

A PICTURE OF GOD'S SALVATION PLAN

Can you picture in your mind's eye!

By imagining, the character, Boasting, who is exceedingly desirous to enter into the kingdom of heaven, he marches to the door and knocks. The doorkeeper looks out and demands, "Who stands there?" "I am Boasting," saith he, "and I claim to have the highest seat; I claim that I should cry aloud and say, Glory is unto man, for though he has fallen, he has lifted himself up, and wrought out his own redemption." And the angel said, "But hast thou not heard that the salvation of souls is not of man, nor by man, but that God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion? Get thee gone, Boasting, for the highest seat can never be thine, when God in direct opposition to human merit, has rejected the Pharisee, and chosen the publican and the harlot, that they may enter into the kingdom of heaven." So Boasting said, "Let me take my place, then, if not in the highest seat, yet somewhere amid the glittering throng; for instance, let me take my place in the seat of election; let it be said and taught, that albeit God did choose his people, yet it was because of their works which he foresaw, and their faith which he foreknew, and that, therefore, foreseeing and foreknowing, he did choose them because of an excellence which his prescient eye discovered in them; let me take my seat here." But the doorkeeper said, "Nay, but thou canst not take thy place there, for election is according to the eternal purpose of God, which he purposed in Christ Jesus before the world was. This election is not of works, but of grace, and the reason for God's choice of man is in himself, and not in man; and as for those virtues which thou say God did foreknow, God is the author of all of them if they exist, and that which is an effect cannot be a first cause; God foreordained these men to faith and to good works, and their faith and good works could not have been the cause of their foreordination." Then straight from heaven's gate the trumpet sounded, "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; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger," Then Boasting found that as works had no place in election, so there was no room for him to take his seat there, and he bethought himself where next he could be. So after a while Boasting said to the doorkeeper, "If I cannot mount the chair of election, I will be content to sit in the place of conversion, for surely it is man that repents and believes." The doorkeeper did not deny the truth of that, and then this evil spirit said, "If one man believes and not another, surely that must be the act of the man's will, and his will being free and unbiased, it must be very much to that man's credit that he believes and repents and is therefore saved, for others, having like opportunities with himself, and having the same grace no doubt, reject the preferred mercy and perish, while this man accepts it, and therefore let me at least take my seat there." But the angel said in anger, "Take thy seat there! Why, that were to take the highest place of all, for this is the hinge and turning-point, and if thou leave that with man then thou give him the brightest jewel in the crown. Does the Ethiopian change his skin and the leopard

his spots? Is it not God that worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure? Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, and it is not of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of birth. Oh, Boaster, thy free-will is a lie; it is not man that chooses God, but God that chooses man; for what said Christ, "Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you;" and what said he to the ungodly multitude, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;" in which he gave the death-blow w to all ideas of free-will, when he declared that man will not come to him that he might have life; and when he said again in another place, as if that were not enough, "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." So Boasting, though he were fain not to admit it, was shut out, and could not take his place in heaven upon the stool of conversion; and while he stood there but little abashed, for bashfulness he knows not, he heard a song floating over the battlements of heaven from all the multitude who were there, in accents like these, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name, O Lord, be all the praise."