

PREDESTINATION.

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Peter Burkholder was a prominent Mennonite bishop in Virginia in the first half of the 19th century. He was ordained to the ministry in the Mennonite Church in 1805 at the age of 21. About 32 years later he was ordained to the office of bishop. He was an outstanding and progressive leader among the Mennonites of Virginia.

He married Elisabeth Coffman (24 February 1775-26 April 1846) on 11 October 1803, to which union nine children were born.

The Treatise on Predestination was reprinted as an appendage to *Christian Conversation on Saving Faith* (Lancaster, 1857) and in all succeeding reprints of the same. The many writings of Peter Burkholder were translated from the German by Joseph Funk.

The following remarks on Predestination were written by Peter Burkholder at the request of some of his friends and were translated into the English language.

Inasmuch as there is such a diversity of opinion among the different denominations of Christians concerning man's free will, I would, with the help of God and His grace, endeavour to set forth our belief, according to the Word of God, on this subject. This subject is treated in the ninth and tenth articles of our Confession of Faith, namely, of the free will of man, and of election and reprobation, where the doctrine is maintained, that it is in the power of man, according to his free will, to choose what is good and to reject what is evil, or, to choose what is evil and reject what is good. Yet, since many object to this doctrine, by reason of the Word of God, quoted by the Apostle Paul, and the apostle's own words, where it is said: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Romans 9:15-16), it will, perhaps, be productive of some good to make some further remarks on this subject.

In the first place, the above quoted words, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion,” must be well examined, and proved what is the meaning of them; and, to understand them in their proper meaning, and the apostle’s drift in quoting them, we must compare them with many passages of his epistle to the Romans. And in doing this, we will examine the apostle’s meaning in the twenty-eighth verse of the first chapter of this epistle, where he says: “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient,” and these words give us a key which will open to us many passages of this epistle, for here we find that, because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind. Now, had they been willing to retain God in their mind, God would have had mercy and compassion on them, but as they rejected the knowledge of God and spurned Him, He also rejected them, and gave them over to hardness of heart.

Moreover, in the third and fourth chapters of this epistle, the Apostle Paul speaks of the works of the law, whereby no flesh shall be justified, but for which the Jews were so very zealous, as they still sought their justification by the deeds of the law, yet could not thereby be justified. And as the Romans were Gentiles, the apostle wrote unto them in this epistle, testifying that a man is not justified by the deeds of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. Romans 3:28. Here Paul teaches and encourages the Gentiles that, notwithstanding they have not the law, yet they have equal access to the salvation by Christ with the Jews, testifying that God is not the God of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. Romans 3:29. For the general tenor and drift of this epistle is of the calling and election of the Gentiles by faith in Jesus Christ, and of the rejection of the Jews, who go about to establish their own righteousness, for which they were very zealous, as the apostle saith: “For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every

one that believeth” Romans 10:2-4). Now, upon such ignorantly zealous Jews, who will and run to establish their own righteousness, contrary to the counsel of God, is the above passage of Paul’s applicable, when he saith, “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” For the Jews, with all their *willing*, and *running*, and compassing sea and land to make proselytes, did not attain the righteousness of God, as God was not pleased to extend His mercy and compassion unto them, because they rejected His counsel, and sought it not by faith, but by the works of law, and thus they stumbled at the stumbling Stone and Rock of offence. Romans 9:31-32. This Rock is Christ, on whom the Jews would not believe. But the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, have attained the righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith, because they sought it not in the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ that justifieth the ungodly, and therefore their faith is counted for righteousness. Hence, these are they on whom the Lord will have mercy and compassion, because they did the will of God and sought Him by faith in His own appointed way.

And thus it is in relation to our present condition. If we begin a thing and go on with it according to our own mind and will, and contrary to the word and will of God, we may *will* and *run*, as we may, to our utmost ability, yet will God not have mercy nor compassion. But if we do according to the word and will of God, He will be pleased to have mercy, and compassion on us. Of this we have an example in Pharaoh and the children of Israel, for the children of Israel went out of the land of Egypt according to the commandment of the Lord, and the Lord was with them on their journey, and with signs and wonders led them on. But Pharaoh, who in direct opposition to the word and will of God, pursued after the children of Israel to destroy them, was himself with all his host destroyed, without having any mercy or compassion shown them from the Lord, and this was done because Pharaoh would not obey the voice of the Lord to let Israel go — “HE DID NOT LIKE TO RETAIN GOD IN HIS KNOWLEDGE.”

For, when Moses and Aaron were sent with the message of the Lord to Pharaoh, and told him, “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel,

Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go” (Exodus 5:1-2). Now, because Pharaoh would not obey the message of the Lord by Moses and Aaron, but hardened his heart against the God of heaven, he was given over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient. And thus his heart was hardened by his own obduracy to pursue after Israel to his own destruction.

Now in adverting to the words of the apostle and his quotation from the Old Testament, where he saith, “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth” (Romans 9:16-18), we must, with this passage, compare the following Scriptures, in order to find who they are on whom the Lord will have mercy, and also they whom He will harden. And here we find, as said above, that they who did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave over to a reprobate mind, and thus their hearts were hardened because they hardened their hearts against the counsel of God. This agrees with the words of the apostle, “Despise thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Romans 2:4-5). “Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Hebrews 3:7-8). From these Scriptures we see that men themselves harden their hearts against the counsel of God and His Holy Spirit, when He, by His goodness, would lead them to repentance. For, when the Holy Spirit counsels men to repent, He will not harden their hearts against it. Neither will God harden the hearts of any but those who have hardened their hearts against Him, His counsels, and His ways, through the deceitfulness of sin, as the apostle saith, “Exhort

one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:13).

Hence, it is highly necessary for us to stand upon our guard and watch lest our hearts be hardened against God through the deceitfulness of sin. But let us hear and obey the voice of God and the dictates of His divine Spirit, to be by Him led in the path of wisdom and truth.

Furthermore, as predestinarians hold forth the doctrine that God, by His unchangeable decrees, has, from eternity, elected and chosen a part of mankind to be heirs of eternal glory, and by the same decrees He has reprobated and doomed the other part to eternal and unavoidable woe and misery, and as they ground this doctrine partly on the above quoted words of the apostle — which we have in some measure explained — and also on the type and figure represented by Jacob and Esau, therefore we will, by the grace of God, endeavour to give a further explication, as follows:

As God is omniscient, and knew, from eternity, all future events, He has by figures and types represented what would come to pass. And herein Jacob and Esau were striking types: Esau being a type of the old dispensation, as the Jews, with their laws and ceremonies, and Jacob a type of the new dispensation, as the Christians, with the Gospel and its privileges. For, when Esau and Jacob were born, Jacob’s hand took hold on Esau’s heel; Esau’s heel denoting the end of the law with its ceremonies, and the hands of Jacob the beginning of the Gospel dispensation, and in like manner as Esau was the first-born, so also was the law introduced before the Gospel, and as the children struggled together before they were born, even so did the stubborn and unbelieving Jews struggle and strive against the Gospel — stumbling against the stone of stumbling and Rock of offence. Romans 9:32-33. Moreover, that Esau was red all over, like an hairy garment, may denote the rigor of the law, and also the rough, rude, and unsubdued nature of the old man, in his natural birth. And that the elder shall serve the younger, may imply that the law is subservient to the Gospel. For the Apostle Paul compares the law with Hagar, the bondmaid of Abraham, saying, “It is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But

he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children” (Galatians 4:22-25).

And further, Paul speaks of Esau and Jacob saying, “(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;) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” (Romans 9:11-13). Now this is somewhat hard to understand, and those that do not view the case of Esau and Jacob in the light of a spiritual and emblematical representation may greatly err, inasmuch as these words seem to import that, according to the purpose and determination of God, He had chosen the one and rejected the other, without respect to their merit and future conduct, and therefore there would be no room given for the rejected to gain the love and favour of God, though he might earnestly seek it. Thus might the inference be drawn that God is unrighteous! which question the apostle also asks, when he says, “What shall we say then ? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid” (v. 14). Yea, although we cannot trace God in His foreknowledge and providence, and though His dispensation may be dark and mysterious, He is righteous in all His ways.

Now in that God saith, “Not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger,” He gives us to understand that the Jews sought their righteousness and justification by the works of the law, whereby they could not attain to the righteousness which is acceptable with God; but as the *called*, by the grace of God they must obtain it through the Gospel, by faith in Jesus Christ. For it pleased God that man’s eternal blessedness should be of grace, and not of works, that all the glory, honour, and praise of our salvation may be to the Lord, and that no flesh might glory in His presence.

Likewise when it is said, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated,” it is thereby typified that the love of God was manifested to

us in the Gospel, and not in the law; “because the law worketh wrath” (Romans 4:15), and the wrath, and displeasure of God, under which man had fallen, could not be appeased and reconciled by the law, and therefore it is hated. But in Christ Jesus and His glorious Gospel is grace and truth, the wrath of God is pacified and the enmity slain, as the apostle saith, “For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace” (Ephesians 2:14-15). This is the love of God, which is pre-figured in Jacob. And in like manner, as Esau despised and sold his birthright, thereby was prefigured the birthright to the promised inheritance of the heavenly Canaan through the atonement of the Saviour Jesus Christ, the eternal and only begotten Son of God. This promise was made to the Jews, as the elder brother, but as they despised this promised inheritance through the Redeemer and rejected the Son of God, they thus sold their birthright to their younger brother, the Gentiles, who believed on Christ, and thus inherited the promised blessing, in preference to the unbelieving Jews. Thus it is written, “And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last” (Luke 13:29-30).

Moreover, as Esau could not obtain the blessing by his weapons, the quiver and bow, in hunting venison, so also could not the unbelieving Jews obtain the Gospel blessings by their zeal for the works of the law, and their carnal ordinances. And as Jacob inherited the blessing, so have all the believers in Christ obtained the blessing, and are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Ephesians 1:3. Therefore, “it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.”

Now let us consider well whether, from the emblematical representation of Esau and Jacob, and the words, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated,” the inference can be drawn that God has from the creation chosen and elected a part of the human family to be heirs of

eternal life, glory, and happiness, while he has doomed and reprobated the others to eternal death, pain, and misery! No, that be far from that GOD who is righteous in all His ways.

For, notwithstanding the law, wherein God manifested His *hatred of sin*, and which was prefigured by Esau, whom he hated, and by the works of which law the sinner could not be justified and obtain the favour of God — for, “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Romans 3:20), yet God did not hate the penitent sinner who was under the law and kept it. But by law and its sacrifices, pointed him to the all-atoning LAMB, Jesus Christ, and His glorious Gospel, by which is manifested His love to sinners, and which was prefigured by Jacob, whom he loved, by this Gospel ALL are called and invited to the Gospel feast, as may be seen in many passages and parables in Holy Writ, but few received the call; hence it is written, “For many are called, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14).

But here let us examine what is the cause that but few are chosen? Is it not, because they *will not* obey the call and come? For the invitation was as urgent to those who did not come, as to those who came, and even those who were *first bidden*, refused to come. For when the Lord sent out His servants at supper time, to say to them that were bidden, “Come; for all things are now ready” (Luke 14:17), they all with one consent began to make excuses, and refused to come. These were of the house of Israel, and when all things were made ready, and they were bidden to come, and came not, was it not because they *would not come* — and not because they were not invited and could not? Now when this was shown unto the Lord, He said to His servants: “Go quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:21-23). The highways and hedges may denote the whole world, and this accords with the commandments given to the apostles by our Lord Jesus Christ, when He ascended to heaven, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel

to every creature” (Mark 16:15). This call extends to *all* — both Jews and Gentiles — all nations, of every language and tongue. There is free grace for all those who *will come* and accept it. Now if the greater part are reprobated and rejected, why are they all called? Our Lord exclaims over that great and populous city Jerusalem, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37).

From these Scriptures, and the following, it is plain and evident that it is in the FREE WILL of man to accept the call and invitation of the Gospel, and come to Christ and live, or to reject it and perish. For it is the will of God our Saviour that all men should be gathered under the wings of His mercy and be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. 1Timothy 2:4. This is evidenced by many passages in Holy Writ. For God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, as He saith by the prophet: “Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (Ezekiel 33:11). Also saith Peter, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Moreover, Moses saith: “See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that

thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him, for he is thy life” (Deuteronomy 30:15-20). Likewise Joshua saith to Israel, “Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:14-15). “Behold,” saith the Spirit, “I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it” (Revelation 3:8). Also, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17).

Now, if God declares with an oath that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked; and that He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, and if He sets before them life and good, and death and evil, and commands them to love the Lord their God, to walk in His ways, and to choose life; and Joshua, after exhorting the people to fear the Lord, and serve Him, and to choose for the best, says, As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord: — moreover, if a door is set open that no man can shut — and if the bride and the Spirit say, Come — if all that hear say, Come — if all that are athirst shall come, and if whosoever will may come and take the water of life freely — can it yet be said that God, that holy, just and good God who is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), should, in His foreknowledge, have reprobated and abandoned some of His rational creatures unavoidably on their part — to eternal death and misery? Would it not be inconsistent with the above Scripture texts, and in opposition to them? And, moreover, would it not be inconsistent with the Divine attributes?

Furthermore, that Christ Jesus, by His sacrifice and blood, has made atonement for the sins of the whole world, is clear and evident from the following Scriptures. Paul says, “Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto jus-

tification of life” (Romans 5:18). And John says, “We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1-2). Moreover, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (1 John 4:10, 14). “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Peter 2:24). “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18). And when John saw Jesus coming unto him, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). The Samaritans said unto the woman, “Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world” (John 4:42). “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Thus we see that full atonement is made for the sins of the whole world; and that a door of free grace is open for ALL who will come, and accept it, by faith in Jesus Christ.

But, nevertheless, we also believe and acknowledge that, according to the Holy Scriptures, God has His elected and chosen people, who are known to Him, and whom He hath chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world. For Christ said, “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive THE VERY ELECT” (Matthew 24:24). “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain” (John 15:16). Also the apostle says, “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. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he jus-

tified, them he also glorified” (Romans 8:28-30). Again he says, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved: In whom we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:4-7), Moreover it is said that those that are with the Lamb, are “called, and chosen, and faithful” (Revelation 17:14).

Here let us examine the reason why some are elected, called and chosen, while others are hardened in sin, and reprobated. By thus examining, will we not find that it is owing to their own *willingness* or *unwillingness* in receiving the message of peace to their souls? For the apostle says, “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became *followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word* in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost” (1 Thessalonians 1:4-6). For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye *received the word of God* which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. For ye, brethren, *became followers of the churches of God* which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 2:13-14). “Then they that *gladly received his word* were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). “And the people with one accord *gave heed unto those things which Philip spoke*, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. But when they *believed* Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:6, 12). “And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and *glorified the word of the Lord*: and as many as were ordained to eternal life *believed*” (Acts 13:48). “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” says the inspired apostle (Philip-

pians 3:14). And Peter declares, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall” (2 Peter 1:10).

Now does it not appear evident, from the foregoing Scriptures that all those who gladly and willingly receive the Word, believe in Christ, keep His sayings, and follow Him, are they that are the called, the elected, and the chosen? They press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. They give diligence to make their calling and election sure. They are elected and chosen, because they obey the voice of the Lord, hear His sayings, and do them. “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:12). And thus Christ is the “author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey him*” (Hebrews 5:9).

On the other hand, those that are hardened and reprobated are they who reject the offered grace and spurn it, as the Apostle Peter says, “For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water” (2 Peter 3:5). “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved” (John 3:19-20). “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient” (Romans 1:21, 28). And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; *because they received not the love of the truth, THAT THEY MIGHT BE SAVED*. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who *believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*” (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). “But unto them that are contentious, and *do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness*, indignation and wrath (Romans 2:8),

Here, also, does it not appear plain and evident from the foregoing Scriptures, that those, and those only, are hardened and reprobated

who harden themselves, and are wilfully ignorant of the knowledge of God and His ways, who love darkness rather than light, who *will not* retain God in their knowledge, who *will not* receive the love of the truth and be saved, but who spurn the knowledge of God and His grace and persist in their obstinacy and impenitency on the road down to eternal ruin? “He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Proverbs 29:1).

Lastly, some may yet object and say that according to the words of the Apostle Paul, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13), man can do nothing towards the salvation of his soul, but that all is from the Lord, whether he be saved or lost. But by the words of Paul we understand that God graciously operates on the minds of men, by the preaching of the Word and the Spirit, to produce in them a willingness, without any restraint, to come to the Saviour and seek their soul’s salvation. This seems to be intimated by the apostle in the preceding and succeeding verses, where he says, “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain” (Philippians 2:12, 16).

But here it should be noticed that to this willingness which is produced in the minds of men by the means of grace, as said above, the carnal mind is at enmity. Upon this carnal mind the adversary of souls operates to produce an unwillingness to obey the call and voice of the Lord to walk in His ways. Here man is brought into a strait, as there are now, as it were, two opposite natures within him, namely, the inward man, and the natural man, and these are differently wrought upon and produce a continual warfare. Of this the apostle saith: “I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Romans 7:21, 23). Again he says, “For the flesh lusteth

against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Galatians 5:17). Hence Paul asks, ‘Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?’ (Romans 6:16). And Peter declares, “For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage” (2 Peter 2:19). In this conflict is set before us, as Moses set before the children of Israel, “LIFE AND DEATH, blessing and cursing” (Deuteronomy 30:19). Let us therefore choose life. Let us “fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:12), whereunto we are called, and thus let us give diligence to make our “calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10), that we may obtain the “crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give at that day to all them that love His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8).