

WORDS OF THE WISE.

BENEDICT PICTET ON THE ASSURANCE OF ELECTION.

(Translated from the Latin.)

Not only is the election of believers certain and unchangeable, but they can also certainly know that they are elected; not by ascending into heaven to read the book of life, but by descending, as it were, into their own hearts, examining the book of conscience, and discovering in themselves the fruits of election. For if believers can know that they have faith, they can be sure of their election, because faith is the effect of election; now they can know that they possess faith, as is proved by that passage of St. Paul, in which he enjoins believers to "examine themselves, whether they be in the faith," (5 Cor. xiii. 5,) for to no purpose would the Apostle enjoin this, if it were impossible to ascertain it. Again, the faithful can know certainly whether they are the children of God, for "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God," (Rom. viii. 16.) Now all the children of God are elected; and therefore if the faithful can believe the testimony of the Spirit, they must believe that they are the children of God; and if so, they can believe, or be sure, that they are elected of God. We are also said to be "sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption," (Eph. iv. 30.) which could not take place without our being sensible of it; hence St. John says, "hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." (1 John iv. 13.) How, then, is it possible, that we should know ourselves to possess the Spirit, and yet be ignorant of our election, since the Holy Spirit is given only to the elect? Finally, the examples of the saints establish this truth, who, being sure of their election and salvation, boldly and confidently professed that no created thing, not even death itself, could separate them from the love of God. See Rom. viii. 38, 39.

But various observations are necessary to be made on this subject, in the way of caution and explanation. *First*, the believer is not always certain of his election, nor equally so at all times, for this assurance is often weakened by afflictions and violent temptations; hence the complaints of the godly, as if God had altogether forsaken them, and "the right hand of the Most High" had been changed. *Secondly*, there are many in the church that without warrant, boast of this assurance, and abuse the profession of it greatly; hence we often find it better to hear the lamentations of a mourning believer, than the exultations of one who rejoices, not through faith, but self-opinion; and it often happens that those who groan, and with the publican, dare not lift up their eyes to heaven, yet possess the very thing which they fear they have not; while others, by the just judgment of God, perceive themselves deprived of what they vainly and presumptuously imagined they possessed. *Thirdly*, there is no true believer that is not at some time or other certain of his election and salvation, for although the experience of present and the hope of future grace, may for a while be laid asleep in the children of God, yet out of this dark condition the believing soul comes forth, when God restores to it the joy of his salvation; therefore, if sometimes the soul groans, struggles, doubts, and fears, yet afterwards it sings, trusts, rejoices, and triumphs, as over a conquered enemy; as is seen in the cases of David, Asaph, Paul, and others. At any rate we believe that there are very few real believers who die in a state of doubt as to their salvation. *Fourthly*, this assurance cannot come into genuine operation, without following after holiness; for a man who should persist in sin, and yet persuade himself that he is elected to eternal life, and therefore will be certainly saved, would indeed bolster himself up with a false and deceitful hope; on the contrary, such a man,