

knew also the election of the Christian Ephesians (Eph. 1:4-5), as Peter also did that of the members of the churches in Pontus, Galatia, etc (1 Peter 1:2). It is true, indeed, that all conclusions of this nature are not now infallible, but our judgments are liable to mistake, and God only, whose is the book of life, and who is the Searcher of hearts, can absolutely know them that are His (2 Tim. 2:19); yet we may, without a presumptuous intrusion into things not seen, arrive at a moral certainty in this matter. And I cannot see how Christian love can be cultivated, how we can call one another brethren in the Lord, or how believers can hold religious fellowship and communion with each other, unless they have some solid and visible reason to conclude that they are loved with the same everlasting love, were redeemed by the same Saviour, are partakers of like grace, and shall reign in the same glory.

"But here let me suggest one very necessary caution, viz., that though we may, at least very probably, infer the election of some persons from the marks and appearances of grace which may be discoverable in them, yet we can never judge any man whatever to be a reprobate. That there are reprobate persons is very evident from Scripture (as we shall presently show), but who they are is known alone to Him, who alone can tell who and what men are not written in the Lamb's book of life. I grant that there are some particular persons mentioned in the Divine Word of whose reprobation no doubt can be made, such as Esau and Judas; but now the canon of Scripture is completed, we dare not, we must not pronounce any man living to be non elect, be he at present ever so wicked. The vilest sinner may, for aught we can tell, appertain to the election of grace, and be one day wrought upon by the Spirit of God. This we know, that those who die in unbelief and are finally unsanctified cannot be saved, because God in His Word tells us so, and has represented these as marks of reprobation; but to say that such and such individuals, whom perhaps, we now see dead in sins, shall never be converted to Christ, would be a most presumptuous assertion, as well as an inexcusable breach of charity which hopeth all things." (pp. 68-69)

Thus the doctrine of election, instead of hindering assurance, can be used to enhance and promote it! One who believes himself to have been justified by grace through faith in Christ and His redemption may read Rom. 8:29-30, and say to himself: "In this passage those whom God has justified are the very same ones whom He called ('whom He called, them He also justified'). And those whom God called (in a special, saving sense, since He justified them), are the very same ones whom He predestinated ('whom He predestinated, them He also called')." Thus if a person believes himself to be in that group who have been justified (by savingly trusting to Christ), he must also believe himself to be in that group who, before the foundation of the world, God predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, and to final glorification.

What marvelous simplicity and yet fullness of comfort! The only persons who savingly come to Christ and are justified by faith are those who were elected to come, believe, and be saved. And the only way to know whether I am elected is to come to Christ, to believe on Him, to receive Him, and to receive His Word to me as authoritative. As someone put it so