On this account it is called a *better testament* of which Jesus is the *surety*. Heb. vii, 22. And God expressly calls him *the covenant of the people*. All the great and precious promises of this covenant were promised. by the God who cannot lie before tire world began. Tit. i, 2. These promises were all made to Christ. Gal. iii, 16. For God would not trust their salvation, in which his glory is so much concerned, in their own hands, because he well knew his saving design would then never take effect. Therefore we read, Job xv, 15, "Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints," much less would he put trust in them before they were saints. Hence their salvation is irreversibly secured by the new covenant, which is a "better covenant, and established upon better promises," promises of

reconciling, renewing and infallibly persevering grace; all which are positive and absolute. Heb. viii, 6. A transcript of these are in the 10th, 11th and 12th verses, and runs in the most absolute and, unconditional strain that can be conceived of. "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." As God would not commit the glory of salvation to the hands even of saints; so, he founded the covenant of grace on the sacrifice of Emmanuel. Heb. x, 14. "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." And the nature of the counsel of peace is this: Christ in it, undertakes to make men holy and righteous. For the condition of it on the part of Christ is expressly declared in, Heb. x, 16, 17. "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; *I will put my laws into their hearts and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*" In the decree of election Christ was chosen to be the head and mediator of the elect; and they were given to him, put into, his hands and committed to. his care, that he might redeem, call, renew, justify, sanctify and preserve them.

For so the bible informs us. "They were chosen in Christ," Eph. i, 4; "called in him," Phil, iii, 14; "created in him unto good works," Eph, ii, 10; "preserved in him," Jude 2, and "receive all spiritual blessings in him," Matt iii, 17, and finally "loves them in Christ with a great love through his rich mercy toward them, even while they were dead in sins," Ep ii, 5.

"preserved in him," Jude 2, and "receive all spiritual blessings in him," Eph. i, 3. "God is well pleased with the *renewal* of their nature made it necessary that they should be chosen; *in* Christ. For they lost *in* Adam that principle which would have led them to God, and they must receive in the second Adam a new principle to lead them to God. Because there is salvation *in* no other, Acts iv, 12; and therefore can be had only in him.

Consequently, he bestows his special blessings on the elect, according as he hath chosen them *in* Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world. This is beautifully illustrated by our Saviour, John xv, 5. “I am the vine, ye are the branches.” Now as the branch must be ingrafted into the vine before it can receive nourishment from it, so we must be in Christ by election before we can derive regenerating virtue from him. For as all the promises were made to Christ, so they descend to the elect as chosen in him. Wherefore Christ said to the nonelect Jews, “ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep.”— But of the elect he saith, “my sheep hear my voice.” John x, 27, 28.

The elect could not have been *justified* had they not been chosen *in* Christ. For as Adam’s sin could not have been ours, unless we had been *in* him, and he had represented, or sustained our persons in the covenant of works: So Christ’s righteousness could not have been reckoned to us unless we had been chosen in him, and he sustained or represented our persons on the cross. For his suffering on account of our sins could not benefit us unless we had been chosen in him so as to constitute a legal union or oneness between him and us. Because justice could not have punished him in our stead, nor have pardoned us through him, for this plain reason: The act of another cannot be mine, either in profit or in loss, but on the supposition of a legal union, or oneness existing between us.

I shall now conclude this discourse with the following practical observations on what hath been said: First of all, I would observe, we should not disown or relinquish any doctrine on account of seeming difficulties, or because of some objections raised against it.

For man’s corrupt, proud and aspiring mind, has, started some difficulties, and formed some objections against the plainest truths that are taught in the bible. If therefore the doctrine be expressly taught in the bible, or necessarily inferred from it, we must by no means withhold our assent. For whatever God has revealed, we are indispensably obliged to believe, whether it coincides with our reason, and agrees with our preconceived, opinions or not. Because every doctrine taught by inspiration is to be

received upon the credit of him who revealed them. And the scripture is the only rule of faith.

For reason is a very incompetent judge of revealed truths, on account both of the narrowness of our capacities, and the *blindness of our minds*, which is the consequence of our fallen state.

All the noble and instructive doctrines of the gospel are connected with this doctrine of personal election. The covenant of redemption made between the Father and the Son in the days of eternity, has respect to a distinguished number, who were given to Christ as his charge, and as his reward. John xvii, 2. "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." Indeed, the satisfaction made by the Son of God would be exceedingly depreciated and rendered a very loose, unsafe, and uncertain thing, if it was not made and accepted for certain determinate persons; for it would both impeach the wisdom, and affront the dignity of Christ's person, as well as exceedingly lessen the merits of his satisfaction even to suppose, that he did not, purchase faith, repentance, and holiness, for all those on whom they are bestowed. Election is therefore the foundation of all those great and precious promises contained in the covenant of grace; the origin of our redemption; the rise and spring from whence all those blessings flow, of which we are made the partakers through Christ. And without the proper consideration of this, *we* cannot possibly "comprehend what is the height and depth, the length and breadth of the love of God in Christ." We ought therefore, with the blessed apostle, to look back, with joyful praises, to this electing love of God. "Blessed be the God and Farther of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessing in heavenly things, *according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.*" We ought not to murmur at God's decree of election; for it furnishes us with the reason why "he did not cast off the human family for their apostacy," as he did the fallen angels. It was because there was an election of grace among them. "Except the Lord had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and had been made like unto Gomorrah." This gave birth to the early promise of the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head. On this account it was that judgment was

arrested, after sentence was pronounced on our apostate parents, and that mankind partake now largely of divine goodness.

All God's patience with the present sinful world is on account of a distinguished remnant that are now in it, and shall hereafter be born into it. Isa. lxxv, 8, 9. "Thus saith the Lord, as the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, destroy it not, for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servant's sake, that I may not destroy them all. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there." And our Saviour saith, it was "for the elect's sake," that a remnant of the Jews should be saved from destruction. And when all God's elect are born into the world, and ripened for heaven, the long suffering patience and forbearance of God with sinners will be at an end, the final judgment will commence, and this world shall be consumed by fire.

Men have no need to quarrel with the doctrine of election as they do; since it is well for the rest of the world, that there is an election of grace out of it. Others fare the better for their sake. For their sake the wicked world is spared from generation to generation, and the execution of vengeance toward particular sinners delayed; because many who will embrace Christ, must rise from such as reject him. For instance, God did not cut off Jeroboam and Ahaz in their first transgressions, because of good Abijah and Hezekiah, who were to spring from them. 2. Personal election in Christ affords much comfort and a great encouragement for serious faithful Christians to adhere to the doctrines of salvation, and to lead a life of active holiness, in times of great apostacy and corruption.

When evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, as they will do in the last days; when error and profanity spread wide like a mighty torrent; let the faithful in Christ Jesus remember for their encouragement, it is impossible to deceive the elect, in anything necessary to salvation, "For the foundation of God standeth sure; having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." And "because he lives, they shall live also." He has life in himself; he is the Prince of life. And the law of the spirit of life in him makes them free from the law of sin and death. Think, O my soul, what

radiant rays of divine wisdom beam forth from, God's putting, the elect in Christ, that being incessantly influenced by an immortal root, they should be effectually preserved from withering and falling off. Besides, this number may be much larger than we may sometimes apprehend. The prophet Elijah thought the apostacy from the true worship of God was so general in his days, that none beside himself persevered in the true service of God: but God told him for his comfort, that he had preserved thousands from the defection of the times, which the apostle applies to the times of the gospel. Rom. xi, 2—5. "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew; wot ye not what, the scriptures saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession for God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life." But what saith the answer of God unto him? "I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant *according to the election of grace.*"

3. Some, unable to overthrow the doctrine of election, greatly misrepresent it. They do this in order to make the doctrine the subject of sport and ridicule, since they are incapable of refuting it. They will tell us, that if election be true then men have nothing to do, for a certain number will be saved however immoral and profane they may be even to the end of their lives. But let those who cavil in this manner, consider they are doing nothing that touches the doctrine of election in the least; because election admits no such consequence. The scripture knows no such election, and we are far, very far from maintaining it. Those who contend thus are not warring with election, but with something they have put in its room. For the decree ascertains all the means of its accomplishment.

The elect are predestinated to persevere in bringing forth fruits of holiness—"predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ," which takes in the whole work of sanctification; and chosen to salvation "through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth." We therefore never said, that if a person were elected he might be saved however he ordered his life; for this would be to separate what God has indissolubly connected, and to destroy a part of the decree itself.

They equally misrepresent the doctrine of predestination, and prove themselves to be perverters of the decree, when they say, that the decree is the cause why men continue in sin. For although the omnipotent power of God exercised toward the elect, by working faith and repentance in them, be the immediate cause of their faith and repentance, and his decree to exert this power to work these saving graces in them be the reason why he does so; and so it is the execution of his purpose respecting them: Yet it does not follow from thence, that the nonelection of the rest is the cause why they continue in unbelief and final impenitence. It is true, they're not being ordained to eternal life, is the reason why God does not exert that almighty power toward them, which he exerts toward the elect; and the certain consequence will be unbelief and final impenitence: but the immediate spring and cause of that unbelief and impenitence, is the corruption and perverseness of human nature, which is chargeable on none but man himself. Unbelief and impenitence are by no means the effect of God's not working faith and repentance, but only the consequent thereof. Therefore, the only reason why those, from whom God withholds his special grace, and to whom he was not obliged to give it, continue in sin, is the evil propensity of fallen nature, which inclines them to sin.

If men will oppose the doctrine of election, let them quit false representation and ridicule, and make use of the proper arguments for the purpose. Let them advance to the fortress they would lay in ruins and make a direct attack. If they will do this, they must come forward and prove, that God has no determinate plan of operation; that there is an imperfection in God's knowledge, on account of which he does not know with certainty how the affairs of every particular man will terminate; that things are left so loose and uncertain that they may terminate this way or any other; that the creature can in any case whatever act contrary to what God knows they will do, and so God has no *fixedness* but what may be altered. If these ideas and others similar can be maintained and proved true, the doctrine of election must fall. But as that can never be done, this doctrine will stand firm and unshaken notwithstanding the whole torrent of opposition which may be raised against it.

But let the opposers of this doctrine consider, that they do not war with dependent flesh and blood like themselves. It is not a doctrine of men. It is taught in the bible. God is its author. They oppose a revealed truth. To God they must answer for it. They may pride themselves in their opposition to truth before men, yet without deep repentance and pardon through the merits of Christ, they will tremble at the bar of God. 4. The doctrine of predestination to holiness and eternal life is a spring of consolation to believers, and therefore a very powerful argument to obedience. This unadulterated truth of revelation, set before men, will do more for their happiness than all the moralizing philosophers of a thousand generations. This doctrine, clearly stated, instead of corrupting men, is calculated to restrain from sinful outbursts. For all who understand it must know, that in order to be happy, they must be holy and obedient, which is the fruit and evidence of election, and that they may express their gratitude to God for his eternal distinguishing love to them. The idea that this bible-truth is injurious to morality is therefore without foundation. For it has long ago been acknowledged, that those who have embraced this doctrine, ranked among the most moral and fruitful Christians. 5. Since predestination is “unto salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth,” it becomes every person, who does not profanely despise his salvation, diligently to read, hear and meditate on God’s word, and constantly attend the preached gospel. For he knows not what word of the holy scripture, what sermon, or in what hour, the Lord may graciously visit him with the supernatural efficacy of his spirit. And though we cannot assure any one that he shall certainly be saved, yet we know there is a brighter hope, both of the conversion and final salvation of those, who use the means of God’s appointment than of those who willfully neglect them. For the elect are chosen and ordained to active diligence in bringing forth fruits of holiness as well as to glory.

We are exhorted, from the very nature of election, to “give diligence to make our election sure.” It was always sure with respect to God; but we must give diligence to make it sure to ourselves. We may be sure of our election by the fruits and evidences of it. Paul was certain of the election

of the church at Thessalonica. 1 Thes. i, 4, 5. “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God: for our gospel came to you, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.” If the gospel has come in *power*, like a *hammer* to break the rocky heart in pieces, and like a *fire* to melt it into love; if it has come with such energy from the Holy Ghost as to kill sin, and make alive unto God; if the word has come accompanied with “much assurance” of the gospel truths, so as to venture your eternal all upon them, we may be sure of our election, for these are the fruits and evidences of it.

## **DISCOURSE VI**

*EPHESIANS 1, 3, 4, 5.*

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

*Fourthly*, WE come now to the eternity of election, which is proved by such arguments as these: 1. We read of a personal transaction from all eternity expressly declared to exist between God and Christ, acting by mutual consent, with respect to the bestowal of divine love and favor, in Prov. viii, 23. “I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.” He was set up the mediatorial head of the election of grace. And the words, verse 30, “as one brought up with him,” have always respect to some special end, or purpose; or to some work and service. And it was with respect to the arduous work of redemption and salvation, which he had to accomplish, the counsel of which was between the Father and the Son, that he is so called. For he everywhere commits himself and his undertaking to the faithfulness and protection of his Father. Psalm xxii, 9, 11, 19, 20. Isa. 1, 7, 9. And his Father engageth to carry him through his whole work, because it was to be performed in that nature which

needed help. Wherefore Christ is said to be always before him, verse 30, as one he would take particular care of, and protect with love and faithfulness in the completion of his arduous work.

Isa. xlii, 1—7. So the words, “I was daily his delight,” have also respect to the eternal counsel of peace, as appears front verse 31; “rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.” Christ here points out what things were mutually agreed upon in that counsel, the accomplishment of which was his delight. This counsel of God and Christ therefore respects the sons of men. And the context as plainly manifests that the things here spoken of were transacted in eternity, as words can possibly do. Christ was now ordained, even before the foundation of the world, to the work of redemption. 1 Pet. i, 20. And an innumerable multitude of men were also chosen in him to grace and glory. Eph. i, 4.

Our Saviour confirms this. John xvii, 6. “Thine they were, [by election] and thou gavest them me,” in the covenant of redemption; and the bringing of them to grace and glory was committed to him, and in the contemplation, of this work, he “delighted” in the days of eternity, on account of the manifestation of the divine glory which should be revealed thereon. And he was constituted, from the beginning, to be the head of certain members, which were to make up his spiritual or mystical body. Col. i, 18. And these are called *his* people, which he *shall* save from their sins. Matt, i, 21. They were given him, in the counsel of peace, to save from sin, and are therefore called his people, whom his Father promised him, saying, “*thy* people *shall* be willing in the day of thy power.” Psalm cx, 3. For in the agreement made between the Father and the Son, “from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was,” Christ was pitched upon to be the Saviour,, and his people were put in him by election, that he might be the means of accomplishing that salvation to which they were chosen.

Dan. ix, 24. Therefore his Father gave him power over all flesh, on purpose, that he should give eternal life to as many as were given, him. John xvii, 2. 2. That the elect were foreknown and chosen in Christ before

the world began, clearly appears from the words of our text; “he hath chosen us in him *before* the foundation of the world.” As time began with the foundation of the world, so whatever was before that, was eternal. But the act of election was before the world began, and therefore in eternity.

3. The everlasting and immutable love of God proves the eternity of election; for his love consists in this, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and we love him because he first loved us. John iv, 10, 19. His love to us is not in consequence of our love to him, for he first loved us. And the riches of his mercy consist in this, that “he loved us with a great love, even when we were dead in sins.” Eph. xi, 4, 5. He loved their persons, not their sins.

He everlastingly loved their persons in their elect head Jer. xxxi, 3. “I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.” He draws them in time with love, because he everlastingly loved them.

And so particular was his eternal love for them as a sacred order of kings and priests, that in consequence of it, he prepared a kingdom for them from the foundation of the world, and in it a seat for each elect person, which cannot be given to another. For when James and John requested to sit, one on his right hand and the other on his left, in his glory; he answered, “to sit on my right hand, and on my left hand, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.” Mark x, 35—41. The kingdom of heaven and the seats in it were then prepared for the elect from the foundation of the world. Matt, xxv, 53. But the elect must have been chosen previous to the preparing of those glorious abodes for them. For those seats were prepared for them in consequence of their election. Therefore, election is expressly called the eternal “purpose, which God hath purposed in Christ.” Eph. iii, 11. What daring blasphemy then to give God the lie, and affirm, that they were chosen in time on condition of their own behavior! 4. The eternity of election appears from all things relating to man’s salvation, being determined, fixed and settled in the eternal covenant of redemption. In this covenant, Christ pledged himself to become answerable for all their guilt. Isa. liii, 1—11. And on condition of his engagement to satisfy the demands of justice for them, by

magnifying the law and making it honorable, God promised him a numberless multitude of men. Isa. liii, 12. "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with transgressors; and he bare the sins of many and made intercession for the transgressors." In this personal transaction, all the blessings of the new covenant were promised to Christ, Gal. iii, 16; before the world began.

Tit. i, 2. "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began. 2 Tim. i, 9. "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ before the world began." This promise and giving was to Christ, that the blessings might be sure to all his spiritual seed. Gal. iii, 15. Heb. vi, 17. Now the elect as chosen *in* Christ before the world began, are the heirs of this immutable promise, confirmed by oath to Christ in the days of eternity. And God promised Christ in the most absolute manner before the world began, that by the merits of his blood, he would release the elect from the dominion of satan and from the slavery of an unregenerate state. Zech. ix, 11. "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth the prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." This brings me to observe, 5thly, That election is absolute. For, 1st. Everything, which could reasonably be supposed to be a condition of election, is but a part of election itself. The promise God made to Abraham, Gen. xii, 7, "to thy seed will I give this land," gave him as much assurance of a seed to inherit that land, as that the land should be inherited by his seed.

Election, in like manner, includes the whole series of things which tend to the accomplishment of salvation. The elect are chosen to holiness, Eph. i, 4; elected unto obedience and purification from sin, 1st Pet. i, 2; predestinated unto the adoption of children, Eph. i, 5; predestinated to the praise of God's glory, Eph. i, 11, 12; foreordained to walk in good works, Eph. ii, 11, 12; chosen and ordained to persevere in bringing forth fruits of holiness, John xv, 16. Thus you see the elect were chosen before the foundation of the world, and that their election includes all the means which tend to grace and glory. To these they were chosen before they had

a being, and consequently before they could be obedient. Faith, repentance and holiness of heart and life, are therefore essential branches, and consequently indisputable evidences of election. They are parts of one undivided magnificent whole. They are all of God. And the decree includes them with as much certainty as if the elect possessed them, when the decree was made.

Consequently, they can with no propriety of language be called conditions on the part of man. 2. Election must be absolute, because God could foresee no moral goodness in man as a motive to choose him. For the scriptures expressly declare there was none, Gen. vi, 5. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Psalm v, 9. "Their inward part is very wickedness." Eccl. ix, 3. "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live." Jer. iv, 22. "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." Jer. xvii, 9. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." 1 Cor. ii, 14. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Rom. viii, 7, 8. "The carnal mind is enmity against God for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Jer. xiii, 23. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." Now it appears from scripture light, and the experience of those renewed, that fallen man is blind, naked, and at enmity with whatever is good; and that all those, who glory in their understanding, boast of their power, freedom of will, and improvement of common grace, are in a state of spiritual darkness, and very far from God. For by such sentiments they are puffed up with pride and presumption, and a despising of the peculiar distinguishing grace of God, by which, if ever, they must be saved. 3. Election must be absolute, since man has neither faith nor holiness, nor any inclination to what is truly and acceptably good in the sight of a holy God, but what he works in them in time. Eph. ii, 8. "Faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God," a gift which God himself works in the

heart of his children, Col. ii, 12. "Through the faith of the operation of God." Heb. xii, 2. "Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." Phil, i, 29. "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." Acts v, 31. "God exalted Christ to give repentance." Now as faith, repentance and Christian fortitude are the free gifts and work of God; so they can with no propriety whatever be called conditions on the part of man. Indeed, to call them conditions on the part of man is to rob God of the glory of his work, and to take the work of salvation out of his hands. 4. Election must be absolute, because conditional election would overthrow the very foundation of the promises and destroy the whole nature of the great salvation. For all the promises spring from mere love and sovereign grace; since there was nothing in man's corrupt nature to move God to provide a remedy for him, who had destroyed himself and was his bitter enemy, unless you suppose man's sin and misery to be it, which would destroy the common idea of conditional salvation.

Therefore, to suspend the promise of God's love and grace on the faith and repentance of those to whom it was made, is perfectly to destroy it, and to place the merit of it in man, whereas it arose purely from the grace of God. Besides it utterly destroys the nature of salvation from sin and misery. — For they hold saving faith, which is the spiritual life of the Christian, and evangelical repentance, which is a loathing of sin, and the principle which causes the penitent to turn away from it to God, to be acts of the creature previous to divine acceptance. Now to affirm, that God will save none, but on condition they will thus deliver themselves from their sins, is to assert a plain contradiction, and wholly to destroy the promised salvation. For God has not promised to save men because they had faith and were penitent, but by promising to save them, he has promised to give them faith and repentance.

And to make the creatures' acting faith and repentance, the condition of his saving them, is to take the work out of his hand, and to make, both him and his salvation useless. For the nature of the covenant of grace consists in this, that God in it makes men righteous and holy. Ezek. xi, 19, 20. So that righteousness and holiness on the part of the creature cannot be the

condition of God's salvation, unless it be the condition of making it useless. So that Upon the whole the contest between God and the Arminians lies here: God engages to give men righteousness by the covenant of grace, the Arminians take upon themselves to be righteous that God may make that covenant with them. 5. That election is absolute, appears evident from our text. God chose us that we should be holy, and predestinated us according to the good pleasure of his will. We were not chosen as holy, nor for holiness foreseen, but we were chosen that we should be holy. And his good pleasure, was the spring or cause of our election. Indeed, so very far was God from choosing us on account of faith and holiness foreseen, that he did not choose us for the obedience of Christ foreseen.

God did not love us from eternity because Christ was to die for us in time, but he loved us from his own good pleasure.

Being self-moved, he loved us with an everlasting love, in consequence of which he sent his Son to die for us. Christ's death was the fruit and effect of our election, but not the cause of it. Now if Christ's most exalted obedience was not the cause of our election, much less could our own deservings be the cause of it. Consequently, no other reason can be assigned why God chose any, or one in preference to another, than the mere good pleasure of his will. For he did not choose us because we were worthy, but to make us so.

Holiness then, is not the cause of our election, but it is the fruit and effect thereof. God chose us in eternity, that we should be initially, progressively and perseveringly holy, and that we should be accounted blameless in his sight through faith in Christ's righteousness, in time, and that we should be perfectly holy when time shall be no more. 6. Election must be absolute, because the apostle expressly declares, that the purpose of God according to election, is not of works. Rom. ix. 11. And a little afterward affirms, that "God hath not cast away his people whom he fore-knew," which he proves from God's saying to Elias that "he had reserved seven thousand to himself," from the general defection of those times; and lest any should say it was because they "did not bow to the image of Baal," he

assures us in the following words, that it was no such thing. God preserved them from idolatry, while others were permitted to apostatize from the true worship of God. “Even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant, according to the election of grace.” And if by grace, namely, electing grace, “then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.” According to the apostle’s arguing, there can be no medium here. For every man’s salvation must take its rise wholly from the free grace of God in election, or wholly from his own works. And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace.” Grace totally excludes works, and works totally exclude grace. Grace and works cannot stand together in the matter of a sinner’s acceptance with God. “But if it be works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.” The least mixture of works would destroy the grace of God in the salvation of sinners. Gal. v, 4. “Christ is become of none effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace.” If you lay down but the least observance of the law as a condition of salvation, you renounce Christ as a Saviour altogether. For “election is of grace, and if by grace, then it is no more of works.” Nothing can be more absurd than to join grace and works together in the cause of salvation from sin. Rom, iv, 4. “To him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” For grace and works are as inconsistent with each other in the cause of salvation as any two contrarieties can possibly be. “And if “by grace, then it is no more of work.” But though it be totally absurd and inconsistent to join grace and works together in the cause of salvation, yet they will agree perfectly well in this respect, that grace, viz. electing grace, always produces good works.

Eph. xi, 8, 9, 10. “For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” And to confirm that the cause of salvation is wholly of grace to the total exclusion of works, he adds, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” But the doctrine of conditional election, which gives the creature so much room to boast, and to put in a claim for so large

a share in the honor of his own salvation, cannot possibly be of God, on account of the absurd consequences which follow it. For all those who deny the doctrine which has been supported, must suppose the salvation of every *particular man* to originate wholly within himself; or at least to be divided between God and the creature. They imagine mankind to be in a salvable state, that final salvation is suspended on the will of man, and that its success as to *particular persons* is not the result and fruit of God's purpose of grace, but (depends upon their own reason, will and choice, compliance with, and improvement of, what they call the grace of God, by which they seem to mean nothing more than a general grace, which goes along with the gospel, and is so common to all, that one may improve it as well and to equal advantage as another. And if it be thus, the sinner saved is furnished with a ready and easy answer to that question, 1. Cor. iv, 7, "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it." His answer would be, "I have made *myself* to differ from another. I cannot ascribe the happy difference to the free and powerful grace of God, for I had no more of that than those who perish; therefore I must ascribe it wholly to my own self, to my own, reason and choice,, good conduct and improvement: so that upon the whole, I must glory in, and boast of what I differ from others, for that difference was not given me by grace, but is the result and fruit of my own works and improvements." This makes good the apostle's argument, that election is wholly of grace, or wholly of works, and that the doctrine of conditional election cannot be of God, since it gives the creature so much room to boast, and robs God of the honor of his work of salvation; for he will not have anything of his glory given to another. And nothing can be more contrary to the whole design of the gospel, which is to stain the pride of all flesh, cut off every occasion of glorying from the creature, and to secure to divine grace its full honors. For the glorious God aims at the exaltation of free grace in the whole plan of man's, salvation. And for this purpose, he has admirably fitted the whole frame from the first corner stone, to the bringing forth the top stone thereof. 2. Tim. i, 9. "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ

Jesus, before the world began.” Tit. iii, 5. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” 1 Cor. i, 29, 30, 31. “That no flesh should glory in his presence.

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” Eph. xi, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; by grace ye are saved; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus. “For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” 7. That election is absolute, appears from God’s dealings with Saul. When our blessed Lord appeared to him, the whole company were struck into amazement. They heard a voice but knew not what it meant. Acts ix, 7. and xxii, 9.

But how was this, since they were as likely to yield to the heavenly vision as he? —Because God selected him out from among the rest, directed and conveyed the distinct pronounciation and meaning of the words, not to them, but to him; and afterward commanded Ananias to go and preach Jesus to him, “for he is a chosen vessel,” saith the Lord. Acts ix, 6, 15. And when he afterwards spoke of his conversion and call to the apostleship, he cannot but ascribe them to the powerful grace of God, in consequence of his previous purpose of election. Gal. i, 15, 16. “It pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen.” God did not therefore intend that voice for them, and consequently did not open their ears to hear it, nor did he direct it to them, but to Saul by name. But why direct it to Saul rather than the rest since he was the ringleader and chief persecutor in the gang, which he confesses made him peculiarly unworthy of the graced of God. 1 Cor. xv, 9. “For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle,

because I persecuted the church of God.” The reason is given. Acts xxii, 14. “The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou” shouldest “know his will, and see that just one, and” shouldest “hear the voice of his mouth.” In a word, God chose him that he should be an accomplished Christian; in consequence of which, God worked in him a will to do that which was good, and the deed from that will, which work of God, in consequence of his previous election, caused him not to be disobedient to the heavenly vision. God’s work in saving him, in consequence of having previously elected him, was so far the completion of the decree. Therefore, nothing can be more absurd than to suppose, that God’s work in fulfilling his own decree could possibly be a condition of the creature’s performance, which caused God to make the decree. It would be to confound things which are quite distinct; and to ascribe the work of God to the creature.

God’s work of grace in saving sinners from eternal ruin, in consequence of his decree to do so, cannot possibly be the cause or condition of his making that decree. For the eternal decree is the pattern after which he worketh all things. “He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” 8. Election must be absolute, since it is impossible to mention one work, or duty, which could be supposed to be a condition of man’s salvation, but what the bible declares it to be either the work or free gift of God, as may be seen from the following statement.

If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land. Isa. i, 19. This relates only to temporal benefits, which the Jews were to enjoy in Canaan.

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COVENANT OF GRACE. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. Psalm cx, 3. I will cause you to walk in my statutes. Ezek. xxxvi, 27.

Wash ye—make you clean, put away the evil of your doings: cease to do evil, learn to do well. Isa. i, 16, 17. Surely the sons of pride, who imagine themselves to be as gods, will find it a hard work to purify themselves from the corruption of their nature. And though it be their duty to do so, yet they have made themselves unable by sin. They have ruined themselves. And God commands them to do it in order to show them the necessity of an almighty work of grace, to conquer their corruptions, and to shew them that their boasted ability is but a lie in their right hand

I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness will I cleanse you. Ezek. xxxvi, 25. I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Isa. xliii. 25.

Repent and turn from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Ezek. xviii, 30. Jesus works the principle of repentance in man, and man's exercising that principle is his repentance.

Make you a new heart and a new spirit. Ezek. xviii, 31. Man cannot cause his own holiness of heart. He cannot regenerate himself. It is Divine agency that prepares men for heaven.

Surely after that I was turned, I repented, Jer. xxxi, 18. Christ gives repentance. Acts v, 31. I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. Ezek. xxxvi, 27.

I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness will I cleanse you. Ezek. xxxvi, 25. I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Isa. xliii. 25.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. Ezek. xxxvi, 26.

These commands are useful to shew us our duty, and what qualifications are necessary evidences of being in a state of grace. And as they shew us our duty, so they teach us the wretched condition of men in a state of unrenewed nature. Jer. iv, 22, "They are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." Therefore God's working everything that can possibly be supposed to be a condition of man's salvation shews the necessity of an Almighty work of grace to turn the sinner from the evil of his way, and to cause him to serve the living and true God.

Eph. i. 19. "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." It is called the power of God, the greatness of his power, the exceeding greatness of his power, according to the working of his mighty power, even that almighty power which raised Christ's dead body, and consequently an invincible power; God exercises this power toward those whom he brings to believe. To usward who believe, on purpose that no flesh should glory in his presence. 1 Cor. i, 29. Since it is God who worketh all in all, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. 1 Cor. xii, 6. Phil, ii, 13.

Jer. xvii, 5. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." John iii, 27. "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven." James i, 17. "Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow turning." 1 Pet. i, 3. "His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." John i, 13. "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Jam. i, 18 "Of his own will begat he us." Eph. i, 10. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Isa. xxvi, 12. "Thou also hast wrought all our works in us," Is. lv, 11. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: It shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please; and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." Ezek. xxxvi, 16. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the

stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.” Ver. 27. “And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my statutes, and do them.” Ver. 28. “And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.” Ver. 31. “Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations.” Ver. 32. “Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways.” Ver. 22. “I do not this for your sakes, but for mine holy name’s sake, which ye have profaned.” 2 Tim. i, 9. “Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” Tit. iii, 5. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

But, sixthly and lastly, Election is immutable; that is, none of the elect can lose that grace and glory which God has decreed for them. 1. Election must be *immutable* from the death of Christ, which, as you have heard, was irreversibly ordained to be the principal means of their salvation. And all saved before his crucifixion were saved by virtue of that decree. Heb. ix, 15. And at the appointed time God sent him into the world to be the substitute of elect men, and loaded him with the curse of the law which was due to their every sin. Gal. iv, 4, and iii, 13; Dan. ix, 24—26. Now to lay down, the price, without securing the purchase, would be to act beneath the dignity of a wise and prudent man.

How absurd then to suppose that God could possibly predetermine and lay down the infinitely precious price, the life of his only begotten and well-beloved Son, to save elect men, without securing the certainty of their salvation.

Had not the certainty of their salvation been secured, God’s whole saving design might have been defeated, and the precious blood of Christ might have been shed in vain as we have already seen. 2. Election must be immutable, because the scriptures expressly declare that elect men shall

inherit final salvation. “Whom he did predestinate them he also glorified.” “The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.” Rom. xi, 7. “But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end.” Isa. xlv, 17. “For a small moment have, I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed: but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.” Isai. liv, 7, 8, 9, 10. “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.” Jer. xxxii, 40. “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people—For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins, and their iniquities will I remember no more.” Heb. viii, 10—12. “And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” Acts xiii, 48. All were not ordained to eternal life, else all would have believed. For they were not ordained on account of faith, nor of its acts, but they were “ordained to obtain faith by our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thess. v, 9. Therefore those ordained to eternal life shall believe. “And he that believeth hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” John v, 24. These absolute promises of saving blessings are a transcript of the decree of election. They were made to Christ, and confirmed to him by the oath of Almighty God. “Because God could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,” pledged his eternal Godhead for the absolute performance of every blessing contained in the covenant of grace. Hence they are sure and steadfast. Heb. vi, 16, 17. Now the apostle’s argument lies here, that to deny the immutable stability of the decree of election is not only to accuse God of a lie, but also to charge him with perjury. Which is a most horrid and satanical blasphemy. “For God, willing to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath.” It

was on the irreversible stability of the decree that St. Paul stood, when he challenged the universe to nullify, or set aside the election of God. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? Who is he that condemned?” Christ has died for us. “He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth; so that there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.” He has paid our debt. He bore the punishment due to our sins. The justice of God is engaged for our final salvation. It would be reckoned among mankind a very iniquitous act for a creditor to receive full payment and ample satisfaction from the hand of the bondsman, or surety, and then to cast the original debtor into prison, or even to demand a second payment from him. And how shall we ascribe such iniquitous act to our righteous Creator? God forbid. — The holy apostle proceeds to enumerate every kind of temporal adversity which could have the remotest tendency “to separate them from the love of Christ,” and then positively declares, that “in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” He then goes on to shew that no one thing, however powerful, can possibly separate God’s children from his love. “For I am persuaded (absolutely assured) that neither death, nor life, nor angels, (whether good or bad) nor principalities, nor powers, (not the powers of men or devils), nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, (and consequently nothing) shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom. viii, 32—39, Nay, “we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” And “they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” 1 Pet. i, 5. And I cannot, for my own part, see how any one that even pretends to believe the bible, could once suppose any of God’s children should finally miscarry. 3. The nature of election makes it immutable. God has predestinated us unto “the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,” saith my text. Election is founded on the will and good pleasure of God, not on the worth and deservings of the creature. “It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Luke xii, 32. Now the will and power of God, as an absolute sovereign, cannot be regulated by the will, power and conduct of any other. For that would be to destroy his

sovereignty, and to make him a dependent being. If God has sovereign authority, then he must dispose his favors of mercy and grace in an absolute manner.

Accordingly, “he worketh all things (not from motives taken from the creatures, but) after the counsel of his own will.” Therefore the disposal of his mercy and grace, whether in purpose or in act, is regulated not by the will of man, but by the will of God. Whence those who receive Christ and believe on him are said to be “born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” John i, 13. “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” Rom. ix, 16. Now as God’s will is unchangeable, and as it is the rule of his conduct, according to which he predestinated the elect, therefore election, the highest act of God’s sovereignty, must remain forever immutable.

Therefore election is not of works, that God’s purpose according to election might stands Rom. ix, 11. 4. Election must be immutable; for we read of very artful and crafty seducers, who make use of unwearied diligence, and pretend to great signs of being sent of God, and to work wonderful things by his authority, insomuch that they delude and carry away after them great multitudes in every age of the church, and by the power of their delusion and sly cunning seduction, would seduce the elect were there a possibility of it. Mark xiii, 22. “For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.” Blessed be God then, all the powers of delusion cannot seduce and draw away the elect. But how differently does it fare with others in such perilous times. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast. And we are told in 2 Tim. ii, 17, 18, of Hymenius and Philetus, two of the active subtle seducers, which were in the apostles times, who overthrew the faith of some, that is the historical faith of some, or caused them to renounce the doctrine of faith by denying the resurrection of the body. And though they deluded unsound and hypocritical professors, yet they could not by all their artifice and cunning draw one believer out of the way. Verse 19.

“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his.” This foundation which stands sure signifies the elect, who stand firm, steadfast and immoveable, as in Matt, xxiv, 24; which interpretation is agreeable to the connexion and to the language of scripture. It is agreeable to the Connexion as they are distinguished from those God preserved from apostacy. And the apostle compares the visible church to a great man’s house in which are vessels of all sorts, and some of them to honorable, and others to dishonorable uses. Verse 20. “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood, and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor.” God permitted the vessels which were to dishonor to be drawn away into delusion; but nevertheless, the foundation of God stood sure. Which shews this interpretation to be agreeable to scripture also, Prov. x, 25. “The righteous is an everlasting foundation.” Rev. iii, 12. “A pillar in the temple of God which shall go no more out.” They are called the foundation of God, and 1 Cor. iii, 9, “God’s husbandry, God’s building,” because none but God can lay such a firm and immoveable foundation. They derive this stability from the seal of God; having this seal the Lord knoweth them that are his. God’s knowledge is compared to a seal, by which he sets a mark or imprints characters on his elect as those known and beloved as his peculiar treasure, which he highly esteems and closely keeps. Besides, he impresses on them the likeness of that holiness which is in the seal, i.e. in the Holy Spirit, which makes them guard against defections, which being inscribed on the heart, becomes the law of the heart, and causes, them to profess Christ and to depart from iniquity.

And nothing can be more absurd and inconsistent with the common sense of mankind, and with the allowed perfections of Deity than the supposition that a child of God should finally perish. To suppose one of those, whom God knows shall persevere in holiness and finally be saved, could possibly be lost, is to suppose a flat contradiction. It is in fact to say, God knows he will be saved, and at the same time does not know it. The Holy Ghost has therefore furnished us with a ready answer respecting all apostates.

John ii, 19. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." Psalm cxlv, 14. "The Lord upholdeth all that fall." Prov. xxiv, 16. "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again." Eccl. iii, 14. "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it; and God doeth it that men should fear before him." John vi, 37. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." They are given to Christ in such a manner that he will in no wise cast them out. John x, 28, 29. "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

## **DISCOURSE VII**

*EPHESIANS I, 3, 4, 5.*

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

ON a review of the whole, we see that predestination unto life is no new doctrine. It is taught by God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, by the prophets and apostles. And the protestant Elijahs, who ascended in chariots of flame to glory, rejoiced in it, as a doctrine according to godliness. I shall now close the subject with some practical remarks.

Paul, a noble champion of the cross, is so enraptured with the eternal electing love of God, that he cannot but make it the subject of praise to Almighty God. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, according as he hath chosen us in Christ before the laying of the foundation of the world. We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." May the Lord work the same divine temper of mind in you, to enable you also to acquiesce in the eternal electing love of God.

Ministers might as well preach to brutes as to rational creatures were it not for the electing love of God. For the understanding of a natural man is so darkened by reason of sin, as to mistake that for happiness which is, in fact, real misery. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, mere flesh; all its faculties have a carnal bias, and all its powers are wholly enslaved to fleshly or carnal pursuits, and sordid pleasures. Dead in sin, destitute of divine life, alienated and enemies in their mind, have no sincere desires after God; and are not only strangers, but enemies, in a state of hostility to the holy nature of God. A mind bent upon wicked works, passionately prone to all evil, insomuch that when iniquity knew no bounds in Israel, it is said, "every one did that which was right in his own eyes," Judg. xvii, 6. Nor will St. Paul exempt himself nor the most eminent saints from being governed by the flesh, till renewed by the blessed Spirit; but declares they remained under the dominion of sensuality till subdued by the power of electing grace. The darkness of the understanding necessarily perverts the will, so that man invariably chooses evil in preference to good. And the will is by nature so enslaved to evil that he heartily loves and eagerly pursues the imaginary pleasures of sin. And because the will is fond of, and relishes that slavery, it is therefore said to be free; naturally free to what is morally and spiritually evil. This perverted will, unless curbed by Providential restraints, never fails to produce the baneful fruits of practical immorality and licentiousness. All practical unbelief and final impenitence of those that perish, arises from this viciousness of their nature and stubbornness of their perverted will. Boast not then of free-will. It is like what the prophet said of Nineveh, *void and empty* of anything spiritually good. They who feel not this, resemble delirious persons in a high fever, who imagine nothing ails them, while in fact, they are at the very gates of death therefore, he who is the faithful and true

witness, taught the obstinate perverseness of the human will that it is opposed to what is good. Ye will not come to me that ye might have life, but will do the works of the devil. Whence all who are left to the choice of their own will inevitably go to hell!

Some who pretend a great regard for the bible, would persuade us that the will is like a wax tablet on which you may stamp what impressions you please; or like a balance in equilibria, which you may turn to either side according as you throw more or less weight on the scale; that Christ died in order to put the will in this condition: so that it depends on the will of man whether he be saved or perish; that a man can turn his will either to good or evil as he pleases. But this opinion contradicts our daily experience, insults the common sense of mankind, and gives the lie to every page in the bible; and is therefore a strong delusion of the devil, whereby he casts down millions and millions into the regions of horror and despair.

Alas! the choice is already made. Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart, previous to regeneration, is spiritually considered in the sight of a holy God to be only evil, without any mixture of good, and that continually without any intermission. Gen. vi, 5. The heart of man, says God by the prophet, is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Our blessed master, who well knew what is in man, saith—From within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, &c. Is it possible that anyone who calls himself a Christian, can, after considering the above declaration of Christ, maintain the powers of free-will; since when God arrests the sinner by regenerating grace, there is not only a heart of flesh to be given, but a heart of stone to be taken away. God must not only write his own law on the hearts of his people, but must destroy the law of sin and death, which has a prior footing in every descendant of apostate Adam. Therefore every grace we possess, every good thought we exercise, all holy desires, all pious resolutions, every good counsel, and every good work, are gifts which proceed only from God.

Had the intention of Christ's death been to put the human family in a capacity to choose their final condition, and to suspend the salvation of every individual on his own choice, then it would follow, that God's saving design is completely frustrated, that Christ died to no purpose, and that universal damnation would inevitably follow. For the bible and daily experience prove, that while men continue in an unconverted state, they will not have Christ to rule over them. Luke xix, 27. "Their mind is very enmity against God and cannot be subject to the law of God." Rom. viii, 7. "And he finds us enemies to him at the very moment he reconciles us, makes us friends to him." Rom. v, 10. "And till God regenerates us, we are natural men and receive not the things of the Spirit of God; but view them as foolishness, and consequently are morally unable to know them." 1 Cor. ii, 14. Now whatever a man hates and views to be foolishness that he will invariably choose to avoid. But while a man continues in a natural state he hates God and views the things of his Spirit to be foolishness. Therefore, he will always necessarily and out of choice flee from God, till he is captivated by Almighty converting grace. And even then, God does not ask the creature's consent. For they are born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man. John i, 13. At the same time the elect sinner is not made good by forcing his will, but is by victorious grace, made willing to be good, according to Psalm ix, 3. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Surely, he who without our consent made us rational creatures can, by virtue of his almighty transforming grace, make us holy creatures without making us mere machines. God does not offer the least violence to the human mind in his effectual operation of regenerating grace. Open a blind man's eyes to see the sun, and there needs no compulsion to make him admire it. So when God causes saving light to shine into the understanding of an elect sinner, which seems to be the initial point of regeneration, or the first effect of converting grace, which causes him to view his sins like huge mountains, exceeding vile and aggravated; that his desperately wicked heart has all his life-time been streaming forth enmity against infinite perfection; that he has been a Heaven daring, a God provoking, a Christ despising sinner; that he has all along been under the curse and condemnation of a holy, just, and good law; that he has justly merited the eternal torments of hell; that God would

be gloriously just in leaving him to perish on account of his sins, and that it is wonderful mercy God did not long ago plunge him into eternal flames; that God was at perfect liberty, in point of justice, to leave him to perish forever, and that without a remedy, for that he is a poor, vile, helpless, undone, self-ruined creature. His understanding being now enlightened to see the merit and demerit of sin, together with its infinite evil and vileness, he finds, that his redemption from the condemnation of hell, could be effected at no less expense than the most bitter death of God's eternal Son. Being led by grace to the fountain of living water, he deeply laments his past transgressions, and especially the depravity of his nature. He wonders at himself that he was so blind, and so hardened through the deceitfulness of sin as to seek for happiness in the way of death.

Oh! how powerfully does this induce the soul to sorrow after a godly sort! what self-abhorrence and indignation! what fear of God! what revenge and hatefulness of sin! what vehement desires of forgiveness! what self-loathing and condemnation, and what zeal for holiness! These, these are the properties of genuine repentance.

And by thus enlightening the understanding God conciliates the will to holiness, and causes the soul to aspire after and choose him for its portion and happiness. The Holy Spirit is pleased with his own work, and goes on to finish what he has begun, by shedding abroad his loving kindness on the heart. O! how eagerly does the penitent now fly to him, and bid him welcome. Such is the sweetly captivating power of invincible grace. "The love of Christ constraineth us." This casts down all his opposition to and silences all his objections against the doctrine of election, better than ten thousand arguments. May God Almighty cause thee, O reader, to experience this enlightening to the salvation of thy immortal soul! This shews both the folly and the wickedness of depending on our own works for salvation; which soul-destroying delusion is founded on the ignorance that the covenant of works was broken and annulled, as to any possibility of salvation by it, the very moment Adam fell.

But it still remains in force, as the ministration of death and condemnation to every soul that finally cleaves to it for pardon and eternal life. Had Adam continued innocent, it had been his wisdom to seek happiness for himself and posterity, on condition of his own obedience. But for fallen creatures to expect salvation that way, is to waste their time to no purpose. For God's law, as a covenant of works, will accept nothing less than perpetually perfect obedience. Our obedience to it from the first dawn of reason to the end of life, should be as uniform and uninterrupted as a stream which invariably fills its banks.

But its requirements are so exceeding broad, that the most enlarged human obedience falls short, vastly short of its demands; they are so *absolutely holy*, that the purest works the best Christian can perform fall infinitely short of the perfection which it requires. How surprising that any fallen creature should expect salvation from their own obedience to a rule of such exalted perfections, or place their eternal dependence on such imperfect duties.

Some will tell us, that the law requires nothing more than a sincere obedience proportioned to the abilities of our fallen state. But the volume of inspiration teaches no such thing. The invariable current of scripture language is, that the law is a transcript of God's most holy nature, consequently the standard of human purity and obedience.

It can therefore make no allowance for infirmities, which man by the fall has brought on himself, nor will it dispense with a single grain of the perfect conformity which it requires. Hence in the eye of the law, and in the estimation of the lawgiver, the risings of wrath are tantamount to murder, and impure thoughts bring us under the condemnation of actual adultery. Matt. v, 22, 28. The purity of the law makes even a foolish thought to be sin." Prov. xxiv, 9. It can make no allowance for any irregular thought, but invariably requires us to love God with all the heart, with all the soul, with all the strength, and with all the mind, and our neighbor as ourselves, and condemns with a curse everyone who does not continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them.

This makes the law the ministration of condemnation. 2 Cor. iii, 7. But the moment it became sufficient for a sinner's acceptance, it would cease to be the ministration of condemnation, and become the ministration of righteousness, and thereby totally set aside the doctrine of the apostle, that Abraham the friend of God, and David, a man after God's own heart, were justified, not as righteous, but as sinful creatures. They were not accepted for any eminent service or works of their own performance, but for the merits of Christ.

Some talk as if God could not, in justice, hold fallen man under the original law; that he judged it too severe and unreasonable, and therefore set it aside, and by the death of his Son established the gospel as a milder law designed for a remedy against the unjust severity of the original law. But the scriptures countenance no such opinion. It is a delusion of the devil. And all opposition to God's law argues a carnal mind full of enmity against God. The law was as just and reasonable after the fall as it was before. And God is as worthy of our love and obedience as ever. For our apostacy could not make God less amiable in himself, nor curtail our obligations to love him with all the heart, and perfectly obey his commands.

But the above supposition enjoins the following declaration: "O ye sons of apostate Adam, I the Lord God am no longer worthy of infinite esteem, I no more deserve unlimited obedience, and therefore ye are no longer commanded to love me with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength." Some suppose, that God was not at liberty to choose the objects of his favor and grace, that he could not in justice have withholden the death of his Son from any particular man, that if he did more for one than for another, he would be a partial and unjust tyrant; that he never absolutely willed the salvation of any particular person, but has only conditionally willed the salvation of all alike, provided they will repent and believe, but never determined to give this repentance and faith to any in particular; that he also at the same time conditionally willed the damnation of all alike, provided they did not repent and believe; that he sent his Son to die for the salvation of all alike, for those who were in torment, and for all others; that the salvation of man depends on his own will and choice,

improvements and good conduct, all which (according to them) is not the result of invincible grace, but of man's own will and choice, good conduct and improvements; that the happy difference of the saint from the sinner is not to be ascribed wholly to the will and grace of God, because he did equally alike to both, but is to be ascribed to the will and choice, good works or improvements of the former.

Now what would be the language of the sinner saved on these principles? It would be this (I shudder to relate it) "You were not at liberty to choose me for the object of special grace, you could not, in point of justice, have withholden the death of your Son from me. You would have been a respecter of persons, partial, and unjust, had you done more for me than you did for those weltering in yonder burning lake. You only conditionally willed my salvation, if I repented and turned, and conditionally willed to damn me if I did not, which, in fact, was not will at all; besides you never infallibly willed to give me faith and repentance; you never intended any more benefit for me by the death of your Son than you intended for those who were in torment at the very time he suffered. I have therefore nothing more to praise thee for than they have." He would say to the blessed Saviour, "you neither loved nor shed your precious blood for me any more than for those now in torment. You willed their salvation as much as you willed mine. I have therefore nothing more to praise thee for than they have; and as to thee, O blessed Spirit, thou never didst strive more to save me than thou didst to save those in hell, else thou wouldest have been partial and a respecter of persons, for which I could not love thee. Besides I could have baffled all thy operations and caused them to issue in nothing. Thou didst not determine my will to choose happiness, for thou only madest me the offer by setting life and death before me in common with others, and I determined my own will and choice. Therefore, my salvation is not the result of invincible grace, but the fruit of my own will and choice, good works and improvements. These, these have put the happy difference between me and others. And I cannot praise thee for what thou hast not done." Thus, he would claim a great share of the glory of his salvation.

The sinner saved on the Calvinistic plan would thus address Deity when seated on a throne of glory: "O most holy Father, when thou didst in the days of eternity view angels and men as fallen into sin, thou wast at perfect liberty to determine whether thou wouldest save any one transgressor of thy most holy and equitable law. They all stood on a par. Thou mightest have chosen fallen angels, and passed by the apostate race of men, but thou didst reprobate the fallen angels, and choose poor sinners of mankind. Thy act of choosing us could have no regard to any desert found in us. For we were viewed as lying in the corrupt mass of mankind when the decree was made concerning us, and all our excellency above others is the fruit of thy electing love. Thou wast sovereign Lord of thine own grace, and a debtor to none, consequently wast at perfect liberty to bestow it when, where and on whom thou wouldest. For no one could lay claim to it, and therefore no one is wronged if it be not bestowed on him.

It was infinite goodness and mercy in thee to save us, when thou mightest have left all our apostate race to perish forever, as thou didst the fallen angels. But O! how shall we adore thy immutable will, which is the fountain and spring of our eternal salvation! Thou infallibly willedst to give us faith and repentance, and the grace of final perseverance. And thou, O blessed Jesus! loved us with a discriminating love took our sins on thy blessed self; bore the punishment due on account of them, and redeemed us by thy most precious blood, out of every kindred, tongue, people and nation under heaven; we are therefore not our own, we are bought with a price; O that we had ten thousand tongues to celebrate thy praise!— And thou, O blessed Spirit, didst powerfully enlighten my dark understanding, whereby I saw how vile, how hateful, and how abominable a creature I was. Thou madest me sick of sin, causedst me to hate it, and view myself as a loathsome, detestable creature on account of sin. O I remember well how just it appeared in my eyes that I should be condemned for ever. It appeared wonderful to me that God would save any, but especially myself, for methought I was the vilest of all God's creation. I saw plainly that it was only electing love and the merits of the blessed Jesus that could save me. It was this thy invincible grace which caused me to hate and forsake sin, and to choose Christ Jesus for my Lord

and Saviour. I plainly see my will, was so obstinate and bent on evil, that I never had chosen thee, unless thy love had first constrained me to love and choose thee. It is thy wonderful love, O blessed Trinity, that made me to differ from those now weltering in the burning lake. I have nothing but what I received from thee. O the wonderful love thou bestowedst on me, that I, poor worthless I, should be called the son of God!

Be stirred up, O my soul, and all that is in me, to praise and magnify, the Lord for his loving kindness to me.” It is plain there can be no true humility of heart without a practical belief of predestination unto life. We should not deviate from this truth merely because it is unfashionable or unpopular. All who are afraid to avow it because of the popular outcry against it, will at the last day be deemed base traitors of God’s cause, and destroyers of men’s souls. For the gospel cannot possibly be preached fully and clearly without it. It is perfectly consistent with the infinite goodness and mercy of Deity that all his creatures in misery do not equally partake in them. The example of the fallen angels who are wholly passed by, not one of them saved, nor any remedy provided for them, are an undeniable proof of this. For it is not the number of miserable creatures concerning which these perfections are employed, that makes them infinite, because there is not an infinity of them. But these perfections are infinite as they are from everlasting to everlasting, without beginning or ending.

And nothing can be more absurd and irrational than to suppose that God is unmerciful, merely because he chooses the objects of his mercy, or “has mercy on whom he will have mercy.” We always affirmed that God, out of his mere sovereign good pleasure, chose some to everlasting life, without any consideration had to their good works, because there is no good in man till God works it in him in consequence of his previous decree; and that he passed by others without any consideration had to their evil deeds, because he does not depend on the actions of creatures for the regulation of his conduct. Rom. ix, 18. “He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” But it does not follow from hence that any are damned *by virtue of the decree*, without any

consideration of their sin. For there is a wide difference between *non-election and the decree of condemnation*.

To condemn is an act of punitive justice and supposes a fault. Therefore, the objects of this decree are viewed as transgressors, obnoxious to punitive justice.

Consequently, God never ordained any man to condemnation before the consideration of sin. Every man who is damned is damned for sin that he has willfully committed and contumaciously continued in. God never decreed to make any creature everlastingly miserable, except he deserved it, by his voluntary transgression of the divine law. Rom. iii, 9. "All are under sin." Verse 19, "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." The decree of election is an act of mere sovereignty, but the decree of condemnation is an act of relative justice. Rom. vi, 23. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The apostle states a material difference between the two. —Eternal life is a free sovereign gift of God, given through Jesus Christ, to those who did not deserve it—but punishment is merited as the reward due to their sin. So saith Jeremiah, chap, ii, 17—"Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God?" They are not condemned because they were not elected, but because they sinned. Therefore, no man is doomed to destruction because he was reprobated, or not elected; but because he was a sinner and deserved it. And in this the justice of God will appear clear in the judgment of all holy creatures.

Election does not make God partial, nor a respecter of persons. He does not condemn any for their poverty, but has chosen many who are poor in this world. James ii, 5.

Nor does he condemn any for being rich, but he has chosen and called by his grace some even of the wise men after the flesh, some of the mighty and noble. 1 Cor. i, 26. He respects no man, either more or less, on account of his being a Jew or Gentile, as appears from Acts x, He does not withhold his favors from any on account of their nation, family or country, for he hath chosen and redeemed a select number out of every kindred,

tongue, people and nation. Rev. v, 9. And he will gather together his elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other. Matt, xxiv, 31. And in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female.

Gal. iii, 28. And the only rule of his conduct in choosing this man rather than that one, was neither their external nor internal circumstances, but his own sovereign good pleasure. Rom. ix, 11, 18. “The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works; but of him that calleth.” From which it appears that God is no respecter of men’s persons, but he is a respecter of his own glory.

The Arminian scheme, according to James i, 1—4, makes God partial, and a respecter of persons. “Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man, in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth gay clothing, and say unto him, sit thou here in a good place, and say to the poor, stand thou there, or sit here under my foot-stool, are ye not then partial in yourselves?” This clearly shows, that did God choose and save any because they were thus and so qualified, or on account of any circumstance, qualification or condition, whereby they were any better or worse than others, that he would be partial to them on account of that circumstance, condition or qualification, and a respecter of their persons for the same reason. For a judge to acquit a criminal on account of some fine qualification, or because he is his friend, or relation, or rich and powerful, would constitute him partial, and a respecter of persons.

But though a judge in administering justice must do alike to all who are in the same condition; *yet* when he is considered in, another capacity, at perfect liberty, under no obligation by any law or rule, he may adopt into his family whom he pleases, or bestow his estate on whom he will. Whence it is evident, that partiality and respect of persons have nothing to do with matters of mere bounty, free liberality; but only in preferring one above another in matters of right, from some sinister or selfish end.

Though ministers cannot assure any sinner that he shall certainly be saved; yet no one ought to draw up dark conclusions against himself, as if the decree of God was against him. “O, unconverted sinner, do not murmur at the decree of election; for that is very displeasing to God. You have no reason to do so, for no decree of God, as I have already shown, can be the cause of your sin and impenitence: their cause is by your own inbred corruption, which you have brought on yourself by your apostacy in Adam, and from which you cannot be delivered but by the Almighty grace of God. However, it is certain God has a purpose of mercy for a great many, and you are as likely to have an interest in it as any other. You can have no certain token of being reprobated, except you have committed the unpardonable sin, but there are many signs of election. And God has, in all ages, saved some even of the vilest of sinners. Therefore, your way is to apply for mercy in and through Jesus Christ, on the footing of his merits. A peradventure is looked on in other cases of great hazard and distress as encouragement enough to try and use the means. Remember Benhadad’s servants. 1 Kings xx, 31, 32. “And his servants said unto him, behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel, peradventure he will save thy life.” Take also the example of the king of Nineveh. His safety from God appeared only possible. “Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?” Labor to be reconciled to God’s method of saving sinners. It must certainly be the wisest and the best. For as the heavens “are high above the earth, so are his thoughts above our thoughts, and his ways above our ways.” I shall now conclude this important subject with some evidences of eternal election. Faith in Jesus Christ, which produces love to God, is a grand evidence of election. For so we read, “faith which, worketh by love, and we love him, because he first loved us.” If you have this faith, you may then hear him saying to you, “yea I have loved you with an everlasting love.” If we would know our election of God, we must inquire whether a separation has been wrought between us and our sins, whether the remains of indwelling sin be a burden and grief to us; whether we be diligent in using the means appointed by God, for “cleansing ourselves from all

filthiness of the flesh and spirit; perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” For God hath chosen us before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

If our love be sincere; it will be obediential; so that new obedience is a proof of election. Do we then desire holiness, a conformity to Christ above all things? Well, this is a token of salvation. It is an evidence, that “God has not appointed you to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” And may God enable us, by a well ordered walk and conversation, to know that we have obtained this salvation through his Son. —*AMEN*.