

## **THE CHANNEL OF GOSPEL BLESSINGS**

Preached on Lord's Day Evening, June 27, 1841, at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street

"The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."  
Romans 11:7

The doctrines of discriminating grace always have been, and to a certain extent always will be, opposed by the generality of the professing world. They are so humbling to the pride of man, they are so exclusive of human merit, they so beat down creature righteousness, they so cut up all the boasted freedom of the will, that the great majority of those who profess religion will hate and resist them. But we should greatly err if we supposed that all who received them were the children of the living God. We have this strikingly set forth in the history of Gideon. Gideon was raised up by the Lord as an instrument to deliver Israel from the hand of the Midianites; and a large army gathered together under his banner. But the Lord commanded a solemn proclamation to be made, that every one "who was fearful and afraid should return, and depart early from Mount Gilead" (Jud. 7:3). In obedience to this proclamation, out of this vast number two and twenty thousand left the camp, forsook the banners of the Lord, and returned to their own homes: striking emblem, apt illustration of all who make a nominal profession of religion, and endure not to the end, but, though "armed, and carrying bows, turn back in the day of battle," and belong to those of whom the Lord says, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him!" But the army of Gideon was too numerous still. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts;" and the assembled multitude were yet so numerous, that had they all continued under Gideon's banner, it would have taken from the Lord's

glory. The Lord therefore commanded Gideon to try them by bringing them down to the water and to take notice how this assembled multitude partook of the flowing stream to which he led them down. The trial which the Lord gave was this: those that knelt down, and lapped with their tongues, and those that partook of the water by taking of it in their hands. Of this assembled multitude ten thousand lapped with their tongues as a dog lappeth; and three hundred only satisfied their thirst by dipping their hands into the stream, and drinking the water out of the palms of their hands. This seems to be a striking illustration of the different way in which the truth is received by the mere nominal professor and the living soul. The one lapped as a dog lappeth. They threw themselves with their bodies all along upon the earth amid the mud and mire, and thrust their "unclean lips" **Isa 6:5** into the water, so as to drink it down, without anything to intervene betwixt their mouth and the stream that flowed at their feet; and thus lapping as a dog lappeth, they showed that they were those characters spoken of in Scripture, "without are dogs" (Rev. 22:15). But there was a small company that bowed down upon their knees, and partook of the water by using their hands as a medium to bring it to their lips; doubtless implying the posture of reverence and godly fear, and the hand of faith whereby the truth is received in the love of it; showing that they did not receive the waters of truth in anatural manner, did not fall headlong in the mud and mire, did not eagerly and greedily swallow it down as the dog lappeth; but that there was godly fear in exercise, as well as the intervention of living faith; and that they did not gulp down at one unintermitted draught enough to satisfy thirst, but partook of it little by little, at intervals, receiving only just so much as repeated acts of faith procured them. Thus in our day there is a vast multitude of those who profess the name of the Lord, who are bitterly opposed to the truth as it is in Jesus, who are "fearful and

afraid" of the cross; and as such, if they live and die in their cowardice, will have their part amongst "the fearful **literally 'cowards'** and unbelieving," who shall be cast into "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21:8). And yet of those who seem to stand by the Lord's banner, there is a very large assemblage who receive the truth, not by the intervention of faith, not by the teaching of the Holy Ghost in their hearts, but receive it in a carnal manner into their judgment, without the feeling application and spiritual revelation of it to their souls. "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Solemn words! It should indeed be a matter of heart inquiry, whether those of us who profess to fear the name of the Lord are included in this small remnant; whether we really belong to that "election" which "hath obtained it." For if we do not belong to that number whom God hath chosen in Christ before all worlds, we shall die in our sins, and be thrust down into that fearful place where hope never enters. It is therefore a matter of solemn inquiry with one that fears God, who knows what it is to have divine realities commended to his conscience, who stands at times on the brink of eternity—it is with such a matter of deep inquiry, of earnest questioning, of anxious thought, whether he has a well-grounded scriptural evidence that he belongs to that happy number whom God hath chosen in Christ before all worlds; and there will be many anxious struggles, many fervent wrestlings, many vehement cries, before it is powerfully and sweetly ratified in the court of conscience, that we belong to that "number which no man can number;" that we have an interest in the blood and love of the Redeemer.

The apostle had been speaking in the preceding chapters concerning righteousness. For this is his grand topic in the epistle to the Romans—the way in which a sinner is accounted righteous before God. He draws a sketch of the

difference betwixt those who were really accounted righteous in God's sight, and those who were seeking to obtain righteousness by the works of the law; and he shows that those who sought righteousness by the works of the law, stumbled at that stumbling-stone, that they obtained not that which they sought, and that the Gentiles who sought not after righteousness, had obtained righteousness. Nor does he leave it there, but traces it all up to the sovereignty of God, "in having mercy on whom he will have mercy," and "having compassion on whom he will have compassion." And when one replies in a fit of passionate rebellion, "Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" he meets him in a moment with this appeal to his conscience, "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?"

We will, then, with God's blessing, endeavour to show what the election hath obtained; and how the rest are blinded. By the word "election" here, the apostle means, not the choice of God, but those who are the objects of that choice. It is a Hebrew idiom, substantives being often used in that language instead of adjectives; for instance, "We are the true **circumcision**," instead of those that are truly circumcised. So again, "The mountain of my holiness," instead of, "My holy mountain." The writers of the New Testament were Jews by birth, and often use Hebrew idioms, though they wrote in Greek. Thus, when the apostle speaks of the "**election**" having "obtained it," he means, not that the choice of God had obtained it, but that the chosen vessels of mercy, the objects, the favoured objects of that election had obtained it; and thus the word "election" here means simply the elect. The elect, then, have obtained certain blessings, and they are the only persons who have obtained them. Let us see what these blessings are, and how they obtain them.

1. The grand point which the apostle speaks of here is, that they have obtained **righteousness**. This must always be a matter of anxious inquiry with a convinced sinner, how he can be righteous before God; because wherever sin is opened up in a man, and laid as a burden upon his conscience, the effect will be a discovery of unrighteousness, and a deep conviction working with power in his soul, that unless he can stand righteous before God, he never can enter into the abode of him who is perfect righteousness and complete purity. The "election," then, "hath obtained righteousness," that is, through the imputation of Christ's obedience, they stand righteous and accepted before God, "without spot or blemish, or any such thing;" the garment of the Redeemer's obedience covering them and shrouding them from the eye of God, so that he beholds not iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel (Num. 23:21). This all the elect have obtained, freely given to them by their God and Father in the Son of his love. But the word "obtained" seems also to point to some personal reception of it. It is one thing to be righteous before God in his eyes; it is another thing to have received the manifestation of this righteousness in our conscience. Now, however true and glorious the doctrine is, that all the elect of God stand righteous in Christ's righteousness, the living soul can never be satisfied with the doctrine in the letter, nor can he ever rest until he has the manifestation and discovery of it with power to his heart by the Holy Ghost. And here is that eternal line which separates the living from the dead; here is that narrow, narrow path which distinguishes the heaven-born children from those who are wrapped up in a nominal profession, that the living family must have power, whilst others are satisfied with form, that the living family must have heavenly teaching, whilst those that are dead in sin can be contented with seeing truth In the Scriptures, without a feeling application of it with dew and

savour to their hearts. All the living family, then, are brought into a state, wherein they are made to need righteousness. The Lord opened his ministry with, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." The holy law of God, applied with power to their consciences, discovers to them what sin is, and slays them as having personally transgressed his righteous commandments. When the Lord has thus slaughtered them in their consciences, he raises up in their souls a hungering and a thirsting after righteousness; he pours out upon them a Spirit of grace and of supplications; he opens up to their understanding that there is a righteousness stored up in Christ; he casts a light upon the Scriptures of truth, and shows to them that there is no way of justification but that by Christ. And setting before their eyes this glorious object, he kindles, by his secret work upon their hearts, longings, desires, hungerings, thirstings, and breathings after the manifestation of this righteousness. No man ever got a feeling enjoyment of Christ's righteousness imputed to him, who has not passed under solemn convictions of his guilt before God; and if ever you got at Christ's righteousness without travelling in the path of condemnation, be assured that you have never arrived where you are by the Spirit's teaching. How deep these convictions shall be, or how long these convictions shall last, the Scripture does not tell us, nor do I deem it possible to set up a standard to measure them by; but they shall be so deep as to empty a man completely of all his own righteousness, and they shall last so long as to strip him of everything in which he can boast, and to which he can look with satisfaction.

2 Again the elect have obtained **pardon of their sins**. For God will pardon all those whom he reserves. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." "He hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." This is the grand doctrine

of the Scriptures; to this all the types bear witness; of this all the prophecies are full; the enjoyment of this is that which constitutes a foretaste of eternal bliss. All the living family then will be brought, before they close their eyes in death, to a sweet manifestation of the pardon of their sins. If a man lives and dies without a discovery to his soul of the blotting out of his iniquities, he will never enter into the presence of God after death. But in order to obtain a manifestation of this pardon, we must travel in that path which God has traced out in the Scriptures of truth. The blood of Jesus is not to be approached with presumptuous hands. His blessed sacrifice and propitiation is not to be looked upon with the eyes of the flesh. He will have in his sanctuary no intruding worshippers; the veil shall be over the Holy of Holies, and none but "a priest unto God" shall ever enter "by the new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh," to look at the ark of the covenant, sprinkled with atoning blood. Before the soul can know anything by a divine revelation of the pardon of its sins, it must have the fear of God implanted from above, whereby it approaches him with holy reverence and trembling apprehension of the wrath to come. The conscience must be made tender and alive, so as to feel the weight and evil of transgression; sin must be opened up in its awful colours, discovered in its guilt, and laid upon the soul as a heavy burden; and if a man has not travelled in that path he has never yet arrived at that secret sanctuary where God manifests himself in the face of Jesus Christ, nor has he ever looked with anointed eyes upon the mercy-seat, and the Shechinah, the divine cloud that rests upon it. This is the grand struggle, the painful conflict which exercises so many of the quickened family of God "Has the Lord pardoned my sins? Am I an accepted worshipper? Has the blood of Jesus Christ cleansed **me**? Do I stand before God, with all my sins cast into the depths of the sea?" This will be a point of solemn inquiry, anxious meditation, midnight wrestling, and

a pouring out of the soul, at times, in vehement cries, that the Lord would reveal it, and apply it, and manifest it, by his own Spirit with power to the conscience. Where pardon of sin is manifested, the conscience is purged "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Try yourselves by that test. Say you, "I have no doubt my sins are pardoned?" Look in the mirror of God's word. Have the fruits followed? Have the effects that God has pointed out been visible? Was conscience ever purged, that is, was all guilt taken away? Were you able to come before God, without guilt, without condemnation without slavish fear, without a sensation of his wrath? That is the test, to try whether the pardon of sin has been felt in your soul, whether your conscience was purified from guilt, filth, and fear, and you could come before God without any spot of guilt upon you, whether you were able to draw near with the feelings of a son and felt the Spirit of adoption enabling you to cry, "Abba, Father." But, says some living soul, "I cannot come there; it would seem presumption in me to say 'Abba Father.' I have not felt what you have been speaking of, the pardon of my sins. When I come before God, I have guilt on my conscience; I often fear I shall be cast into eternal perdition; if I were to die tonight, I could not say that I should be sure to go to glory, and see Christ as he is." Well, it is better to be there than resting in a presumptuous confidence. You had better be in spiritual bondage than in carnal liberty. You had better be under the rod of God's law in your conscience, suffering under the sensation of his anger, and knowing experimentally the meaning of those words, "When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth" (Ps. 39:11); you had better be under the distressing feelings of guilt and bondage and wrath in your conscience, than sitting at ease in Zion, flattering yourself in false liberty, and believing that you are



a pardoned, accepted child, when the Holy Ghost bears not his witness with your spirit that you are born of God.

3. **Love** is another blessing which the election have obtained; the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that love which hath lengths and breadths and depths and heights, and yet such lengths, breadths, depths, and heights as pass all creature measure. The "election" hath obtained love; it is the free gift of God to them,—for he has loved them everlastingly; and a measure of this love be sheds abroad in the heart of every child of his, sooner or later. As the apostle speaks, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Have you ever felt the love of God in your souls? If you have felt it shed abroad there, I will tell you what it has done for you. It has made your soul burn with love to him in return; it has drawn forth the affections of your heart to embrace Jesus as your "all in all;" it has deadened the world, and all that the world can offer, in your estimation; and it has made you earnestly long to be with Christ, that you may bathe in his love, see him as he is, and enjoy him for ever. But say some, "You are setting up a standard that I cannot reach. It is true, that at times, I have felt what I have thought to have been something like love to Christ; I do think that his name has been to me at seasons like the ointment poured forth. I can say from my heart, honestly in the sight of God, that there have been moments when Christ has been precious to my soul! but to speak of the love of God being shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost, that is a standard which I cannot reach." If you have received but a drop of love, it came from the heavenly fountain; if you have had but a passing visit from Jesus, it is a testimony that you are redeemed by his blood; if his name has ever been to you as "ointment poured forth," it was the blessed Spirit who shed that fragrance abroad; and if ever, for a few fleeting moments, he has been

experimentally precious to your soul, he is everlastingly yours, and you are everlastingly his. But I will put another question to you. "How are you when you have not the manifestation of his love? Can you be satisfied without it? Is it all the same to you whether you have a visitation of Christ to your soul or not? Are you as happy on the day that you receive it not, as on the day that you receive it? Can you be really at peace and rest in your soul without some testimony of it?" Then, if you say, "Yes, I can be as happy the day I receive it not, as the day I receive it; it is all one with me whether Christ manifests himself, or whether he does not manifest himself; I should be happy and cheerful without Christ, just as much as with him;" if you say that, you prove that the love of Christ was never really dropped into your heart by the Holy Spirit's manifestation; for if that love had been really shed abroad and made known to your soul by the Holy Spirit, there would be at seasons a restlessness, a dissatisfaction, in its absence; there would be an anxious sigh, a groaning inquiry, an earnest cry, and at times, as the Spirit works it, a fervent wrestling, that that love should be revealed to your heart again. But there may be some who say, "I cannot get even so far as a taste or a sip; I do not know whether I have ever tasted the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; nor can I positively say that I have really felt Christ precious to my soul; but this I feel, my deep need of him, that I am a ruined wretch without him, that he must be my salvation or I shall utterly perish, and that without him there is nothing that I can do acceptable in God's sight." I will put to you a question also: It is easy enough to say all this, it is easy enough to use the words, but what the Lord looks at is the heart. If you are in this state spiritually, there will be, at times, in your soul, earnest sighs and cries and panting desires to know Jesus. You cannot rest upon want, poverty, and destitution as evidences, and say, "I have heard it described from the pulpit that all the people of God are not

in the enjoyment of gospel liberty, do not walk in the light of God's countenance, and that many of them, if not most, have doubts and fears and disquietudes; therefore, as I have all these evidences, pardon and love will all come in good time; I can take my rest, I need not be so very anxious nor troubled." These are plague-spots, marks of death, not the spot of God's children. Where the conscience is really touched by God's finger, and brought into the searching light of his countenance, there will be the pouring out, at times, of the will unto God! that he would manifest himself; there will be the anxious inquiry whether the heart is right before him; and a restless dissatisfaction with everything short of the manifestation of Christ, and the enjoyment of his blood and love.

4. They have obtained also **deliverance**; deliverance from the wrath to come, deliverance from the present evil world, and from every evil word and work so as to bring them into eternal condemnation. As a testimony of this, they from time to time receive deliverances from God; and no man has a real heart-felt persuasion that he is interested in the deliverance from the wrath to come, who has not received, and does not receive some deliverances now. Every deliverance in time is an earnest of a deliverance for eternity; and if we have never received any deliverance from God, our soul must hang in doubt, and there must be room for earnest inquiry whether we are interested in the deliverance from eternal wrath. Now there are deliverances which are short of a full deliverance into gospel light and liberty; there are testimonies which leave the soul short of "peace in believing," and the enjoyment of that "perfect love which casteth out fear." For instance, there are deliverances from temptation by the removal of the temptation; by power being given to resist it; by its edge being abated; by our being enabled to confess the sins that press upon our

conscience, and by confession finding relief. So, also, there is at times dropped into the soul some sweetness out of Christ, which yet does not amount to a full deliverance from the temptation under which we may happen to labour. Says some soul, "I think I can come in here; I have had some deliverances; have found some manifest answers to prayer; I have been in great straits, and cried to the Lord, and the Lord has delivered me; I have passed through severe exercises, and in those exercises I have, for a few moments, or for a short season, felt the Lord's light and power; I have had tokens that he has heard my feeble cries." Well, these are deliverances, and if you have had but one deliverance, one answer to prayer, one testimony from the mouth of God, one soft word spoken to your soul, it is an earnest of your deliverance in Christ from eternal perdition.

These, then, are some of the blessings which the elect obtain; but God has prescribed a certain channel through which they shall obtain them. Jesus himself obtained salvation for his people through suffering. He did not come into the world as a mighty conqueror carrying all before him, accomplishing the salvation of his people without a sigh or a groan or a tear, without much anguish of body, and without much tribulation of soul; but he was a sufferer every moment of his existence upon earth, and he wrought out the salvation of his dear people through the medium of most poignant suffering. The "election," then, has obtained God's blessings; but, though these mercies are freely given by God, though they are irreversibly granted for "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" **upon his part**, though they are freely given, yet the Lord has appointed a certain channel through which they flow. The channel is not the cause of them. None would mistake the course of a stream for its origin and source, and yet the river must flow in a certain channel, or it would cease to flow at all. So the Lord has

appointed a certain channel for his blessings to flow in; this channel is not the procuring cause of the blessings, but it is the mode in which the Lord bestows those blessings upon his elect. For instance, the Lord, usually speaking, does not communicate blessings to his people, except through the channel of sighs and cries and groans and wrestlings with him for the blessing. It is true that, in the first communications of grace, those find it who seek it not, for did the communication of grace to our souls depend upon our seeking it, none of the elect would receive it at all. "I am found of them that sought me not." But the Lord has appointed that his people, when quickened by his Spirit, should seek the blessings he means to bestow: "For all these things," he says, "will I, be inquired of by the house of Israel." "With supplications will I lead them." The Lord, then, has appointed prayer and supplication as a means through which he is pleased to communicate these blessings. Thus it is not a matter of freewill on our parts whether we will pray or not; nor is it a matter of duty, but it is a matter of divine teaching. We pray because the Lord himself kindles in our hearts the spirit of prayer. The Lord himself puts certain desires into our souls, pours into our hearts a Spirit of grace and supplications, and then we freely pour out what the Lord pours in. The Lord, then, before he communicates his manifested blessings to his people, works in them **for the most part** these two feelings, a necessity of the blessing that they want, and a hungering and thirsting and panting desire after the manifestation of that blessing. These two ideas are conveyed by the comparison of hunger. Hunger is a painful feeling; there is an absolute necessity connected with it, for if food be not supplied, the man must die. But connected with this necessity, there is a longing after food. It is not merely a painful sensation of emptiness and want; but there is a longing, a desire, an intense craving after the gratification of that want. Thus this expression, "hunger,"

conveys the two feelings that are wrought by the Spirit in living souls. They are brought to a feeling of want and destitution, a sense of emptiness and sinking, unless the blessings are communicated to them. But there is something more than the necessity. Together with the want, there is a craving to enjoy food. And out of the working together of these combined feelings, there springs a fervent wrestling with the Lord, that he would communicate, and manifest, and bestow his pardon upon the soul. But the children of God may have a long season of spiritual hunger and spiritual thirst before their desires are fully satisfied. The "election" hath obtained righteousness, everlasting righteousness in Christ; but the Lord has appointed that his people should obtain the manifestation of it through deep want and through fervent intercession. So that, though the blessing is theirs already in the mind of God; though they stand righteous and accepted in Christ before all worlds; though they are freely justified from all things, yet the manifestation of it, the enjoyment of it, the rich experimental revelation of it, they may be, and often are, destitute of for weeks and months and years. Yea, many of God's pilgrims go toiling on through life, and the desired blessing is communicated only a little time before their souls are taken into the eternal enjoyment of it. The Lord sees fit that his people shall be kept humble; he will not suffer them to be deeply entangled in that awful sin of presumption, that is so rife; and, therefore, he sees good that many of his family shall, by painful exercises, be kept in a state of bondage, darkness, and unbelief; and they shall no more be able to deliver their souls out of guilt and condemnation than they would be to create a new sun. But all for wise purposes, that they may be kept back from presumptuous sins, that they may taste somewhat of the wormwood and the gall, that they may be baptized with that baptism with which the Lord himself was baptized, and drink of the cup that he drank of; and thus, when righteousness is

revealed and salvation manifested, they learn what it really is, and what a power and blessedness there is in it. Many of the Lord's people go on for weeks and months and years without a clear manifestation of the pardon of their sins; and sometimes, when death stares them in the face, or when the wrath of God against sin is deeply felt, or when things in providence takes a frowning turn, or when their souls are exercised with powerful temptations, they are cast well nigh into despair, and fear lest the blessing should never be communicated to their hearts. These very exercises, under the Spirit's teaching, work in them so as to make them dissatisfied with everything short of a manifestation. The guilt that they feel brings them to this spot, that pardon must be "something known and felt," that it must be an enjoyed manifestation from God himself, that there is a divine reality in it; and that nothing but the discovery of it with power can really bring their souls into happiness and peace. They could not learn this lesson in any other way; they could not value it. The Lord never bestows his gifts upon unthankful hearts. He prepares and exercises the souls of his children that, when the blessing comes, they shall prize it; shall estimate it, in some measure, at its due worth; and shall thank, bless, and praise God for his goodness to them, the very chief of sinners, and the basest of all wretches. So with respect to the **love of God**; he will teach all his people to sigh and cry and groan and plead and wrestle vehemently for the manifestation of his love to their souls; they know that it is a reality; not mere lip-language, not an unknown something just casually mentioned in God's word; but that there is a spiritual enjoyment of it through divine manifestation, and that all the elect of God have it shed abroad in their hearts before they die. Short of it, therefore, they cannot rest satisfied; short of it, they feel themselves destitute of salvation; and, therefore, until the love of God is experimentally realised and made known by the Holy Ghost

to their souls, they cannot be fully persuaded that they are interested in that love of Christ which passeth knowledge. So, with respect to **deliverances**, the Lord has appointed a channel for them to come in, and this channel is temptation. Thus, all the elect are exercised, more or less, by temptations. From these temptations they seek for deliverance. And, as the temptation is real, so must the deliverance be real too. It is one thing to see a porter staggering under a heavy burden in the street, and another thing to have the burden upon our own back. We might see the burden taken off, it would convey no relief to us; but were we in his place, were we staggering and sinking under the weight, the removal of the burden would be a sensible relief, and we should know the moment when we were relieved, and feel there was a hand that relieved us. So those that are burdened in their consciences with temptations and exercises, must have relief. To read how David was relieved, how Paul was relieved, how Peter was relieved, brings them no comfort; they want it as a personal matter, as a realised thing, as what is made known in their consciences, and felt with power in their hearts. The election hath obtained eternal deliverance in Christ; but when the Lord gives a deliverance in time, seals a testimony, brings in some timely help which delivers the soul, it is the sure evidence of its eternal deliverance, and ratifies and manifests it in the heart.

These, then, are some of the things which the election hath obtained; and all the elect of God who are quickened into spiritual life, are in one of these two states; they have either obtained the manifestation of these things in their consciences, or else they are travailing after the obtaining of them. God has none of those in his dear family, who are always at ease, careless and carnal, and utterly reckless whether he will bless them or not. All of his quickened children, in their measure, some more, some less, some to a



deeper, others in a more shallow degree, but all of his quickened family are exercised with the things of eternity: and those of the quickened elect who have not been brought into the enjoyment of the things of Christ in their hearts and consciences, are at times, as the Spirit of the Lord works upon them, earnestly seeking that they may taste and feel and handle these divine realities in their soul. Election, then, in eternity, is the source of every blessing in time: out of it, as out of a root, grow all the branches of life in the soul. But the way in which the Lord's people get at election, and taste the sweetness of it as sealed upon their souls, is, by passing through those straits and severe exercises, whereby they are brought to this solemn conclusion, that none but the elect are saved; and that if their names are not in the book of life, and their personal election is not experimentally made known, they are lost and ruined for ever.

II. "And the rest were blinded." Solemn words! awful declaration! Look at this assembled congregation, this large multitude. All here present are either elect or non-elect. Your names, each of you, as individuals, were either written in the Lamb's book of life before all worlds, or were written up to eternal perdition. Now, if you are a living soul, you will be exercised with this matter, and you will have a conviction in your conscience, that salvation must be revealed to you from the mouth of God; and until you get that sweet testimony in your heart, you can never feel fully persuaded of your interest in eternal realities.

"And **the rest** were blinded." What a multitude this comprehends! Look at God's ancient family, those who live in the vicinity of this place of worship, who dwell so thickly in streets and alleys within a circle of half a mile from this chapel—God's ancient people, the Jews! How blinded they are! We, standing in their privileges, are grafted as Gentiles

into the olive tree; and they, on account of disobedience, are cut off. What a striking memorial that "the rest are blinded!" Every Jew that we meet with in the street is a standing testimony that God had "blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart" (John 12:40).

But when we come within the pale of the visible church, especially when we come more immediately to those whom we know, and with whom we stand in connexion; how many of these, too, are blinded! Who is so blind as the self-righteous Pharisee that expects to be saved by his own virtues! Blind he must indeed be, as the Scriptures speak, "smitten with blindness of heart (Deut. 28:28), and madness and astonishment." Blind indeed must he be, to think he can work out a righteousness that shall satisfy God. But, if it be possible, blinder still are those who have the form of godliness, whilst they deny the power thereof. Jude speaks of certain characters as "twice dead," and we might reasonably say of unsanctified professors, that they are "twice blind," because they have the eyes of their natural understanding open to see truth in the letter, but the "veil is still upon their heart;" they are still blind towards God, blind to the supernatural manifestation and experimental realisation of the truth as it is in Jesus. If it were not so, if they were not twice blinded, they would have such a sight of themselves as would drive them into madness or despair. If those who are destitute of the fear of God, and yet have the form of godliness, could see themselves as God sees them, playing with mere baubles, amusing their vain minds with speculations, whilst under the wrath of God, under the curse of his law, doomed to eternal perdition,—if they could only have one moment's sight of themselves as God sees them, they would plunge headlong into hell to escape, if it were possible, his vengeful eye. But they are blinded. They cannot see, they do not know where they are. Blindness hath come

upon them, and they walking in blindness see not who God is, nor what they are; they see not their real state before God, nor do they know the things that God's people are mysteriously led into. And are not some of you afraid that this is your case? Does not your heart sometimes quake with fear lest you belong to this "rest;" lest the God of this world be blinding you; lest you have nothing but a nominal profession, and lest your conscience be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. It is good to have such fears. He who feareth not, who has no solemn apprehensions, who has no anxious inquires, who is never exercised with some internal trepidation of soul, it is much to be feared has never known what it is to have "the candle of the Lord searching the hidden parts of the belly." The children of God are often earnestly questioning whether they belong to this band of nominal professors; and their very anxious inquiries, their very searchings of heart, their very appeals to God with fervent importunity, is an evidence that they are not blinded. Those that are blinded by the god of this world, have no acquaintance with what power and feeling and savour and dew are; they see not these things, they are blind to their reality, they are dead to their importance; but the living family, who are brought by God's blessed Spirit into some apprehension of eternal realities, have eyes to see what power, is, and hearts too, to desire to feel its manifestation. Nay, it is the very seeing what reality and power are, which makes them desire to experience the savour of eternal things in their conscience; and because they do not feel them as they wish, it makes them often fear that they are blind altogether. They are thus brought into that state described, Isa 59:10: "We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes." It does not say they had no eyes, but "**as if** they had no eyes"—that is, they fear that they are the characters; they seem so to stagger here and there like a drunken man, and to be at their wit's end, that

they are exercised in their minds whether they are not blind altogether. But the very inquiry, the very anxious cry, the very groaning desire, the very fervent supplication to the Lord that he would not let them live and die without a testimony from himself, that he would lift up the light of his countenance and the life of his favour—these very cries are a proof of life. Were you blind, you would not see these things; were you deaf, you would not spiritually hear these things; were you dead, you would not feel these things. And therefore, that which you seem to take as an evidence against you, is in reality an evidence for you; and the very sensations of trepidation, anxious inquiry, godly tear, and the crying out before the Lord that he would search you and try you, and really make your heart right in his sight—these very things are the symptoms of life, the evidences of a work of grace upon the heart, and are the spiritual breathings of the quickened soul, the Lord himself having communicated these feelings unto it. The blind, hardened, dead, conscience-seared professor has no anxiety, no holy fear, no trembling awe, no godly reverence, no solemn searching before God, whether his heart is right before him; he is shut up in unbelief; he has no inward trepidation of spirit before God, because his eyes being blind as to who God is, and to what he is before him, all is at peace within him. Like the man spoken of in the parable of the strong man armed, "his goods are at peace;" the strong man keepeth the palace, and as long as the strong man keeps possession, he deadens the conscience, hardens the heart blinds the eyes, and thus represses any conviction that may seem to start up in the natural mind.

If God, then, has quickened your soul into spiritual life, and you have ears to hear, I would just put to you two questions before I conclude. Have you obtained these blessings? Have you obtained righteousness by a manifestation of Christ's

righteousness; pardon, by the application of Christ's blood; love, by a shedding abroad of love, deliverance, by a discovery of God's outstretched hand? My other question is this—if you have not, and let conscience bear its honest testimony—if you have never experienced righteousness, pardon, love, and deliverance, is there a cry in your soul after them? Is there anything like fervent supplication that God would bestow them? Is there anything of a groan in the depth of your spirit that the Lord would reveal them? These are marks of life; and he that has these marks will have the blessing, because God has quickened him into spiritual life. It may be long delayed but it will come at last; "it will surely come, it will not tarry." It may be withheld for wise purposes, and you may have to travel through many a dark season and many an anxious hour, but deliverance is sure; it is reserved for you in Christ, and you are reserved for it, kept by God himself unto salvation, ready to be delivered in the last time. I cannot speak to the blind. They have no eyes to see, no ears to hear; no hearts to feel. I speak to the living; for the living alone can receive the testimony of God; and "the living, the living he shall praise him." (Isa. 38:19).