

Sermon to the saints which are at Topeka, Kansas – Sunday, January 18, 1959

Good morning, this is Fred Phelps. In 1859, when Mr. Spurgeon was dedicating his new church building, he said “as for our faith as a church, you have heard about that already. “ We believe in the five great points, commonly known as Calvinism. Against all comers, especially against all lovers of arminianism, we defend and maintain pure gospel truth, and this is the position of the Westboro Baptist Church here in Topeka. Now this morning I desire to give you a 4 point message showing the value of the doctrine of absolute predestination, and God’s sovereignty. First, it is valuable in that it repudiates the heresy of salvation by works.

There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death (Prov. 14:12.)

The way which seemeth right, and which ends in death eternal is salvation by human effort and merit. The belief in salvation by works is one that is common to human nature. It may not always assume the grosser form of popish penances or even of protestant repentance that is sorrowing for sin which is never the meaning of repentance in scripture. Anything which gives man a place at all is but a variety of the same evil genus. To say as alas many preachers are saying, that “God is willing to do his part if you are will to do yours,” is a wretched and excuseless denial of the gospel of his grace. To declare that God helps those who help themselves is to repudiate one of the most precious truths taught in the bible, and in the bible alone, namely that God helps those that are unable to help themselves, who have tried again and again only to fail. To say that the sinner’s salvation turns upon the action of his own will is another form of the God-dishonoring dogma of salvation by human efforts.

In the final analysis, any movement of the will is a work. It is something from me, something which I do. But, the doctrine of God’s sovereignty and absolute predestination lays the axe at the root of this evil tree by declaring “**it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy**” (Rom. 9:16.) Does someone say “such a doctrine will drive sinners to despair?” The reply is, “be it so; it is just such despair that we need. It is not until the sinner despairs of any help from himself that he will ever fall into the arms of sovereign mercy. But, if once the Holy Spirit convicts him, that there is no help in himself, then he will recognize that he is lost, and will cry God be merciful to me a sinner, and such a cry will be heard. A sense of utter helplessness is the first prerequisite to any sound conversion. There is no salvation for any soul until it looks away from itself, looks to something, yea, to someone outside of itself.

And second, this doctrine is valuable in that it is deeply humbling to the creature. This doctrine of predestination and the absolute sovereignty of God is a great battering ram against human pride. And in this it is in sharp contrast from the doctrines of men. The spirit of our age is essentially that of boasting and glorying in the flesh. The achievements of man, his developments and progress, his greatness and self-sufficiency, are the shrine at which the world worships today. But the truth of God’s sovereignty with all its corollaries removes every ground for human boasting and instills a spirit of humility in its stead. It declares that salvation is of the Lord; of the Lord in its origination, in its operation, and in its consummation. It insists that the Lord has to apply as well as supply; that he has to complete as well as begin his saving work in our soul; that he has not only to reclaim but to maintain and sustain it to the end. It teaches that salvation is by grace through faith and that all our works, good as well as evil, count for nothing towards salvation. It tells us we’re “**born, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man,**

but of God.” (John 1:13.) And all of this is most humbling to the heart of man. Man wants to contribute something to the price of his redemption and do that which will afford ground for boasting and self-satisfaction. But, if this doctrine is humbling to us, the creatures, it results in praise to God. If, in the light of God’s sovereignty and predestination, we have seen our own worthlessness and helplessness, we shall indeed cry with the psalmist **“all my springs are in thee,” (Psalm 87:7.)** If by nature we were children of wrath, and by practice rebels against the divine government and justly exposed to the curse of the law, and if God was under no obligation to rescue us from the fiery indignation, and yet notwithstanding he delivered up his well-beloved son for us, then how such grace and love will melt our hearts; how the apprehension of it will cause us to say in adoring gratitude **“not unto us oh Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory for thy mercy and for thy truth’s sake.” (Psalm 115:1.)** How readily shall each of us acknowledge by the grace of God I am what I am. With what wondering praise shall we exclaim “why was I made to hear his voice and enter while there’s room, when thousands make a wretched choice and rather starve than come? Twas the same love that spread the feast, that sweetly forced us in, else we had still refused to taste, and perished in our sin.”

And thirdly, this doctrine is valuable, in that it affords a sense of absolute security. God is infinite in power, and therefore it is impossible to withstand his will, or resist the outworking’s of his decree. Such a statement as that is well-calculated to fill the sinner with alarm. But from the saint, it evokes naught but praise. Let us add one word and see what a difference it makes: “My God is infinite in power, then I will not fear what man can do unto me. My God is infinite in power, then what time I am afraid, I will trust in him. My God is infinite in power, **then I will both lay me down in peace and sleep: for thou LORD only makest me dwell in safety, (Psalm 4:8.)** Right down the ages, this has been the source of the Christian’s confidence. Was not this the assurance of Moses when in his parting words to Israel he said:

**“There is none like unto the God of Israel who rideth upon the heaven in thy help and in his Excellency, on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms”
(Deut. 33:27)**

Was it not this sense of security that calls the psalmist to write **“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high shall abide unto the shadow of the almighty. I will say of the Lord ‘he is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in him will I trust. ‘Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers and under his wings shalt thou trust. His truth shall be thy shield and buckler; Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee,”** instead, all things shall work together for good, and **“neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.” (Psalm 91.)**

So that the saint can say “though death and plagues around me fly, until he bid I cannot die. Not a single shaft can hit until the God of love sees fit. Oh the preciousness of this truth. Here am I, a poor helpless senseless sheep, yet am I secure in the hand of Christ. And why am I secure there? Because none can pluck me thence; because the hand that holds me is the hand of the son of God and all power in heaven and earth are his. Again I have no strength of my own; the world of the devil and the flesh are arrayed

against me. So I commit myself unto the care and keeping of the Lord and say with the apostle **“I know of whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I’ve committed unto him against that day (2nd Tim. 1:12.)** And what is the ground of my confidence? How do I know that he is able to keep that which I’ve committed unto him? I know it because God is a sovereign and he is almighty. He is a king of kings and the Lord of Lords.

And fourthly, this doctrine is valuable because it supplies comfort in sorrow. The doctrine of God’s sovereignty and absolute predestination is one that is full of consolation and imparts great peace to the Christian. The sovereignty of God is a foundation that nothing can shake and is more firm than the heavens and earth. How blessed to know there is no corner of the universe that is out of his reach. As said the psalmist **“wither shall I go from thy spirit or wither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art thou. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea then there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say ‘surely the darkness shall cover me,’ even the night shall be light about me. Yea the darkness hideth not from thee but the night shineth as the day. The darkness and the light are both alike to thee” (Psalm 39, 7-12.)**

How blessed it is to know that God’s strong hand is upon everyone and everything. How blessed to know that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without his notice. How blessed to know that our very afflictions come not by chance nor from the devil, but are ordained and ordered by God. **That no man should be moved by these afflictions: For yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto (1st Thes. 3:3.)** But our God is not only infinite in power, he is infinite in wisdom and goodness too. And herein is the preciousness of this truth: God wills only that which is good and his will is irreversible and irresistible. God is too wise to err and too loving to cause his child a needless tear. Therefore, if God be perfect in his wisdom and goodness, how blessed is the assurance that everything is in his hand and molded by his will according to his eternal purpose. **“Behold he taketh away; who can hinder him? Who will say unto him ‘what doest thou?’” (Job 9:12)** Yet, how comforting to learn that it is he, and not the devil, who taketh away our loved ones for instance. **“Ah, what peace for our poor frail hearts to be told that the number of our days is with him” (Job 7:1.)**

That disease and death are but his messengers and always march under his orders. That it is the Lord who gives, and the Lord who takes away; and this begets a sweet spirit of resignation. To bow before the sovereign will of God is one of the great secrets of peace and happiness. There can be no real submission with contentment until we are broken in spirit. That is, until we are willing and glad for the Lord to have his way with us. Not that we are insisting upon a spirit of fatalistic acquiescence; far from it. The saints are exhorted to **prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:2.)**

*Ten thousand ages ere the skies
were into motion brought;
all the long worlds and years to come
stood presence to his thought.
There’s not a sparrow nor a worm
but found in his decrees.
He raises monarchs to their thrones
and sinks as he may please.*

Thus behold dear friends the value of the blessed doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty and predestination.

This is Fred Phelps, pastor of Westboro Baptist Church. And now, peace be to the brethren, and love with faith from God the father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, Amen.