

ELECTION

A SERMON

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“A remnant according to the election of grace.” Romans 11:5

MY object this morning will be, first, to show *how this remnant is distinguished from all other people*; secondly, *that no soul can either be saved or serve God acceptably without election*; and thirdly and lastly, *the way in which this election is kept eternally certain and everlastingly good*.

First, then, I notice *that which distinguishes the election of grace from all other people*. If we belong to those that God has chosen, then we must look for the evidence of belonging to him, and that evidence will consist in that which he himself has described in his holy word. There are four things especially to which the natural man is blind. First, he is blind to the life of God; “alienated,” says the apostle, “from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.” Now, what is this life of God? This life of God means a new creature life; it means being born again; it means, indeed, being brought to see that you have nothing but sin that you can call your own; it means being brought to feel that you are a poor lost sinner, and that you are both in the law and in the gospel sense of the word utterly helpless, that you are unable to be in your nature what the law demands, and that you are unable to reach one gospel blessing.

When thus brought to see your sinful state, and feel your utter destitution and utter helplessness, the result will be that you will search, and seek, and look, and long after a remedy for your condition; and by-and-bye you will find that that remedy lies in what the Lord Jesus Christ has done; that he has done all that was needed for our eternal salvation; that “Whosoever believes in him shall be saved;” and that “Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;” and that “He that believes in him has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation.” This is what you will seek after, and you will see that the Lord Jesus Christ is that which you need; you will believe in him; and this will be something new to you; and thus old things will pass away; your old notions, and thoughts, and sentiments, and righteousness, and conceit, and free-will, and duty-faith, and all the rest of it will pass away, and you will find that you do not want some things of the Lord, but that you want everything of the Lord, you want everything that is in Christ Jesus the Lord. Now this is that change of heart, of state; this is that transition from death to life, from darkness to light, that is hidden from the eyes of the natural man. It is true you may have an intellectual idea of this change, and you may be able to speak of the doctrine of regeneration as a doctrine; but then this will avail you nothing in a dying hour, unless you can speak of it from your

own experience, unless you are brought to say, Whereas once I was blind, now I see what sin is, such as nothing but Christ could atone for; and now I see what I am by sin, that I am altogether as an autumnal leaf, as a piece of stubble, a poor worm, a poor helpless thing, loathsome in the sight of God; and I am brought to see that if ever I get to heaven, it must be entirely by the grace of God. And you will be pretty sharply exercised, more or less; you will see that all blessedness lies in transgression being by Jesus Christ forgiven, and that there is by Jesus Christ the non-imputation of sin on the one hand, and the imputation of righteousness on the other.

This is the inward feeling, these are the perceptions, the apprehensions, and the desires that you will have. And I will tell you one more conclusion you will come to, and that is this, that you will never call the Lord yours, you will never cry, "Abba, Father;" you will never feel sure that Jesus Christ has died for you, until the Holy Spirit shall bring home the word with power, and peace shall flow unto your soul, and you shall feel that your sins are forgiven, you shall feel that you are reconciled to God, and your soul shall flow forth in love to God. Hence, with the angel standing at the golden altar, there was much incense with the prayers of the saints. Ah, poor little one, whose eyes are just beginning to be opened, how little incense will go with your prayers. Your prayers will seem like a whisper out of the dust, your prayers will seem like a groan, and sometimes mixed with rebellion, and you will pray almost in rebellion sometimes, and say, "It is better for me to die than to live; Lord, take away my life, I am not better than my fathers." There will not be much incense. You will say, Ah, my prayers, I cannot call them prayers. But then Jesus Christ mingles much incense, so that when your sighs reach the throne of God, which they do by the power of the Holy Spirit, they reach there in all the perfection of Christ's atonement; there is much incense. The fragrance of his dear name gives life, and majesty, and dignity, and availability to the feeblest cry. Hence the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man avails much; and a righteous man is a man that believes in Jesus Christ, that is reconciled to God by Jesus Christ, and his prayers are fervent because they are sincere, and they are rendered effectual by the name in which they ascend to the throne of God, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, then, my hearers, how is it with us? Can we one and all say that our state by nature is thus laid open to us; and it has been a burden to us; that we have groaned under it, and do groan under it, and that we see that Jesus Christ is the way of escape, and that all we want is to realize the sweet and the happy consequences of what he has done, to come up out of the pit of sin, the pit of the law, the pit of the curse, and the pit of despair. We are to come up out of this by the Mediator of the everlasting covenant, and to take our stand upon the Rock of ages, and to see and feel that this God is our God, and will be our guide, even unto death. Then, secondly, we are by nature also blind to the Christ of God. What does the natural man know of the Christ of God? He may know a great deal of him historically, and doctrinally, and in the letter of the word; but he knows nothing of him truly.

How am I to distinguish, then, between the man who has a right acquaintance with Christ, and the man who has a mere fleshly knowledge, that knows Christ after the flesh or the mere letter but does not know him after the spirit. There are two things that especially distinguish God the Father's teaching, that distinguish the Holy Spirit's teaching, from mere human acquirement. In the first place, God the Father never draws the soul to a false Christ; the Holy Ghost never reveals to the soul a false Christ, Now, let us see, then, what the true Christ is. Take, for instance, that character of the dear Savior which the apostle found that many of the saints in his day did not clearly understand; and it was a grief to him that they were not charmed and enraptured with the same Jesus Christ in that same respect that he was, and therefore it was they were dull of hearing, and it

so hindered him he could not speak out with the freedom he otherwise would have spoken with if they had understood the matter. Take, then, that beautiful Scripture in the 110th Psalm; there we have the true Christ of God set before us in few words: "The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." Now you must remember the Old Testament priests were priests only for a little while, because their sacrifices could not take away sin. But Christ is a Priest forever, because his one sacrifice has taken away all sin, and taken it away forever, that there is no more remembrance of sin, that there is no more conscience of sin, and through all eternity no other sacrifice for sin will be needed.

And then, take notice of another thing, you will see in the 110th Psalm, that the true Christ of God, this priest that stands in perfection eternal, that he stands inseparably connected with the immutable oath of the great God, "He has sworn, and will not repent." And therefore, to receive a Christ that is unassociated with immutable counsel, to receive a Christ that is unassociated with the sworn and unalterable appointments of the Father, is to receive a false Christ, which God the Father never draws a sinner to, and which the Holy Ghost never reveals to a sinner. So, then, if God be your teacher, you will understand this. You may, it is true, at present be a little confused upon this matter, but still, if you are, there will be an uneasiness; you will feel that you have not yet got all you want. You say, "Well, I don't know, there is something I want, and I don't, know what it is and, by-and-bye, the time will come when you will look at that beautiful scripture in the 6th of Hebrews, "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel." And you see, in that 6th of the Hebrews, how it accords with the 110th Psalm. In that 110th Psalm there the true Christ of God, one with God's immutable oath; and in that 6th of the Hebrews, there is the immutability of God's counsel, and in close association therewith, that Christ is made a High Priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek. Now, if you are taught of God, this Christ, in all his greatness; this Christ, in his absolute sacrificial perfection; this Christ, in the eternity of his perfection, is the Christ that you will receive; and you will laugh to scorn the idea, and shake your head with utter contempt at the doctrine that would insinuate for one moment the possibility of a soul being lost, for whom such a Savior as this died. In order for such a one to be lost, Christ's offering must come to nothing, the Father's counsels must be overturned, and the counsels of hell must prevail over the counsels of heaven.

The next thing that distinguishes divine teaching from mere human acquirement, is that the true Christ of God will be supremely precious to you. Ah! as you go on, you will say, "What a heart I have! what a nature I have! what a poor creature I am! Ah! but for the perfection that is in Christ, but for the blood of Christ, containing all the value of the wondrous person of Immanuel, God with us. I am sure I should be lost. Precious Jesus Christ! dear Jesus Christ!" "To, you that believe he is precious;" ah! too precious, infinitely too precious, ever for one moment to be parted with. This is the way in which you will hold him. And I will say something else, there is one more thing, that this true Christ of God will endear to you God in his sworn covenant. "Ah!" you will say, "I did not, at one time, understand what ministers meant, when they talked so much about God in covenant; when they spoke so much of God in the immutability of his counsel; but now he is dear to my heart; now I see it is here that God is love; now I see it is here that he has sworn never to be wrath, nor to rebuke you." Thus, then, the election of grace are distinguished from others by being brought into this new life, this new creature-ship life; for "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, all things are become new." Thus, then, I say, there will be a reception also of the true Christ, and that that true Christ will be precious to you and endear God

to you. You know that a great many of the Lord's temporal dealings with you have a tendency to set him at a distance and make us afraid of him. That is what Satan made sure of, if he could gain his ends with Job. Then, says Satan, I shall bring about a separation between God and Job. That is what Satan aimed at; and the tendency of that mysterious and wondrous circumstance was to make Job curse the day of his birth, which he did do, but it could not make Job curse his God, and it could not make God curse him; for Job still blessed God, and God still blessed Job. And so, by-and-bye, when the devil had done his work, he was sent about his business, and Job's captivity came to a termination, he came forth as gold; and the Lord demonstrated at the last that he was very pitiful, and of tender mercy. Ah, then, if you would love God, you must see him in what Christ is; if you would have peace with God, it must be by the righteousness of Christ; if you would have the victory, it must be by faith in what Christ has done, and then your soul shall rejoice, and say, "Thanks be to God, that gives us the victory by our Lord Jesus Christ."

But the rest were blind. Do you see this new life? and are you brought in? and do you see this Christ? and is he dear to you? and do you prize a God in covenant? and do you see that out of that covenant there is nothing but wrath? In that covenant there is no blame, no fault, no condemnation, no death, no sorrow, no pain, except the sorrows, and pains, and death that Christ underwent; for he underwent pains, and sorrows, and griefs, and death, and has thereby terminated sin, and sorrow, and death for us. In that covenant there is nothing but fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore; outside that covenant there is nothing but wrath, anguish, tribulation, and eternal woe. In that covenant there is everything that is blessed. So, the counsel of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them this covenant and bring them into the midst thereof. Then, as these elect are distinguished by being brought into this life of faith, and receiving that true Christ of God, and that true Christ being too precious ever to be parted with so, thirdly, the natural man is blinded to the gospel; he does not know what the gospel is. Hence the question is very often asked, What is truth? Well, friends, if any one should ask you that question, what truth is? ask you in a proper way, if they do not ask you in a proper way, it is generally best to give them no answer at all; because these things ought not to be spoken in an unhallowed way, and the Christian himself had better say nothing than speak in a passion; but if the question should be put, and the time, and place, and person proper to answer, perhaps you could not answer that question, What is truth? better than by quoting the apostle's words in the 1st of Ephesians: "After that you had heard the word of truth;" now comes the definition, "*the gospel of your salvation,*" And in the next chapter he says, "By grace are you saved." So, then, the word of truth means the gospel of our salvation; and the gospel of our salvation means God's revelation of the truth that "by grace are you saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." So, then, if I am asked, What is truth? I answer, The gospel of my salvation. What is the gospel of my salvation? By grace am I saved through faith; and that not of myself: it is the gift of God. And I am perfectly satisfied, myself, with that definition of what truth is. So, then, let philosophers and speculative professors range from science to science, from subject to subject, and from one theological theory to another, in quest of truth; and then, when they come to die, they tell us, as the infidel, Taylor, did, on his deathbed, "Well, if I have erred, I have been seeking truth all the time." Yes, but, poor things! they have no heart to seek it where it can be found. In a word, they are blind. We are all by nature blind, whereas the Christian finds the truth. He knows that that truth that is with him now, and that shall be with him forever. and sustain him forever, is the gospel of salvation; and "By grace are you saved."

Second. I go on to show that no soul can be saved without election. First, then, in working out of this part of my subject, I must just remind you that election excludes no man from heaven; election excludes no man from God; election never did exclude anyone, and never will. The enemy loves to represent election as excluding men from heaven; as contracting the gospel; as making out that only two or three will get to heaven, and all the rest will be sent to destruction. But then, it is the enemy that has done this; it is the enemy that does this, that tries to represent eternal election in an unlovely light. Let us, therefore, try to deal with it this morning with that sobriety that becomes us. Let me then, in the first place, tell you plainly, and I do it merely to remind you of it, because it is a self-evident truth, that whatever harm is done to man, is done by sin. It was not election, but original sin, that has excluded the whole of the human race from the presence of God, from the favor of God; I mean from that creation favor we had in the first Adam. Sin has shut every man out. Look at the many aspects of sin. First, "By one man's disobedience many became sinners;" sin, you see, has shut us out. Second, that men are sinners in their lives as well as sinners in their nature: "Wickedness," says the proverb of the ancients, and rightly too, "proceeds from the wicked." And third, that the law of God stands so that not one jot or tittle thereof can fail and holds the whole human race with an omnipotent and eternal grasp. Here lies the human race prostrate at the great Jehovah's feet: "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that does good, no, not one."

Now, the question arises, what will God do with these fallen creatures? what will God do with these his enemies? what will God do with this human race that has corrupted his fair creation, that defy his perfections, rush in upon the thick bosses of his bucklers, and care nothing for his tremendous name, but daringly defy the Judge of all? Such is the hardness of the human heart, such the blindness of the human mind, such the degradation of the once noble soul of man. Such is our state by nature. What shall the great God do? Shall he, as with the broom of destruction, sweep the whole into that place which sin has demerited? Shall he let fall upon them all that wrath that they deserve? What shall he do? Talk of election excluding men! Ah, my hearer, never open your mouth in such blasphemy again, if I am speaking to any such among you. It is sin that has excluded men; it is sin that has done this; and now that they lie entirely at the mercy of the great God, will he have mercy upon any at all? He is under no law obliging him to do so; he is under no tie, no obligation; he would be just in leaving you where sin has brought you. But in the infinity of his mercy, he is pleased to choose, out of this fallen race, a number that no man can number, and that out of every kindred, nation, tongue, and people. Now then, if the Lord had not been pleased thus to choose you, then you would not have been one with Christ; then your sins could not, eighteen hundred years ago, have been laid on Christ. It is too late to talk about laying sin on Christ now. In the Old Testament age, it was too soon for them to do it, for Christ was not come; and when Christ ended sin, his disciples were scattered from him. So that, first, it was too soon for them to do it, Christ was not come; second, when he did come, God so ordered it as to suffer the enemy to have that dominion over the disciples that they should be scattered, that they should leave him, lest they should say, Ah, we did not flee from him at the cross; we succored him, and helped him. But ah, no, they could say nothing of the kind. So that, before the work was done, it was too early to talk of laying our sins upon Christ; and it is too late after the work is done. It was an act of grace; he looked upon you in the deeps of eternity, and he saw you, and was as familiar with you then as he is now, or ever will be. Remember that God is omnipresent, in time and eternity; he is in every particle that exists, that constitutes the vast and incomprehensible universe; he is, as it were, in every hair of your head. As I have lately said, in an ancient saying, his center is

everywhere, and his circumference nowhere. Now, if he had not given you to Christ, you could not have belonged to Christ; if he had not chosen you, then you would not have been included in Christ's death. It was election that included you in Christ's death; it was election that gave you to Christ; it was election that constituted you one with Christ. "Both he that sanctifies, and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." I appeal now to the real Christian, What say you to this? You have been able to follow me in the first part of my discourse; and I am sure you would wish to say, So far from my making light of such mercy, I would desire to join with the holy apostle, and to say that I am bound to give thanks unto God, because from the beginning he has chosen me to salvation. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed me with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, where they are safe in Christ Jesus, according as he has chosen me in him before the foundation of the world.

Ah then, no election, no salvation; no election, no life; no election, no inheritance; no election, no escape from the wrath to come. As to those that abuse the Almighty for this great act of mercy, let them answer for it; God will take care of his own honor and his own truth. The apostle anticipated such thoughts, and said, "Nay but, O man, who are you that replies against God?" Ah, but, say some, look at the numbers that are lost. That is God's business; do not you trouble yourself about that; except it be to magnify that mercy that has made you to differ. There are ministers that tell us we should not trouble ourselves about election. I have as much sympathy with that advice as I have with that advice which would say, Don't trouble yourself about Christ's atonement; don't trouble yourself about his righteousness; don't trouble yourself about what he has done; do your duty, and all will be well. Ah, so they deceive the souls of men; and would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect. But God's elect, that cry to him, not to man. Why, they cry to God day and night; that is, there is a cry goes out from their souls after God. Not trouble themselves about election! What! not rejoice that their names are written in heaven? What! not bless God for electing grace? What! not acknowledge it, that God chose them to the greatest glory they could be chosen unto, chosen to eternal life, eternal salvation, eternal glory, chosen to be the heirs with Christ? Thus, then, there is no salvation without election; and the end of time will show it: if you look at the summing up of all things at that tremendous day, whosoever's name was not found in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire.

But, also, I must hasten to show that *there is no serving God acceptably without election*. This is a truth that was shadowed forth even in conditional systems. For instance, when God created Adam, was Adam left to serve God after the manner of his own devising or choosing? No; the great God chose the way in which Adam was to do service to God; he was to dress the garden and to keep it, and to abstain from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. That was God's way, and while Adam remained in the way that God had chosen, it was well with him. But when Adam set God's choice aside and put his own invention into the place of it, then God chose his confusion. When the Israelites came out of Egypt and were brought into Canaan, were they left to serve God just after the manner they pleased? Did not God choose the way in which his name should be honored, his truth proclaimed, his name, and salvation, and purpose set forth; and were they acceptable when they deviated from that? Verily, not. If then, in conditional systems there was no acceptable service except in the way that God chose, how much more is this truth established in matters that are absolute and eternal? Take, for instance, Cain and Abel. Abel was led by the grace of God to serve God in the way that God had chosen, and so Abel was accepted. But Cain thought the other way would do quite as well; he did not think it was important; but Cain was rejected.

When the Lord would save Noah, it significantly says, and that shows the certainty of this electing grace, it significantly says in the onset, and I never saw the significance of it more than I have done these last two or three days, in meditating upon and praying over this text, that “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” Grace, what is the result? The result is that Noah understands God’s way and builds the ark according to God’s plan and choice. Noah abode in God’s choice, served God after God’s own choice. What was the result? Why, he was saved, and brought into the knowledge of God’s everlasting covenant. Abraham served God after God’s own way of choosing, and Abraham was the friend of God. Abraham knew that discriminating grace had made him to differ, and he served God in God’s own way. What is the result? Why, he is now sitting down in the kingdom of heaven. Isaac served God by faith in Christ, God’s own way. What is the result? Why, he is now glorified with the blessed. Jacob served God in God’s own way; he saw the mediatorial ladder that reached from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven, and with the yea and amen promises that God gave. What is the result? Why, he is now realizing all the import of his name given to him, Israel. But Ishmael despised God’s way; Esau hated God’s way; and all men by nature do so. Now, my hearer, if we do not serve God in God’s own way, the way he has chosen, then we cannot serve him acceptably. No longer say, then, that election is not a rule of practice. Election has ordered everything. God has not only chosen the people, but he has chosen the way in which they are to know him, to dwell with him, to walk with him, to honor him, and to glorify him. Hence, the Pharisees in the Savior’s Day thought their way of serving God by their traditions was a much better way than God’s way. But the Savior puts a negative upon the whole; and calls such persons, because of their spirit of enmity against God, a generation of vipers. Thus, then, without this electing grace there is no service acceptable in the sight of God. As the apostle says, “If by grace, then is it 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.

Now, there is another point, and that is, *the way in which this election of the people to eternal salvation is kept certain and good.* Now, just a word in conclusion. You ought not to be ashamed of election. Jesus Christ is neither ashamed of election nor of the elect; he is ashamed of neither; he is neither, ashamed of election itself nor of the people chosen; he took their shame away. We are sneeringly told sometimes, You are one of the elect. Well, my answer is, I hope so. Ah, say they, I wouldn’t be one of them forever so. Well, I say, whatever circle I am put out of I would not be put out of that. Now, in conclusion, there is a threefold representation given in the 42nd of Isaiah of the way in which Christ maintains this election to eternal glory in the certainty and goodness of it. You know a thing may be good without being certain. You may have many good things in this life, but there is no certainty. And a thing may be certain without being good. It may be certain you are going to die, but you may not reckon it good. But here the two go together, certainty and goodness. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ established this election by his substitutional work, by the gentleness of his dealings with his people, and by his infallibility. Forty-second of Isaiah, “Behold my servant, whom I uphold;” God’s approbation is in Christ. And what upholds us? God’s approbation of us in Christ. “My elect;” there it is, you see; he is not ashamed to be called one of God’s elect, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him.” See 2nd of Luke; “The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him.” “He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.” In the 12th of Matthew that which in the 42nd of Isaiah is called “judgment” is called “victory;” so it means, shall bring forth judgment in their favor; that is the idea; and if judgment be in their favor, that is legal victory. “He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles,” by his substitutional work. “My servant,” he is a servant by

his substitutional work; that servant I have chosen to bring forth victory. Secondly, he establishes this election by the gentleness of his dealings. "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street;" shall not make a noise about it, no ostentation; "a bruised reed shall he not break." Look at that poor creature where is there a man that knows what a poor miserable thing, he is that does not prize such a scripture as that? "And the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth;" there it is again, you see; he shall bring forth victory unto truth; his victory shall not be a false victory, but a victory unto truth, a victory founded on truth, confirmatory of truth, in accordance with truth. And then, thirdly, by his infallibility. How much might be said upon the victory he gives by the gentleness of his dealings. Ah, I shall break down here, and break down there. Well, never mind; you will not break down in the Lord; he will deal gently with us. "Your gentleness," said one, "has made me great." Bless his holy name; it is a very comfortable thing amidst the storms of this world to have a peaceful friend to come to. Our Heavenly Friend is always the same; Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever; the same Jesus Christ, he is always the same. But third, he brings forth victory, also, by his infallibility. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he has set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law;" that is, the law of liberty. Now, then, here is victory brought forth unto the Gentiles; a victory unto the truth; and victory established in the earth.

Such, then, is the election of grace; first, that they are distinguished from others in the way I have described; secondly, that no soul can either be saved, or serve God acceptably, without election; and, lastly, it is in and by this wondrous Christ Jesus that this election remains certain and stands eternally good.