

Love to God, one of the characteristics of his people here specified, though it is first mentioned by the apostle, is the second in the order of succession, for no man can love God till he is called by God, any more than an individual can perform the functions of life before he is possessed of the vital principle of life. We shall, therefore, in the first place, consider the second description which is here given of God's people—they are said to be called according to his purpose.—In one sense it may be said that all who listen to the tidings of salvation are called. The gospel is to be preached to every creature under heaven; it may be offered to all; the blessings which it bestows are adapted to all. There is nothing that stands in the way of a sinner's salvation, but his own wilful rejection and hatred of the means whereby it is secured.

Such, however, is the natural enmity of the human heart against God; such is its love of sin; such is its indifference to the blessings of salvation, that this outward call of the gospel is frequently made to man in vain. Many are called, but few are chosen. All mankind are subject to a deadly malady—the malady of sin; but thousands refuse to accept of the only remedy which infinite mercy has provided for them.

But they whose privilege is described in the text have not only listened to the invitation of mercy—the have felt the power of the call on their heart and complied with it accordingly. The gospel has come to them, not only in word, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. Their understanding being enlightened they have been led to see the reality of the overtures of grace. They have recognized in the death of Christ the true and effective propitiation for sin, and have thus renounced all feeling of self-dependence in their hope of obtaining mercy. Through faith in the atonement wrought out for them on Calvary, they are brought within the pale of the divine favour, and thus secure an interest in all the blessings of salvation. While others have turned a deaf ear to the call, it has come to *them* like a voice from heaven, and accompanied by the potent energy of divine grace, has transformed them from the enemies to the friends of God, from the captives of Satan to the willing subjects of Christ.

It is to be observed that God's people are not only said to be called but called according to his purpose, or as the words might be rendered, according to his previous design. The reference is to the purpose which God formed in eternity, of marking out a certain number of the human family whom he should rescue by his grace from the ruinous consequences of sin, and put in possession of the blessings of salvation which was to be purchased by the death of his beloved Son. The redemption of believers is uniformly represented in scripture as the result of this purpose. "He hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world was." Salvation is thus a work performed in compliance with a design which had been formed long anterior to the existence of those who should enjoy its blessings; it is not an expediency arising out of the exigency of circumstances; the evil was foreknown, and a remedy provided before time began its course. The fall of man being foreseen, the Lamb was slain, his