

THE ELECT

A SERMON

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AT EXETER HALL

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“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?” Romans 8:33

Is there in this vast assembly one that would dare to deny that “Happy is the people that is in such a case?” Does not our misery, our present and final misery, lie in that which is laid to our charge, and that by a righteous Judge? And to be placed where nothing can be finally laid to our charge is certainly to be placed in the best of all positions. Truly, in such a position as this, the sons of this freedom are indeed as plants grown up in their youth; they are indeed as green olive trees in the house of their God, trusting in the mercy of God forever. The daughters of this freedom are indeed as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace. Truly there is no dignity like it. This is a land, this land of gospel freedom, affording all manner of store, “Happy,” then, “is the people whose God is the Lord the people whom he has chosen for his own inheritance. And before I enter upon the subject before me, I would just say to you that our text does not mean that the people of God have no faults; it does not mean that they are any more free than other people from the common responsibilities of life; and it does not mean that they are not to be blamed for wrong as well as other people. Their religion makes no difference as to their responsibilities in life; it makes them understand them better, and appeal to the Lord to direct them; but nevertheless, these people have their faults, and they confess them; but still they have not so many faults as the world generally lays to their account; for they are the very people, the very sect, that is everywhere spoken against; and the enemy has in all ages taken care that both the doctrine and the people who hold that doctrine should fare very badly in this world. But with all the drawbacks, bless the Lord there are in our own favored land I hope some thousands that are brought to know that if they ever escape the wrath to come, and if they come into a possession of that inheritance which is incorruptible, it must be by grace from first to last.

Our text then presents itself in a two-fold form. Here are, first, *the elect of God*; and then, secondly, *here is their freedom*.

First. I notice first, *the elect of God*. The question arises, how are the elect of God distinguished from other men? and this shall be my first business this evening, to point out to you how the elect of God are distinguished from other men. As I read out these distinctions, I may perhaps speak out the very feelings of some who have that distinction from the world, and indeed, have most of those distinctions from the world which mark them as the objects of God's eternal love; and yet these same persons are not yet brought to understand the great truth of eternal election, and consequently are standing out on the side of antipathy to it. But never mind; if the heart be right, the head will come right in due time; if the experience be right, the judgment will come right in due time. Your poverty and helplessness will teach you very, very many lessons; and those experiences and troubles you have will cause you to read God's word very prayerfully and find mysteries therein that you never dreamt of. The first feature I notice that distinguishes the elect of God from other people is that *of prayer*. They are a praying people; they pray perseveringly, and they pray practically, and they pray effectually. I shall describe to you, with all the minuteness I can, what this real prayer is, as the first feature that distinguishes the elect of God from other people. Let us look then at the word of God upon this matter. Here is a sinner, brought to feel that he is in a lost condition; and he reads that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; and that man is led to see that after all, those people that are the people of God, must of all people, be the happiest people; though this man as yet may not understand how the Lord has made them his people; yet this poor sinner begins to see that there is nothing like being a Christian, nothing like having the everlasting God on our side; as the apostle says, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" I will therefore notice some of *the prayers of God's elect*. The first I take is in the 106th Psalm; where the Psalmist has these words; "Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that you bear unto your people; O visit me with your salvation." Now my hearer, you are either seeking that favor by which the Lord remembers his people, or you are not; you are either saying in your soul before God, "Visit me with my salvation," or you are not; and it is only when you are brought to feel that you are a poor, lost sinner, that you can use this language; "Remember me with the favor that you bear unto your people; O visit me with your salvation." And the Psalmist does not stop here; and may you not stop here! may the Lord help you to go on with the prayer as far as the Psalmist went; you see how far he went on with this prayer; until he came into the very theme of our text; he says, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that you bear unto your people; O visit me with your salvation; that I may see the good of your chosen." Why, perhaps to some of you this may seem exceedingly strange; you will say, what! is there any good in election, in such a doctrine as that? All the good is in that, my hearer; for if a man be not chosen, and be not given to Christ, then he does not belong to Christ. Therefore, may you in your prayer, (if you have a praying heart at all,) not stop short, but go on to where the Psalmist went; "That I may see the good of your chosen; that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation, that I may glory with your inheritance." You see how simple this prayer is, my hearer, I must leave you to judge whether you see or know that as a sinner you are under wrath, that you need God's mercy, that you need His favor, that you need His salvation; and whether you can pray the prayer which is there recorded. You see that he went on with his prayer till he came, as I have said, into the very theme of my text. And this prayer is sure to be successful. This is one of the features that distinguish God's elect from other men; they pray as no other men do, they pray for what no other men pray for, they seek that which no other men seek; they seek to see the good of God's chosen, they seek to be saved by his salvation; they seek to dwell in the order of his new covenant and eternal establishment. "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Again, prayer. I hope that most of you perhaps that is too charitable, yet I should hope that most of you have come

this evening with the desire to hear something concerning Jesus Christ and the way of salvation; that may be not only a lifetime, but an everlasting blessing to you. What, therefore, is going to house the of God but practical prayer? It is like going to the wells for water; it is like going to the tree for fruit, or for leaves to heal your wounds; it is like going to your Father's house, and knocking and saying, "Open unto me, it is like practically waiting at wisdom's gates, and watching the posts of her doors; and happy that minister that is filled with such grace, such wisdom, and such power, that he instrumentally helps to keep up in his hearers all their life time long a desire, a thirst, a longing after these things; so that although they do not always hear him with the same savor or with the same power, yet there is always something *moorish* about what he says; this is what I want; this is what I want to enjoy; such an one will go praying on all through life, and go from strength to strength; presently a dying hour comes; the body falls asleep, the soul departs in all the triumphs of the cross; for they shall not pray in vain; "the Lord has not said to the seed of Jacob, seek you me in vain."

But I will come to the New Testament for another instance of real prayer. And I should like to avoid being superstitious; but there is an enemy to the souls of men, there are many enemies, but the enemy to whom I refer now is that adversary that bowed a daughter of Abraham down for eighteen years; and she could in no way lift up herself. Perhaps there may be some infidel besetment, some thorn in the flesh, and you say, why, I cannot think how it is; my days are days of sorrow; my nights are nights of grief; my life seems filled with gloom and foreboding; I cannot believe the Lord will ever have mercy upon me; everything seems against me; if I look at temporal matters, where I take one right step I take a dozen wrong ones; and if at spiritual things, where I get one encouragement I get a thousand discouragements; and you cannot lift up yourself. What must be done? Your prayer must be, O God, if this be Satan, then tread him for me under my feet; if this be the adversary, avenge me of my adversary. And the Savior illustrates this point by a widow prevailing with an unjust judge, when she came and said, "Avenge me of my adversary;" and yet he was a man that feared not God; that is, he did not regard religion; and he did not regard man; but he said, "Lest by her continual coming she weary me, I will avenge her." "Hear," says the Savior, "What the unjust judge said; and shall not God avenge his own elect, that cry night and day unto him;" that cry unto him, Lord, take this burden away; Lord, take this adversary away. Lord, you are almighty; and your word declares that "where sin has abounded your grace has much more abounded;" and you did say to your servant of old, "My grace is sufficient for you;" Lord, avenge me of my adversary; hear me and answer me. My hearer, do you know anything of this sighing, this groaning before God? for this is a sign of election; the Savior calls such persons God's own elect; "Shall not God avenge his own elect? I tell you he will avenge them speedily, though he bear long with them." But notice the conclusion; and I am not to hide God's truth because this assembly is a large assembly; I ought rather to be more the clear and the more decisive than the less. Mark then, in the 18th of Luke, the Savior's conclusion. "Shall not the Lord avenge his own elect?" "But when the Son of man comes," said Christ, "shall he find faith on the earth?" Why does the Savior put that conclusion there? For this reason; that the great truth of election shall be so perverted by man and so hidden by man, and so stifled, and smothered, and got rid of by man, that when the Son of man comes he will find but few that have that faith which the word of God, not my word, mark you, but the Word of God, calls *the faith of God's elect*; and the faith of God's elect must sooner or later receive the truth of God's eternal election. Here then, again, is prayer; I say to you, my hearer, let your troubles or burdens be what they may, like the widow still importune; still call to the Lord; still say with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

Ah but, you say, that is very well; but then all that belongs to the elect; I do not see election; I do not understand it. Nor did I understand it once; nor do those of you that understand it now, understand it always; I was once as blind to it as you now are; but God heard me, and answered me, and in his own time opened up that great truth to me. Now if you have any doubt about it, the Lord help you to go home and pray about it; and say, "Lord, I have heard that man talk very solemnly about the great truth of eternal election, and he has made it out to be a very important matter, infinitely important; he has shown that those persons that you have chosen are brought into this spirit of prayer, that they cannot rest until they have found you, and can read their title clear; Lord, open my eyes, teach me so to read your word that if I am deceived, O undeceive me; for whatever I am deceived upon, let me not be deceived as to the salvation of my precious and never dying soul."

One more word upon prayer. "The Publican stood afar off." Do you know what that means mystically and spiritually? If not, I will boldly, at the same time sincerely and affectionately tell you. Know then that while God is your Father by creation, you have no salvation in that; and you have no right, unless you are born of God, unless you have this praying heart, unless you can pray with the Psalmist as I have described, unless you have that spirit of prayer, you have no right to conclude that God is your Father in Christ Jesus; you will stand afar off, dare not call him your Father; you have no right to call the Savior yours unless you have this spirit of prayer; and you will stand afar off, you may take this wonderful book of books, and read the promises therein, but you have no right to one promise unless God himself make it yours; and you will stand afar off. Let a person then come and put the prayer into your hands, "Our Father which are in heaven;" you will say, Ah, the Savior spoke this to the disciples; this belongs to believers, to those that have praying hearts; if I am calling God my Father, when at the same time I am not born of God, I am deceiving myself; if I am calling Christ my Savior while at the same time I am not born of God, I am deceiving myself; if I am calling the promises mine when they are not mine, then I am deceiving myself. There is, and I can hardly forbear a moment's digression here, just to illustrate this point; there is a very striking illustration of this in the 17th of Jeremiah; that "as the partridge sits on eggs, and hatches them not; so, he that gets riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool." The idea there intended is this; it is a bird that takes possession of the nest and the eggs of another bird; and so, Ishmael should take possession of Isaac's place, and maintain that he was the heir of promise; but when the blessed God came in, he set Ishmael aside, sets the heir presumptive aside, and puts the heir apparent into his right place. And so, as this bird sits upon eggs, and hatches them not; so, this man may fraudulently take possession of the promises, and call them his; but by and bye, when the right heir comes, that man shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at the end he shall be a fool; he has played the fool in calling that his which was not his. Here then, the Publican stood afar off. My hearers, every one of you, man and woman, young and old, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, do you know what it is thus to stand afar off, and dare not call any mercy yours till God has made it yours? Mark the next feeling; he trembled at the majesty of heaven; he would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven;" because he saw a righteous Judge there, he saw the cloud of his sins there, he saw a threatening God there; and therefore, he could lift up his eyes only by someone looking up for him. And so, it is said of Christ, "he lifted up his eyes to heaven;" he faced the storm for us; and now that the winter is gone, the rain is over and past, we by Jesus Christ may lift up our eyes to heaven. But the publican dared not look daringly to heaven; no, he was cast down, he was little in his own eyes, base in his own sight; he smote upon his breast; his prayer was short, but very decisive; all

that the publican called himself was a sinner; nothing else; not a thought, not a word, not a work did the publican mention; he called himself a sinner. Why, a great many of you would be offended if I were to tell you that is all you are; you would bring in your benevolence, and perhaps your learning, and a great many other things; all very excellent things in their place, but they will not do to meet God's eternal law with, they will not do to come before God with. He called himself no other term than that of a sinner. What can suit a sinner but mercy. "God be merciful to me a sinner." This man went down to his house justified; and shall you thus pray, and go down to your house condemned? No, my fellow-sinner, no, no; if you are brought to seek the favor of God, if you are Brought to seek the salvation of God, if you are brought to desire to see the good of God's, chosen to dwell in Christ; if your enemy has oppressed you, and if you are breathing out, "God be merciful to me a sinner that man went down to his house justified; and shall you go otherwise? No. If you have prayer in your heart, it is the pledge, the token, the forerunner, the sure sign, that mercy is on the way in your behalf; and the Lord will ere long step in; for the vision is for an appointed time; and open the great secret; and blot out from your conscience all that troubles you, and set you free, rejoicing that this God is your God for ever and ever.

I must name only one more characteristic of God's elect, and upon that I must say but little; and that is, their submission to God's sovereignty. We read in the 20th of Matthew that there were a number of men standing idle, that is, they had left the devil's service, but they had not yet engaged in the Lord's service. They professed to desire to be religious. Well, go into the vineyard to work. And they went. But by and bye the sovereignty of the Master came in the way; the Master gave unto the last even as unto the first; and the first began to murmur. And the Master said, "Well, I do you no wrong; may I not do what I will with mine own?" There is the bone of contention. Their murmurings denied him that authority; but he exercised it notwithstanding their denial of it. So, it is still; man's unbelief shall not make void the faith of God's elect. Is your eye evil because I am good? Are you offended; do you look with an evil eye upon my text this evening; "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" I will therefore leave these two points; first that they are distinguished from other people by that prayer, that practical seeking after the Lord where he may be found; namely, in the order of eternal mercy; and that they are distinguished secondly by submission to his sovereignty, acknowledging that he has a right to do as he pleases among the armies of the heavens, the inhabitants of the earth, and all the deep places.

Now, the question is: *When were these people chosen?* This is a fair question because these are the objects of his choice. When were they chosen? I read in the Old Testament, that "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting;" that, to say the least of it, looks as though there were objects of commiseration, taken into the notice of the Most High. Would there be propriety in saying, "His mercy is from everlasting," if there were not known to the Most High from everlasting persons who would need that mercy? That looks as though their election was before this world was, it does not say so there; but we will go on. Another scripture says that "wisdom," that is, the new covenant, the mystic mother of the church, "was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." This again looks as though the people were chosen from everlasting, or from before the world was. Another scripture says, "You are our Father, our Redeemer; your name is from everlasting." A Father from everlasting, a Redeemer from everlasting. Well, say you, but it does not say they were chosen from everlasting. No, it does not; I am not saying so, I am only giving you a few *broad hints*. Another scripture says, "His goings forth were from of old, even from everlasting." Here is mercy from everlasting; here is wisdom set up from everlasting; here is a

name from everlasting; here are goings forth from everlasting. I come to the New Testament; and I come to a scripture like this, that "You have given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him." That looks as though there were a people given to him, and a people not given to him. I go on a little farther, and I find the apostle Paul rejoicing exceedingly: and I say, Well, Paul, you seem very happy, I should like to know what it is about. Why, he says, "He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Ah, that explains the mercy from everlasting; that explains the going forth of love from everlasting. Again, "We are bound to give thanks that God has from the beginning chosen you unto salvation." I go a little farther, and it says, "He has 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." Again, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Thus, from the Old Testament I get the facts, that the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting, his goings forth from everlasting, his name from everlasting, wisdom from everlasting. I get in the New Testament the matter explained, by showing to me that the people were chosen before the foundation of the world. Now will you be offended at this? Will you, and can you, I speak now to those that do not know the truth, but have a praying heart, will you be offended at this? Well, say you, I am seeking the Lord, I desire to know the Lord. Well, do not trust in me; do not receive my testimony any farther than you can see it to be the testimony of the great God. But I will go on farther. I will show to you that this great matter of election is a wonderfully preservative truth; there is no truth in the Bible that has a more preservative power than election; not even the atonement of Christ, apart from election, has a more preservative power to keep us from error. Why, say you, this is very extravagant. No, my hearer, it is not. Go with me to the 13th of Revelation, and the 8th verse, there you read that "All shall worship the beast whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." It does not say in that scripture that their names are written from the foundation of the world; it says that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. But still, by that truth, they are preserved from worshipping the beast. Some have thought the beast means Popery. Why, my hearers, Popery is only one limb of the beast; Puseyism is a new horn shot out of the beast, for the beast has many horns; he has ten horns, that is a definite number for an indefinite. Popery is but one limb of the beast. But again, go to the 17th of Revelation, and there you read that "They that dwell on the earth shall wonder after the beast, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world." When a sinner is brought to know that his salvation originated in electing grace, it gives that man such vantage ground that neither Popery, nor Puseyism, nor any other damnable ism can deceive that man. "They shall deceive if it were possible the very elect;" but eternal election throws such an everlasting light upon the man's path that there he stands, defies the powers of error, the powers of hell, and can exult in the language of our text, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" But I do not like stopping short; I will go on yet farther. I have pointed out who...

The rest of the sermon is missing.