

Sermon of 10/12/1958

Particular Redemption and the Philadelphia Confession of Faith

Good morning, this is Fred Phelps. For the past few weeks I have been speaking on the subject of particular redemption, or the limited atonement. The oldest Baptist association in America is the Philadelphia association. It was formed in 1707, its greatest contribution to Baptist progress, according to the encyclopedia of Britannica, was the adoption in 1742 of the Philadelphia Confession of Faith. This was, essentially, the same statement of faith as the older London confession, of 1689. Every sound Baptist, through these intervening centuries, has accepted and endorsed this grand, time honored confession of faith.

Now, upon the subject of the particular atonement, or the limited atonement, I give you the following excerpts from the Philadelphia Confession of Faith, *“by the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated, or fore ordained to eternal life, through Jesus Christ, to the praise of his glorious grace. Others being left to act in their sin. To their just condemnation, to the praise of his glorious justice. And these angels and men, thus predestinated and fore ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished. And those of mankind that are predestinated to life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret council and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving him there unto. And as God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so he hath by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, fore ordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ. Are effectually called unto faith in Christ, by his spirit, working in due season, and they are justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only. And Christ, by his obedience in death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are justified. And did, by the sacrifice of himself, and the blood of his cross, undergoing in their stead the penalty due unto them, make a proper, real, and full satisfaction, to Gods justice in their behalf. Yet, inasmuch as he was given by the Father for them, and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead and both freely, not for anything in them, their justification is only of free grace, that both the exact justice, and rich grace of God, might be glorified in the justification of sinners, and God did from all eternity decree to justify all the elect, and Christ did in the fullness of time die for their sins, and rise again for their justification. Nevertheless, they are not justified personally, until the holy spirit doth in due time actually apply Christ to them.”* And so much for excerpts from the Philadelphia confession on the subject of the particular atonement.

The insipid preaching and theology of today may suit most of you very well, but it is earnestly hoped, that at least some there are today whose hearts respond to the historic Christian faith and the preaching thereof. now this morning, let us consider more scriptures dealing with this

blessed subject of the particular atonement, or the limited design in the atonement. Romans 11:5-6

“Even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But, if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work.” Romans 11:5-6

The words *even so*, at the beginning of this quotation, refer us to the previous verse, where we are told, “I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Bale.”

Note particularly the word *reserved*. In the days of Elijah, there was seven thousand, a small minority who were divinely preserved from idolatry and brought to the knowledge of the true God. This preservation and illumination was not from anything in themselves, but solely by Gods special influence and agency. How highly favored such individuals were to be thus reserved by God? Now, says the apostle, just as there was a remnant in Elijah’s day, reserved by God, even so there is in this present dispensation. A remnant according to the election of grace. Here the cause of election is traced back to its source. The basis upon which God elected this remnant was not faith foreseen in them, because a choice founded upon the foreside of good works, is just as truly made on the ground of works as any choice can be, and in such a case it would not be of good works, for, says the apostle, **“...if by grace, then it is no more of works. Otherwise, grace is no more grace.”** Which means that grace and works are opposites. They have nothing in common and will no more mingle than will oil and water. Thus the idea of inherent good foreseen in those chosen or of anything meritorious performed by them is rigidly excluded.

“A remnant according to the election of grace”, signifies an unconditional choice resulting from the sovereign favor of God, in a word it is absolutely a gratuitous election. And now consider with me 1 Corinthians 1:26-29.

“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.”

That’s 1 Corinthians 1:26-29. Three times over in this passage references made to Gods choice, and choice necessarily supposes a selection. The taking of some, and the leaving of others. The chooser here, is God himself, as said the Lord Jesus to his apostles, **“ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.” John 15:16.** The number chosen is strictly defined, **“...not many wise men after the flesh, not many noble...”**, and so forth, which agrees with Matthew 20:16, so the last shall be first, and the first last. For many be called, but few chosen. So much then for the fact of Gods choice, now mark the objects of his choice. The ones spoken of above, as chosen of

God, are the weak things of the world, base things of the world, and things which are despised. But why? To demonstrate and magnify his grace. Gods ways, as well as his thoughts, are utterly at variance with mans. The carnal mind would have supposed that a selection had been made of the ranks of the opulent and influential, the amiable and cultured so that Christianity might have won the approval and applause of the world by its pageantry and fleshly glory. Ah, but **“...that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God.” Luke 16:15.**

God chooses the base things, he did so in old testament times. The nation which he singled out to be the depository of his holy oracles, and the channel through which the promised seed of the woman should come, was not the ancient Egyptians, the imposing Babylonians, nor the highly civilized and cultured Greeks. No, that people upon whom Jehovah set his love, and regarded as the apple of his eye, were the despised, nomadic Hebrews. So it was when our Lord tabernacled among men. The ones whom he took into favored intimacy with himself and commissioned to go forth as his ambassadors, were for the most part unlettered fisherman, and so it has been ever since. So it is today. And the purpose of Gods choice, that is the *raison d’etre*, of the selection he has made, is that no flesh should glory in his presence. There being nothing whatever in the objects of his choice, which should entitle them to his special favors. Then all the praise will be freely ascribed to the exceeding riches of his manifold and magnificent grace. And now consider with me Ephesians 1:3-5.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. In whom also we have obtained the inheritance being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” Ephesians 1:3-5

Here again we are told that in what point of time, it time it could be called, when God made choice of those that were to be his children by Jesus Christ. It was not after Adam had fallen and plunged his race into sin and wretchedness. But long ere Adam saw the light, even before the world itself was founded, that God chose us in Christ. Here also we learn the purpose which God had before him in connection with his own elect. It was that they should be holy and without blame before him. It was unto the adoption of children. It was that they should obtain an inheritance. Here also we discover the motive which prompted him. It was in love that he predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself. A statement which refutes the oft made wicked charge that for God to decide the eternal destiny of his creatures before they are born is tyrannical and unjust.

Finally we are informed here, that in this matter, he took counsel with none. But that we are predestinated according to the good pleasure of his will. And now consider with me again 2 Thessalonians 2:13 along this same line.

“But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation thru sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth.”

That’s 2 Thessalonians 2:13. There are three things here which deserve special attention. First, the fact that we are expressly told that Gods elect are chosen to salvation. Language cannot be more explicit, friends. How summarily do these words dispose of the sophistries and equivocations of all who would make election refer to nothing but external privileges or rank in service. It is to salvation itself that God hath chosen us. Second, we are warned here, that election unto salvation does not disregard the use of appropriate means. Salvation is reached through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth. Is it not true, that because God has chosen a certain one to salvation, that he will be saved willy nilly? The Arminian ask. Indeed it is not. Whether he believes or not? Indeed it is not. Nowhere do the scriptures so represent it. The same God who predestined the end, also appointed the means. The same God who chose unto salvation, decreed that his purpose should be realized through the work of the spirit and belief of the truth. Third, that God has chosen us unto salvation is a profound cause for fervent praise. Note how strongly the apostle expresses this. We are “**...bound to give thanks always to God for you brethren of the Lord because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation...**”, and so forth. Instead of shrinking back in horror from the doctrine of predestination, the believer, when he sees this blessed truth, as it is unfolded in the word, discovers a ground for gratitude and thanksgiving such as nothing else affords, save the unspeakable gift of the redeemer himself. This is Fred Phelps, pastor of Westboro Baptist Church. Next week the Lord willing, I shall continue this same subject of the particular atonement and bring more scripture to bear in its proof and defense.