

Josias Bonham

Holiness unto the Lord

A second ground and reason why it ever becometh God's people to be an holy people is because God hath chosen them thereunto in Christ, before the foundation of the world, as the Apostle teaches the Ephesians. "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." {Eph.1:4} In this Scripture we may note these three particulars: First - God's choice of his people. Secondly - Upon what account this choice is made; and that is, not our works foreseen, but Christ's merits, as God hath chosen us in Him. Thirdly - To what end this choice is made; and that is, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love. But if it be asked how hath God chosen his people in his Son unto holiness before the foundation of the world? I answer, God did from eternity see the lost condition of his people, through their transgression of his Law, and their defacing his Image of holiness, in which he did at first create them. He also did foresee, and in Himself purpose and decree a satisfaction to his Justice, in and by Jesus Christ, by his obedience to his just Law, which man had transgressed; and by his suffering death for sin in their same human nature that had sinned, that thereby a perfect Righteousness and Justification might be wrought for mankind, that all those who through grace, and the operations of the Holy Spirit are in time brought over to believe in Jesus Christ, should be justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the Law, and sanctified to the obedience of Christ, and to acceptance with the Father through him. And so God beholding his people from eternity in that righteousness that Christ by his perfect obedience to the Law should in time obtain; and in that Satisfaction which he should make to Divine Justice by his sufferings on the cross; God also beholding his people in that work of regeneration and sanctification, which in time Christ by his Spirit should work and effect in them, did accept and choose them in this means, to be a people to the praise and glory of his grace; in relation whereunto are these words of the Apostle to the Ephesians. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." {Eph.2:10} So that God's people ought ever to be an holy people, because they are chosen thereunto from eternity. A third ground and reason why it ever becometh God's people to be an holy people is because they are called thereunto with an holy calling, as the Apostle to the Thessalonians saith, "for God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." {I Thes.4:7} The Apostle also writing to Timothy, speaking in the words before of God, "who {saith he} 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,." {II Tim.1:9} In these words we have the Lord's act of saving his people, set forth unto us in two particulars. First, he saved us; secondly, he called us; whereby the term 'saved,' I do apprehend that free and full redemption from sin and the wrath of God due to man for sin, which Jesus Christ, the unspotted Lamb of God, hath by his perfect obedience wrought for mankind; for which obedience sake, the Father doth give to his people a free and full remission of their sins with everlasting salvation. {Rom.3:24,25, Eph.1:5-8} By the term 'called,' I understand the operating power of

Christ's Spirit, bringing persons into the way of salvation, and investing them with a holy calling, whereby they may receive the privileges of the Gospel; that is, Adoption, Sanctification, and Justification, {Jn.1:12, I Cor.6:11,} which the Spirit of Christ doth work either immediately, as in the Apostles, or more ordinarily in the ministry of the Word, plainly and purely set forth to the understanding, {enlightening the understanding, quickening the apprehension, informing the judgment, rectifying the will, renewing the mind, regulating the affections, and persuading the heart to take Christ, to trust in Christ, to rely upon Christ and to obey Christ} to the producing Faith, Regeneration, and Sanctification, whereby the creature is called forth to walk with God in that way whereunto it hath pleased the Father to annex the promise of salvation, according to those words of the Apostle to the Thessalonians, "but we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." {II Thes.2:13,14} {Salvation is on God's part an act of mercy; on Christ's part an act of merit; on man's part it is undeserved in its best obedience; for, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."} Believers therefore are the persons that are saved and called, not according to their works, but according to the purpose and grace of God, given in Christ Jesus before the world began; so that man's works are no ways meritorious of salvation, nor any original ground of God's love to man; but Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification together with all the means appertaining thereunto are God's free gift to man upon the account of Jesus Christ alone. Furthermore; we may know our holiness by our heavenliness; for hath the Lord through the illuminations of his Spirit, and the operations thereof, manifested to thy soul the great sufferings of Christ, to procure the pardon of thy sins, together with the privileges of Adoption, justification and Salvation? Hath he showed thee the dignity of Christ, in respect of his offices, King, Priest and Prophet? Hath he sealed the benefits and privileges thereof to thy soul, with the Signet of his love through the demonstrations of his Holy Spirit to thy great consolation in the enjoyments thereof; so that thy mind and affections are thereby raised up from earthly and carnal objects and seated on God with so earnest a desire and delight in him, that thou canst truly say with the psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." {Ps.73:25} "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart." {Ps.119:111} When thou canst experience by a supernatural work of grace, that thy affections are so fixed on the Lord, that thou canst sincerely love him for his own sake; and in love to him, bear an affectionate esteem to, and delight in his Testimonies, Statutes, Ordinances, and Commands, so as to make them thy choice; {Ps.119:30;} or chosen subjects of thy meditations, and rule of observations; when thou canst experience thy will by grace, made free to stand in the will of God, so as in love to him, submit and wait upon him in all his dispensations; serve, worship and obey him in all his institutions; when thou canst experience thy desires drawn forth towards him, with holy longings, thirstings and paintings after more enjoyments of him, and supplications to him for further strength and power of grace to assist thee, support and uphold thee against those corruptions and temptations that attend thee, lest thou shouldst thereby be overcome to sin against God to the dishonor of his Name, the grief of his Spirit and stain the profession of his truth. Note by the way, that when a peoples sacrifice of prayer, and praise and other obedience doth arise from an indwelling of the Spirit of faith and sanctifying grace, and is

offered upon the Altar, Jesus Christ, in the Golden Censer of his merits; this doubtless is highly accepted of God. Josias Bonham {The Churches Glory; or, the Becoming Ornament; being a Seasonable Word, Tending to the Provoking, Encouraging, and Perfecting of Holiness in Believers, 1674}