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THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

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The Doctrine of Election

As the doctrine of election is a part of the wider subject of God's sovereignty, a brief word on this first. In Revelation 19:6 we are told, "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." In heaven and earth, He is the Controller and Disposer of all creatures. As the Most High, He ruleth amid the armies of the heavens and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, "What doest thou?" (Job 9:12). He is the Almighty, who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. He is the Heavenly Potter who takes hold of our fallen humanity like a lump of clay, and out of it fashioneth one as a vessel unto honor and another as a vessel unto dishonor. In short, He is the Decider and Determiner of every man's destiny and the Controller of every detail in each individual's life, which is only another way of saying that God is God.

Now, election and predestination are but the exercise of God's sovereignty in the affairs of salvation, and all that we know about them is what has been revealed to us in the Scriptures of truth. The only reason why anyone believes in election is because he finds it clearly taught in God's Word. No man, or number of men, ever originated this doctrine. Like the teaching of eternal punishment, it conflicts with the dictates of the carnal mind and is repugnant to the sentiments of the

unregenerate heart. And like the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the miraculous birth of our Saviour, the truth of election must be received with simple, unquestioning faith.

Let us now define our terms. What does the word *election* mean? It signifies to single out, to select, to choose, to take one and leave another. Election means that God has singled out certain ones to be the objects of His saving grace, while others are left to suffer the just punishment of their sins. It means that before the foundation of the world, God chose out of the mass of our fallen humanity a certain number and predestined them to be conformed to the image of His Son. "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name" (Act 15:14).

We cannot do better than here amplify our definition of election by quoting from a sermon by the late C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) on "Things That Accompany Salvation":

"Before Salvation came into this world, Election marched in the very forefront, and it had for its work the billeting¹ of Salvation. Election went through the world and marked the houses to which Salvation should come and the hearts in which the treasure should be deposited. Election looked through all the race of man, from Adam down to the last, and marked with sacred stamp those for whom Salvation was designed. 'He must needs go through Samaria' (Joh 4:4) said Election; and Salvation must go there. Then came Predestination. Predestination did not merely mark the house, but it mapped the road in which Salvation should travel to that house. Predestination ordained every step of the great army of Salvation; it ordained the time when the sinner should be brought to Christ, the manner how he should be saved, the means that should be employed; it marked the exact hour and moment when God the Spirit should quicken the dead in sin, and when peace and pardon should be spoken through the blood of Jesus. Predestination marked the way so completely that Salvation doth never overstep the bounds, and it is never at a loss for the road. In the everlasting decree of the sovereign God, the footsteps of mercy were every one of them ordained."

Why God selected these particular individuals rather than others, we do not know. His choice is a sovereign one, wholly gratuitous, and dependent upon nothing outside of Himself. It certainly was not because these particular individuals were, in themselves, any better than the others which He passed by. Scripture is very emphatic upon this point: they, too, "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph 2:3). They, too, had no inherent righteousness. Neither did God choose the ones He did because of anything that He foresaw would be in them, for the simple but sufficient reason that He foresaw no good thing in them, save that which He Himself wrought in them. All that we can say is that God chose out certain ones to be saved solely because He chose to choose them, because such was the good pleasure of His sovereign will (Eph 1:5).

1. The Mystery of Election

That election is a profound mystery, we readily grant; that it is altogether beyond the power of the finite mind to fully comprehend, we freely acknowledge. Our feeling and our reasoning faculty cannot aid us in this inquiry. Yet this is no cause why we should refuse to believe what we cannot fully understand. We are surrounded by mystery on all sides. We cannot understand why God, Who is perfect and omniscient, Who at the beginning clearly foresaw all the fearful consequences of it, should have ever allowed sin to enter this world. But He did! To say, as many do, that if God created man a free moral agent, He could not prevent it, is an assertion which is utterly devoid of any foundation in God's Word; and not only so, but it contradicts its explicit statements. For example: "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Psa 76:10). If God can restore to righteousness those who are the willing slaves of sin and have long indulged in the commission of it, without interfering with man's accountability, why then could He have not preserved sinless beings in a state of purity? And if it was in His power to do so, why did He not do it? All we can say is, "We do not know." God has not seen fit to tell us. The divine permission of sin is a profound mystery.

Nor is this the only mystery connected with the history of our race. The glaring inequalities in the lot of human existence are equally insoluble.² One is born blind, another is blessed with sight. One enters the world endowed with a strong constitution and enjoys almost uninterrupted health, while another inherits an incurable disease and sinks into an early grave. One is born to wealth and all its comforts, another to poverty and its consequent miseries. One is born of criminal or infidel parents, while another is the child of true believers and is reared in the fear of the Lord. One is born amid heathen darkness, another enjoys the privileges of Gospel light. Now these differences not only affect happiness in this life, but they are among the determining factors of character and destiny, and yet they are not at all dependent upon the character or conduct of those concerned. When we ask ourselves, "Why are such differences permitted to exist? Why does God allow such inequalities?" again we have to answer, "We do not know." Yet we firmly believe that He has some good and wise reason for all His providential dealings, but to man in his present condition they are profoundly mysterious.

That God's dealings are mysterious, His own Word affirms. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:8-9). And again the Holy Spirit, through the Apostle Paul, declares, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

¹ **billeting** – to quarter or place in lodgings.

² **insoluble** – not to be solved or explained.

(Rom 11:33). Our true position, then, in investigating such a subject as this, is that of disciples—learners—sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus that we may be taught by Him. If we accept the Bible as God’s Word, we must expect to find in it “some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2Pe 3:16).

2. The Truth of Election

The doctrine of election is clearly taught in God’s Word; from cover to cover, the Bible is full of it. It is one of the great foundational doctrines of the Scriptures. The very first book in the Bible has God’s sovereignty for its central theme. Cain the elder is passed by, while Abel the younger is accepted. Ham and Japheth are ignored, while Shem the youngest is selected for the line from which the Messiah was to come. To Abram the junior, not to Nahor the senior brother, is given the inheritance of Canaan. Ishmael the firstborn is cast out unblessed, while Isaac the child of his parents’ old age is blessed. Esau the generous-hearted and forgiving-spirited is denied the blessing, though he sought it carefully with tears, while Jacob the treacherous, underhanded schemer is fashioned into a vessel of honor. Though the eleventh son, Joseph, is the one who receives the double portion, when Jacob, guided by God, is blessing Joseph’s sons, Ephraim the younger is preferred before Manasseh the elder.

The limits of our space will not permit us to go right on through the Bible; we can only now quote a few sample texts, but they are sufficient. “I am found of them that sought me not” (Isa 65:1). “For many be called, but few chosen” (Mat 20:16). “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you” (Joh 15:16). “I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me” (Joh 17:9). “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Act 13:48). “There is a remnant according to the election of grace” (Rom 11:5). “He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him” (Eph 1:4).

During Old Testament times, the principle of divine election was clearly exhibited in God’s dealings with the human race. At the Tower of Babel, God, for a time, abandoned His direct dealings with humanity as a whole, and singled out one man—Abraham—from whom descended the nation of Israel. This nation was His chosen people. He revealed Himself to them as to none other. Israel was His peculiar treasure. They enjoyed direct fellowship with Jehovah, while other nations were left to their sins. But why? Why should God single out Abraham’s descendants to be the recipients of His special favors? Had they a greater natural claim than others? Assuredly not. The Egyptians were a far wiser race than the Hebrew nomads.³ The Chaldeans were more ancient, more numerous, more civilized, and albeit, exerted a much greater influence upon the rest of the world. Ah! But God passes by the wise and learned and chooses the weak and despised. Why? To demonstrate His sovereignty and exemplify His grace. Why? “That no flesh should glory in his presence” (1Co 1:29).

3. The Justice of Election

In every age there have been those who argued that the doctrine of election charges God with injustice. They say it is not fair that He should single out certain ones for eternal life and permit the balance to be eternally damned. But such a charge evidences gross ignorance and perverts the fundamental principles of the Gospel. Salvation is not a question of justice, but of grace. If the matter is to be settled on the ground of bare justice, then every child of Adam must perish, for: “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23).

To say that God has no right to single out only certain ones to be conformed to the image of His Son, is to repudiate⁴ the cardinal⁵ fact of the Gospel. Salvation is not a wage which we must earn, nor a reward that we must merit. It is a free gift bestowed upon the undeserving. But the moment we grant that salvation is God’s gift, we are logically compelled to accept the principle of election. Has not God a perfect right to dispense His gift as He pleases? Certainly He has. And not only is this His prerogative;⁶ but He exercises it: “For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” (Rom 9:15). God is indebted to none. He is not under obligations to save any. If He delivers any from the wrath to come, it is solely due to His grace. He is under no constraint to save all if He would save any. If He chooses to pass by some, withholding the gift of salvation, then there is no ground for complaint. At the last great day every man will receive all the mercy to which he is entitled. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Assuredly. The sentence passed upon those on the left hand will be a perfectly righteous one.

“Concerning this prerogative [His sovereignty] we may say, first, that to God belongs the right to exercise it. This right springs, first, from His being our Creator. He saith, ‘all souls are mine’ (Eze 18:4). He has an absolute right to do with us as He pleases, seeing ‘it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves’ (Psa 100:3). Men forget what they are, and boast great things; but truly they are but clay on the potter’s wheel, and He can fashion them or break them as He pleases. They think not so, but He knoweth their thoughts that they are vain. Oh, the dignity of man! What a theme for a sarcastic discourse! As

³ **nomads** – those who lead a wandering life.

⁴ **repudiate** – to cast away; to reject; to discard.

⁵ **cardinal** – principal or fundamental.

⁶ **prerogative** – an exclusive or peculiar privilege.

the frog in the fable swelled itself till it burst asunder, so doth man in his pride and envy against his Maker, Who nevertheless sitteth upon the circle of the heavens, and reckoneth men as though they were grasshoppers, and regardeth whole nations of them as the small dust of the balance. The Lord's prerogative of creation is manifestly widened morally by our forfeiture⁷ of any consideration which might have arisen out of obedience and rectitude⁸ if we had possessed them. Our fault has involved forfeiture of the creature's claims, whatever they may have been. We are all attainted⁹ of high treason, and we have each one been guilty of personal rebellion; therefore, we have not the rights of citizens, but lie under sentence of condemnation. What saith the infallible voice of God? 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them' (Gal 3:10). We have come under this curse; justice has pronounced us guilty, and by nature we abide under condemnation. If then the Lord shall be pleased to deliver us from death, it rests with Him to do so; but we have no right to any such deliverance, nor can we urge any argument which would avail in the courts of justice for reversal of sentence or stay of execution. Before the bar of justice our case must go hard if we set up any plea of right. We shall be driven away with the disdain of the impartial Judge if we urge our suit upon that line. Our wisest course is to appeal to His mercy and to His sovereign grace, for there alone is our hope. Understand me clearly: If the Lord shall suffer us all to perish, we shall only receive our deserts, and we have not one of us a shade of claim upon His mercy—we are therefore absolutely in His hands, and to Him belong the issues from death." (C.H. Spurgeon, *The Royal Prerogative*—Psalm 68:20-21).

Finally, let it be remembered that God never refuses mercy to those who honestly seek it. It is true that the non-elect will be lost, let them do what they will. The sinner is bidden to "taste and see that the LORD is good" (Psa 34:8). He is freely invited to be a guest at the Gospel feast. The promise is wide and plain—"him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (Joh 6:37). But if the sinner will not come to Christ that he might have life, then his blood is upon his own head. If he will not believe, then it is his own will which damns him.

4. The Corollaries¹⁰ of Election

The doctrine of election *magnifies the character of God*. It exemplifies His grace. Election makes known the fact that salvation is God's free gift, gratuitously bestowed upon whom He pleases. This must be so, for those who receive it are themselves no different and no better than those who receive it not. Election allows some to go to hell to show that all deserved to perish. But grace comes in like a dragnet and draws out from a ruined humanity a great multitude, which no man can number, to be throughout eternity the monuments of God's sovereign mercy.

It exhibits His omnipotency. Election makes known the fact that God is all powerful, ruling and reigning over the earth; and declares that none can successfully resist His will or thwart His secret purposes. Election reveals God breaking down the opposition of the human heart, subduing the enmity of the carnal mind, and with irresistible power drawing His chosen ones to Christ. Election confesses—"We love him, because he first loved us" (1Jo 4:19), and we believe, because He made us willing in the day of His power (Psa 110:3).

It ascribes all the glory to Him. It disallows any credit to the creature. It denies that the unregenerate are capable of predicating¹¹ a right thought, generating a right affection, or originating a right volition. It insists that God must work in us both to will and to do. It declares that repentance and faith are themselves God's gifts, and not something which the sinner contributes towards the price of his salvation. Its language is, "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us" (Psa 115:1), but, "unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev 1:5).

"The Lord makes distinctions among guilty men according to the sovereignty of His grace. "I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away" (Hos 1:6). Had not Judah sinned too? Might not the Lord have given up Judah also! Indeed He might justly have done so, but He delighteth in mercy. Many sin, and righteously bring upon themselves the punishment due to sin: They believe not in Christ, and die in their sins. But God has mercy, according to the greatness of His heart, upon multitudes who could not be saved upon any other footing but that of undeserved mercy. Claiming His royal right, He says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy" (Rom 9:15). The prerogative of mercy is vested in the sovereignty of God: that prerogative He exercises. He gives where He pleases, and He has a right to do so, since none have any claim upon Him." (C.H. Spurgeon, *The Lord's Own Salvation*—Hosea 1:7).

Finally, the doctrine guarantees *eternal preservation of all God's saints*. In the Holy Scriptures, the question of our salvation is traced back (in the purpose of God) not to the moment when we believed—this is when it becomes ours experimentally—but to a point before time began. Before the foundation of the world, God chose us in Christ (Eph 1:4). "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer 31:3). This lifts the matter of our salvation out of time into eternity. Were it merely a thing of time, it would perish. But because it is a thing of eternity, it must endure forever. It is impossible to imagine a stick with only one end to it; that which is eternal must be so at both ends. So God's Word affirms "whom he did predestinate [in eternity past], them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified [in eternity future]" (Rom 8:30).

⁷ **forfeiture** – the losing of some right.

⁸ **rectitude** – rightness of principle or practice.

⁹ **attainted** – stained; corrupted.

¹⁰ **corollaries** – conclusions drawn from premises.

¹¹ **predicating** – to base or establish something upon something else.

5. The Certainty of Election

Before we approach what is the more experimental side of our subject, let us review the ground that we have already traversed. We have seen that the doctrine of election is one of the deep things of God and must be received with simple, unquestioning faith; that like the subject of the Holy Trinity, it is a profound mystery which transcends¹² the grasp of the finite mind. Then we have sought to show by a free quotation from Scripture that the truth of election is clearly taught in the Word of God; nay more, that it is one of the most prominent truths of divine revelation. Further, we have seen that the principle of election runs through all God's dealings with people; that, both in Old Testament and New Testament times, God passes by some and calls others. Next, we considered briefly the justice of election, and found that in blessing some, God showed no injustice to others, because none have any claim upon Him. And that as salvation is His free gift, He dispenses His favors according to His own good pleasure. Finally, we have noted the corollaries of this doctrine and shown how it ascribes all the glory to God, and guarantees in the most emphatic way the eternal security of all who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

And now, with a humble desire to seek to remove some of the difficulties which naturally arise from a consideration of this subject, let us notice a few of the questions which usually occur to all reflecting minds when this doctrine is brought before them for the first time.

6. The Difficulties of Election

1. Does not Scripture declare that God is no respecter of persons?

Yes, it does (Act 10:34), and election proves it. The seven sons of Jesse, though older and physically superior to David, are passed by, while the young shepherd boy is exalted to Israel's throne. The scribes and lawyers are unnoticed, and ignorant fishermen are chosen to be apostles of the Lamb. Divine truth is hidden from "the wise and prudent," but is revealed unto "babes" (Mat 11:25). The majority of the mighty and noble are ignored, while the weak and despised are called and saved. Harlots and publicans are sweetly compelled to come to the marriage feast, while proud Pharisees are suffered to perish in their own self-righteousness. Truly, God is no respecter of persons, *or He would not have saved you*, my friend.

2. But is not man a responsible being, endowed with a free will?

Man is unquestionably a responsible being. He is no mere machine or automaton. Scripture uniformly regards him as one who reaps according as he sows, and as one who shall yet have to render an account for the things done in the body. But nowhere does the Bible predicate the free will of the natural man. Man by nature is the subject of Satan and the slave of sin, and does not become free until the Son of God makes him free (Joh 8:36). "No man can come to me [but he can if he is free], except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (Joh 6:44)—but there is no need to "draw" him if he is free. This is unequivocal.¹³

"When mercy comes to bless, it finds us bent to curse. We will not receive the proffered¹⁴ boon;¹⁵ we reject the mercy, and grace must overcome our will. It must lead us captives in silken bonds, or likewise it cannot bless us. Man, while his will is free, is graceless; it is only when his will is bound by fetters of sovereign grace that he is gracious at all. If there be such a thing as free-will, Luther truly hit the mark when he called free-will a slave. It is only our will in bonds that is truly free. Our will constrained, then ranges at liberty; when grace binds it, then indeed it is free, and only then, when the Son has made it free." (C.H. Spurgeon, *The Glory of Grace*—Ephesians 1:6).

3. But does not Scripture say, Whosoever will, may come?

It does, and Christ never yet turned away any willing soul. If, in the eleventh hour, the dying thief who turned unto the Lord was assured a place in paradise, and if Saul the persecutor of the church—"the chief of sinners" (1Ti 1:15)—found mercy, verily, whosoever will, may come (Act 2:21; Rev 22:17). But all are not willing. The vast majority of people have no desire to come to Christ. Had God left it entirely to man's will, none would ever have accepted Him. Consequently, God has to work in us "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phi 2:13). But God does not thus work in all, and that brings in election.

4. But why preach the Gospel to every creature if only a "few" are chosen?

Because the atoning sacrifice of Christ is sufficient for all, if all will accept it. Because God would have published¹⁶ far and wide the matchless grace and fathomless love of His dear Son. Because the sacrifice of Christ is eminently adapted to all, what suits one sinner must meet the needs of another. Because it is by the preaching of the Gospel that the elect are called

¹² **transcends** – surpasses.

¹³ **unequivocal** –not doubtful; clear; evident.

¹⁴ **proffered** – offered for acceptance.

¹⁵ **boon** – a gift; a grant.

¹⁶ **would have published** – wills to have published.

out from the world. Finally, because we are commanded to preach the Gospel to all nations, and “it’s not for us to reason why; it’s not for us to make reply; it’s for us to do—and die.”

5. But will not this doctrine cut the nerve of evangelistic effort?

Once again we will let Mr. Spurgeon make reply.

“Well, then, says one, that will make people sit still and fold their arms.’ Sir, it will not. But if men did so, I could not help it; my business, as I have often said in this place before, is not to prove to you the reasonableness of any truth, nor to defend any truth from its consequences; all I do here—and I mean to keep to it—is just to assert the truth, because it is in the Bible. Then, if you do not like it, you must quarrel with my Master; and if you think it unreasonable, you must quarrel with the Bible. Let others defend Scripture and prove it to be true; they can do their work better than I could—mine is just the mere work of proclaiming it. I am the messenger; I tell the Master’s message. If you do not like the message, quarrel with the Bible, not with me. So long as I have Scripture on my side, I will dare and defy you to do anything against me. ‘Salvation is of the LORD’ (Jon 2:9). The Lord has to apply it, to make the unwilling willing, to make the ungodly godly, and bring the vile rebel to the feet of Jesus, or else salvation will never be accomplished. Leave that one thing undone, and you have broken the link of the chain, the very link which was necessary to its integrity. Take away the fact that God begins the good work, and that He sends us what the old divines call preventing grace—take that away, and you have spoilt the whole of salvation. You have just taken the keystone out of the arch, and down it tumbles.” (C.H. Spurgeon, *Salvation of the Lord—Jonah 2:9*).

7. The Signs of Election

How may believers know they are among the number of God’s elect? It is true they do not have access to His Book of Life; that they cannot read His secret decrees; that they are ignorant of His eternal counsels. Yet it is possible for the saints to know they are among the ones whom God has predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. There are at least five ways in which God testifies that He has chosen us from all eternity.

1. By calling us to Himself

“Whom he did predestinate, them he also called” (Rom 8:30). The predestination was in eternity; the calling is in time. This call comes to the elect with irresistible force: They hear it and they cannot but respond. “The sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out” (Joh 10:3). We have an illustration of this in the case of Zacchaeus. “Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down...And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully” (Luk 19:5-6). The sheep was called by name and responded to the Shepherd’s voice! “And the sheep follow him: for they know his voice” (Joh 10:4). We have another beautiful illustration of this recorded in John 20:16: “Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni.” Previously she knew Him not; she mistook Him for the gardener; but the Good Shepherd addressed His own sheep by name—“Mary”—and instantly she knew His voice! Here, then, is the first mark of election, as illustrated by the above cases. The Shepherd calls, and those who are His sheep (the elect) hear, recognize, and respond.

2. By creating them anew in Christ

Or, in other words, by making them His children. All are not God’s children. On the contrary, all are by nature “children of wrath” (Eph 2:3), and only by sovereign grace do we become children of God. All are His creatures, but all are not His sons. Regeneration is the consequence of election. “Of his own will begat he us” (Jam 1:18). “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (Joh 1:13). Have I been born again? Have I been made a new creature in Christ? Are there unmistakable evidences in my life that I have been made a partaker of the divine nature? Then this is one of the marks of my election.

3. By conforming them to His will

“The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). The unregenerate will is entirely opposed to everything truly holy. But it is otherwise with those whom God calls and quickens. He renews their wills. He works in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure. That which differentiates a child of the devil from a child of God, is that the former is ruled by his own will, while the will of the latter is lost in God’s. The language of the saint is, “It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good” (1Sa 3:18). If then your will is broken, if you find yourself saying from the heart, “not my will, but thine, be done” (Luk 22:42), then this is one of the marks and signs of your election.

4. By communicating His love to their hearts

The wicked have no love for God, no capacity to appreciate His perfections, no concern for His glory. They see in Him no beauty that they should desire Him, yea, He is despised and rejected by them (Isa 53:2-3). But the Holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in the hearts of those who believe (Rom 5:5). To them, God is so excellent, they say, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Psa 73:25). To them, Christ is the fairest among ten thou-

sand, the “altogether lovely” One (Song 5:16). If then the love of God glows within your heart, this is one of the marks and evidences of your election.

5. By cultivating in them the fruit of the Spirit

In the Parable of the Sower, there are four kinds of ground on which the seed falls, but only one bears any fruit. The first three represent various classes of unbelievers who hear the Word of God, and one thing is common to them—they are all barren. But the fourth class, the good ground hearers, brings forth fruit in varying degrees. Here, then, is another unfailing sign, another peculiar characteristic of believers—they bring forth fruit. What that fruit is, we learn from Galatians 5:22-23. Have I “love”—love for God, for His Word, for His people? Have I “joy”—that deep, fixed, wondrous joy, which the world knows nothing of? Have I “peace”—that peace of conscience which comes from the knowledge of sins forgiven? Am I “long-suffering,” so that “I endure all things for the elect’s sakes” (2Ti 2:10)? Have I “gentleness,” so that like a real sheep I never show fight? Have I “goodness,” so that those around take knowledge that I have been with Jesus? Have I “faith,” so that I rest with unshaken confidence upon God’s promises? Have I “meekness,” so that I esteem others better than myself? Have I “temperance,” so that my moderation is known unto all men (Phi 4:5)? Then this is the fruit of the Spirit. By these and similar signs, God indicates to us our eternal election.

8. The Fruits of Election

Not only does God give us these infallible signs by which we may discover His choice, but the elect make their own election sure unto themselves. “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (2Pe 1:10). In the mind of God, my calling and election were “sure” before the foundation of the world; but so far as my own consciousness and assurance of them are concerned, I am to give diligence to make them sure to myself. How do the elect do this?

1. By abandoning themselves to Christ

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me (Joh 6:37). When we lose all confidence in the flesh; when we come entirely to the end of ourselves; when we realize that in the flesh there dwelleth no good thing; when we become conscious that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; when we are prepared to cry, “Lord save me, I perish” (see Mat 8:25); when we fly to Christ as the only refuge from the wrath to come—then we take the first step in making our calling and election sure.

2. By an obedient walk

Peter addresses the “strangers” as “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience” (1Pe 1:2). If we are walking contrary to God’s precepts, then we have no reason to consider ourselves as being among God’s elect. The Good Shepherd leads His sheep in “the paths of righteousness” (Psa 23:3), and if we are found in “the way of sinners” (Psa 1:1), then we have no warrant for calling ourselves His sheep. But if we are praying for and striving daily after a more perfect obedience than that which we have yet rendered, then we are making our calling and election sure. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10).

3. By a progressive sanctification

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). If we are growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord (2Pe 3:18); if we are forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before (Phi 3:13); if we are cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and are perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2Co 7:1)—then are we making our own “calling and election sure.” “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy” (Eph 1:4).

4. By a continued perseverance in the faith

Herein are false professors to be distinguished from God’s elect. There are those who hear the Word and anon with joy receive it, yet have they no root in themselves, but endure for a while only (Mat 13:20-21). But God’s elect persevere unto the end. They “follow on to know the LORD” (Hos 6:3). They may oftentimes be cast down in themselves; they may sometimes be overtaken in a fault; they have to confess that they are “unprofitable servants” (Luk 17:10)—yet at the end, every one of them in measure will be able to say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2Ti 4:7). By enduring to the end, we make our calling and election sure unto ourselves. “Whom he did predestinate...them he also glorified” (Rom 8:30).

Brethren, if we are among God’s chosen ones, let us show by our daily walk that we are indeed the choicest of men. “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Col 3:12-13). ❧