

**"WHO ART THOU THAT REPLIEST  
AGAINST GOD?"**

**ROM. 9:20.**

It is the mistaken idea of some that justice requires that God should make no difference in bestowing his favors among his creatures; that if he exalts one to a high position, in justice he must do the same for all, unless it can be shown that some have forfeited their rights, in which case such might justly be assigned to a lower position.

If this principle be a correct one, it would show that God had no right to create Jesus higher than angels and then to exalt him to the divine nature, unless he intended to do the same for all the angels and for all men. And to carry the principle still further, if some men are to be highly exalted to be partakers of the divine nature, all men must eventually be elevated to the same position. And why not carry the principle to its extreme limit, and apply the same law of progression to the brute and insect creation, and say that since they are all God's creatures they must all eventually attain unto the very highest plane of existence – the DIVINE NATURE.

Perhaps none would be inclined to carry the principle – if principle it is – so far. Yet if it is a principle founded in simple justice, where could it stop short and still be just? And if such were indeed the plan of God, where would be the pleasing variety in all his works? All nature, both animate and inanimate, exhibits the glory and diversity of divine power and wisdom. The modest violet does not develop into a rose, the blade of grass does not develop into a tree, a bird does not develop into some other creature. But if progression from lower to higher natures were a

part of God's plan, how inferior that plan would be to what it really is! If every blade of grass were to become a tree, or every flower a rose, and every forest warbler had ceased its song, what a weary, monotonous picture we should have!

But such is not God's plan; for as "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork" in wonderful variety and glory, much more shall his intelligent creation exhibit the variety and superior glory of his power. So we conclude from reason, from the analogies of nature, and from the express teaching of the Word of God.

It is very important that we should have right ideas of justice. A favor should never be esteemed as a justly-merited recompense. If you bestow a favor, and it is received as an act of simple justice, as nothing more than you ought to do, you feel disappointed. An act of simple justice is no occasion for special gratitude, nor is it any proof of love; but God commendeth his great love to his creatures in an endless train of unmerited favors, which call forth their love and praise in return.

God had a right, if he chose, to make us merely the creatures of a brief space of time, even if we had never sinned. Thus he has made some of his creatures. He might have permitted us to enjoy his blessings for a season, and then blot us out of existence. It is only of his favor that we have an existence at all, but how much greater favor is the redemption of the existence once forfeited by sin.

And further, it is purely of God's favor that you are a man and not a beast; it is purely of favor that angels are angels, a little higher than men; and it is purely of God's favor that Jesus is made a partaker of the divine nature. It becomes all his intelligent creatures, then, to receive with humble gratitude whatever God may bestow. Any other spirit justly merits condemnation, and if

indulged will end in abasement and destruction. It is a mark of gross ingratitude to say, My favor is of less value than my neighbors, and to aspire to attain a favor not promised. A man has no right to aspire to be an angel, never having been invited to that position; nor has an angel a right to aspire to the divine nature, that never having been offered to them. This was the crime of Satan which brought his abasement, and will end in his destruction. (Isa. 14:14.) "Whoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted," (Luke 14:11), but not necessarily to the highest position.

Partly from this false idea of justice, and partly from other reasons, the subject of election as taught in the Scriptures has been the occasion of much dispute and misunderstanding. That the Scriptures teach election few would deny, but on just what principle the election or selection is based is a matter of considerable difference of opinion, some claiming that the election is an arbitrary, unconditional one, and others that it is conditional. There is a measure of truth we believe in both of these views.

An election on God's part is the expression of his choice for a certain purpose, office, or condition. We have just seen that God has elected or chosen that some of his creatures should be angels, that some should be men, that some should be beasts, birds, insects, etc., and that some should be of his own divine nature. We also see that their election to these conditions is not because of their own merit or demerit, but that it is purely of favor that they have existence in any condition.

But let us confine ourselves to God's elections among men. None, we presume, would question the fact that the election of Isaac rather than Ishmael, of Jacob rather than Esau, and of Israel rather than other nations of the world, to enjoy the special favors

of God, were unconditional elections. And Rom. 9:11 makes the very plain and positive statement that the election of Jacob over Esau was made before the children were born, so that it might be evident that the election was not because of the merit or demerit of either, but of God's unconditional choice. So also Isaac, and the nation of Israel, were chosen before they were born.

"So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy," or favor. (Rom. 9:16.) It was not because these chosen ones were better than others that God selected them, but it was because God had a [R612 : page 4] right to do as he pleased with his own, and because he chose to exercise that right for the accomplishment of his plans. If you owned a number of buildings, and chose to use one as a dwelling, to turn another into a store, and another into a factory, who could dispute your right to do so, since the buildings are your own property? So God asserts his right to do what he pleases with his various creatures. And "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him who formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor [without honor]?" Rom. 9:21. From original nothingness all were created by the same divine power.

"Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, his [man's] maker: ASK me of things to come. Concerning my children, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me? I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded." "Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited. I am the Lord, and there

is none else." (Isa. 45:10-12,18.) None have a right to dictate to him.

If God has established the earth, and if he formed it not in vain, but made it to be inhabited by restored, perfect men, who are we that we should reply against God and say that it is unjust not to change their nature and make them all partakers of a spiritual nature like unto the angels, or like unto his own divine nature? How much more becoming to come humbly to God's Word and "ASK concerning things to come," than to "command" or assert that he must carry out our ideas?

"Lord, keep back thy servants from presumptuous sins: let them not have dominion over us." None of God's children, we believe, would knowingly dictate to the Lord; yet how easily and almost unconsciously we may fall into such an error. We need to look into the glass frequently, lest such dispositions remain undiscovered.

The human race are God's children by creation – the work of his hands – and God's plan with reference to them is clearly revealed in his Word. Paul says that the first man (who was a sample of what the race will be when perfect) was of the earth, earthy; and his posterity, with the exception of the Gospel Church, will in the resurrection still be earthy – human – adapted to the earth. (1 Cor. 15:38,44.) David says that he was made only a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and honor, dominion, etc. (Psa. 8:4-8.) And Peter, and Jesus, and all the Prophets since the world began, declare that the human race is to be RESTORED to that glorious perfection, and are again to have dominion over earth as their representative, Adam, had.

This is what God has elected, or chosen, the human race for. And what a glorious portion! Close your eyes for a moment, if you can, to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow, that

yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word, but love welling up from every heart to meet a kindred response in every other heart; benevolence marking every act. Then there shall be no more sickness, not an ache, nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay – not even a fear of any such thing. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty, of human form and feature, that you have ever seen, and know that perfect men and women will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping, bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away when thus they realize the resurrection work complete. **[R613 : page 4]**

And this is only the change in human society. We call to mind also that the earth which was "made to be inhabited" by such a race of beings, is to be a fit and becoming abode for man. It shall no more bring forth thorns and briers, and require the sweat of man's face to yield his bread, but "the earth shall" easily and naturally "yield her increase." "The desert shall blossom as the rose," and the lower animal creation will be perfect, willing and obedient servants. All the grasses will not develop into trees, nor every modest flower into one monotonous form of beauty. No; nature with its pleasing variety will call to men from every direction to seek and know the glory and power and love of God, and mind and heart will rejoice in him.

Think you that with ungrateful heart man will turn from such loving favor to envy an angel's estate? No, not for an instant. We call to mind the expression of gratitude from an only child when Christmas morning displayed the special evidences of a mother's

love. Viewing his treasures with childish delight, he said, "Mamma, did you do all this for one little boy?" Such will be the gratitude of perfect human hearts. Men will not then, as they now do, with restless, feverish pulse and morbid desire, crave and long for exciting change or greater variety. No, they will have learned and proven that "Godliness [God-likeness] with contentment is great gain." (1 Tim. 6:6.) This restless desire for something new, that now prevails, is not a natural, but an abnormal condition, due to our imperfection and to our present unsatisfactory condition. It is not God-like to restlessly crave something new. Most things are old to God, and he rejoices most in those things which are old, and have attained their perfection. So will it be with man, when restored to the image of God.

Well, says some one, will not Abraham and the Prophets, and others of past ages, who were so faithful to God, and who suffered so much for conscience sake, have a right to feel envious of the Gospel Church some of whom have not suffered half so much, and yet will be so much more highly exalted? Not at all. They will recognize God's right to do what he will with his own, and they shall be satisfied when they awake with God's likeness as Adam had it. (Psa. 17:15; 36:8; 63:5; 104:13; Jer. 31:12-14.) The perfect man will not know or understand the spiritual glory, that being wisely hidden from him; and he will be so absorbed and enraptured with the glory that surrounds him on the human plane, that he will have no aspirations for things unseen and not revealed. A glance at present experience will illustrate this – for how hardly, with what difficulty do those who are rich in this world's goods enter into the kingdom of God. The few good things possessed even under the present reign of evil and death so captivate the human nature that we need special help from God to keep our eye and purpose fixed on the spiritual promises.

We notice also that the election of the Gospel Church is in a sense an unconditional election; for we read (Eph. 1:4,5) that it was chosen or elected "before the foundation of the world" – long enough before they were born, to prove that it was not of merit, but of favor. And moreover we read that "Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son;...and whom he did predestinate them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

This shows that the election or choice of the Church was a pre-determined thing on God's part; but mark, it is not an unconditional election of the individual members of the Church. Before the foundation of the world God determined that within a specific time (the Gospel Age) he would offer a special favor to those living during that time. And the class he then intended to favor (and no others) he also determined to conform to the image of His Son, who is "the express image of the Father's person" – that is, he determined to change the nature of this class from human to spiritual, and the highest form of the spiritual, the "divine nature." (2 Pet. 1:4.)

And whom he thus determined to favor he called; but all who receive the call do not appreciate it. Some fail to make their calling and election sure, and therefore of the many called only a few are chosen. The class who actually receive the great favor offered "are called, and faithful, and chosen." (Rev. 17:14.) Their being called or invited to the high position is mentioned to show that they do not presumptuously aspire to it without invitation.

"And whom he called, them he also justified." The class whom God calls to this high position he first redeemed and justified through Christ. Such believers as appreciate and accept the invitation to the high position, were first JUSTIFIED through



faith in the Redeemer – reckoned free from sin, sin being no longer imputed to them. Being thus divested of all condemnation, they are free to so run that they may make their calling and election sure. As long as we were in bondage to sin and death we could not move; but having by faith passed from death unto life, we are reckoned as free from sin as the world will be when actually made perfect, and therefore we may strive lawfully for the prize of our high calling. Since the privilege of running for the great prize was the only advantage to be gained by being justified during the Gospel Age, those who disregarded and did not appreciate the call are not reckoned justified.

"And whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Gr. doxazo, honored.) They are honored now by being set apart for this special position, separated from the world, and marked or sealed with his Spirit; and in due time they will be more highly honored in the full realization of the "exceeding great and precious promises."

All this wealth of favor predetermined on the Gospel Church was wholly unconditional – of God's own free will and choice. We never should have thought of seeking such a thing, nor dared to claim it on the strength of merit, nor to aspire to it without invitation.

But as to whether you and I shall be of that favored class is quite another matter. That is conditional, and if we would be counted in this class we must fulfill those conditions, all of which are well known to us. "Let us therefore fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (Heb. 4:1.) While the great favor is not of him that willeth, and of him that runneth," it is to him that willeth, and to him that runneth.

Having thus, we trust, clearly vindicated God's absolute right and purpose to do what he will with his own, we would call attention to the fact that the principle which characterizes the bestowment of all his favors is the design of each for the general good of all. The highest exaltation is for the greatest service and blessing of all. Let meekness, humility and benevolence make ready the sons of God for their high service.

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