

**THE WORLD'S GREAT
SERMONS. IN TEN
VOLUMES. VOLUME III
- MASSILLON TO MASON**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649372454

The world's great sermons. In ten volumes. Volume III - Massillon to Mason by Grenville Kleiser

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GRENVILLE KLEISER

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The World's Great Sermons

VOLUME III

MASSILLON TO MASON

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MASSILLON

THE SMALL NUMBER OF THE ELECT

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

JEAN BAPTISTE MASSILLON was born in 1663, at Hyères, in Provence, France. He first attracted notice as a pulpit orator by his funeral sermons as the Archbishop of Vienne, which led to his preferment from his class of theology at Meaux to the presidency of the Seminary of Magloire at Paris. His conferences at Paris showed remarkable spiritual insight and knowledge of the human heart. He was a favorite preacher of Louis XIV and Louis XV, and after being appointed bishop of Clermont in 1719 he was also nominated to the French Academy. In 1723 he took final leave of the capital and retired to his see, where he lived beloved by all until his death in 1742.

MASSILLON

1662—1742

THE SMALL NUMBER OF THE ELECT

And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.—Luke iv., 27.

EVERY day, my brethren, you continue to ask of us, whether the road to heaven is really so difficult, and the number of the saved really so small as we represent? To a question so often proposed, and still oftener resolved, our Savior answers you here, that there were many widows in Israel afflicted with famine; but the widow of Sarepta was alone found worthy the succor of the prophet Elias; that the number of lepers was great in Israel in the time of the prophet Eliseus; and that Naaman was only cured by the man of God.

Were I here, my brethren, for the purpose of alarming, rather than instructing you, I had only to recapitulate what in the holy writings we find dreadful with regard to this great truth; and, running over the history of the just, from age to age, show you that, in all times, the number of the saved has been very small. The family of Noah alone saved from the general flood; Abraham chosen from

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among men to be the sole depositary of the covenant with God; Joshua and Caleb the only two of six hundred thousand Hebrews who saw the Land of Promise; Job the only upright man in the land of Uz; Lot, in Sodom. To representations so alarming, would have succeeded the sayings of the prophets. In Isaiah you would see the elect as rare as the grapes which are found after the vintage, and have escaped the search of the gatherer; as rare as the blades which remain by chance in the field, and have escaped the scythe of the mower. The evangelist would still have added new traits to the terrors of these images. I might have spoken to you of two roads—of which one is narrow, rugged, and the path of a very small number; the other broad, open, and strewed with flowers, and almost the general path of men: that everywhere, in the holy writings, the multitude is always spoken of as forming the party of the reprobate; while the saved, compared with the rest of mankind, form only a small flock, scarcely perceptible to the sight. I would have left you in fears with regard to your salvation; always cruel to those who have not renounced faith and every hope of being among the saved. But what would it serve to limit the fruits of this instruction to the single point of setting forth how few persons will be saved? Alas! I would make the danger known, without instructing you