



**I**N the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. 2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. 4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. 6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. 8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. (Isaiah 6:1-8)

The Book of Isaiah puts forth the Sovereignty of God's own Will in the calling of ministers as well as His elect people. Mortal man finds it a hard pill to swallow that the calling of God to faith and to Christ is an act of Providential election and predestined governance.. Man desires to claim the decision-making all for himself and discount the foreordained Will of God in the matter; but man is wrong in such false assumptions. *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 Timothy 1:9) I remind the reader that the self will of man is a function of his deliberate intention. His will is not free but in bondage.

The dignity and sovereignty of God is not dictated by the sinful will of man, but by His Will alone. The heart of man is tainted with sin and incapable of any meritorious deeds apart from that calling and election in Christ. *And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* (Genesis 6:5) The wickedness of man's heart remains unchanged from the Fall of Adam in the Garden at Eden until this day. It is the efficacious calling and drawing of the Holy Ghost in the heart of man that draws him, sometimes kicking and screaming,

to the grace and mercy of God. *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.* (Isaiah 55:8-9) We are all alike born into the family of fallen man in Adam. We have no native goodness. *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; and For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* (Romans 6:23)

Consider with me the nature of a GIFT for a moment. A gift cannot be something deserved or demanded. It originates in the heart and will of the Giver. To emphasize its nature, God calls the gift of eternal life a *free gift*. Aren't the words free and gift, used in the same context, redundant? Normally, that would be the case; but God is using this principle to drive home His complete mercy and grace in granting this gift. It is not the same as gifts which some men give to one another with strings attached. The gift of eternal life is given freely and without any merit on the part of the beneficiary. Barabbas was a murderer and an insurrectionist, yet Christ died in his place just as He died in our stead. Whether that gift of life for Barabbas was eternal or limited to his physical life is not clear since we know nothing of a future calling and election of Barabbas in Scripture. But it was a gift totally undeserved, unexpected, and based on no mental or physical disposition on the part of Barabbas.

The nature of the Kingdom of Heaven is reflected in the Church. Are all righteous in the Church today? Far from it! Most are truly unrighteous and unfaithful to God. Then why are they in the Church? Several reasons come to mind: politics, social standing, business enhancement, pretention, etc. The church is just like the dragnet our Lord describes in the Kingdom chapter of the New Testament (Matthew 13).

A dragnet is not designed to be discreet in gathering a certain school of fish in the ocean deep. It is most often used near the shore, and is cast out by men in all directions. It has heavy stones or metal weights about its girth to allow the edges of the net to sink wherever they are cast. This kind of net catches whatever sea life is thusly trapped in its boundaries – some desirable, and some undesirable – for consumption. The desired fish are then separated from the undesirables. *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.* (Matthew 13:47-50) The wicked may be prestigious members of the Church rich in seemingly good works of charity, but whose motives are neither good nor charitable. In the last day, these will be sorely anguished when they are not received into the Kingdom, but rather cast into the furnace of fire. The angels of God will execute His judgment in separating those of the elect from the tares at the last day. The bad fish were gathered in precisely the same manner as the good fish. Neither had any predetermined discretion that is reserved to God alone.

Please observe the calling of the prophet Isaiah. He was not a man uncommon to the lot of sinners in whose midst he stood. His mouth and language expressed the profane thoughts of his heart. But in the fore-ordained will of God, Isaiah was called from among those fellows to be His prophet. Isaiah had nothing to do with the cleaning of his heart or tongue. It was performed by the Holy Ghost by means of the Seraphim acting as agents. *Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.* There is only one trait that separated Isaiah from his fellows – he recognized his sinfulness and unworthiness. *Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean*

*lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.* Without the awakening touch of the Holy Ghost, man cannot recognize his unworthiness. It was not Isaiah who made himself worthy to be called, but God Almighty. If God calls one to serve Him, He will make that one worthy of the calling by the redeeming blood of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

God called Abram while Abram knew not God. (Genesis 12:1-3). Did Abram initiate the calling? No, it was God. Did you initiate your calling to Christ? No, it was God. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* (Romans 8:28) God calls according to HIS purpose, not man's purpose! *For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.* (Romans 9:11) (see also, Romans 11:5-8) If we are elected to be the children of God, we must know that that calling was of God and not of ourselves: *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.* (1 Peter 1:2) Yet, men continue to claim credit for the decision! *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* (Romans 8:29-30) Were you called without the foreknowledge of God, or were YOU not predestined? If not, how came you to Christ?

I believe it was Charles Spurgeon, who was a fervent advocate of free election, who uttered this illustration when asked how election could be possible (paraphrased from memory):

There was a large wall along which men walked day in and day out in the thorough-fare of life. At one point along the wall was a great door with this inscription above, '*Come unto me all who will.*' Most passersby were oblivious to this sign though they saw it with each passing. Occasionally, a pedestrian would stop, gaze upon the sign, and enter in. Once he came into the inner court, the blessed fellow would look back to see this inscription above the door of the inner chamber which he had entered, '*Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*' (Matthew 25:34)

Edwin Landseer produced a canvas painting (1864) entitled, Man Proposes, God Disposes about the failed Arctic expedition of Sir John Franklin's lost 129 men of the 134 who set out. It presents a fundamental truth of Proverbs 19:21: *There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.* (Proverbs 19:21)

The wisdom of man cannot grasp its need for God. That need must be manifested by the Holy Spirit separate and apart from any righteous volition of man: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 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,* (Ephesians 1:3-5) (According to the good pleasure of WHOSE will?)