

THE ELECT ;

Or how may I know whether I am one of them ?

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THE ELECT ;

Or how may I know whether I am one of them?

Now this is a question which has at all times troubled souls, and it may be a help to some if we look at it, and see if it be possible to know whether our names have been written in the Lamb's Book of Life, or not. I feel firmly convinced that there is no difficulty whatever, and that the answer to the question, Am I one of God's Elect? is as easy and simple as possible.

That God has an elect people, whom he has chosen in Christ from everlasting, is a truth that cannot be gainsayed by any honest student of the Word of God; for example, take the following plain statements of Holy Scripture. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." (Acts xiii. 48.) "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." (1 Peter i. 2.) "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. i. 9.) "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." (Eph. i. 4, 5.) Surely such passages as these show beyond all controversy that God has chosen and elected in Christ a people to be to the praise and glory of his grace; and, further, that in due time those whom he fore-knew and predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, them he called and justified and glorified. (Rom. viii. 29, 30.)

Again, the other side of the question is as clearly stated, viz., that the characteristic of this dispensation is not universal salvation; but, so far from that, we are most distinctly informed that sin and iniquity are to *abound*, up to the moment of the second coming of Christ, to take away His bride, the Church of the living God. Not only then are we not to see the whole world saved in this dispensation, but sin is to prevail, and that, too, in that place where naturally we should expect to see the very contrary, that is where there is a form, a profession of godliness. Thus St. Paul, writing to Timothy, says in his second Epistle, 3rd. chap.: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come: for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those who are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." (2 Tim. iii. 1-4). And, moreover, what is most remarkable and solemn is, that we are not to look for any improvement. There is no hope of anything like a reformation, but, on the contrary, we are rather to expect that evil men and seducers will wax worse and

worse, deceiving and being deceived. And not only so, but this iniquity is to increase and prevail in that place where there is a **FORM OF GODLINESS**, where the name of Jesus is professed, and where the Word of God has got a place. As the Apostle says, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." What are Christians to do then, if they are not to try and reform? let the Apostle give the answer, which by the Holy Ghost he does, and tells us, "**FROM SUCH TURN AWAY.**" (Verse 5.)

This is very solemn, and any one with his eyes open to the present state of Christendom cannot but see that, in this day infidelity, and worldliness are prevailing therein. Where are, in these days, the leading persons who are writing against God's Word? Are they so much in the world outside? It is true they are there, but the most remarkable are in that place where Christ has a prominent position, where he is professed and acknowledged, and where people take His name and call themselves Christians. It is truly in the place where there is a form of godliness, but the power thereof denied.

And further, we would say, that it is really a very great mercy that God has an elect people, whom He wills to be saved, because, if that were not the case, none would be saved at all. All by nature are dead in trespasses and sins; they have no power or inclination to come to Jesus. The only free will they have is that they *will not* come that they might have life. Thus, it is quite a mercy that God will have some to be saved.

Thus, it is seen both in the positive and negative statements of the Word, of God that the peculiarity of

this dispensation is, not the conversion of the world, but as James said at the Church-meeting held in Jerusalem, that "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to TAKE OUT of them a people for his name." (Acts xv. 14). And this from the day of Pentecost up to this present moment, has been fully realized. Take, for example, any place on the globe, and is it not true that it is but a handful of people, compared with the vast multitudes who have heard the Gospel of God's Grace, who acknowledge Jesus as their Lord and Saviour? Is it not but a very few who confess with their mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in their hearts that God raised Him from the dead? I mean *not in word only*, but in deed and in truth by the power of the Holy Ghost.

But the purpose of this paper is, to meet a question which often arises in the minds of the Lord's people in connection with this important subject, "Am I one of the Elect?" "If I could tell whether God had elected me then I should be happy." Another class of persons says, "Oh, it is no use my coming to Christ; I do not know whether I am one of the elect." This is what the author of this paper is anxious to answer; and for two reasons: 1st, that he who has some ground for hoping to get to Heaven, but is as yet *only hoping* to get there, may have his doubts and fears removed, and be a happy Christian, knowing that his sins are all washed away; and, 2dly, that the unconverted may have no excuse for their unbelief.

But, is it right, that the Christian should know whether he is one of the Elect? Is it not presumption? Many say it is. Most certainly he may and he ought to know that he is saved, and it can be no presumption to say so. It is on the contrary presumption not to

know it, for surely it is presumption, yea, wicked presumption to doubt the word of God. The Christians of the Apostles' days knew they were saved. For instance, the Thessalonians knew their Election of God. The Colossians gave thanks *that they had been made meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. And so instances might easily be multiplied of Christians who knew and rejoiced in that they were saved by Jesus, who came to deliver up His life as a ransom for sinners. And what is more than this, God says that He has written certain things unto those that believe on the name of the Son of God, *that they MAY KNOW that THEY HAVE eternal life*, and that they may believe on the name of the Son of God. (1 John v. 13.)

Well, then, let us now approach the particular question before us. How may the Christian know that he is saved? Is it by his frames and feelings, by his experiences? No, certainly not. Blessed as they may be, and doubtless are, in their proper place, their existence is no evidence that he who experiences them is saved. There may be abundance of warm and happy feelings apart from Christ. Many a heart has been filled with joy, but alas, time has proved that after all they were but dead while they seemed to live,—stony ground hearers.

The writer knows an aged woman in the country, who for many years has passed for a very wonderful Christian. Ministers and other Christians of all denominations have been in the habit of visiting her to learn of her, and to hear her remarkable experiences. Alas, it was her experiences, and not Christ that she ministered to those who visited her, and now she is on her death-bed the Lord has come in

(happily indeed), and taken away all her experiences, frames, and feelings, and the like. And now she finds that there is nothing whatever to rest upon but Christ. But she is at present without hope and miserable indeed. And what makes her case the more sad is, there seems to be no power to lay hold of the simple Gospel, and to rest her soul simply on Jesus the Christ of God, because her efforts are to get back her experiences, and not to confess Christ. She is taken up with herself instead of her Lord and her Saviour. She is saying to herself, "Oh! that I were as in months past," instead of looking to Jesus now as a present Saviour. Thus it is seen that confidence in mere frames and feelings, apart from Christ, will never do. They are no grounds for peace whatever. They will never stand the test of a dying hour.

Depend upon it nothing apart from Christ will do. Joyful frames and happy feelings are all right enough, provided that they proceed from communion with the living, personal Christ; the exhortation is indeed to rejoice in the Lord *always*. It must be remembered that Satan will allow the soul to have any amount of joy and peace, so long as it does not proceed from communion with Jesus. He will permit the soul to go on comfortably enough, but when he sees that it is joy in Christ, then he will be up and doing all he can to bring trouble upon the happy one that is in Jesus. Oh! may we see to it that our frames and feelings all arise from communion with the risen Jesus, and that it is not mere sentimentality that we are taken up with.

Then again, there are many persons who flatter themselves that because they have doubts and fears there is some evidence of life having been implanted in

their souls. Oh! says one, I have doubts and fears, and therefore I have some reason to think that the Lord has been and is working with me, otherwise I should not have them. This is a great fallacy, and there is not the least warrant from the Word of God for any such conclusion, but rather the contrary. The Word of God deals with two classes of persons—believers and unbelievers. The one *is* saved, because “he that believeth on the Son of God HATH everlasting life;” the other class is *unsaved*, for “he that believeth not, the *wrath* of God ABIDETH on him.” (John iii. 36.) Doubting is not faith, but unbelief, and therefore, there is no scripture warrant to say that doubts are evidence of life. If we take God’s Word, oh! how clear and plain it is.

Once more, some persons build their hopes and confidence of salvation on the opinion of others. One will be asked, as indeed the writer was this very day, by a doubting Christian, “Do *you* think that I am converted?” Of course, he declined to answer that question, because he saw that the doubter would have at once taken comfort from the mere opinion of a failing creature instead of resting upon the sure and incorruptible word of God. Clearly a person has no right to consider himself one of the Elect because his friend *thinks* that he is. This is a common thing, but most dangerous. It is wonderful what straws, what broken reeds souls will cling to rather than the unchangeable word of the ever-living God.

Having made these observations—the way is now clear to answer the question, “How may I know that I am one of the Elect?” and this happily can be done without any difficulty. And if those who have doubts and fears would but bow to, and acknowledge what God has written, as the truth, then all their doubts and misgivings would at once take to themselves wings and

fly away. Neither man nor devil could hinder their flight. The Christians at Thessalonica knew their election of God. How and why? The answer is this, "for the Gospel came not unto you," says the Apostle, "in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." (1 Thess. i. 5.) The question then as to how one may know his election of God, is answered by asking another, viz., has the Gospel of God's grace come home to *your* soul in power and in the Holy Ghost? True, but what is the Gospel? The Gospel Paul preached at Thessalonica is thus stated in Acts xvii. 2, 3. "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must *needs have suffered*, and *risen again* from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." The Gospel is this. Man is a fallen—ruined—lost creature on the broad road to eternal death. This is the first part of the Gospel. Have you learnt it *in your own soul*, and not in your head only? The second part of the Gospel is, that God SO loved man in this awful and desperate condition, that He gave His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, who so loved His Church that He offered Himself without spot to God, through the eternal Spirit, that He might take the sinner's place, and be made sin for him—that He might die, and thus pay the penalty for sin, and bring nigh to God him who was afar off, having poured out His soul unto death on his behalf. Now the question is, do I, a poor conscience-stricken sinner, believe that Jesus the Christ of God died for ME? If I believe it for MYSELF, then I may *know* that I am one of the Elect of God, for he that believeth on the Son of God HATH everlasting life, and SHALL NOT COME INTO CONDEMNATION, but is passed from death

unto life. (John v.) Not, however, because I *feel*, but because GOD HAS SAID IT; and I take God at His Word. Feelings will then flow out and take their proper place. FAITH is the condition of salvation—not feelings. “As many as received HIM, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that BELIEVE on his name.” (John i. 12.) “For ye are all the children of God by FAITH in Christ Jesus. (Gal. iii. 26.)

The whole question of the knowledge of my election depends then upon the answer to the question, have I *believed* the gospel?—have I believed that Christ loved ME and gave himself for ME? “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” (1 John v. 10, 11.)

If the reader is desirous of knowing whether his name is in the Lamb's book of life, he can at once ascertain the point by answering faithfully and in sincerity before God, “did Jesus die for ME?” Did God raise Him up again for ME? If he did, then it is clear he is one of the Elect. If he did not, then the sooner he believes it the better. This was the way the Christians in Thessalonica knew their Election of God. (1 Thess. i. 4.)

The reader may be led to say, ah! that way is too simple. Well indeed it is simple, beautifully, blessedly simple, and, what is more it is *scripturally* simple. Let not, then, dear reader, the simplicity of the way of salvation be a stumblingstone to you. See whether it

is God's way, and if so accept it, and cast your whole and entire soul upon the finished work of Christ.

It is indeed a simple and easy way for the sinner; but for Jesus the Saviour it was no light thing, it was no easy way by which he saved the lost one. He poured out his soul unto death, and by the sacrifice of HIMSELF He put away sin. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him. He bore the penalty for sin that we might escape. We have sinned, but the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Surely this was no light and easy way. The Lord help us to know and understand more of the true nature of the sacrifice of God's own Son, His fearful sufferings and agony on the cross for the sinner, and thus learn more of the heights and depths of God's love towards us poor sinners.

Let your soul rest there, and then your conscience, which now tells you that you are a sinner, will tell you that the Death of Jesus has met all the claims of God against you, and that God is now JUST in justifying him that believeth on Jesus. Look only to Jesus, rest your hope of salvation upon Him, and what he has DONE for you, and you will have peace with God—settled peace—and from that will FLOW forth joy unspeakable and full of glory.

E. C.

