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Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit.

ELECTION.

A SERMON

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, 3RD MARCH, 1867, BY
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AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSEY STREET.

“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?”—Romans viii. 33.

THE ancient Israelite who was taught of God would clearly see that for him to deny that the Lord called Abraham alone, and blessed him, and increased him; that the Lord took Isaac and left Ishmael; that the Lord loved Jacob, but not Esau; that the Lord took the Jews as a nation from the midst of another nation, by signs and wonders, by temptations, by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors,—to deny that the Lord had chosen a land for them, and brought the believers among them into that land; to deny that the Lord had thus sovereignly chosen them, would be to deny everything. Therefore it was that every right-minded Israelite admitted the sovereignty of God in thus calling Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in thus redeeming them, in thus distinguishing them, in thus giving them the land, and taking up his own abode among them. An Israelite, therefore, would see that to deny election, even in this national sense, would be to deny everything. And did this election of the Jewish nation to that distinction which for so many years it enjoyed—did that hinder Rahab from coming to the God of Israel, and becoming a true believer in the God of Israel, a true worshipper of the God of Israel? So far from hindering, was it not that which God achieved for his chosen people that reached her ears, enlightened her mind, affected her heart, and brought her to God? Did the election of the Jewish nation hinder Ruth from coming to Bethlehem? Was it not the very things that Naomi had told Ruth that God had done for his chosen people that enabled her to renounce all her native gods, or the gods of her native land, and go to a people which heretofore she knew not? And when she came, was she repulsed with the idea, “We are a chosen people, we shall not receive you?” Was it not the very fact of their being a chosen people that brought her? And how welcome she was, and how nicely received! “The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.” Did this national election hinder the queen of Sheba from coming? Was it not the very name of Jehovah, in what he had done for his people, that brought her? And doth not Solomon’s prayer extend to the Gentile stranger? “Moreover, concerning the stranger, that is not of thy people Israel,” after the flesh, but is embodied in thine eternal choice to salvation. Did this hinder the queen of Sheba from coming? Did this election of the nation hinder Naaman from being

cleansed? Was it not the very things that God had done for his chosen people, with which the little captive maid was acquainted, and with which she acquainted her master—was it not these things, which the Lord attended with power, that brought him into the land of Israel, and he went back a healed man; he went back as a witness that the God of the Hebrews could do what no other god could do? And did this election of a people hinder Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian, from entering into the things that Jeremiah advanced, and so having that true spiritual love to Jeremiah that he risked his life in interposing for him, to get him drawn up out of the dungeon? And did this election of a people, and God's interposing for them, hinder a succession of kings from acknowledging him, as you see in Babylon? And I have no doubt that, during the progress of that dispensation, both by the prosperity of the Jews as a nation, and by their calamities, especially when they were dispersed among other nations, thousands of Gentiles, during that time, were brought to receive the God of the Hebrews, and to rejoice in the same mercy. Just so now. Eternal election, the eternal election of a people to eternal salvation, when rightly seen, stands as one of the best reasons possible to encourage every sinner that feels his need of mercy to come to God. You will say, How do you prove this? I prove it thus. Forgive me if I refer to my own experience in the matter. I was among the Wesleyans. Well, I felt my need of a better gospel than they preached. Whether there was a better I did not know. Then I got among duty-faith people, who say there is an elect, but it is the duty of all men savingly to believe. That seemed a little better; but I found I could not do with that. I felt if there were not a better gospel than that I could not be saved. Presently, reading the Lord's word, I saw that all those who were saved were saved before the world was; blessed with all spiritual blessings according as they were chosen. I found that this choice was a choice of grace, an election of grace. I directly said, Well, if that doctrine of eternal election be true, then my salvation is possible, then I can be saved. If eternal election, an act of sovereign grace, gave sinners into the hands of a Saviour, and the Saviour became surety for them, then it is possible for me to be saved. I have at last found out a gospel that just suits me. And in the Lord's time I saw it was his own gospel; and when I saw that I watched at wisdom's gates, and waited at the posts of her doors. Then the Lord brought home, as I have said many times, and shall never be ashamed of saying it, but I shall realize it to all eternity, the eighth verse of the 54th of Isaiah, and that made it mine. Bless the Lord! all I have experienced since has confirmed me in this blessed yea and amen gospel. Must there not be a greatness in this election? Look at the language of our text,—“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?” If, therefore, election be rightly understood, you will turn it into a reason why you should hope in God, and not into a reason why you should go away from him; for if you are made acquainted with your real condition, you will see that nothing short of this order of things can save you. And this doctrine of eternal election has been known to the people of God in all ages; it is known to them now, and will be known to them to all eternity. The doctrine that it is the duty of all men savingly to believe in Jesus Christ is a doctrine that turns the gospel of God into a mere jest; it makes the gospel of God appear a mere farce, without any reality. God in his blessed word assures us that he hath mercy upon whom he will, and that faith that is connected with salvation is the gift of God, the work of God, the operation of God; the faith of God's elect. Therefore the doctrine that comes in and tells us that it is the duty of all men savingly to believe, why it thrusts the sovereignty and the truth of God aside, and turns the gospel into a mere jest. God's election is a divine and eternal reality. God's ordination to eternal life is a self-acting decree, that will grasp all its objects and

maintain its ground. And the Saviour's mediatorial work 'tis in entire accordance herewith. Happily, there are some in the world that know these things, and that stand out for them, and feel that they must stand out for them. I myself judge no man. How far a man may be in error, and yet have grace in his heart, and be saved at last,—all that I must leave to the Lord. I have to do with principles; I have to do with God's truth. But I will say this one thing to the Wesleyans, who do not believe in absolute and eternal election,—and there are two reasons why they do not believe in it; the one is, they do not feel their need of it, and the other is they do not see it, because, not feeling their need of it, they do not seek after it,—I must just tell the Wesleyans, as well as all the duty-faith people, this one thing,—that however blind you may be to eternal election, and whatever aversion you may have to it, you must hear it at the last great day as the voice of final, eternal, unalterable decision. For when death and hell, the sea and dry land, shall give up their dead, the book of life, the register in which is recorded from before the foundation of the world the whole election of grace, that book shall be brought forth in the presence of angels, in the presence of devils, in the presence of the lost, in the presence of the saved, and the voice shall sound from the highest arches of heaven to the lowest caverns of hell, and to the remotest bounds of the universe, that "whosoever's name is not found written in the book of life shall be cast into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone."

Nothing else but eternal election, and the blessings included therein, can minister life now, or give you a place in the city of God when time shall be no more. But men say to people that profess to be in trouble about their souls, Don't trouble yourself about election. You may be a Christian without believing that, and without receiving it; and you may get to heaven without believing that. Very well; go on; don't stop there. Presently comes another in soul trouble, professedly, and says, Well, I should like to get to heaven, sir. I have some degree of trouble about it, but I cannot endure the doctrine of Jesus Christ being God as well as man. Oh, don't trouble yourself about the divinity of Christ; you have no occasion to believe he is God; you will get to heaven without that. Another comes and says, Well, sir, I am somewhat in trouble about my soul, but I cannot bear the thought of Jesus Christ being impeccable, having no sin, not capable of sin. Some of my private friends tell me that Mr. Irving told the people, and that some of them believed it, that Jesus Christ had sin. Oh, never mind; you have no occasion to believe he was sinless; you will get to heaven. Another comes and says, I have some degree of soul trouble, sir, but I cannot endure the doctrine of regeneration; I think, sir, that as I was sprinkled and confirmed, that will be sufficient. Oh, you have no occasion to trouble yourself about regeneration; you will get to heaven fast enough. If I may tell a man not to trouble himself about one essential of the gospel, I may tell him not to trouble himself about another, and so I shall go on until I get below the devil himself. For the devil, with all his faults, is not an atheist, nor is he a deist, nor is he a Socinian, nor is he Wesleyan, nor is he a duty-faith devil. The devil himself is a thorough, out-and-out high Calvinist. Why, say you, he is like you, then. Stop a minute; we have to trace that presently.

He knows God's decree is fixed; he knows God's gospel is certain; he knows the Saviour's victory is eternal; he knows that every one of God's people shall ultimately have the victory. He is a thorough, out-and-out high Calvinist. Well then, again you say, he is like you. Well, here is simply this difference between us, he believes what I believe, and I believe what he believes, but with this difference: he most heartily hates what he believes, and I most heartily love what I believe. He trembles because he cannot get away; and I triumph because he cannot

take me away. So you see, while we admit the likeness, we can point out essential differences. Now Balaam and the devil were very much alike; for just what Balaam believed, that the devil believed. Not that the devil preaches it, because the devil does not like to preach what he believes; like some of our parsons, privately hold one thing, and publicly preach another; just that that might suit his turn. Now Balaam and the devil were very much alike; for Balaam advanced these great truths, but he at the same time hated them, and hated the people of God, and did everything he could to injure them. Thus, then, election, or God having chosen the people, was the means of bringing in poor Gentiles in olden time. Duty-faith and free-will turn the truth of God into a mere jest; and if we tell people not to be troubled about one essential, we may tell them not to be troubled about another essential; and so go on by degrees until we get below Satan himself, get rid of the Bible, and get rid of God.

Now, after this rather long introduction, which I have purposely made, I will proceed to notice our text. First, *the nature of this election*. Secondly, *its happy consequences, as noted in several scriptures*. Thirdly and lastly, *the happy consequence of election, as indicated in our text*—“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?”

First, *the nature of election*. Now election, rightly understood, will present the basis of this challenge, which the apostle sums up in few words. “It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Here the apostle saith a very great deal in few words. We must therefore try this morning to enter into the nature of this election; and if we are let into the nature of it, we shall then see that from the very nature of it not anything can be finally laid to the charge of the people so placed. As to the nature of this election, it was an act of divine sovereignty that constituted the Lord Jesus Christ and the people so chosen everlastingly one. That is the first element in the nature of this election. It was to put them into indissoluble and everlasting oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ. We see this in the 2nd of the Hebrews, that “He that sanctifieth,”—that is, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ, who sanctifieth the people with his own blood, puts their sins away, and presents them to the eternal God by what his atonement hath made them;—“He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one”—of God; “for which cause,” on the ground of God having constituted them one with him, “he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” I want you to be clear upon this point. You will perceive that he owns them as brethren; he owns the church as his bride; he owns the people as flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone; he owns the people that are members, mystical members, of his body, he owns them simply on the ground that God the Father hath loved, and chosen, and thus given the people to Christ. He owns them (that is the point I want to come at) exclusively and entirely on the ground of what God the Father hath done, and not on the ground of anything done by them. “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;” and therefore it standeth eternally sure. Made one with him, and he one with them; for “he passed by the nature of angels, and took upon him the seed of Abraham;” that is, those who shall in due time be brought into the same faith that Abraham had, into the bond of the same sworn covenant, shall rejoice in the same blessed day of Christ which Abraham saw. Here, then, is one of the elements of election. And if the Lord had not thus given us to Christ, we never could have been given to him at all. You must, in order not to be deceived, receive this truth. Every one that is taught of God is led into this truth of eternal election. You cannot be saved without it, because without it salvation is

not entirely of grace; without it salvation is not entirely of God; without it salvation is not based upon the eternal counsels of God, and God alone. You cannot therefore be saved without receiving this truth. Being one with Jesus Christ, whatever responsibility they were under devolved upon him, and he met that responsibility, which I shall now trace out carefully, in order to show up the nature of this election. Take, first, the 42nd of Isaiah, "Behold my servant;"—may I here stop for one moment, and say, in the sight of a heart-searching God, some of us can say we are never weary of beholding God's servant? "Behold my servant." See how he has obeyed the law, and brought in everlasting righteousness for you. "Behold my servant;" see, without exception, how obedient he was unto death, and that by that death he hath put away all your sins,—cleansed you from all sin,—given you entire victory, and has perfected you for ever by his one offering. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." And I would give but very little for your religion if you are not pleased with him above all other things,—if he be not to you the Rose of Sharon, the lily of the valleys, the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, the sun amidst ten thousand stars, and if he be not the chief of ten thousand, and the altogether lovely, as the image of God, the brightness of his glory. But we will go on with this responsibility of Christ. He was to do all the service he did to perfect them for ever. God chose him to it, as he chose the people in him. And then hear what is said; "He shall bring forth judgment unto truth." Now, that which in the 42nd of Isaiah is called "truth" is in the 20th verse of the 12th of Matthew called "victory", which the New Testament quotes from the 42nd of Isaiah; "He shall bring forth judgment unto victory." What does that mean? Bring in the words of John, and we get a little light upon it. John saith, "This is our victory over the world, even our faith." So then, Jesus Christ has brought forth judgment unto victory; that is, God gives judgment in favour of the man that believes; and the man that believes by the teaching of the Holy Spirit believes with the faith of God's elect. Thus it is the people of God have victory. How can anything be laid to your charge, since everything was laid to the charge of Christ, and he has put the whole away? Then see, also, for it is worth noticing, how willing, and loving, and kind, the dear Saviour was in the solemn position in which he stood. Passing by many scriptures, come to the 50th of Isaiah; see how this is exemplified in the wondrous life of this wonderful person, in whom the people are chosen and made one. If that which the queen of Sheba said of Solomon be true, how much more true is it here? When she contemplated the wisdom and riches of Solomon, she exclaimed, "Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on his throne, to be king for the Lord thy God; because thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made he king over them." But more so here with the Lord Jesus Christ. Because he loved us, he sent his dear Son, made him king over us. Let us look then at the Saviour in his gentleness and kindness; and he is the same now as he was then. 50th of Isaiah; "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." I dare not stop here; but that is a scripture that has attracted my attention for many many years. There is the poor leper, weary of his leprosy; the Saviour speaks the word, and heals him. There is the poor Gadarene, weary of the legion of devils; the Saviour speaks the word, and releases him. There is the poor woman that Satan had bound down eighteen years, weary of being so bound; the Saviour speaks the word, and sets her free. Time would fail me to run thus through all the miracles and wonders he wrought. And I have been many times, and I should think some of you as well, spiritually, and perhaps temporally too, where the disciples were. They were toiling in rowing till the fourth watch of

the night, wearied and worn out. Well, I can't go on much longer; I don't know what's to be done. Presently the dear Saviour comes, walking on the sea; is received into the ship, throws in a word, all is calm; immediately they are at the land. This is the wonderful Person, then, in whom the people are thus chosen; he hath thus perfected them for ever, and he himself is their minister, the minister of the true sanctuary, which God pitched, and not man. And see how the dear Saviour abode by this new covenant. "The Lord God hath opened mine ear," to listen to the counsel of his will, to listen to his great decree in the eternal salvation of a number that no man can number. "I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Well, say you, what of all this? This is the Saviour's love to his chosen people; this is the Saviour's love to God in the purpose of eternal election. How is it with us? Are we brought to love God in election, in the stability of his counsel? If so, we shall spurn, despise, and tread under our feet every doctrine that would set up human sovereignty, under the pretension of advocating human responsibility. We shall tread such doctrines under our feet; we shall spurn the whole, renounce everything of the kind, cleave to God, and to God only, rejoicing that all our springs are in him. The Saviour knew he should have God with him in this. "The Lord God," he saith, "will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." Here, then, election is one with him that has thus served God in eternal perfection, one with him who thus has left us an example; for though we cannot do as he hath done, yet in our position there is to be an analogy, there is to be a likeness; that as he stood out for the truth so are we to do the same; as he rejected all lies, we are to do the same; as he abode by the will of God, we are to do the same; and as he was willing to suffer anything and everything needful to be suffered rather than to part with God's truth, so must we, and we shall if we are taught of God. And the Saviour under these circumstances, see how kindly he inquires after his people! I must be a little digressive here, just to refer to that—just to show what the spirit of election is. What is the spirit of election in God the Father? A spirit of everlasting and immutable love to your souls. What is the spirit of election in Christ? A spirit of the same eternal and immutable love. What is the spirit of election in the Holy Ghost? The same love; so that he shall dwell with you for ever. . . And if you understand this great transaction you will see that everything is founded in it—every blessing descends according to it; and you will have a spirit of love supreme to God. But look at the Saviour's inquiry after his children that are tried. "Who is among you"—that are thus brought to see it must be of electing grace, that are thus made to feel that it must be by a covenant ordered in all things and sure,—"who is among you that feareth Jehovah"—in contrast to false gods,—"that obeyeth the voice of his servant"—the servant is Christ, and to obey Jesus Christ is to believe in him, to love him, and to stand out for him;—"that walketh in darkness, and hath no light"—no shining? Why, all of you do, more or less. And we, if we did not experience these darknesses, should exalt our experience into a saviour, as I am afraid some of the *Standard* people do; or we should exalt our works into a saviour in part, as every Wesleyan and duty-faith man necessarily must do. "Thou makest it night, and the beasts of the forest"—the hidden evils of the heart—"creep forth;" and we feel what we are, and where we are—loathsome, vile, base, hell-born, and, but for grace, should be hell-bound sinners. Thus the Lord strips us and humbles us. Now what are such persons to do, that are thus walking in darkness? The Lord does not seem to speak to them or notice them;—nothing from the Bible, nothing from the hymn, nothing from the prayer, nothing from the

pulpit, nothing from meditation; all is dark, gloomy, and wretched. What is such an one to do? "Let him trust in the name of the Lord"—that is, in Jehovah; let him trust in God in his eternity and sworn promise,—“and stay upon his God”—upon his Interposer,—that is, Christ. So he is to trust in the certainty of the Father's promise, and to stay himself upon Christ. Jesus Christ knows whether you have anything else to stay upon or not; and if you have not, you are welcome to his arm. "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" Ah, well, saith one, I receive Jesus Christ, but have nothing to do with election. Then you would exclude God the Father from Christ in the election of his people; you would exclude God the Father from blessing the people with all spiritual blessings, according as they were chosen in Christ; and yet you think you will get to heaven. Be not deceived. God is not mocked; God is wiser than man; and what thou sowest thou shalt also reap. If thou sowest the devil's lies—for he is a liar—what he secretly believes is one thing; what he publicly propagates and advocates by his servants is another—and if thou receivest his falsehoods, though thou receivest them in the name of the Lord, they will prove to be thy destruction at the last. Now the people of God, then, walk in such darkness as to make Jehovah, in the eternity of his counsels, essential to their hope. If you have not that darkness that makes you feel your need of him in his immutable counsel, your hope is as a spider's web. If you have not that darkness that makes you fall back upon the perfection of Christ, as the way in which that immutable counsel is on your side, then your hope will give way. But if we do experience those darknesses that humble us, and strip us, and make us know our need of the immutability of his counsel, and of the perfection of Christ as the way in which that immutable counsel is on our side, then we have the right kind of hope.

The reason we are not more hated and slandered in our decisions for these truths is because we are not decided *enough* for God; the cause of God does not lie near enough to our hearts. Why, some of you in this matter—a few of you—are downright hypocrites before God. To give a shilling to God's cause would go to your very hearts. And yet you call yourselves Christians! The Saviour gave his blood. I would not give a rush for a religion if it does not swallow up the soul, and make you feel that there is nothing under the heaven that has so much demand upon you, and that in the way of love to it, as God's blessed truth, his cause, his honour, and his glory. The want of this is the reason that some slander one another. Are ye not carnal? The Lord bless us with more spirituality, more devotedness, more determination, and more decision. We should then love each other too much to say a word against each other; we should love each other too much to notice little faults; we should love each other too much to show any unkindness; but should pray the more earnestly, weep the more earnestly, rejoice more mightily, and glorify God more mightily too. Still there are some that do slander the people of God, that do kindle a fire against them—no question about that—in towns and villages, and in London too. "This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye." I have sometimes asked the Lord to take me out of the world at once, or else enable me to live nearer to him, and preach with more power. We go on from Sunday to Sunday half dead; I am afraid we are. I sometimes think we are all dying together. I dread the thought of it. I like life; I like liveliness, I love the truth, and I wish to stand to no repairs; know no man after the flesh, but go right on with eternal truth; lay the axe to the root of the tree, cut up all human importance and consequence; lay the sinner dead at the Saviour's feet, there let him be till grace shall raise him up, clothe him in righteousness divine, give him the victory, inspire him with zeal, and make him determined to be on the Lord's side.

Thus, then, you cannot find anything you need for time or for eternity that is not found in the Lord Jesus Christ. Why, in gone-by ages—some of you that are good people, and I love you sincerely—in gone-by ages they would no more think of seeing the Lord's Supper ministered from time to time, and they themselves would not come to it, because they did not like to go through the ordinance of baptism—they did not dream of such a thing; why the very first thing that touched their souls was to be baptized. "Here is water." The eunuch did not want any coaxing, and persuading, and going to your house, and taking tea with you, and then stop and take supper with you; and then call another day, and by slow degrees convert you to baptism. No. Why, grace reigned; grace came into his soul, lifted him up into the everlasting covenant, and he said, "Here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized." Well, the eunuch had not said much, and so Philip hardly knew exactly where he was; he did not know what the effect of what he had preached to him was exactly; so he said, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." Believe! believe! Can I hear of such a Saviour as this, such electing grace as this, such mercy as this, such a salvation as this, and not believe? "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." "And they went down into the water, and he baptized him. And the eunuch went on his "way rejoicing" in the dear Saviour he had found, and the obedience he had rendered. Now there is another fire, but it is of the best kind, the hallowed fire of God's truth and love. "I am come," saith the Saviour, "to send fire on the earth; and what will "I, if it be already kindled." Well, then, Lord, give us, we pray thee, more live coals from off the altar, that our souls may burn more and more with love to thee, our covenant God.

But secondly, I had intended to have noticed *the happy consequences of this election, as noted in several scriptures*. I have only time to mention a few. Go to the 45th of Isaiah; there the gates of brass are to be broken in pieces, the bars of iron to be cut in sunder, and the people are to be given the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places. Why doth the Lord do this? Why, he says, "For Jacob my servants' sake, and Israel mine elect." Ah, saith one, that 'is the last people I would do a favour to. That is the very first people God would do a favour to. 65th of Isaiah:—"I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains;" which typically means this, —Christ shall be heir of all things, and never lose his standing, as Adam did, and as the Jews did; and the people, joint heirs with him, shall live with him. Who is to have the inheritance? "Mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there." Again, in the same chapter:—"They shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them; and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." They build up the truth, they dwell there, and will dwell there for ever. And who are the people that cry to God day and night, in whom God carries on the work? His elect cry to him day and night. And who are the people that listen to the truths of the gospel? "He shall send out his messengers with the sound of trumpet, and gather together his elect." He shall find them out; they will hear the sound; they will be drawn to it, and shall come into the truth of this eternal election. And who are the people that all the policy of hell and the policy of earth put together cannot fatally deceive? God's elect. "If it were possible, they should deceive the very elect." And if England be spared; if plagues, diseases, calamities, and war—if these are modified in old England, what is the reason? The reason is because it has people in it for whose sake it is spared. As it is written, "Except those days should be shortened, no flesh should be saved;" disease and war would soon sweep old England right away; but for the elects' sake, whom he hath chosen, he will shorten the days."