

The Doctrine of Election 11. Its Opposition

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Transcript

The Doctrine of Election

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Wherever the doctrine of election is Scripturally presented it meets with fierce opposition and bitter declamation. It has been so throughout the entire course of this Christian era, and that, among all races and classes of people. Let the high prerogatives of God be set forth, let the sovereignty of His grace be proclaimed, let men be told they are but clay in the hands of the divine potter to be shaped into vessels of wrath or vessels of mercy as seemeth good in His sight, and at once there is an uproar and outcries of protest. Let the preacher insist that the fallen creature has no claim whatever upon his maker, that he stands before Him as a convicted felon, and is entitled to naught but everlasting judgment, and let him declare that all of Adam's progeny are so utterly depraved that their minds are "enmity against God" and therefore in a state of inveterate insubordination, that their hearts are so corrupt they have no desire for spiritual things, their wills so completely under the domination of evil they cannot turn unto the Lord, and he will be denounced as a heretic. But this should neither surprise nor stagger the child of God. As he becomes more familiar with the Scriptures, he will find that in every generation the faithful servants of God have been hated and persecuted, some for proclaiming one part of the truth, some for another. When the sun shines on a dunghill, an odious stench is the consequence; when its rays fall upon the stagnant waters of a swamp, disease germs are multiplied. But is the sun to be blamed? Certainly not. So when the sword of the Spirit cuts to the root of human pride, reveals man to be a fallen and foul being, reduces him to an impotent creature, laying him in the dust as a bankrupt pauper, and declares him to be entirely dependent upon the discriminating pleasure of a sovereign God, there is a storm of opposition evoked, and a determined effort is made to silence such flesh-withering teaching. The method which is usually followed by those who reject this truth is one of misrepresentation. The doctrine of election is so grand and glorious that to bear any opposition at all it must be perverted. Those who hate it can neither look upon nor speak of it as it really deserves. Election is treated by them as though it did not include a designation to faith and holiness, as though it was not a conforming of them unto the image of Christ; yea, as though the elect of God might continue to commit all manner of wickedness and yet go to heaven; and that the non-elect, no matter how virtuous they be, or how ardently they long for and strive after righteousness, must assuredly perish. False inferences are drawn, grotesque parodies exhibited, and unscrupulous tactics are employed to create prejudice. By such devilish efforts do the enemies of God seek to distort and destroy this blessed doctrine. They besmirch it with mire, seek to overwhelm it with things odious, and present it to the indignant gaze of men as something to be repudiated and abominated. A monster of

iniquity is thus created and christened "Election," and then presented to the world as something to be cast out as evil. Thereby multitudes have been cheated out of one of the most precious portions of divine truth, and thereby some of God's own people have been sorely perplexed and harassed. That the avowed opponents of Christ should revile a doctrine taught by Him and His apostles is only to be expected; but when those who profess to be His friends and followers join in denouncing this truth, it only serves to demonstrate the cunning of that old serpent the devil, who is never more pleased than when he can persuade nominal Christians to do his vile work for him. Then let not the reader be moved by such opposition. The vast majority of these opposers have little or no real understanding of that which they set themselves against. They are largely ignorant of what the Scriptures teach thereon, and are too indolent to make any serious study of the subject. Whatever attention they do pay to it is mostly neutralized by the veil of prejudice which obstructs their vision. But when such persons examine the doctrine with sufficient diligence to discover that it leads only to holiness—holiness in heart and life—then they redouble their efforts to do away with it. When professing Christians unite with its detractors, charity obliges us to conclude that it is because of failure to properly understand the doctrine. They take a one-sided view of this truth: they view it through distorted lenses: they contemplate it from the wrong angle. They fail to see that election originated in everlasting love, that it is the choosing of a company to eternal salvation, who otherwise would have inevitably perished, and that it makes that company a willing, obedient, and holy people. We shall not now attempt to cover the whole range of objections which have been brought against the doctrine of election, yet our discussion would be incomplete if we totally ignored them. The workings of unbelief are always endless in number. The child of God needs to be occupied with something more profitable. Yet we feel that we should at least consider briefly the ones which the enemy suppose are the most forceful and formidable. Not that our object is to try and convince them of their errors, but rather with the design of seeking to help fellow-believers who may have been shaken if not stumbled thereby. Our business is not to refute error, but (under God) to establish our readers in the truth. Yet in order to do this, it is sometimes needful to expose the wiles of Satan, show how baseless are the most insidious of his lies, and seek to remove from the Christian's mind any injurious effect they may have had upon him. Before starting on this unwelcome task let it be pointed out that any lack of ability on our part to refute the calumnies of opponents, is no proof that their position is impregnable. As the renowned Butler pointed out long ago in his masterly "Analogy," "If a truth is established, objections are nothing. The one (i.e., Truth) is founded upon our knowledge, and the other on our ignorance." Once it is established that two and two make four, no quibbling or juggling with figures can disprove it. "We should never suffer what we know to be disturbed by what we know not" said that master of logic, Paley. Once we see anything to be clearly taught in Holy Writ, we must not allow either our own prejudices or the antagonism of others to shake our confidence in or adherence to it. If we are satisfied that we have a "thus saith the Lord" to rest upon, it matters nothing if we be unable to show the sophistry in the arguments brought to bear against it. Be assured that God is true, even if that involves our accounting every man a liar. The bitterest enemies against the doctrine of election are the Papists: This is exactly what might be expected, for the truth of election can never be made to square with the dogma of human merits—the one is diametrically opposed to the other. Every man who loves himself and seeks salvation by his own works, will loathe sovereign grace, and seek to load it with contempt. On the other hand, those who have been effectually humbled by the Holy Spirit and brought to realize that they are utterly dependent upon the discriminating mercy of God, will have no hankering after nor patience with a system which sets the crown of honor upon the creature. History bears ample testimony that Rome detests the very name of Calvinism. "From all sects there may be some hope of obtaining converts to Rome except Calvinism" said the late "Cardinal" Manning. And he was right, as our own degenerate age bears full witness, for while no regenerated

Calvinist will ever be fatally deceived by the wiles of the mother of harlots, yet thousands of "Protestant" (?) Arminians are annually rushing to her arms. It is an irrefutable fact that as Calvinism has met with less and less favor in the leading Protestant bodies, as the sovereignty of God and His electing love have been more and more crowded out of their pulpits, that Rome has made increasing progress, until today she must have, both in England and in the U.S.A., a greater number of followers than any single evangelical denomination. But what is saddest of all is that, the vast majority of those now occupying so-called Protestant pulpits are preaching the very things which further Rome's interests. Their insistence upon the freedom of fallen man's will-to-good must fill the Papist leaders with delight—in the Council of Trent she anathematized all who affirmed the contrary. To what extent the leaven of Popery has spread may be seen in that "Evangelical Protestants" (?) who oppose the doctrine of election are now employing the self-same objections as were used by the Italian doctors four hundred years ago. But to come now to some of the objections. First, such a doctrine is utterly unreasonable. When it suits her purpose Rome makes a big pretense of appealing to human reason, but at other times she demands that her children close their mental eyes and accept blindly whatever their unholy "mother" is pleased to palm upon them. Yet Rome is by no means the only offender at this point: multitudes of those who regard themselves as Protestants are guilty of the same thing. So too almost the first response of those who make no religious profession, when they have this truth presented to their notice, is to exclaim, "Such a concept does not appeal to me at all. If there is a God, and if He has anything at all to do with our present lives, I believe He will give us all an equal chance, balance our good deeds against our bad, and be merciful unto us. To say that He has favorites among His creatures, and that He fixed the destiny of every one before his birth, strikes me as outrageous." Our first reply to such an objection is that, it is quite beside the point. The only matter which needs deciding at the outset is, What saith the Scriptures? If election be clearly taught therein, that settles the matter for the child of God, settles it once and for all. Whether he understands it or no, he knows that God cannot lie, and that His Word is "true from the beginning" (Ps. 119:160). If his opponent will not allow this, then there is no common ground on which they can meet, and it is utterly futile to discuss the matter with him. Under no circumstances must the Christian allow himself to be drawn away from his stand on the impregnable rock of Holy Writ, and descend to the treacherous ground of human reason. Only on that high plane can he successfully withstand the onslaughts of Satan. Reread Matthew 4 and observe how Christ vanquished the tempter. The holy Word of God does not come to us craving acceptance at the bar of human reason. Instead, it demands that human reason surrender itself to its divine authority and receive unmurmuringly its inerrant contents. It emphatically and repeatedly warns men that if they despise its authority and reject its teachings, it is to their certain eternal undoing. It is by that Word each of us shall be weighed, measured, judged in the day to come; and therefore it is the part of human wisdom to bow to and thankfully receive its inspired declarations. The supreme act of right reason, my reader, is to submit unreservedly unto divine wisdom, and accept with childlike simplicity the revelation which God has graciously given us. Any other, any different attitude thereto, is utterly unreasonable—the derangement of pride. How thankful we should be that the ancient of days condescends to instruct us. Our second reply to the above objection is that, in a written revelation from heaven we should fully expect to find much that transcends the grasp of our poor earth-bound minds. What was the use of God communicating to us only that which we already knew? Nor are the Scriptures given to us as a field on which reason may be exercised: what they require are faith and obedience. And faith is not a blind, unintelligible thing, but confidence in its Author, an assurance that He is too wise to err, too righteous to be unjust; and therefore that He is infinitely worthy of our trust and subjection to His holy will. But just because God's Word is addressed to faith, there is much in it which is contrary to nature, much that is most mysterious, much that leaves us wondering. Faith must be tested—to prove its genuineness. And

God delights to honor faith: though His Word be not written to satisfy curiosity, and though many questions are not there fully answered, yet the more faith be exercised, the fuller is the light granted. God Himself is profoundly mysterious. "Lo, these are parts of His ways: but how little a portion is heard of Him!" (Job 26:14); "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" (Rom. 11:33). We must therefore expect to find in the Bible much that strikes us as strange: things "hard to be understood" (2 Peter 3:16). The creation of the universe out of nothing, at the mere fiat of the Almighty, is beyond the grasp of the finite mind. The divine incarnation transcends human reason: "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh" (2 Tim. 3:16): that Christ should be conceived and born of a woman who had known no contact with man, cannot be accounted for by human reason. The resurrection of our bodies, thousands of years after they had gone to dust, is inexplicable. Is it not, then, most unreasonable to reject the truth of election because human reason cannot fathom it! Second, it is highly unjust. Rebels against the supreme sovereign hesitate not to charge Him with unrighteousness because He is pleased to exercise His own rights, and determine the destiny of His creatures. They argue that all men should be dealt with on the same footing, that all should be given an equal opportunity of salvation. They say that if God shows mercy unto one and withholds it from another, such partiality is grossly unfair. To such an objector we reply in the language of Holy Writ: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? 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 honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Rom. 9:20, 21). And there we leave him. But some of the Lord's own people are disturbed by this difficulty. First, then, we would remind them that God is "light" (1 John 1:5), as well as "love." God is ineffably holy, as well as infinitely gracious. As the Holy One He abhors all evil, and as the moral governor of His creatures it becomes Him to eternally manifest His hatred of sin. As the gracious one He is pleased to bestow favors upon the undeserving, and to give an everlasting demonstration that He is "the Father of mercies." Now in election both of these designs are unmistakably accomplished. In the preterition and condemnation of the non-elect, God gives full proof of His holiness and justice, by visiting upon them the due reward of their iniquities. In the foreordination and salvation of His chosen people, God makes a clear display of the exceeding riches of His grace. Suppose that God had willed the destruction of the entire human race: then what? Had that been unjust? Certainly not. There could be no injustice whatever in visiting upon criminals the penalty of that law which they had defiantly broken. But what had then become of God's mercy? Had naught but inexorable justice been exercised by an offended God, then every descendant of fallen Adam had inevitably been consigned to hell. Now on the other hand. Suppose God had decided to open wide the floodgates of mercy, and carry the whole human race to heaven: then what? The wages of sin is death—eternal death. But if every man sinned, and none died, what evidence would there be that divine justice was anything more than an empty name? If God had saved all sinners, would not that necessarily inculcate light views of sin? If all were taken to heaven, should we not conclude that this was due us as a right? Because all are guilty, are the hands of divine mercy to be tied? If not, if mercy may be exercised, then is God obliged to wholly renounce His justice? If God be pleased to exercise mercy upon some, who have no claim thereto, cannot He also show Himself to be a just judge by inflicting upon others the punishment to which they are entitled? What wrong does a creditor do if he releases one and enforces his demands on another? Am I unjust because I bestow charity on a beggar, and decline doing so to his fellow? Then is the great God less free to impart His gifts where He pleases? Before the above objection can have any force it must be proved that every creature (because he is a creature) is entitled to everlasting bliss, and that even though he falls into sin and becomes a rebel against his maker, God is morally obliged to save him. To such absurdities is the objector necessarily reduced. "If eternal felicity be due to every man without exception, surely temporal felicity must be their due likewise: if they

have a right to the greater their claim to the less can hardly be doubted. If the Omnipotent is bound, on penalty of becoming unjust, to do all He can to make every individual happy in the next life; He must be equally bound to render every individual happy in this. But are all men happy? Look around the world and say Yes if you can. Is the Creator therefore unjust? none but Satan would suggest it: none but his echoes will affirm it. The Lord is a God of truth, and without iniquity: just and right is He. . . . Is the constituted order of things mysterious? impenetrably so. Yet the mysteriousness of God's dispensations evinces, not the injustice of the sovereign dispenser, but the shallowness of human comprehension, and the shortness of human sight. Let us then, by embracing and revering the Scriptural doctrines of predestination and providence, give God credit for being infinitely wise, just, and good; though for the present His way is in the deep, and His footsteps are not known" (A. Toplady, author of "Rock of Ages"). Finally, let it be pointed out that God never refuses mercy to any one who humbly seeks it. Sinners are freely invited to forsake their wicked ways and sue unto the Lord for pardon. The gospel feast is spread before them; if they refuse to partake thereof, if instead they loathe and turn away from it with disdain, is not their blood on their own heads? What sort of "justice" is it which requires God to bring to heaven those who hate Him? If God has performed a miracle of grace in you, my reader, and begotten in your heart a love for Him, be fervently thankful for the same, and disturb not your peace and joy by asking why He has not done the same for your fellow transgressors. Third, the gospel offer is meaningless. Those who refuse to receive the truth of divine election are fond of saying that the idea of God having eternally chosen one and passed by another of His creatures would reduce evangelical preaching to a farce. They argue that if God has foreordained a part of the human race to destruction, it can contain no bona fide offer of salvation to them. Let it first be pointed out that this objection does not press upon Calvinism alone, but applies with the same force to Arminianism. Free-willers deny the absoluteness of the divine decrees, yet they affirm the divine presence. Then let us turn the question round upon him: How can God in good faith bid men to repent and believe the gospel, when He infallibly foreknows they will never do so? If he supposes the former objection to be irrefutable, he will find our question is unanswerable by his own principles. Whatever difficulty may be presented at this point—and the writer has no thought of belittling it—one thing is clear: to whomsoever the gospel comes, God is sincere in bidding its hearers submit to its requirements, receive its glad tidings, and be saved thereby. Whether we can or cannot perceive how this is so, matters nothing; but the integrity of the divine character must be maintained at all costs. The mere fact that we are unable to discern the consistency and harmony between two distinct lines of truth, certainly does not warrant our rejecting either one of them. The doctrine of sovereign election is clearly revealed in the Scriptures; so too is the genuineness of the gospel offer to all who receive it: the one must be contended for as earnestly as the other. But do we not create our own difficulty by supposing that the salvation of men is God's sole object, or even His principal design, in the sending forth of the gospel? But what other ends, it may be asked, are accomplished thereby? Many. God's first end in the gospel, as in everything else, is the honor of His own great name and the glory of His Son. In the gospel the character of God and the excellency of Christ are more fully revealed than anywhere else. That a worldwide testimony should be borne thereto is infinitely fitting. That men should have made known to them the ineffable perfections of Him with whom they have to do is certainly most desirable. God, then, is magnified and the matchless worth of His Son proclaimed, even though not one sinner ever believed and was saved thereby. Again; the preaching of the gospel is the appointed instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit whereby the elect are brought to Christ. God does not disdain instrumental agencies, but is pleased to employ them: He who ordained the end, also appointed the means thereto. Just because God's elect are "scattered abroad" (John 11:52) among all nations, He has commanded that "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations" (Luke 24:47). It is by hearing the gospel they are called out of the world. By nature

God's elect are the children of wrath "even as others": they are lost sinners needing a Saviour, and apart from Christ there is no salvation for them. Therefore the gospel must be preached to and believed in by them before they can rejoice in the knowledge that their sins are forgiven. The gospel, then, is God's great winnowing fan, separating the wheat from the chaff, and gathering the former into His garner. Moreover, the non-elect gain much from the gospel even though it effects not their eternal salvation. The world exists for the elect's sake, yet all share the benefits of it. The sun shines upon the evil as well as the good; refreshing showers fall upon the lands of the wicked as truly as on the ground of the righteous. So God causes the gospel to reach the ears of many of the non-elect, as well as those of His favored people. Why? Because it is one of His powerful agencies to hold in check the wickedness of fallen men. Millions who are never saved by it, are reformed: their lusts are bridled, their outward course improved, and society is made more suitable for the saints to live in. Compare the peoples without the gospel and those who have it: in the case of the latter it will be found that higher morality obtains even where there is no spirituality. Finally, it should be pointed out that the gospel is made a real test of the characters of all who hear it. The Scriptures declare that man is a fallen, corrupt, and sin-loving creature. They insist that his mind is enmity against God, that he loves darkness rather than light, that he will not be subject to God under any circumstances. Yet who believes such humbling truths? But the response to the gospel by the non-elect demonstrates the verity of God's Word. Their continued impenitence, unbelief, and disobedience bears witness to their total depravity. God instructed Moses to go unto Pharaoh and make request that Israel should be allowed to worship Jehovah in the wilderness; yet in the next verse He told him, "I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, not by a mighty hand" (Ex. 3:18, 19). Then why send Moses on such an errand? To make manifest the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, the stubbornness of his will, and the justice of God in destroying such a wretch. Fourth, it destroys human responsibility. Arminians contend that to affirm God has unalterably decreed and fixed the history and destiny of every man, would be to demolish human accountability, that in such a case man would be no better than a machine. They insist that man's will must be free, free equally unto good and evil, or otherwise he would cease to be a moral agent. They argue that unless a person's actions are without compulsion, and are in accordance with his own desires and inclinations, he could not be justly held responsible for them. From this premise the conclusion is drawn that it is the creature and not the Creator who chooses and decides his eternal destiny, for if his acts are self-determined, they cannot be divinely determined. Such an objection is really a descent into the dark regions of philosophy and metaphysics, a specious attempt of the Enemy to lead us away from the realm of divine revelation. So long as we abide by the Holy Scriptures, we are safe, but as soon as we resort to reasoning upon spiritual matters we are certain to err. God has already made known all that He deems well for us to know in this life, and any attempt to be wise above that which is written is naught but folly and impiety. From the Scriptures it is clear as a sunbeam that man—whether considered as unfallen or fallen—is a responsible being, that he is made to reap whatsoever he sows, that he will yet have to render unto God an account of all his deeds and be judged accordingly; and nothing must be allowed to weaken the impression of these solemn facts upon our minds. The same line of reasoning has been employed by those who reject the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. It is contended that such a postulate entirely eliminates the human element from the Bible, that if we insist (as this writer, for one, most emphatically does) that not only the thoughts and sentiments but the very language itself is divine, that every word and syllable of the original manuscripts was God-breathed then the human penman employed in transmitting the same were merely automatons. But this we know is false. In like manner, with as much show of reason might the objector declare that Christ cannot be both divine and human: that if He be God, He cannot be man, and that if He be truly man, it follows that He cannot be God. What is reasoning worth, my reader, upon such matters! The books of the Bible were written by men,

written by them under the free exercise of their natural faculties, in such a way that the impress of their personalities is clearly left upon their several contributions. Nevertheless, they originated nothing: they were "moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21), and so completely were they controlled by Him, that not the slightest shadow of a mistake or error was made by them, and every thing they wrote was "the words which . . . the Holy Ghost teacheth" (1 Cor. 2:13). The redeemer is the Son of man, who was "in all things . . . made like unto His brethren" (Heb. 2:17); yet because His humanity was taken into union with His divine person everything He did possessed a unique and infinite value. Man is a moral agent, acting according to the desires and dictates of his nature: he is at the same time a creature, fully controlled and determined by his Creator. In each of these cases the divine and human elements coalesce, but the divine dominates, yet not to the exclusion of the human. "Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come." Then surely, may an objector reply, there can be no guilt resting on him who introduces that which is inevitable. Different far was the teaching of Christ: "but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh" (Matt. 18:7). "When ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be" (Mark 13:7). There is a must-be for these death-dealing scourges, yet that alters not the criminality of the instigators of them. There is a needs-be for "heresies" (I Cor. 11:19), yet the heretics themselves are blamable. Absolute necessity and human responsibility are, therefore, perfectly compatible, whether we can perceive their consistency or no. Fifth, it is objected against the truth of predestination that it supercedes the use of means and renders all incentives to human endeavor negatory. It is asserted that if God has elected a man unto salvation that he will be saved although he remains utterly unconcerned and continues to take his fill of sin; that if he has not been elected, then no efforts to obtain eternal life would be of any use. It is said that for men to be told they have been divinely ordained either to life or death by an eternal and immutable decree, they will at once conclude that it makes no difference whatever how they conduct themselves, since no acts of theirs can to the slightest degree either impede or promote the foreordination of God. Thus, it is argued, all motives to diligence are effectually neutralized, that it is subversive of every exhortation to morality and spirituality. Really this is the most senseless of all objections. It is not an objection at all against the Scriptural doctrine of predestination, but against an entirely different concept, one hatched in the brains of ignorance, or conceived by malignity in order to bring odium on the truth. The only sort of predestination to which this objection is applicable, would be an absolute pre-appointment to an end without any regard to the means. Stripped of all ambiguity, this objection presupposes that God secures His purposes without employing any instrumental agencies. Thus, when the objection is exposed in its nakedness we see at once what a sorry figure it cuts. Those whom God has elected to salvation He has chosen to it "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth" (II Thess. 2:13). The fact is that God decreed to bring His elect to glory in a way of sanctification, and in no other way than that; and throughout their entire course. He treats them as rational and accountable creatures, using suitable means and motives to draw out their hearts unto Himself. To affirm that if they are elected they will reach heaven whether sanctified or no, is just as silly as to say Abraham might have been the father of many nations although he had died in infancy, or that Hezekiah could have lived his extra fifteen years without food or sleep. Prior to the taking of Jericho it was divinely revealed to Joshua that he should be master of that place (6:2): the assurance was absolute. Did, then, Israel's leader conclude that no action was needed, that all might sit down and fold their arms? No; he arranged the procession around its walls in obedience to God's command, and the event was accomplished accordingly. We turn now briefly to consider some of the principal Scriptures used by those who resist the Truth. "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof" (Prov. 1:24, 25). "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people which walketh in a way that was not good,

after their own thoughts" (Isa. 65:2). "How often would I have gathered thy children together . . . and ye would not" (Matt. 23:37). We are told by Arminians that these declarations are irreconcilable with Calvinism, that they show plainly the will of God can be resisted and thwarted by men. But most certainly a disappointed and defeated God is not the God of Holy Writ. To draw from these verses the conclusion that the divine decrees fail of accomplishment is utterly erroneous: they have nothing whatever to do with God's eternal purpose, but instead, they respect only His external agencies, whereby He enforces man's responsibility, tests his character, and makes evident the wickedness of his heart. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). From these words it is urged that if God loves the world He desires the salvation of the whole human race, and that it was for this end He provided a Saviour for them. Here it is a case of being misled by the mere sound of a word, instead of ascertaining its real import. To say that God gave His Son with the design of providing salvation for all of Adam's children is manifestly absurd, for half of them had already died before Christ was born, and the vast majority of them perished in heathen darkness. Where is there the slightest hint in the Old Testament that God loved the Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Babylonians? And where else in the New Testament is there any statement that God loves all mankind? The "world" in John 3:16 (as in many other places) is a general term, used in contrast from Israel, who imagined they had a monopoly on redemption. God's love extends far beyond the bounds of Judaism, embracing His elect scattered among all nations. "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40). Strange to say this is one of the verses appealed to by those who will not have election at any price. They suppose it teaches the free will unto good of fallen man, and that Christ seriously intended the salvation of those who despise and reject Him. But what is there in these words which declares that Christ seriously intended their salvation? Do they not rather signify that He was here preferring a solemn charge against them? So far from our Lord's utterance implying that these men had the power within themselves to come to Him, they rather declare the perversity and stubbornness of their wills. Instead of any inclination for the Holy One, they hated Him. "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth . . . who gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:4, 6). In order to understand these words they must not be considered separately, but in connection with their setting. From the context it is unmistakably evident that the "all men" God wills to be saved and for whom Christ died are all men without regard to national distinctions. Timothy's ministry was exercised chiefly among Jewish converts, many of whom still retained their racial prejudices, so that they were unwilling to submit to the authority of heathen rulers. This was why the Pharisees had sought to discredit Christ before all people when they asked Him whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Caesar. Paul here tells Timothy that Christians were not only to yield obedience unto Gentile rulers, but to pray for them as well (vv. 1, 2). In 1 Timothy 2 Paul struck at the very root of the prejudice which Timothy was called upon to combat. That law of Moses was now set aside, the distinction which so long obtained between the lineal descendants of Abraham and the rest of mankind no longer obtained: God willed the salvation of Gentiles and Jews alike. Note particularly these details. First, "There is one God [see Rom. 3:29, 30], and one mediator between God and [not "the Jews" but] men" (v. 5). Second, "Who gave himself a ransom for all [indefinitely], to be testified in due time." (v. 6): when Christ was crucified it was not generally understood, not even among His disciples, that He gave Himself for Gentiles and Jews alike; but in "due time" (particularly under Paul's ministry), it was clearly "testified." Third, "whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle . . . a teacher of the Gentiles" (v. 7). Fourth, "I [with apostolic authority] will therefore that men pray every where" (v. 8): those professing the faith of Christ must drop at once and forever their Jewish notions and customs—Jerusalem no longer possessed any peculiar sanctity. "We see Jesus . . . that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). Have you taken the trouble to ascertain how that expression is used elsewhere in the New Testament? "And then shall every man have praise of God" (1

Cor. 4:5). Does that mean all of Adam's race? How can it, when "depart from me, ye cursed" will be the portion of many? "The head of every man is Christ" (1 Cor. 11:3): was He the Head of Judas or Nero? "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man" (1 Cor. 12:7). But some are "sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude v. 19 and cf. Rom. 8:9). It is "every one in God's family that is meant in all of these epistle passages: note how the "every one" of Hebrews 2:9 are defined as "many sons" (v. 10), "brethren" (v. 11), "children" (vv. 12-14). "There shall be false teachers among you who truly shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them" (1 Peter 2:1). This verse is often cited in an attempt to disprove that Christ died for the elect only, which only serves to show what desperate shifts our opponents are reduced to. Why the verse makes no reference unto Christ at all, still less to His death! The Greek word here is not kurios at all—the one commonly used when referring to the Lord Jesus; but despotes. The only places where it occurs, when applied to a divine person, are Luke 22:9; Acts 4:24; 2 Timothy 2:22; Jude 4; Revelation 6:10, in all of which God the Father is plainly intended, and in most of them as manifestly distinguished from Christ. "Buying" here has reference to temporal deliverance, being taken from Deuteronomy 32:6. Peter was writing to Jews, who boasted loudly they were a people purchased by the Lord, and therefore he used this expression to aggravate the impiety of these false teachers among the Jews. "Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Here again a false meaning is extracted by divorcing a snippet from its context. The key to this verse is found in the word "us-ward": "the Lord is . . . longsuffering to us-ward," for He is not willing that "any" of them should perish. And who are they? Why, the "beloved" of verse 1 (those mentioned at the beginning of the First Epistle, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit"), and because He has purposed that "all" of them should come to repentance," He defers the second coming of Christ (vv. 3, 4). Christ will not return till the last of His people are safely in the Ark of Salvation.

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