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## Fire and Ice Sermon Series

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# Eleventh Sermon on 2 Thessalonians Chapter Two

By Thomas Manton

*But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because the Lord hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.—2 Thes. 2:13.*

THE adversative particle *but* showeth what respect these words have to what went before. He had spoken of God's direful judgment, of sending strong delusion on them that had no love to the pure truth, but sinned against light, and had pleasure in the false worship and superstitions countenanced by the world. Now, lest the Thessalonians should be troubled at this sad prediction, he showeth what cause he had to bless God in their behalf. The subjoining of this consolation doth teach us three things:—

1. That it is a great favour of God to us to escape antichristian errors. They are so dangerous in their own nature, so insinuating and inveigling by plausible appearance, and accompanied with such worldly baits and advantages, that it is a great mercy that God hath taught us better things. But then be sure you be in the right out of conscience and evidence, not out of faction and interest; and that you hate Popery out of the love of the truth, rather than because you are out of the reach of the temptation. However, it is a great mercy that God keepeth off the temptation till we are better settled in religion.

2. That the election of God giveth a people great advantages against errors, especially against the impostures of Antichrist; for when he speaketh of the sad estate of those who are seduced by the man of sin, he presently addeth, 'But we are bound to give thanks to God for you, for he hath chosen you to salvation.' You will say the Thessalonians received the gospel before these corruptions were brought into the

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church; but, though Antichrist was not then in being, and this corrupt Christianity not then set afoot, yet there were some preparations for it. The “mystery of iniquity already worketh, and they were preserved from the taint of it by the election of God; for either God suffereth not the elect to be deceived in momentous points, or sooner or later he reduceth them: ‘The purpose of God according to election must stand,’ Rom. 9:11; and Rom. 11:7, ‘The election hath obtained, and the rest were blinded;’ so 2 Tim. 2:18,19, ‘They have overthrown the faith of some, nevertheless the foundation of the Lord standeth sure.’ Still the elect of God escape the seduction, and especially anti-christian error: Rev. 13:8, ‘The dwellers upon earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the Lamb’s book of life.’

3. How careful we should be to support the hearts of God’s people, when we speak of his terrible judgments on the wicked. This was the practice of the apostles everywhere; as when the author to the Hebrews had spoken of the dreadful estate of apostates, ‘whose end is to be burned:’ Heb. 6:9, ‘But we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak; ‘he did not condemn them all as apostates, nor would discourage them by that terrible threatening, So again, after another terrible passage Heb. 10:39, ‘But we are not of them that draw back to perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.’ Once more, when another apostle had spoken of the sin unto death, which is not to be prayed for, he presently addeth, 1 John 5:18,19, ‘Whosoever is born of God, sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.’ Zuinglius saith, *Bone Christiane, haec nihil ad te, &c.*—Good Christian, this is not thy portion, when he had flashed the terrors of the Lord in the face of sinners. The reasons of this are partly with respect to the saints, who, sometimes out of weakness and infirmity, and sometimes out of tenderness of conscience, are apt to be startled, *electorum corda semper ad se sollicitè pudeant* (elect hearts are always anxiously ashamed about themselves) (Gregor.) We deserve such dreadful judgments, and therefore fear them; partly, with respect to ourselves, that we may rightly divide the word of truth: 2 Tim. 2:15, ‘Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth: Give every one his portion; make not their hearts sad whom God would not make sad, and, therefore, they are much to blame who, in reproofing sinners, stab a saint at the heart, and take the doctrine but for a colour to make a perverse application. The apostle here useth more tenderness: ‘God shall send them strong delusion. But we are bound always to give thanks for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord; because the Lord

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hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.’

In the words are two things:—1. An acknowledgment of this obligation to give thanks for them: *but we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, &c.*

2. The matter or particular cause of his thanksgiving: *because the Lord hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, &c.*

First, There are—(1.) The titles he giveth: ‘brethren,’ and ‘beloved of the Lord.’ They were not only beloved of the apostle, but the Lord himself; both with an antecedent love, bestowing grace upon them, and also a consequent love, they believing in his name, living according to his precepts, suffering for the truth. (2.) His obligation to bless God in their behalf: ‘We are bound to give thanks to God always for you.’ There is—First, ‘Giving thanks,’ which sheweth his esteem of the blessing. Secondly, ‘Always,’ which sheweth how deeply he was affected with it. (3.) *Οφείλομεν*, ‘We are bound;’ he acknowledgeth a debt and bond of duty. We must not only give thanks to God for our own election, but the election of others, out of the law of brotherly love, we loving them as our own souls, and respect to the glory of God, which is promoted by the salvation of others as well as ourselves.

Secondly, The matter of the thanksgiving, their election to salvation, which is two ways amplified:—(1.) By the antiquity of it: ‘from the beginning;’ that is, from everlasting, for so it is taken sometimes; as John 1:1, ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God;’ that is, before the first point of time, before God began to create all things. (2.) From the means of its accomplishment. Two are mentioned—one on God’s part, ‘the sanctification of the Spirit;’ the other on ours, ‘the belief of the truth.’ From the whole observe:—

*Doct.* That the great matter of our thanksgiving to God is his eternal election of us, whether for ourselves or others; this is that which leaveth a debt, or an indispensable obligation, always to bless and praise his name.

In pursuing this point I shall first consider how election is here set forth; secondly, give you the reasons why this is the great matter of thanksgiving:—1. How it is here set forth.

[1.] By the rise of it, which is the mere love of God; for he calleth these ‘brethren, beloved of the Lord;’ and that the only original cause and motive of election is God’s love and grace. This is asserted in other scriptures; as, for instance, in

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the types of election and reprobation: Rom. 9:13, 'Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated.' God's respect to Jacob above Esau is ascribed to his love. So to the posterity of Jacob, whom he distinguished from other nations: Deut. 7:7,8, 'The Lord did not set his love upon you, and choose you, because ye were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you.' And still the Lord's election is an election of grace. There is no antecedent worthiness in the people whom he chooseth: 2 Tim. 1:9, 'Not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given in Christ Jesus, before the world began.' Now grace is nothing but the love of God working freely and of its own inclination.

[2.] The act itself: he 'hath chosen you;' making a distinction between them and others. Upon them he shall send strong delusion, but you hath he chosen to salvation through the belief of the truth. Those whom God hath chosen he separates from the world of the ungodly, or the corrupt heap of mankind, and consecrateth them unto himself; so that election is not a taking all, but some, and passing by others: 1 John 5:19, 'We are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.' A choice implieth a setting apart some for objects of his grace and instruments of his glory in the world, Ps. 43. And the number is certain, for their names are said to be written in the rolls and records of heaven, when others are not written: Luke 10:20, 'Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven: Phil. 4:3, 'Whose names are written in the book of life.' And others are said not to be written Rev. 17:8, 'And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.' And Rev. 20:15, 'And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire;' namely, those that perish by these delusions.

[3] It is set forth by the antiquity of it: 'from the beginning.' Eph. 1:4, 'He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world;' and Mat. 25:34, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world namely, as they belonged to his choice election. Love in God is of an, old standing, even from all eternity. His thoughts and purposes of love were towards us a long time before they were discovered. Surely the ancientness of his love should beget an honourable esteem of it in our hearts; for who are we, that the thoughts of God should be taken up about us so long ago? And what is from everlasting is to everlasting, Ps. 103:17; for what is from eternity is to eternity, and dependeth not upon the accidents of time.

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[4] By the means of its accomplishment. Two are mentioned, one on God's part, the other on ours—the sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth.' Where note:—(1.) That God's decree is both of ends and means, for all his purposes are executed by fit means. He that hath chosen us to salvation hath also chosen us to be holy, and to believe the truth. And without the means the end cannot be obtained; for without faith and holiness no grown person shall see God or escape condemnation. As to faith, it is clear: John 3:36, 'He that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him.' And holiness is indispensably necessary: Heb. 12:14, 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord: God had assured Paul, Acts 27:22, 'That there should be no loss of any man's life amongst them, except of the ship;' and afterwards, ver. 31, Paul telleth them, 'Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved: How could the assurance given to Paul from God, and Paul's caution to the mariners stand together? Doth the purpose of God depend upon the will and actions of men? I answer—Not as a cause from whence it receiveth its force and strength, but as a means appointed also by God to the execution of his decree. For by the same decree God appointeth the event; what he will do, and the means by which he will have it to be done; and the Lord revealing by his word this conjunction of 'and means, there is a necessity of duty lying upon man to use these means, and not to expect the end without them. God intended to save all in the ship, and yet the mariners must abide in the ship. And therefore, what God hath joined together let no man separate. If we separate these things, God doth not change his counsel, but we subvert his order to our own destruction. The scripture maketh it a grievous sin, a tempting of God, to expect the end without the use of means. In vain is the cavil, then, of those who would impeach the doctrine of God's free and unchangeable will concerning the salvation of the elect, upon the pretence that it taketh away the duty of man, and the necessity of our faith and obedience. No; God executeth his decree by the proper means. And wretched is their inference who say, If I be elected I shall be saved. No salvation can be obtained but by the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth. And worse is their confidence who profess assurance —of their election, and yet walk after the flesh. No; till a man purge himself from youthful lusts he is not a vessel of honour sanctified and set apart for God, 2 Tim. 2:21. And in vain do we hope to go to heaven till we take the way that leadeth thither. Devils have been cast out thence for unholiness, and therefore unholy men shall never be taken in there.

(2.) That these things are not causes of election, but fruits of election, and means of execution of God's decree about our salvation. Sanctification is not a cause, but a subordinate end or means: Eph. 1:4, 'He hath chosen us to be holy;' not *because we are*

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*holy, but that we might be holy.* So 1 Peter 1:2, ‘Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience.’ Not elected for it, but through it. When God had all mankind in his prospect and view, he freely chose out some to be sanctified and saved. We come to the possession of it through sanctification, that is, by it as a means. So for the other; faith is a fruit of election, not a foreseen cause: Acts 2:47, ‘The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.’ None cometh to the church but those whom God draweth, and they are actually added to the church by a profession of faith; and such as should be saved were as many as were ordained to Salvation Acts 13:48, ‘And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.’ The whole city were met together to hear, but as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. It is not said, as many as believed were ordained to eternal life, but the contrary; faith is not the cause of election, but election is the cause of faith.

(3.) That being the necessary fruits, they are also evidences of our election. All that are sanctified by the Spirit and believe the truth belong to the election of God. Election itself is a secret in God’s bosom, and is only manifested to us by the effects; and what are the necessary effects but sanctification by the Spirit, and a sound belief of the gospel?

*First,* The sanctification of the Spirit is not only an external dedication to God, but an internal and real change. Some are externally dedicated, and may trample under foot the blood of the covenant whereby they are sanctified: Heb. 10:29, ‘Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God; and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?’ That is, were in external covenant with God, and visibly dedicated. But there is another sanctification, which is the fruit of the Spirit, working a real change in them 1 Cor. 6:11, ‘And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Find this, and you find a sufficient evidence, namely, if you become new creatures, and be enabled to forsake sin, and follow after that which is pleasing in the sight of God. Sanctification of the Spirit is not so much known by dedication and profession, but by the real and fixed inclination of your souls to God and heaven, and living accordingly; you are turned to God, and live to God.

*Secondly,* Your belief of the truth, that is, of the gospel. Now this is meant not of a dead faith, or such a cold assent as only begets an opinion in us of the truth of

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Christian religion, but such a lively faith as bringeth us under the power of it; for it is opposed to them that do not receive the truth in the love of it, ver. 10: 'To them that believed not the truth, because they had pleasure in unrighteousness,' ver. 12; that lived under the power of fleshly and worldly lusts. And it is spoken of them who had received the truth, so as to obey it and *suffer* for it, as the Thessalonians are described all along; and in short, such a belief of the truth as caused them to enter into covenant with Christ, and make conscience of their fidelity to him. And here in this verse we learn that a bare belief of the truth doth not save, unless accompanied with the sanctification of the Spirit; and therefore both must be taken together. When the word cometh to us, 'not in word only, but in power and much assurance, and joy in the Holy Ghost,' it is an infallible evidence of our election of God, 1 Thes. 1:5. Alas! many have a general cold belief of the gospel, that never felt the effect of it upon their hearts.

(4.) Observe the necessary connection that is between both these means, the sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth.

*First*, There is a necessary connection between them, as between the cause and the effect; for none are powerfully drawn to believe in Christ but such as are sanctified by his Spirit. It is not in the power of any creature to incline us to God, or bring us to come to him by Christ. But this work is wholly reserved to the Spirit. And so the Lord himself doth powerfully bring to pass his own decrees, as by Christ redeeming, so by the Spirit sanctifying. The Spirit is the author both of faith and holiness. Saving grace is called a new creature: 2 Cor. 5:17, 'Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; Eph. 2:10, 'For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.' And to create is the work of a divine power.

*Creature* and *creator* are relatives. And certainly the noblest creature, such as the new creature is, cannot be framed by any but God. It is called a new birth, and the new birth is only from the Spirit, John 3:5,6. Well, then, these are fitly coupled, the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, that God's work may make way for ours.

*Secondly*, There is the connection of concomitancy between the gospel and the Spirit. The Spirit only goeth along with the gospel, and no other doctrine; and so both external and internal grace are of God: John 17:17, 'Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth.' It was fit that a supernatural doctrine should be accompanied with a supernatural operation and power. How else should it be known to be of God? The truth and the Spirit are inseparable companions. Where there is little of God known,

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there is little of his Spirit. As in the natural truth revealed to the heathens, somewhat God, showed unto them, Rom. 1:19. In the darker revelation to the Jews there is but a fainter degree of the Spirit; but ‘grace and truth come by Jesus Christ’ There goeth along with the doctrine of the gospel a mighty spirit of holiness; for thereby God would prove the verity and truth of this religion, and suitably to the rich mercy prepared for us in Christ.

*Thirdly,* There is a subordination of faith to this work of the Spirit by the truth; for the greatest things work not till they be considered and believed: 1 Thes. 2:13, ‘Ye received it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which worketh effectually— also in you that believe.’ A sound belief produceth strong affections, and strong affections govern our practice and conversation. So that fitly are these things united, as the fruits of our election and means of salvation.

2. Why this is the great matter of our thanksgiving to God., That I shall evidence in the following considerations:—

[1] That thanksgiving to God is a great and necessary duty, expressly enjoined by him, and expected from us: 1 Thes. 5:18, ‘In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God concerning you in Christ Jesus.’ When God hath interposed his will, all debates are silenced. If there were nothing else in the case, this is motive enough to a gracious heart; for the fundamental reason of all obedience is the will of God. Our thankfulness is no benefit to God, yet he is pleased with it, as it showeth our honesty and ingenuity. And to us Christians, the very life and soul of our religion is thankfulness; therefore, God will have us continually exercised in it: Heb. 13:15, ‘Let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks unto his name.’ As our understanding was given us to think of God, and know him; so our speech was given us to speak of God, and praise him. We praise God for all his works, we give him thanks for such as are beneficial to us. In praise, we ascribe all honour, excellency, and perfection unto him. In giving thanks, we express what he hath done for ourselves or others. Now this must be done continually, for God is continually beneficial unto us, by daily mercies giving us new matter of praise and thanksgiving. Besides, there are some mercies so great, that they should never be forgotten.

[2.] That we are to give thanks chiefly for spiritual and eternal mercies: Eph. 1:3, ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ’ For we cannot give thanks rightly without a just esteem of the mercy we give thanks for. But spiritual and

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eternal mercies do much excel those that are temporal and transitory. We are bound to bless the Lord for temporal favours and the comforts of this life, but a renewed heart is most taken up with spiritual and heavenly blessings. A man may give thanks carnally as well as pray carnally.

A carnal man in prayer giveth vent to the desires of the flesh, James 4:3. So in blessing God he may speak from the relish of the flesh; though usually carnal men seldom give thanks to God: Hosea 12:8, 'I am become rich, I have found me out substance,' &c. Surely spiritual blessings should have the preeminence, because they concern our well-being, and they discriminate us from others, which temporal mercies do not: Eccles. 9:1,2, 'For all this I considered in my heart, even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them. All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good, to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not; as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.' The wicked have many of these mercies: Ps. 17:14, 'From men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure; they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.' And they may own God in them as pleased, and well satisfied with the prosperity of the flesh, or as desirous to have more.

[3] That the best prospect we have of God's goodness to us, as to those spiritual mercies, is in election.

(1.) There we see all our blessings in their rise, fountain, and bosom cause, which is the eternal love and grace of God. *Dulcius ex ipso fonte*—waters are sweetest and freshest in their fountain. There we see that antecedent love which provided a Redeemer for us, which should be matter of continual love and reverence to us, John 3:16. There we see the rich preparations of grace in the new covenant, which could never have entered into our hearts if elective love had not provided them for us, 1 Cor. 2:9. There we see what it was that disposed all those providences that conduced to our good birth, education, acquaintance, relations. Alas! we knew not the means of all these things, but elective love was at work for us, to cast all circumstances, that we might be best taken in our month, [Either a proverbial expression, perhaps referring to Jer. 2:24; or else a misprint.-Ed.] Rom. 8:28. There we see what it was that made all the means effectual to draw us unto God: Jer. 31:3, 'He loved us with an everlasting love.'

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(2.) It sheweth us the Lord's distinguishing grace, and who it was that made us differ from others, who are left to perish in their sins. All are not called, and why we? John 14:22, 'Judas saith unto him (not Iscariot), Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?' Yea, many mighty and many noble are not called, 1 Cor. 1:26. God taketh not all, nor many of the highest in esteem among men, not many wise and prudent: Mat. 11:25, 26, 'At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight: Yea, many others are left to perish by their own delusions. The reprobates are *specula judicii divini* (a spectacle of divine judgement). The judgments of God on the wicked do exceedingly amplify his mercies towards us. It was the mere elective love of God, issuing forth by his powerful and differencing grace, that put the distinction between us and others. Surely his peculiar love to ourselves doth most affect us.

(3.) There we see that grace that doth take off all self-boasting: Eph. 2:8,9, 'For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.' Elective love preceded all actual or foreseen worth in us; and from first to last it is carried on in a way of grace; the means, the efficacy, all is of grace. This was God's great end, that grace might be admired and esteemed by us, and be matter of eternal praise and thanksgiving: Eph. 1:6, 'To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved: The whole design is to show us how we are beloved of God, and that we may love him again.

*Use 1.* If election be the great matter of thanksgiving to God, then surely this doctrine should be heard in the church; for the life and soul of Christian religion is gratitude; and what feedeth gratitude is of great use unto us. Our gratitude doth not rise high enough till it come to the first cause that stirred and set all the wheels a-work in the business of our salvation. Surely this is a very profitable point.

1. To detect the pride of man, for here we see the true and proper cause of difference between us and others: 1 Cor. 4:7, 'Who maketh thee to differ?' The differencing grace of God, proceeding from his election, is the only true grace.

2. Nothing more extolleth the glory of God in our salvation; for if man can assume nothing to himself, the glory alone redoundeth to God. The mere reason and cause why some are chosen and others passed by, is God's good pleasure: Mat.

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11:26, 'Even so, Father, because it pleased thee.' Christ himself consents to it, giveth thanks for it, as an act of free and undeserved mercy.

3. No greater incentive to holiness; for here we see the absolute necessity of it, to ether with the strongest, sweetest motive to enforce it. (1.) The absolute necessity of it; because it is a necessary means to bring God's purposes to pass: Eph. 1:4, 'He hath chosen us, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love.' He hath chosen none to enjoy everlasting glory after this life, but such as he hath chosen to be holy here. First, They must be sanctified and renewed by the Spirit, and then walk in all holy conversation and godliness. And whatever assurance of election is pretended unto them who lead an unholy life, it is but a vain presumption or ungrounded persuasion; yea, a strong delusion. Secondly, Here is the sweetest and strongest motive to enforce it, and that is the singular love of God, which breedeth in us a sincere love to God again, and all serious endeavours to approve ourselves to him in purity of living. There is no such constraining force in anything as there is in love: 2 Cor. 5:14, 'For the love of God constraineth us,' &c. And no such holiness as that which floweth from it; this is thankful and evangelical obedience.

4. It is the ground of our solid comfort, in the midst of all the calamities and temptations of the present life; because our final happiness is appointed to us by God's electing love: Luke 12:32, 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' And this is accompanied with his active providence and care over us all the way thither. So that all things are sanctified to us, that we may be sanctified to God: Rom. 8:28, 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.'

Use 2. It sheweth us that the elect have cause to bless God if they be chosen to salvation, though not to wealth, pleasure, and honour, These Thessalonians endured great afflictions for the gospel's sake, yet Paul looked upon himself as bound to give thanks always to God for them, because he had chosen them to salvation. God dispenseth his gifts variously. Some are, shall I say, chosen—or condemned rather? —to worldly felicity. It is the will of God they should attain great wealth and honour here; and will you envy them and repine against providence, though God hath reserved you for a better estate hereafter? Compare two places; one is Jer. 17:13, 'All that forsake thee shall be written in the earth;' the other is Luke 10:20, 'Rejoice in this, that your names are written in heaven.' Which is the better privilege—to be written in earth, or to be written in heaven? to have a great name in the subsidy-book, or

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to have our names written in the book of life? The one is their punishment, the other your blessedness.

Second use is exhortation. It presseth you to two things:—

1. Put in for a share and interest in this mercy; that is to say, in the apostle's words, 2 Peter 1:10, 'Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.' God hath not told us who are elected and who are not; therefore our way is to accept of the general grace offered, and to devote and resign ourselves to God, and to depend upon the merits of our Redeemer, and put ourselves under the discipline of his Spirit in the use of the appointed means, humbly waiting for his renewing and reconciling grace, and every day more and more, by diligence in the holy and heavenly life, getting your interest more assured; for by this means do we come to know the purposed love of God, and that 'he hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain eternal salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ' We need not say, Who shall go up to heaven to know the mind of God? Our election is known to us by our vocation, and our vocation by the fruits—our walking before him in holiness and righteousness all our days. Surely the knowledge of our election is a thing greatly to be desired, because our eternal happiness and all spiritual good things depend upon it. Election is the free love of God, by which he intendeth these blessings to us. This is manifested by calling, by which they begin to be applied to us; then the effectual operation which these blessings have in us discovereth calling, when we 'call on the name of Christ,' and 'depart from iniquity,' 2 Tim. 2:19.

2. We should praise, and admire, and esteem this glorious grace, and show our thankfulness both in word and deed.

[1.] In word; because that is a means to kindle in our hearts the love of God, and to stir up a spiritual rejoicing in him: Ps. 103:1-3, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases,' &c.

[2] But chiefly in deed: you are more obliged to live to God than other men, when, passing by thousands who, in outward respects, were better than you, and you as deep in sin as they, he, not only without, but against, all merit of yours, by his singular grace set you apart for himself. Shall I sin against God, and grieve his Spirit? No; let me glorify him as long as I have a day to live.

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