

AN ELECTION OF PARTICULAR PERSONS

By Benjamin Keach

THE GRAND DOCTRINE OPENED

That all the saints of God, or sheep of Jesus Christ, shall be saved, and none of them shall so fall away as eternally to perish.

The truth of this point I shall prove by divers arguments and scriptures.

And my first argument shall be taken from eternal election, which dependeth wholly upon the absolute sovereignty of God, who hath power over all His creatures, and may do with His own as it seemeth good in His eternal wisdom, and good pleasure of His will.

I shall premise one or two things before I proceed to confirm this argument.

1. That God set up Jesus Christ as Mediator from everlasting, as the Head and Spring of our election; therefore it is said, "We were chosen in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). It was the only act of love and free grace of the Father, therefore not to be ascribed to the merits of Jesus Christ: For though Christ hath merited our salvation, yet He did not procure or merit our election; for Christ Himself was the fruit of this eternal blessing and privilege, it being then the sole act of God's sovereign grace and love. It follows,

2. That all the ways which were ordered in the wisdom of God, for the accomplishing the ends of election, are of the father's appointment also; for whatsoever Christ hath done in working out of our Redemption, it was according to the purpose and determinate counsel of His own will and sovereign goodness. Jesus Christ was first chosen, or elected, by the Father, as Head and Mediator, and only Foundation to bear up the whole building, which the Almighty designed to raise: The Father's love, did precede Christ's glorious mission; therefore He was only of the Father's designation; "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last days" (I Pet. 1:20). Christ was first chosen as the Well-head of grace and glory, and then others were chosen in Him, by and through whom they should be redeemed and raised to a state of grace and holiness here, and to eternal happiness in Heaven hereafter: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). To the image of His Son, that is, to Christ's likeness as Mediator, and taking our nature; not to Christ barely considered as God, for as Christ is God. Now this Conformity being absolutely designed in election, Christ, in the contrivance and intention of the Father, was the first Exemplar and Copy of it, or the main Center, to which all must be brought that were given unto Him; the Father setting Him up, and electing Him as Head of all that should be saved, or as the glorious Bridegroom, and therefore it was requisite He should be consulted about those who were to be the members of His body, and His own blessed spouse for ever: And since Christ was also to suffer and undergo such pain and sorrow in the purchasing and redeeming of them, it was necessary He should not only freely assent and consent in the choice of them, but also be certain of the obtaining and securing them all to and for Himself for ever, and not run the hazard of enjoying or not enjoying of them; which must follow He did, if the doctrines of some men of dark minds were true.

To proceed, it may not be amiss to consider what is contained in the bowels of my first argument, viz. that there is a peculiar people, or some certain persons (as personally

considered) of the lost children of the first Adam, who are elected or chosen of God, in Christ, from all eternity, of His own sovereign grace and good pleasure, ordained unto everlasting life; and that this decree of election doth prevent their final falling, or make it impossible that any of them should ever so apostatize as eternally to perish.

The Argument being thus fairly stated, it calls upon me to do two things.

First, To prove that there is such a particular and personal election of a peculiar people of the lost sons of Adam.

Secondly, To show how this prevents their final falling, and makes it impossible that any of them should ever so apostatize as eternally to perish.

A little to open the first of these.

1. I say of peculiar persons, which denotes it belonging to them only and to none else; others are passed by, or not afforded by any such divine act of grace the like privilege: they are God's jewels, or His peculiar treasure, though until called and cleansed (Mal. 3:17), their inward filth and pollution purged away, they cannot be delighted in by Him, or be loved with a love of complacency; though from eternity God did love all His, with a love of good Will, purpose of grace and of benevolence.

I say personally elected; that is, the objects of this grace, or of this election were singled out and pitched upon by name; not with respect had to such or such qualifications foreseen in them, they being repenting, believing, and holy persons, but chosen in Christ, the Head of Election, that they should believe, should repent, and should be holy and without blame before him in love (Eph. 1:4). They are chosen that they may be holy; not because they were holy, or God foresaw they would be Holy.

I say, they were ordained to everlasting life. Now to predestinate, decree, or ordain, denotes the same thing, and signifies the absolute purpose of God to bring them into a state of grace here, through Jesus Christ, and to eternal glory and happiness hereafter: Hence it is said, As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed, or appointed; and He that ordered or ordained the end, ordained the means also, and so prepared them for everlasting life.

They were chosen in Christ; in the Mediator, in their blessed Head, that they standing might be secured through their union with Him, and His righteousness being imputed to them, according to God's eternal purpose.

2. And further, to make good the first part of what I have laid down, viz. That there is such a particular election; what lies more clear in the Word of God, and the election of Jacob, I shall here first mention, as a full proof of what I say; For the children not yet born, neither having done only good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth (Rom. 9:11). Here the apostle designedly or on purpose confirms, not only the doctrine of personal election, but also that of Preterition, of a passing by, or rejection of the other; and all resulting from the eternal purpose and good pleasure of God's will; As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated (Rom. 9:13). The main scope of Paul in this place is to show, that God hath not cast off all Israel, that is, those who are the true Israel, or such who are the children of the promise, or that do belong to Christ according to the election of grace; see 5, 6, 7, 8 verses: therefore they

that run the love of God and election here spoken of, to the posterity of Jacob, and reprobation to the posterity of Esau, and will not have it to be understood of their particular persons, do palpably abuse the sacred text and drift of the Holy Ghost.

Now that all men may know that election doth run to, or take hold of particular persons, and that not for any foreseen faith or holiness in them, Paul saith, "The children being not yet born, neither having done good or evil." And therefore adds, not of works, that is, of foreseen worthiness or desert in Jacob, but "that the purpose of God, according to election might stand," (that is, stand firm as an act of God's sovereign love and grace only) and abide a blessed truth against all the opposition and cavils of cloudy minds.

I might have mentioned Abraham, Isaac, Moses, David, and others; also Jeremiah of whom God says, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee" (Jer. 1:5); that is, I knew thee to be one of them that I had chosen and given to my Son, or one of mine elect ones; "and I sanctified and ordained thee a prophet."

Moreover, in the New Testament that our Saviour calls His disciples by name and tells them, that "he knew whom he had chosen," (John 13:18) excluding Judas; He must therefore intend their eternal election, for as I said before, Judas was chosen to the Apostleship: also Paul by name. Jesus Christ declares (to Ananias) was "a chosen vessel." not only as an Apostle, but one also comprehended in the election of grace. Do but observe the Nature of his conversion, and what he was before and when called by the special grace of God.

Moreover of this number and sort, were those that the Lord speaks of in Elias's time which Paul mentions, "I have reserved to my self seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal" (Rom. 11:4). Though it is a certain number put for an uncertain as to us, yet all their particular persons were chosen, and known to God; "Even so at this present time also there is a "Remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11:5). God had some particular persons then whom He had from everlasting elected, and so He hath now; "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": Us, as such and such particular persons, not such of such and such qualification, viz. as being believers, obedient and holy persons; No, no, but that they might believe, etc. election will produce faith: it is, because they are elected that they do believe." "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you" (John 10:26) that is, not such as were ordained to believe, and ordained to eternal life. "And as many as were ordained unto eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). As it was hinted before, Christ hath elect persons, or sheep, that yet believe not. "I have much people (saith he to Paul) in this city" (Acts 18:10).

Unto these testimonies I shall add one or two more; as that of Paul, touching the saints at Thessalonica. "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election: For our Gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost," etc. By the evident operations of God's Spirit, the apostle knew they were elected: We cannot know our election, but by special vocation, or as it is manifest in the fruits and effects of it. There is a knowledge of things, (as our annotators note on this place) xxxxxxxxx, when we argue from the cause to the effect: So xxxxxxxxx, when we argue from the effect to the cause. Now what is election, but a choosing some out of others? Thus the angels that stand were elected, and the rest were left to the power they had, or passed by, or reprobated (I Tim. 5:21). Peter also confirms the doctrine of personal election, calling the persons to whom he wrote his epistle, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God," or His eternal purpose; and therefore were separated unto God by special grace, or effectual calling; "through sanctification of the Spirit to obedience," etc. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are concerned in our salvation;

the Father elects, this is principally ascribed to the first Person in the Godhead; the Son purchaseth, He redeems; and the Holy Spirit renews, calls, and sanctifies. Now the purchase of the Son extends no further than the election of the Father; nor the sanctification of the Spirit, further than the purchase or redemption of the Son: Sanctification here, takes in the whole work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and actual holiness, to the final fitting and making the soul meet for the eternal inheritance.

So much shall serve to prove that there is an election of particular persons.

Object. But may be some will Object, If this be so, what need any man concern himself about his salvation, as to seek it or labor after it: for if he be elected, he shall be saved; but if not, let him do what he can, he cannot be saved, he cannot frustrate God's decree, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his mouth?

Answer. I answer, All mankind are under the strongest obligation imaginable to God, as He is their Creator, and they His creatures; as He is their only Lord and Supreme Governor, they are bound to fear Him, and obey His laws, let Him do what He will with them. Is not that a base and sordid principle in a servant or subject, to do nothing but for mere self-profit and advantage?

2. Paul was certain of a crown of life, yet knew it was his duty to press towards "the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," and "to keep down his body" (Phil. 3:14). He strove as strenuously against sin, as if salvation could be merited by so doing; so that his election took him not off from a diligent care in use of means, in order to his attaining to eternal happiness.

3. God hath as well ordained the means, as the end, as I newly told you; both are appointed of God, and equally under His absolute decree: Men are not elected to salvation, but also to sanctification and holiness.

4. "We are not to look upon the decree of God (as a Reverend minister well observes) for a rule of life, but the Word of the gospel; "secret things belong to God," etc. The decree can neither be a rule of life, nor ground of hope, but the precept and the promise, etc." He that leads an ungodly life, and pursues His filthy lusts, may assure himself, so living and dying, he shall be damned for ever: He that believes not in Christ, but rejects Him, and despiseth all the offers of His grace to the end of his life, no decree can save him; therefore if he will go on in sin presumptuously, let him take what will follow. On the other hand, he that doth believe in Christ, and conforms to the holy gospel, need not doubt of salvation, no decree can hinder him of salvation. Men ought to endeavor to believe and repent, and close with Christ upon a peradventure: "If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (II Tim. 2:25).

5. Because God hath absolutely determined the time of my life, and how long thou shalt live: And there is a time thou canst not pass; Wilt thou therefore forbear eating, or use of physician, to preserve thy life, and say, If I eat not, I shall live my appointed time? What signify means or medicines, I will take no physician, no potion? for if the time is come God hath set in His eternal decree, I shall die, nothing can save my life: Would not all think you were under a fearful temptation and delusion of the Devil?

6. Did not God absolutely tell Paul, that He had given him the lives of all that were with him in the ship, and that none of them should perish? Yet he said, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 27:31). Whosoever therefore that doth neglect the means

God hath appointed, in order to the obtaining the end, let it be what it will, doth but tempt God, and comply with the Devil, let his pretence be what it will.

7. No decree of God necessitates men to sin: for though the free grace of God is the absolute cause of election; and no foreseen faith or holiness; yet foreseen wickedness, unbelief and disobedience, is the procuring cause of the reprobation (Jude 4) and of the damnation of them that perish: ?O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help? (Hos. 13:9).

8. Were any ever damned that did what they could in the use of all means under the light of the gospel, to be saved? Brethren, God (may justly and) will condemn men for their not improving their ?one talent.? Nor will it be a good plea for such to say, ?I knew thou wert an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown,? (Matt. 25:24) etc. Thus some men seem to charge God, ?I am not elected.? There is an election of grace, of special and distinguishing grace, and man hath no power in his own will; and God doth not give me power to believe, and will He damn me? Doth he expect to reap where he hath not sown, and gather where he hath not strawed? Such shall have no excuse, as our Savior shows, at the great day. The Lord of that Servant shows the fault lay in his own Sloth and wickedness; and his dread of his Lord?s severity, (as our a\Annotators note) was but a frivolous pretence and unreasonable excuse; for if he had feared any such thing, he should have done what he could; he should have put out his money to the exchange, and then he should have received his own with increase. Thus God may as justly another day reply upon those who think to excuse their lewd and wicked lives, their unbelief and contempt of His Word, from their not being elected, and not having power of themselves to believe and repent, not receiving His efficacious grace; O ye wicked and slothful wretches. May he not say, did ye suspect or fear you were not elected? Why did you not then give all diligence to attend upon the Means, and to make your calling sure, as all they do that are elected? Do you plead the power of your own wills, to repent one while, and that you wanted power at another time, and that I gave you not my special grace? but had you not power to keep from Taverns and Alehouses, to keep from lying, stealing, swearing, and other profane deeds of darkness? Had you not power to read, to hear my Word, to pray? If you had done your uttermost in improving of the talent I gave you, would I have been wanting to you? but since you did not that, why should I trust you with more? Brethren, are these men?s eyes evil, because God?s eye is God? Is He unjust in giving effectual grace to some, because He doth not bestow it upon all? Had He not took hold of a few, the whole lump of mankind would have destroyed themselves, and none would have been saved. Was God unjust in electing some of the Angels, because He passed by others of them?

9. In the day of judgment, God will be just, and all men?s mouths shall be stopped: This you may assure your selves of, ?He will be justified when he judges, and clear when he condemns? (Ps. 51:4). He that had not on the wedding-garment was speechless. God will not then proceed with men upon election and reprobation, but upon their believing, or not believing: ?He will render to every man according to their works? (Rom. 2:6). All men?s mouths shall be stopped, and every man?s conscience witness against him. Alas, men do not act or exercise that human faith in respect of the report of the gospel, which they do in respect of other matters and things that are made known to them, or do not bring forth the fruit of such an historical faith, but so much to this objection.

(A Golden Mine Opened, pp. 169-175, 1694 edition).