

BUTLER, TAYLOR COUNTY, GA., }
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"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.

Elder B. I. Bodenhamer:—Beloved brother, in the above text we are informed as well how we are not saved and called as we are the principle according to which we are saved, and the apostle is so plain and explicit here it would seem there was little ground for cavil or misunderstanding. If his words were duly considered, truly Paul and Timothy were saved and called, as all of God's people shall be in due time, not, however, according to their works; and if not then, not according to their will, for the works of wicked men are the legitimate fruits of their depraved will. The apostle declares "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Romans 3:12.) But why we ask is there none, either Jews or Gentiles, that doeth good? Is it because the Lord will save and call his people according to his own purpose, and not according to their works? We answer—No, there is none that doeth good while in a state of nature, simply because the will of all is to do evil. And here is our objection to the Arminian doctrine of free will, because the natural will of men is free to nothing but sin, if otherwise, if the Lord had taught us that there was some part of Adam's children that had not inherited his corruption, and therefore without inheriting from the Lord had a free will of their own to serve him, then who could or would object? But since we are taught by God's revealed word, and by experience and observation that all have sinned willingly, and that our will itself is sin. These things considered, I ask who should object to God's saving and calling his people according to his own purpose? To which the Arminian would answer, we do not object to God's purpose to save sinners, if he only leaves it to the will of sinners whether or not his purpose shall be accomplished; but a sovereign purpose of Jehovah which does not at all consult the will of man we cannot abide. Such, we know, is the very essence of Arminian teaching. But does not the Lord know that natural men will not be careful about his purpose? has he not declared that the carnal mind is enmity against him? and is it yet probable that the great God

would leave it to the will of such enemies whether his purpose shall at last be fulfilled or be frustrated? Would you, reader, after an important purpose had matured in your mind and you had put yourself to considerable trouble and expense for the accomplishment of that purpose—I ask would you then leave it to the will of your most inveterate enemies whether or not your undertaking should prove successful? No, you would not expect such enemies to advance your interest. And shall men be thought more wise than God? When men purpose a thing, if their minds change not, and if they possess efficient means, they see to it themselves that their purpose fail not, and it is more likely that the Lord will do so. If the will of sinners were not averse to God's will, then there would be no sinners, and salvation would appear a senseless term. But as the sinners will conflict with God's purpose, it is evident that sinners must be saved from their perverse will, otherwise they are not saved at all; and if our will and works are the very things we need to be saved from, then it is folly to suppose such wills and works will save us, or lead us to anything that would; nay, we might as well suppose that quinine would sweeten sugar, or that a table spoonful of sugar would sour a cask of vinegar. Let none think that I would treat this subject in a light manner. The Arminian theory to me appears so very defective and foreign from the teaching of God's word that it is with difficulty that I can find an illustration suitable to represent its absurdity, and while I thus write I humbly hope and trust that I may ever feel and manifest a becoming gratitude to God for the hope that I have that he has saved me and called me, surely not according to my works, but (if at all) according to his own purpose and grace. I know that I have no right, and hope I have no disposition to glory in the flesh, or boast over others who seem yet to be in gross darkness, and who allege that according to the doctrine of sovereign grace and mercy bestowed upon unworthy sinners in pursuance of God's own purpose to the intent that they should be saved—many, I say, allege that according to such doctrine there is no need for sinners to repent, and with impunity ask these irreverent questions—why doth God find fault for who hath rejected his will? But now let us see if God's determinate

counsel or his unchanging purpose to save all Israel precludes the need of their repenting, and if not then these principles of doctrine does not preclude the need of any means which can be necessary to bring them to repentance, and that we may the more easily arrive at a conclusion upon this subject, we will here introduce a simple illustration. The husbandman begins early in the season to clear his farm of logs and trash and other impediments which would otherwise be in the way of his cultivating his land, he repairs his fencing, he provides his variety of ploughs, hoes, &c., he has stored away his stock of provisions, and if he lacks horses or mules he purchases them, and what does all this witness? Surely it is good evidence that the man has determined to raise a crop of corn, cotton, wheat, oats, peas, potatoes, &c., but does not such a set determination upon the part of the literal husbandman preclude the need of all this preparation and means? Arminians allege that if God, the spiritual husbandman, has absolutely predestinated sinners to be conformed to the image of his Son, (Romans 8:29,) and if in like manner God hath chosen his people in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love, (Ephesians 1:4,) then all who are so chosen may go on in sin to the day of their death, and yet salvation must be their end, because they are unconditionally chosen and predestinated. And on the other hand they say that a sinner may repent of his sins and pray for mercy; he may seek the Lord by day and by night, and yet if he is not one of the elect he must be lost in the end. Thus they speak, as if men gathered grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles, or as if there was no need of our Saviour's plan of making the tree good that the fruit may be good also. But to my illustration again. Shall we conclude that the husbandman's purpose to raise a crop of grain results from the capacity of his land to prepare itself? or shall we conclude that his purpose results from his preparing his land? Nay, literally even Arminians themselves knew better than this—they know that instead of the husbandman's purpose resulting from his preparation to cultivate his farm, his preparation results from his purpose. He has determined an end, and therefore he devises means for the accom-

plishment of that purpose. So of God, the spiritual husbandman. I have purposed, saith he, and who shall disannul it, mine arm is stretched out and who shall draw it back. Surely this is defiant language uttered by him who may well defy all opposition. The Lord hath purposed, otherwise his arm had not been stretched. But Arminians say if he hath absolutely purposed, then there is no need of the going forth of his power and wisdom; or if he hath absolutely purposed to build the house, then there is no need that the material should be prepared. This is in effect just what Arminians argue when they allege that if sinners are absolutely chosen to salvation, then there is no need for them to repent. But, beloved, we have not so learned Christ. That God hath appointed his people, and that to obtain salvation is evident (see 1 Thessalonians 5:9.) Yet they cannot be saved except they repent and believe in Christ. Hence as the Lord has appointed his people to obtain salvation, he must also have appointed them to repent and believe. Just as the husbandman's purpose to raise a crop of grain comprehends every means that is necessary to accomplish the end determined, they (the saints) are saved and called, not according to their works, but according to God's own purpose and grace, &c. Strictly in accordance with God's own purpose to save his people, Christ was set up from everlasting, from the beginning or ever the earth was (see Prov. 8:23,) and in him grace was stored for the saints before the foundation of the world. So says our text, which must be regarded as good authority although Arminians may reject it. So far, Christian reader, we perceive the effects of God's blessed purpose. Christ was set up according to it. So likewise we may say the heavens and the earth were created in pursuance of that same purpose, according to which the people of God are saved. Man also was formed of the dust of the earth, and this must needs be, for without the creation and formation of man what would have become of God's eternal purpose. Here the objector will rise up and say your doctrine involves the necessity of Adam's fall, and therefore argues that God is the author of sin. To which we reply that we neither believe that God is the author of sin, nor that sin stands in the way of God's purpose, it was not in