

Transcript of May 8, 1960, sermon by Fred W. Phelps, Pastor, Westboro Baptist Church, Topeka, Kansas:

ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION AND IS PROFITABLE FOR DOCTRINE

There's an interesting verse in 2 Timothy 3:16. It runs: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and *is profitable for doctrine*, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." "Doctrine," friends, means "teaching," and it is by doctrine or teaching that the great realities of God and of our relation to Him—of Christ, the Spirit, salvation, grace, glory, are made known to us. It is by doctrine (through the power of the Spirit) that believers are nourished and edified, and where doctrine is neglected, growth in grace and effective witnessing for Christ necessarily cease. How sad then that doctrine is now decried as "impractical" when, in fact, doctrine is the very base of the practical life. There is an inseparable connection between belief (or doctrine) and practice—"As he thinketh in his heart, *so is he*" (Pro. 23:7). The relation between Divine truth (or doctrine) and Christian character is that of cause to effect—"And ye shall *know* the truth,"—that's doctrine—"and the truth shall make you free"—that's practice-- (John 8:32)—free from ignorance, free from prejudice, free from error, free from the wiles of Satan, free from the power of evil; and if the truth is not "known" then such freedom will not be enjoyed. Observe the *order* of mention in the passage with which we have opened. All Scripture is profitable *first* for "doctrine"! The same order is observed throughout the Epistles, particularly in the great doctrinal treatises of the apostle Paul. Read the Epistle of "Romans" and it will be found that there is not a single admonition in the first five chapters. In the Epistle of "Ephesians" there are no exhortations till the fourth chapter is reached. The order is first doctrinal exposition and then admonition or exhortation for the regulation of the daily walk. The substitution of so-called "practical" preaching for the doctrinal exposition which it has supplanted is the root cause, in my judgment, of many of the evil maladies which now afflict the church of God. The reason why there is so little depth, so little intelligence, so little grasp of the fundamental verities of Christianity, is because so few believers have been established in the faith, through hearing expounded and through their own personal study of the doctrines of grace. While the soul is unestablished in the doctrine of the Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures—their full and verbal inspiration— there can be no firm foundation for faith to rest upon. While the soul

is ignorant of the doctrine of Justification there can be no real and intelligent assurance of its acceptance in the Beloved. While the soul is unacquainted with the teaching of the Word upon Sanctification it is open to receive all the crudities and errors of the so-called Pentecostalist or "Holiness" people. While the soul knows not what Scripture has to say upon the doctrine of the New Birth there can be no proper grasp of the two natures in the believer, and ignorance here inevitably results in loss of peace and joy. And so we might go on right through the list of Christian doctrine. It is *ignorance* of doctrine that has rendered the professing church helpless to cope with the rising tide of infidelity. It is *ignorance* of doctrine which is mainly responsible for thousands of professing Christians being captivated by the numerous false "isms" and cults of the day. It is because the time has now arrived when the bulk of our churches "*will not endure sound doctrine*" (2 Tim. 4:3) that they so readily receive *false* doctrines. Of course it is true that doctrine, like anything else in Scripture, may be studied from a merely cold intellectual viewpoint, and *thus* approached, doctrinal teaching and doctrinal study will leave the *heart* untouched, and will naturally be "dry" and profitless. But, I mean, doctrine properly received, that is doctrine studied with an *exercised* heart, will ever lead into a deeper knowledge of God and of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Now we take then the doctrine of God's sovereignty in predestination. This is no mere metaphysical dogma which is devoid of practical value, but is one that is calculated to produce a powerful effect upon Christian character and the daily walk. The doctrine of predestination lies at the foundation of Christian theology, and in importance is perhaps second only to the Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures. It is the center of gravity in the system of Christian truth—the sun around which all the lesser orbs are grouped. It is the golden milestone to which every highway of knowledge leads and from which they all radiate. It is the cord upon which all other doctrines are strung like so many pearls, holding them in place and giving them unity. It is the plumb-line by which every creed needs to be measured, the balance in which every human dogma must be weighed. This is the doctrine of predestination. It is designed as the sheet-anchor for our souls amid the storms of life. The doctrine of predestination is a Divine cordial to refresh our spirits. It is designed and adapted to mould the affections of the heart and to give a right direction to conduct. It produces gratitude in prosperity and patience in adversity. It affords comfort for the present and a sense of security respecting the unknown future. It is, and it does all, and much more than I have just said, because it ascribes to God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the glory which is His due, and places the creature man in his proper place before Him—in the dust. This doctrine of predestination deepens our

eneration of the Divine Character. The doctrine as it is unfolded in the Scriptures affords an exalted view of the Divine perfections. It maintains God's *creatorial rights*. It insists that "to us there is but one God, the Father, *of whom are all things*, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, *by whom are all things*, and we by Him" (1 Cor. 8:6). It declares that His rights are those of the "potter" who forms and fashions the clay into vessels of whatever type and for whatever use He may please. Its testimony is, "Thou hast created all things, *and for Thy pleasure* they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11). It argues that none has any right to "reply" against God, and that the only becoming attitude for the creature to take is one of reverent submission before Him. Thus the apprehension of the absolute supremacy of God is of great practical importance, for unless we have a proper regard to His high sovereignty He will never be honored in our thoughts of Him, nor will He have His proper place in our hearts and lives. This doctrine exhibits the *inscrutableness of His wisdom*. It shows that while God is immaculate in His *holiness*, He has permitted *evil* to enter His fair creation; that while He is the Possessor of *all power*, He has allowed the Devil to have a certain amount of power to wage war *against Him* for six thousand years at least; it argues that while He is the perfect embodiment of *love*, He spared not His own Son; that while He is the God of *all grace*, multitudes will yet be tormented for ever and ever in the Lake of Fire. These, friends, are high mysteries are these. Scripture does not deny them, but acknowledge their existence—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how *unsearchable* are His judgments, and His ways *past finding out!*" (Rom. 11:33). This doctrine makes known the *irreversibleness of His will*. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). From the beginning God purposed to glorify Himself "in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end" (Eph. 3:21). To this end, He created the world, and formed man. His all-wise plan was not defeated when man fell, for in the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8) we behold the Fall anticipated. Nor will God's purpose be thwarted by the wickedness of men since the Fall, as is clear from the words of the Psalmist, "*Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain*" (Ps. 76:10). Because God is the Almighty His will cannot be withstood. "His purposes originated in eternity, and are carried forward without change to eternity. They extend to all His works, and control all events. He 'worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.'" (Dr. Rice). Neither man nor devil can successfully resist Him, therefore is it written, "The Lord reigneth; *let the people tremble.*" (Ps. 99:1). This doctrine of predestination magnifies *God's grace*. Grace is unmerited favor, and because grace is shown to the undeserving

and Hell-deserving, to those who have *no claim* upon God, therefore is grace *free* and can be manifested toward the chief of sinners. But because grace is exercised toward those who are *destitute* of worthiness or merit, grace is *sovereign*; that is to say, God bestows grace upon whom He pleases, and withholds His grace from whom He pleases. Divine sovereignty has ordained that *some* shall be cast into the Lake of Fire to show that *all* deserved such a doom. But grace comes in like a drag-net and draws out from a lost humanity a people for God's name, to be throughout all eternity the monuments of His inscrutable favor. Sovereign grace, beloved friends, reveals God breaking down the opposition of the human heart, subduing the enmity of the carnal mind, and bringing us to love Him because He first loved us. And, finally, this blessed doctrine of predestination is the solid foundation of all true religion. This naturally follows from what we have said. If the doctrine of Divine sovereignty and absolute predestination alone gives God His rightful place, then it is also true that it alone can supply a firm base for practical religion to build upon. There can be no progress in Divine things until there is the personal recognition that God is Supreme, that He is to be feared and revered, that He is to be owned and served *as Lord*. We read the Scriptures in vain unless we come to them earnestly desiring a better knowledge of God's will for us—any other motive is selfish and utterly inadequate and unworthy. Every prayer we send up to God is but carnal presumption unless it be offered "according to *His* will"—anything short of this is to ask 'amiss,' says James, that we might consume upon our *own* lusts the thing requested. Every service we engage in is but a "dead work" unless it be done for the glory of God. Experimental religion consists mainly in the perception and performance of the Divine will—performance, I say, both active and passive. We are predestinated, we read, to be "conformed to the image of God's Son", and His Son's meat it ever was to do the will of the One that sent Him, and the measure in which each saint is becoming "conformed" practically, in his daily life, is largely determined by his response to our Lord's word—"Take My yoke upon you, *and learn of Me*; for I am meek and lowly in heart." "But, O my soul! If truths so bright, should dazzle and confound thy sight, yet still his written will obey, and wait the great decisive day." 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." (Ephesians 6:23-24). I love you. Amen.