

Sermon of October 5, 1958

Particular Redemption – God is under no obligation to save any

Good morning, this is Fred Phelps. My subject again today is the limited atonement, or particular redemption. This means that Christ died only for the elect, that he in no sense died for all men without exception, and indiscriminately. It is sometimes argued against this doctrine, that if Christ died only for certain ones, then God is a respecter of persons, and treats men with unfair partiality. But this argument confounds justice and grace. Hodeman deserves to understand that God is not obligated to save any of Adams fallen race. A third of the angels fell from their positions in glory, and not a single one of them will be saved, not a single one. Is god unfair because he passes by them all? There they lie, this very Sunday morning, reserved in chains of darkness, moodily and sulkily awaiting the judgement of the last day. They are lost. They have no pity from God, and they deserve no pity, They, with their infamous leader Satan, are rebels against God, the very essence of iniquity and moral putrifaction, and God, in his sovereign pleasure, has chosen to leave them in their black estate, and judge them for their sins, and punish them eternally in a way of divine justice in the lake of fire. He will not have mercy on a single one of them, not one.

God did not sin nor allow Christ to die for a single lost fallen angel, including the devil, therefore, none of them will be saved. Ah, but what of man? Man also is a fallen creature, a very seed of corruption and iniquity, just as fallen, just as depraved, just as putrid, just as rebellious against his maker, as the blackest angel now incarcerated in chains of Tophet. My friends, this awful doctrine of man's total depravity, is so little preached and so little believed today, but it strikes the death blow to all kinds of heresy. I will not deal lightly with human nature.

“The Lord look down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any, that did understand, and seek god, they are all gone aside, their altogether become filthy...”

Psalms 14:2-3

“The wicked are strange from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. their poison, is like the poison of a serpent...” Psalms 58:3-4

A snake is born a snake. Warp and woof, he is a snake. He can be, nor become, nothing but a snake. His venom, or poison is an integral part of him, and so it is with you and sin, my friend. and it takes words in the bible, like filthy, to describe you, and when you never cease to prate about God being unfair, if he doesn't give you, and all of your kind, an opportunity to be saved, I tell you, you do not deserve any more opportunity for salvation than Satan and his black host of fallen angels deserve. You do not believe in particular redemption, or the limited atonement because you do not believe in your own corruption, and total depravity.

Now, Christ did not die, or give his life a ransom, for the fallen angels and so they will not be saved. Neither did he die for all men, and so all men will not be saved. Nor is he obligated in justice to die for any man, or any angel seeing they all alike are fallen and depraved. But, in a way of sovereign grace, he did give his life a ransom for many of Adams seed. This is particular redemption, and were it not for particular redemption, no single one of Adams degenerate offspring would be saved, no single one. But, each and all would receive sovereign justice, and must needs join fallen angels in chains of darkness and eternal despair, so that we say,

“Oh the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out.” Romans 11:33

“Salvation is of the Lord,” Jonah 2:9.

But the Lord does not save all. Why not? He does save some. Then if he saves some, why not others? Is it because they are too sinful and depraved? No, for the apostle wrote, **“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” 1 Timothy 1:15.** Therefore, if god saved the chief of sinners, none are excluded because of their depravity. Why then, does not god save all? Is it because some are too stony hearted to be won? No because of the most stony-hearted people of all it is written that God will yet **“...take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh.” Ezekiel 11:19.**

Then, is it because some are so stubborn, so intractable, so defiant, that god is unable to woo them to himself? Why is it that all are not saved? Particularly, all who hear the gospel? Is it because the majority refuse to believe? Well, that is true, but it is only a part of the truth. It is the truth from the human side. But what needs so sadly and so sorely to be stressed today, is Gods side, the divine side, and except it is, then God is in that much robbed of his glory. The unsaved are lost because they refuse to believe, the others are saved, because they believe. But the question is: why do these others believe? What is it that causes them to put their trust in Christ? Is it because they are more intelligent than their fellows, and quicker to discern their need of salvation? Perish the thought.

“Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou, that thou didst not receive. Now, if thou didst receive it, why didst thou glory as if thou hast not received it?” 1 Corinthians 4:7

It is God himself, dear friend, who maketh the difference between the elect, and nonelect.

“For of his own it is written, and we know that the son of god has come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that it is true.” 1 John 5:20

“Faith is God’s gift, and all men have not faith.” 2 Thessalonians 3:2

Therefore we see that God does not bestow this gift upon all. Upon whom then does he bestow this saving favor? And we answer, upon his own elect.

“As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” Acts 13:48

Hence it is that we read of the faith of gods elect. Titus 1:1. But is God partial in the distribution of his favors? My friend, has he not the right to be? Are there still some who murmur against the good man of the house? Then his own words are sufficient reply, **“...is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?” Matthew 20:15.**

God is sovereign in the bestowment of his gifts, both in the natural and in the spiritual realms, and in the spiritual realm, this is called particular redemption. Let me bring a few scriptures to bear. Perhaps the one scripture which most emphatically of all asserts the absolute sovereignty of God in connection with his determining the destiny of his creatures, and particularly with the limited atonement is the ninth chapter of Romans. Consider verses 21-23.

“Hath not the potter power (or the authority or right) over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if god, willing (or determining to will) to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory.” Romans 9:21-23

These verses represent fallen mankind, as inert and as impotent as a lump of lifeless clay. The scripture evidences that there is no difference, in themselves, between the elect and the nonelect. They are clay of the same lump. Which agrees with Ephesians 2:3, where we are told that all are by nature children of wrath. It teaches us that the ultimate destiny of every individual is decided by the will of God, and blessed it is that such be the case. If it were left to our wills, the ultimate destination of us all would be the lake of fire. It declares that God himself does make a difference in the respective destinations to which he assigns his creatures. For one vessel is made unto honor, and another unto dishonor. Some are vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction, others are vessels of mercy, which had afore prepared unto glory.

We readily acknowledge that it is very humbling to the proud heart of the creature to behold that all mankind in the hand of god as the clay is in the potter's hand, yet this is precisely how the scriptures of truth represent the case. In this day of human boasting, and electoral pride and deification of man, it needs to be insisted upon that the potter forms his vessels for himself. Let man strive with his maker as he will. The fact remains that he is nothing more than clay in the heavenly potter's hands. And while we know that God will deal justly with his creatures, that the judge of all the earth will do right, nevertheless, he shapes his vessels for his own purpose and according to his own pleasure. God claims the indisputable right to do as he wills with his own. Not only has God the right to do as he wills with the creatures or his own hands, but he exercises this right, and nowhere is that seen more plainly than in his predestinating grace or particular redemption.

Before the foundation of the world, God made a choice, a selection, an election. Before his omniscient eye, stood the whole of Adams race, and from it he singled out a people, and predestinated them unto the adoption of children. Predestinated them to be conformed to the

image of his son. Ordained them unto eternal life. Many are the scriptures which set forth this blessed truth. Consider Acts 13:48 above mentioned.

“As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.” Acts 13:48

Every artifice of human ingenuity has been employed to blunt the sharp edge of this scripture, and to explain away the obvious meaning of these words. But it has been employed in vain. Though nothing will ever be able to reconcile this and similar passages to the mind of the natural man, still it stands as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed. Here we learn four things. First, that believing is the consequence, and not the cause of God's decree. Second, that a limited number only are ordained to eternal life, for if all men without exception were thus ordained by God, then the words as many as are a meaningless qualification. Third, that this ordination of God is not to mere external privileges, but to eternal life. Not to service, but to salvation itself. Fourth, that all, as many as, not one less, who are thus ordained by God to eternal life, will most certainly believe. This is particular redemption.

The comments of the beloved Spurgeon, on this passage, are worthy of notice. He said, *“Attempts have been made to prove that these words do not teach predestination, but these attempts so clearly do violence to language that I shall not waste time in answering them. I read as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed, and I shall not twist the text, but shall glorify the grace of God by ascribing to that grace, the faith of every man who believes. Is it not God who gives the disposition to believe? If men are disposed to have eternal life, does not He, in every case, dispose them to it? is it wrong for God to give grace? If it be right for Him to give it, then is it wrong for Him to purpose to give it? would you have Him give it by accident? If it is right for Him to purpose to give grace today, it was right for Him to purpose it before today, and since He changes not, to purpose it from all eternity.”*

This is Fred Phelps. Ten thousand ages ere the skies were into motion brought, all the long years and worlds to come stood present to his thought. There is not a sparrow nor a worm but found in his decrees, he raises monarchs to their thrones, and sinks as he may please. I shall continue next week this same subject of the particular atonement, 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.