

The Doctrine of Election 7. Its Design

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Transcript

The Doctrine of Election

7. Its Design

In the last chapter we have sought to go right back to the very beginning of all things and trace out the order of God's counsels in connection with His eternal decree in election, so far as they are revealed in Holy Writ. Now we shall seek to project our thoughts forward to the future, and contemplate God's grand design, or what it was He ordained His people unto. Here we shall be on more familiar ground to many of our readers, yet we must not overlook the fact that even this phase of our subject will be entirely new to quite a few of those who will scan these lines, and for their sakes especially it will behoove us to proceed slowly, taking nothing for granted, but furnishing clear Scriptural proof for what we advance. That which is to be before us is inexpressibly blessed, O that it may please God to so quicken the hearts of both writer and reader that we may actually rejoice and adore. 1. God's design in our election was that we should be holy: "According as 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). There has been much difference of opinion among the commentators as to whether this refers to that imperfect holiness of grace which we have in this world, or to that perfect holiness of glory which will be ours in the world to come. Personally, we believe that both are included, but that the latter is chiefly intended; and so we shall expound it. First, of that perfect holiness is heaven. That this is the prime reference appears from the amplifying clause "and without blame before him": it is such a holiness that God Himself can find no flaw in. Now the imperfect holiness which the saints have personally in this life, though it be a holiness before God in truth and sincerity, yet it is not one "without blame": it is not one God can fully delight in. Second, as God hath ordained us to perfect holiness in the world to come, so He hath ordained us to an evangelical holiness in this world, or else we shall never come to heaven: unless we be made pure in heart here, we shall never see God there. Holiness is the image of God upon the soul, a likeness to Him which makes us capable of communion with Him; and therefore the apostle declares that we should "follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). As reason is the foundation of learning, no man being able to attain it unless he hath reason, so we cannot reach the glory of Heaven unless the principle of holiness be divinely communicated to us. Therefore, as God's first design in our election was that we should be holy before Him, let us now make this our paramount concern. Here too is solid comfort for those who find indwelling sin to be their heaviest burden: though thy holiness be most imperfect in this life, yet is it the earnest of a perfect holiness in the life to come. Holiness must needs be the fruit of our being chosen in Christ, for it is essential to our having a being in Him. It would be a contradiction in terms to say that God chose a man to

be in Christ and did not make him to be holy. If God ordains a man to be in Christ, then He ordains him to be a member of Christ, and there must be conformity between Head and members. The election of grace was given to Christ as His spouse, and husband and wife must be of the same kind and image. When Adam was to have a wife she must be the same specie: none of the beasts was fit to be a partner for him. God brought them all before him, but among them all "For Adam was not found a help meet for him" (Gen. 2:20), because they had not the same image and kind. So if God chooses a man in Christ—the Holy One—he must necessarily be holy, and this is the reason why our holiness is annexed to our being chosen in Him (Eph. 1:4). God, then, has decreed that His people shall be perfectly holy before Him, that they shall be in His presence forever, there to enjoy Him everlastingly, and delight themselves in that enjoyment, for as the Psalmist tells us "in thy presence is fullness of joy." Therein is revealed to us of what consists the ineffable bliss of our eternal inheritance: it is perfect holiness, perfect love to God; this is the essence of celestial glory. If the entire apostolate had spent the whole of their remaining lifetime in an attempt to depict and describe what heaven is, they could have done no more than enlarge upon these words: perfect holiness in God's presence, perfect love to Him, perfect enjoyment of Him, even as we are beloved by Him. This is heaven, and this is what God has decreed to bring His people unto. This is His first design in our election: to bring us into an unblemished holiness before Him. 2. God's design in our election was that we should be His sons: "Having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph. 1:5 ASV.). Holiness is that which fits us for heaven, for an unholy person could not possibly enjoy heaven: were he to enter it, he would be altogether out of his native element. Holiness, then, is that which constitutes the saints meetness for their inheritance in light (Col. 1:12). But adoption is that which gives the right to the glory of heaven, being bestowed upon them as a dignity or prerogative (John 1:12). As we have pointed out on other occasions, the last two words of Ephesians 1:4 belong properly to verse 5: "In love having predestinated us unto the adoption." God's love unto His dear Son was so great that, having chosen us in Him, His heart went out toward us as one with Christ, and therefore did He ordain us unto this further honor and privilege. This agrees perfectly with "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). God might have made us perfectly holy in Christ and added no further blessing to it. "Ye have your fruits unto holiness" says the apostle (Rom. 6:22), and precious fruit that is; but he did not stop there—"and the end everlasting life:" that is added as a further fruit and privilege. In like manner, God added adoption to holiness: as the Psalmist says "the Lord will give grace and glory" (84:11). As our God, He chose us to holiness, according to that express saying "ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2). But as He became our Father in Christ, He predestinated us unto the adoption of sons. Here, then, is the twofold relation which the Most High sustains to His people in and through Christ, and there is the consequent twofold blessing of our persons because of Christ. Observe how minutely this corresponds with "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). By adoption we become God's sons in law, as by regeneration we are made His children in nature. By the new birth we become (experimentally) members of God's family; by adoption we have the legal status of sons, with all the high privileges that relationship involves: "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts" (Gal. 4:6). Adoption makes known the high prerogatives and blessings which are ours by virtue of union with Christ, the legal right which we have unto all the blessings we enjoy, both here and hereafter. As the apostle reminds us, if we are children then are we "heirs," co-heirs with Christ; yea, heirs of God (Rom. 8:17)—to possess and enjoy God as Christ doth. "Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son-in-law?" exclaimed David (1 Sam. 18:23), when it was suggested that he marry Michal: you may haply be the king's favorite and he may make you great, but to become his

son-in-law is the highest honor of all. This is why we are told immediately after I John 3:1, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him" (v. 2)—like Him in our proportion: as He perfectly enjoys God, so shall we. Let it be duly noted that it is "through Jesus Christ" we are sons and heirs of God. Christ is our pattern in election, the One to whose image we are predestinated to be conformed. Christ is God's natural Son, and we become (by union with Christ) God's legal sons. "That he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29) signifies that God did set up Christ as the prototype and masterpiece, and made us to be so many little copies and models of Him. Every dignity we possess, every blessing we enjoy—save our election when God chose us in Him—we owe to Christ. He is the virtual cause of our adoption. Christ, as we have said, is God's natural Son; how, then, do we become His sons? Thus: God gave us to Christ to be married to Him, and He betrothed us to Him from everlasting, and so we become sons-in-law unto God, even as a woman comes to be a man's daughter-in-law by marrying his son. We owe our adoption to our relation unto Christ's person, and not to His atoning work. Our adoption as originally it was in predestination bestowed upon us, was not founded upon redemption or Christ's obedience, but on Christ's being God's natural Son. Our justification is indeed grounded upon Christ's obedience and sufferings: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph. 1:7). But our adoption and becoming sons-in-law to God is through Christ's being His natural Son, and we His brethren in relation to His person. "God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9). That fellowship or communion involves our participation of His dignities and whatever else in Him we were capable of; just as a woman acquires a legal title unto all the possessions of the man she marries. As Christ being God's natural Son was the foundation of His work possessing infinite worth, so our adoption is founded on our relation to His person, and then our justification upon His meritorious work. We must, however, add this word of caution to what has just been pointed out: when we fell in Adam we lost all our privileges, and therefore Christ was fain to purchase them anew; and hence it follows that adoption, and all other blessings, are the fruits of His merit so far as their actual bestowment is concerned. Thus the apostle tells us Christ became incarnate "to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:5)—our sins and bondage under the law and its curse interposing an obstacle against God's actual bestowment of adoption. But mark the minute accuracy of the language used: Christ's redemption is not said to procure adoption for us, but only that we might receive it. That which procured adoption was our relation to Christ as God's sons-in-law: this being God's purpose from everlasting. Let us duly consider now the greatness of this privilege. Adam was created holy, and Luke 3:38 tells us he was "the son of God," but nowhere is it said that he was the son of God by adoption through Christ. So too in Job 38:7 the angels are called "morning stars" and "sons of God," yet we are never told they are such by adoption through Christ. They were "sons" indeed by creation, for God made them; but not sons-in-law of God by being married unto His Son, which is a grace and dignity peculiar to believers. Thus we excel the angels by our special relation to the Son of God's love: Christ nowhere calls the angels His "brethren," as He doth us! This is borne out by Hebrews 12:22 where, in contrast from the angels mentioned previously, we read of "the Church of the firstborn," a title denoting superiority (Gen. 49:3): we being related to God's "Firstborn," have higher privilege of sonship than the angels have. "A figure may perhaps help us here. A father chooses a bride for his son, as Abraham chose one of his own kin for Isaac, and gives her a goodly dowry, besides presenting her with bridal ornaments, such as Eliezer put upon Rebekah. But on becoming the spouse of his son, she becomes his daughter, and now his affections flow forth to her, not only as a suitable bride for his dear son; not only does he admire her beauty and grace, and is charmed with the sweetness of her disposition, but he is moved also with fatherly love towards her as adopted unto himself, and thus occupying a newer and nearer relationship. Figures

are, of course, necessarily imperfect, and as such must not be pressed too far; but if the one which we have adduced at all help us to a clearer understanding of the wondrous love of God in the adoption of us unto Himself, it will not be out of place. We thus see that predestination to the adoption of children, is a higher, richer, and greater blessing than being chosen unto holiness, and may thus be said to follow upon it as an additional and special fruit of God's love. "But the love of God, in predestinating the church unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, has even a deeper root than viewing her as the bride of His dear Son. It springs out of and is most closely and intimately connected with the true, real, and eternal sonship of Jesus. Being chosen in Christ, the elect become the sons of God. Why? Because He is the true, real, and essential Son of the Father; and thus, as in union with Him, who is the Son of God by nature, they become the sons of God by adoption. Were He a Son merely by office, or by incarnation, this would not be the case, for He would then only be a Son by adoption Himself. But being the Son of God by eternal subsistence, He can say, 'Behold I and the children which Thou hast given Me: I Thy Son by nature, they Thy sons by adoption.' We see, then, that so great, so special was the love of God to His only begotten Son, that, viewing the Church in union with Him, His heart embraced Her with the same love as that wherewith He loved Him" (J. C. Philpot). 3. God's design in our election was that we should be saved: saved from the fall and its effects, from sin and its attendant consequences. This particular ordination of God was upon His foreview of our defection in Adam, who was our natural head and representative; for as pointed out in previous chapters, God decreed to permit the fall of His people in order to the greater manifestation of His own grace and increased glory of the Mediator. Obviously the very term "salvation" implies sin, and that in turn presupposes the fall. But this determination of God to suffer His people to fall into sin and then deliver them from it, was entirely subservient to His prime design concerning the elect and the ultimate glory to which He ordained them. The subordination of this third design of God in our election to those we have already considered appears in "who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9). If the above Scripture be carefully analyzed it will be seen, first, that God formed a "purpose" concerning His people and that "grace" was given them in Christ Jesus "before the world began" either historically or in the mind of God: the reference being to His sovereign act in singling them out from the pure mass of creatureship, giving them being in Christ, and bestowing upon them the grace of sonship. Second, that God "hath saved us" (the reference being to believers) and "called us with a holy calling," which refers to what takes place in time when He brings us forth from our death in sin by an effectual call unto holiness (cf. Titus 3:5). Third, that this saving and calling for us was "not according to our works" either actual or foreseen, but "according to His own purpose," i.e., was based upon His original intention that we should be His sons. Neither our merits (for we have none), nor our misery, moved God to save us, but His having given us to Christ from the beginning. As we have previously pointed out, God assigned unto Christ a double relation to His people: "Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the Body" (Eph. 5:23). In the same Epistle He is seen first as the Head in whom we were originally "blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places" (1:3); later, He is presented as Saviour, as the One who "loved the church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it" (5:25, 26). In speaking of Him as "the Saviour of the Body" it is intimated that He is the Saviour of none else, which is clearly confirmed by "therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:10): note, not merely, "Salvation" indefinitely, but "the salvation" decreed by God for His own. Nor does "we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe" (1 Tim. 4:10) in anywise clash with this: the "living God" has reference to the Father, and "Saviour" is more correctly rendered "Preserver" in Baxter's Interlinear. Now this "salvation" which God has decreed for His elect, viewed as

fallen in Adam, may be summed up under two heads: from the guilt and penalty of sin, and from its dominion and power, these having to do, respectively, with the legal and experimental sides. They are accomplished in time by what Christ did for us, and by what the Spirit works in us. Of the former it is written, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:9); of the latter we read "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (1 Thess. 2:13). It is by the latter we obtain evidence and assurance of the former: "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost" (1 Thess. 1:4, 5). When our salvation from sin is consummated we shall be delivered from the very presence of it.

4. God's design in our election was that we should be for Christ: "All things were created by him, and for him," (Col. 1:16). God not only chose us in Christ and predestinated us unto sonship through Him, but gave us to Him, so that Christ was likewise the end of God's purpose in choosing to perfect holiness and adoption. God having a natural Son, the second person in the Trinity, whom He designed to make visible in human nature, through an union of it to His Son, did decree for His greater glory to ordain us unto the adoption of sons to Him and as brethren unto Him, so that He should not be alone, but rather "the firstborn among many brethren." As in Zechariah 13:7 the man Christ Jesus is designated Jehovah's "fellow," so from Psalm 45:7 we learn that God predestinated others to be for his Son, to be His companions: "Hath anointed thee above thy fellows. The subject of the divine decrees is so vast in its range (whether we look backward or forward) and so comprehensive in its scope (when we contemplate all that is involved and included in it), that it is far from being an easy task to present a summarized sketch (which is as high as this writer aspires) of the same; and when attempt is made to furnish an orderly outline and deal separately with its most essential and distinctive features, it is almost impossible to prevent a measure of overlapping; yet if such repetition renders it easier for the reader to take in the prime aspects, our object will be accomplished. Part of what we now wish to contemplate in connection with God's design in our election was somewhat anticipated—unavoidably so—in the chapter on the nature of election, when, in showing that God's original intention was anterior to His foreview of our fall, we touched upon the positive side of His design. We have sought to point out the infinite distance between the creature and the Creator, the high and lofty One, and that because of the mutability of our first estate by nature there was a necessity of super creation grace if the condition and standing of either men or angels was to be immutably fixed, which God was pleased to appoint by an election of grace. And therefore did God by that election also ordain those whom He singled out unto a super-creation union with Himself and communication of Himself, as our highest and ultimate end, which is far above that relation we had to Him by mere creation; this being accomplished by and through Christ. "Yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto Him and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through Him" (1 Cor. 8:6, ASV.). Let us note first the discriminating language used in this verse: there is a pointed difference made here between the "us" and the "all things," as of a select and special company, which is repeated in the second half of the verse. We and all other things are from the Father—"of Him" or by His will and power, as the originating cause: this is common to "us" and all of His creatures. But the "we" He speaks of as a severed remnant, set apart to some higher excellency and dignity, and this special company is also referred to as "we through Him" (the Lord Jesus) in contrast from the "through whom are all things." The A.V. gives "one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in (Greek eis) Him," which is quite warrantable, the reference there being to God's taking us into Himself out of a special love and by a special union with Himself: compare "the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father" (1 Thess. 1:1). But the Greek also imports our being singled out unto His glory, "for Him": our being in Him is the foundation of our being for Him. The distinction to which we have just adverted receives further

illustration and confirmation in "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:6). Here again we find the same difference used about the phrases of the all things and the us. Of the all things God is said to be "above all," whereby we understand the sublimity and transcendency of the divine nature and essence as being infinitely superior to that being which all creatures have by participation from Him. Yet, second, the transcendent One is also imminent, near to, piercing "through" all creatures. He is present with all, yet holding a different being from all—as the air permeates all our dwellings, be they palaces or hovels. But third, when it comes to the saints, it is "in you all": this is sovereign grace making them to differ from all the rest. God is so united to them as to be made one with them, in a special manner and by a special relationship. How amazing is that grace which has taken such creatures as we are into union with One so elevated and ineffable as God is! This is the very summit of our privilege and happiness. If we compare Isaiah 57:15 with 66:1, 2 we shall see how God Himself has there emphasized both the sublimity and the transcendency of His own person and the marvel and measure of His grace toward us. In the former God speaks of Himself as "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit"; while in the other He declares "The heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool. . .but to this man will I look even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit." How this demonstrates the infinite condescension of His favor that picks up animated dust, indwells us, communicates Himself to us as to none others: we have a participation of Him such as the angels have not! Before proceeding further with our exposition of 1 Corinthians 8:6 so far as it bears upon our present subject, perhaps we should digress for a moment and make a brief remark upon the words "But to us there is but one God, the Father," which has been grossly perverted by those who deny a trinity of persons in the Godhead. The term "Father" here (as in Matt. 5:16; James 3:9, etc.) is not used of the first person in contradistinction to the second and third, but refers to God as God, to the Divine nature as such. If it could be shown from this verse that Christ is not God in the most absolute sense (see Titus 2:13), then by parity of reason it necessarily follows that "one Lord" would deny the Father is Lord, giving the lie to Revelation 11:15, etc. The main thought of 1 Corinthians 8:6 becomes quite intelligible when we perceive that this verse furnishes a perfect antithesis and opposition to the false devices of the heathen religion mentioned in verse 5. Among the pagans there were many "gods" or supreme deities and many "lords" or middle persons and mediators. But Christians have only one supreme Deity, the Triune God, and only one Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. John 17:3). Christ has a double "Lordship." First a natural, essential, underived one, belonging to Him considered simply as the second person of the Trinity. Second (to which 1 Cor. 8:6 refers), a derived, economical and dispensatory Lordship, received by commission from God, considered as God-man. It was to this allusion was made previously, wherein it was stated that God decreed the man Christ Jesus should be taken into union with His Son, and so appointed Him His "sovereign end." The administration of the universe has been placed under Him: all power is committed to Him (John 5:22, 27; Acts 2:36; Heb. 1:2). Christ as God-man has equal authority with God (John 5:23), yet under Him, as Corinthians 3:23, "ask of Me" (Ps. 2:8), Philippians 2:11 shows. The next thing in 1 Corinthians 8:6 we would dwell upon is the clause "and we in Him" (Greek) or as the margin has it "we for Him." Such a supernatural union with God and communication of God is His ultimate design towards us in His choosing of us. Hence it is that we so often read that "for the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure" (Ps. 135:4). "This people have I formed for myself" (Isa. 43:21). "I have reserved to myself seven thousand men" (Rom. 11:4). This choosing of us is not merely a setting apart from all others to be His peculiar treasure (Exod. 19:5), nor only that God hath separated us for His peculiar worship and service to be holy unto Himself (Jer. 2:3), nor only that we should show forth His praise (Isa. 43:21), for even the wicked shall do that (Prov. 16:4; Phil. 2:11); but we are peculiarly for

Himself and His glory, wholly in a way of grace and loving kindness. All that which grace can do for us in communicating God Himself to us, and all that He will do for us unto the magnifying of His glory, arises wholly out of the free favor He shows us. In other words, God will have no more glory in us and on us, than arises out of what He bestows in grace upon us, so that our happiness as the effect will extend as far as His own glory as the end. How wondrous, how grand, how inexpressibly blessed, that God's glory in us should not be severed in anything from our good: God has so ordered things that not only are the two things inseparable, but co-extensive. If, therefore, God has designed to have a manifestative glory unto the uttermost, He will show forth unto us grace unto the uttermost. It is not merely that God bestows gifts, showers blessings, but communicates to us Himself to the utmost that we as creatures are capacitated for. This is so far above poor human reason that nothing but faith can apprehend it, that we are yet to be "filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:19). In communicating Himself, God communicates the whole of Himself, whether of His divine perfections so far as to bless us therewith, or of all three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for us to enjoy and have fellowship with. All in God shall as truly serve to make the elect blessed (according to a creature capacity) as serves to make Him blessed in His own immense infinity. If we have God Himself, and the whole of Himself, then are we "heirs of God" (Rom. 8:17), for we are "joint heirs with Christ"; and that God Himself is Christ's inheritance is proved by His own declaration "the Lord is the portion of mine inheritance" (Ps. 16:5). More than this we cannot have or wish: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Rev. 21:7). In consequence of having chosen us for Himself, God reserves Himself for us, and all that is in Him. If Romans 11:4 speaks of God's having "reserved to himself" the elect (see v. 5 and note the "also"), so 1 Peter 1:4 tells that God is "reserved in heaven for us" as is clear from the fact that God Himself is our "inheritance," and none shall share in this wondrous inheritance but the destined heirs. And there He waits, as it were, till such time as we are gathered to Himself. There He has waited throughout the centuries, suffering the great ones of each generation to pass by, reserving Himself (as in election He did design) for His saints—"as if a great prince in a dream or vision should see the image of a woman yet to be born, and should so fall in love with his foreview of her that he should reserve himself till she is born and grown up, and will not think of or entertain any other love" (T. Goodwin). Christian reader, if God hath such love for thee, what ought to be thy love to Him! If He hath given Himself wholly to thee, how entire should be thy dedication unto Him! When God hath brought us safely through all the trials and troubles of this lower world to heaven, then will He make it manifest that His first and ultimate design in electing us was for Himself, and therefore our first welcome there will be a presenting of us to Himself: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24), which is here mentioned that we might praise and give Him glory beforehand. The reference here is (we believe) not to Christ (that we have in Eph. 5:27; Heb. 2:13), but to the Father Himself, as "the presence of his glory" intimates, that being what we are "presented" before. It is the same Person who presents us to Himself whose glory it is. This is further borne out by "to the only wise God our Saviour [note the "Father" is distinctly called "our Saviour" in Titus 3:4] be glory and majesty, dominion and power, now and ever. Amen" (v. 25), all which attributes are those of God the Father in the usual current of doxologies. God will present us to Himself "with exceeding joy." This "presentation" takes place at the first coming of each individual saint into heaven, though it will be more formally repeated when the entire election of grace arrive there. As we on our part—and with good reason—shall rejoice, so God on His part, too. He is pleased to present us with great joy to Himself, as making our entrance into Heaven more His own concern than it is ours. This presenting us to Himself "before the presence of His glory" is a matter of great joy to Himself to have us so with Himself: as parents are overjoyed when children long absent return home to them—compare the joy of the Father in Luke 15. It is because His purpose is accomplished, His

eternal design realized, His glory secured, that He rejoices. With this agrees, "He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love: he will joy over thee with singing" (Zeph. 3:17). It was for Himself God first chose us as His ultimate end, and this is now perfected. Another Scripture which teaches that God has chosen His people for Himself is "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Christ to himself" (Eph. 1:5). The Greek word rendered "to Himself" may as indifferently (with a variation of the aspirate) be rendered "for Him," so that with equal warrant and propriety we may understand it, first, as relating to God the Father, He having predestinated us to Himself as His ultimate end of this adoption; or second, to Jesus Christ, who is also one end in God thus predestinating us unto adoption. That the preposition *eis* often signifies "for" as denoting the end or final cause, appears from many places: for example, in the very next verse, "to [or "for"] the praise of the glory of His grace" as His grand design; so too in Romans 11:36 "to Him" (or "for Him") are all things." We shall therefore take this expression in its most comprehensive sense and give it a twofold meaning according to its context and the analogy of faith. God's having predestinated us "to Himself" is not to be understood as referring primarily or alone to adopting us as sons to Himself, but as denoting distinctly and immediately His having elected and predestinated us to His own great and glorious self, and for His great and blessed Son. In other words, the clause we are now considering points to another and larger end of His predestinating us than simply our adoption; although that be mentioned as a special end, yet it is but a lower and subordinate end in comparison with God's predestinating us to Himself. First, He chose us in Christ unto an impeccable holiness which would satisfy His own nature; in addition, He predestinated us unto the honor and glory of adoption; but over and above all, His grace reached to the utmost extent by predestinating us to Himself—the meaning and marvel of which we have already dwelt upon. God's having predestinated us "to Himself" denotes a special propriety in us. The cattle upon a thousand hills are His, and they honor Him in their kind (Isa. 43:20), but the Church is His peculiar treasure and medium of glory. The elect are consecrated to Him out of the whole in a peculiar way: "Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase" (Jer. 2:3), which denotes His consecrating them to Himself, as the type in Numbers 18 explains it. Christ made a great matter of this in God's taking us to be His: "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine" (John 17:9); so too the apostle Paul emphasized the same note in "The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Tim. 2:19). It denotes too a choosing of us to be holy before Him, as consecrating us unto His service and worship, which is specially instanced in Romans 11:4, where the "I have reserved to Myself" is in contrast from the rest which He left to the worshipping of Baal. But above all, it imports His taking us into the nearest oneness and communion with and participation of Himself. Consider now the phrase in Ephesians 1:5 as meaning "for Him," that is, for Jesus Christ. The Greek words *autos* and *hautos* are used promiscuously, either for "him" or "himself," so that we are not straining it at all in rendering "for Him." It is in the prepositions which are used with reference to Christ in connection with the Church's relation to Him that His glory is told out: they are in Him, through Him, for Him. Each of these is employed here in Ephesians 1:4, 5 and in that order: we were chosen in Him as our Head, predestinated to adoption through Him as the means of our sonship, and appointed for Him as an end—the honor of Christ as well as the glory of His own grace was made God's aim in His predestinating of us. The same three things are attributed to Christ in connection with creation and providence: see Greek of Colossians 1:16. But it is of God the Father alone, as the fountain, we read "of Him" (the Originator) (Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 5:18). First God decreed that His own dear Son should be made visibly glorious in a human nature, through an union with it to His own person; and then for His greater glory God decreed us to be adopted sons through Him, as brethren unto Him, for God would not His Son in humanity should be alone, but have "fellows" or companions to enhance His glory. First, by His comparison with them, for He is "anointed above His fellows" (Ps. 45:7), being "the firstborn

among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). Second, God gave to His Son an unique honor and matchless glory by ordaining Him to be God-man, and for the enhancing of the same He ordained that there should be those about Him who might see His glory and magnify Him for the same (John 17:24). Third, God ordained us to adoption that Christ might be the means of all the glory of our sonship, which we have through Him, for He is not only our pattern in predestination, but the virtual cause of it. Now in God's councils of election, the consideration of Christ's assumption of man's nature was not founded upon the supposition or foresight of the Fall, as our being predestinated for Him as the end intimates. Surely, this is obvious. Why, to bring Christ into the world only on account of sin and for the work of redemption were to subject Him unto us, making our interests the end of His becoming incarnate! That is indeed to get things upside down, for Christ, as God-man is the end of us, and of all things else. Moreover, this were to subordinate the infinite value of His person to the benefits we receive from His work; whereas redemption is far inferior to the gift of Himself unto us and we unto Him. It might also be shown that redemption itself was designed by God first for Christ's own glory rather than to meet our need. N. B. We are again indebted to the invaluable writings of Thomas Goodwin.

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