

## Sermon on December 7, 1958

### Why Predestination Should Be Openly Preached

Good morning, this is Fred Phelps. There are some who believe in predestination, election, and so forth, but who oppose the open preaching of these doctrines. They say that the doctrines are too high, and mysterious, and theoretical, to have practical value. They say, moreover, that the broad scale preaching of predestination will lead to abuse, on the one hand, and despair on the other. As though one should say, "well, if I am predestinated to be saved, I may live as I list. Naught can prevent my being saved." And another should say, "well, if I am predestinated to be lost, there are no hopes for me. What is the use?" let me show this morning, and perhaps next week, and the next, that the scripture doctrine of predestination should be openly preached and insisted on, and for what reasons.

*Jerome Zanchius once observed, "upon the whole, it is evident that the doctrine of Gods eternal and unchangeable predestination, should neither be wholly suppressed, and laid aside, nor yet be confined, to the disposition of learned, and speculative only. But likewise should be publicly taught from the pulpit and the press, that even the meanest of the people, may not be ignorant of a truth which reflects such glory on God, and is the very foundation of happiness to man. Let it, however, be preached with judgement and discretion. That is, delivered by the preacher, as it is delivered in scripture, and no otherwise. By which means, it can neither be abused to licentiousness, nor misapprehended to despair. But will eminently conduce to the knowledge, establishment, improvement and comfort of them that hear. That predestination ought to be preached, I show first that the gospel is to be preached. And that not partially and by piece meal, but the whole of it. the commission runs, "go forth and preach the gospel." The gospel itself, even all the gospel, without exception or limitation. So far as the gospel is maimed, or any branch of the evangelical system is suppressed, and passed over in silence, so far the gospel is not preached. Besides, there is scarce any other distinguishing doctrine of the gospel can be preached in its purity and consistency, without this of predestination. Election is the golden thread that runs through the whole Christian system. It is the leaven that pervades the whole lump."*

Sisero says, of the various parts of the human learning, *"the whole circle of arts have a kind of mutual bond, and connection, and by sort of reciprocal relationship, are held together and interwoven with each other."* Much the same may be said of this blessed doctrine of predestination. It is the bond, which connects and keeps together, the whole Christian system, which, without this, is like a system of sand, ever ready to fall to pieces. It is the cement which holds the fabric together, nay, it is the very soul that animates the whole frame. It is so blended and interwoven with the entire scheme of gospel doctrine, that when the former is excluded, the latter bleeds to death. An ambassador is to deliver the whole message with which he is charged. He is to omit no part of it, but must declare the mind of the sovereign he represents,

fully and without reserve. He is to say neither more or less, than the instructions of his court require. Else, he comes under displeasure, perhaps loses his head.

Let the ministers of Christ weigh this well. nor is the gospel to be preached only, but preached to every creature. That is, to reasonable beings, promiscuously and at large. To all who frequent the Christian ministry. Of every state and condition in life. Whether high or low, young or old, learned or illiterate. All who attend on the ministrations of Christ's ambassadors, have a right to hear the gospel fully, clearly, and without mincing. Preach it, says Christ, publish it abroad. Be its criers and heralds. Proclaim it aloud, tell it out, keep back no part of it. spare not, lift up your voices like trumpets.

Now, a very considerable branch of this gospel is the doctrine of Gods eternal, free, absolute, and irreversible election of some persons in Christ to everlasting life. The saints were singled out in Gods eternal purpose and choice, to be endued with faith, and thereby fitted for their destined salvation. By their interest in the gratuitous and unalienable love of the blessed trinity, they come to be, subjectively, saints and believers. So that their whole salvation, from the first plan of it, in the divine mind, to the consummation of it, in glory, is at once a matter of mere grace, and of absolute certainty. While they who die without faith, and holiness, prove thereby, that they were not included in this elect number, and were not written in the book of life. The justice of Gods procedure herein is unquestionable. Out of a corrupt mass, wherein not one was better than another, he might, that is, as was observed before on other broadcasts, love and choose, whom and as many as he pleased. It was likewise, without any shadow of injustice, at his option, whom and how many he would pass by. His not choosing them was the fruit of his sovereign will, but his condemning them after death and in the last day, is the fruit, not of their non-election, which was no fault of theirs, but of their own positive transgressions. The elect, therefore, have the utmost reason to love and glorify God, which any beings can possibly have, and the sense of what he has done for them is the strongest motive to obedience. On the other hand, the reprobates have nothing to complain of, since whatever God does is just and right, and so it will appear to be, however darkly matters may appear to us now. When we see him as he is, and know him, even as we are known.

And now, why should not this doctrine be preached and insisted upon in public? A doctrine which is of express revelation. A doctrine that makes holy, for the glory of God. Which conduces, in a most peculiar manner, to the conversion, comfort, and sanctification of elect, and leaves even the ungodly themselves without excuse. But, perhaps you may still be inclined to question, whether predestination be indeed a scriptured doctrine. If so, let me by way of sample, beg you, to consider the following declarations, first of Christ, secondly of his disciples. Matthew 11, **"if the mighty works that have been done in thee, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented."** Whence it is evident that the Tyrians and the Sidonians, at least the majority of them, died in a state of impenitency. But that if God had given them the same means of grace, afforded to Israel, they would not have died impenitent. For Christ said, **"they would have repented."** Yet, those means were not granted them. How can this be

accounted for? Only on the single principle of preemptory predestination flowing from the sovereign will of God. No wonder then that our Lord concludes that chapter with these remarkable words, **“I thank thee, oh Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes. Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”** Where Christ thanks the Father for doing that very thing which Armenians exclaim against as unjust, and censure as partial.

Mathew 13, **“to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. But to them, it is not given. To sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give, except to them for whom it hath been prepared by my father.”** As if he should say, **“salvation is not a precarious thing, the seats in glory were disposed of long ago, in my father’s intention and destination. I can only assign them to such persons as they were prepared in his decree.”** That’s Matthew 20:23. **“Many are called, but few chosen,”** Matthew 22. That is all who live under the sound of the gospel will not be saved, but those only who are elected unto life. For the elect’s sake, those days shall be shortened. And again in Matthew 24, **“if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect.”** That is, Christ teaches two things plainly. That there is a certain number of persons who are elected to grace and glory, and two, that it is absolutely impossible for these to be deceived into total or final apostacy. Again, **“come ye blest of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world.”** That’s in Matthew 25. **“Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God. But to them that are without,”** that is without the pale of election. All these things are done in parables, **“That seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear, and not understand. Lest at any time they should be converted and their sins should be forgiven them.”** That’s in Mark chapter 11. **“Rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”** That’s in Luke 10. **“It is your fathers good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”** That’s in Luke 12. **“All that the father hath given me, shall come unto me.”** John 6. As much is to say, these shall, but the rest cannot. **“He that is of God, heareth Gods words. Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.”** John 8. That is not chosen of God. **“Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep.”** John 10. **“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.”** John 15.

I come now, second, to the apostles. **“They believed not on him, that the saying of Isaiah the prophet, might be fulfilled which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?”** Therefore, they could not believe because that Isaiah said again, **“he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted and I should heal them.”** That’s John 12: 37 and 40. Without certain prescience, that is foreknowledge, certain foreknowledge, there could be no prophecy, and without predestination, there could be no certain prescience or foreknowledge, therefore, in order to the accomplishment on prophecy, prescience, and predestination, we are expressly told that these persons could not believe. They were not able, it was out of their power.

In short, there is hardly a page in John's gospel, which does not either expressly or implicitly make mention of election and reprobation. Peter says, of Judas, **"men and brethren, the scriptures must needs have been fulfilled, which the holy ghost by the mouth of David spake before, concerning Judas."** That's in Acts 1. **"So that he might go to his own place."** That's also in Acts 1. That is to the place of punishment, appointed beforehand for him. **"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain."** Acts 2. Where it is written that the Savior was delivered by the determinate counsel, and foreknowledge of God. Herod and Pontias Pilote and the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together for to do **"whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."** That's in Acts 4. That is predestinated should come to pass. And in Acts 13 we read, **"and as many as were ordained,"** or designed or destined, **"to eternal life, believed."**

Now, concerning the apostle Paul, what shall I say? Everyone that has read his epistles knows that they teem with predestination from beginning to end. I shall only give one or two passages, and begin with that famous chain, **"whom he did foreknow,"** or forelove, for to know, often symbolizes in scripture, to love, **"he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the first born among many brethren."** That, as in all things else, so in the business of election, Christ might have the preeminence. All these texts friends are but as an handful to the harvest, and yet are both numerous and weighty enough to decide the point with any who pay the least deference to scriptural authority. Now let it be observed that Christ and his apostles delivered these matters not to some privileged persons, but to all at large who had ears to hear and eyes to read. Therefore, it is incumbent upon every faithful minister to tread in their steps, and to hold back no part of the counsel of God.

***But oh my soul, if truth so bright, should dazzle and confound thy sight, yet still his written word obey and wait the great decisive day.***

This is Fred Phelps, pastor of Westboro Baptist Church. Next week, the Lord willing, more of the same.