

PREDESTINATION OF GOD'S ELECT TO ETERNAL LIFE.

**Preached May 15, 1960, by Pastor Fred Phelps, Westboro
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Those who are ordained unto eternal life were not so ordained on account of any worthiness foreseen in them, or of any good works to be wrought by them, nor yet for their future faith, but purely and solely of free, sovereign grace, and according to the mere pleasure of God. This is evident, among other considerations, from this: that faith, repentance and holiness are no less the free-gifts of God than eternal life itself. "Faith—is not of yourselves," we read, "it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). "Unto you it is given to believe" (Phil. 1:29). "Him hath God exalted with His right hand for to give repentance" (Acts 5:31). "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). In like manner holiness is called the sanctification of the Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:13), because the Divine Spirit is the efficient of it in the soul, and, of unholy, makes us holy. Now, if repentance and faith are the gifts, and sanctification is the work of God, then these are not the fruits of man's free-will, nor what he acquires of himself, and so can neither be motives to, nor conditions of his election unto salvation; this is an act of the Divine mind, antecedent to, and irrespective of all qualities whatever in the persons elected. Besides, the apostle asserts expressly that election is not of works, but of Him that calleth, and that it passed before the persons concerned had done either good or evil (Romans 9:11). Again, if faith or works were the cause of election, God could not be

said to choose us, but we to choose Him, contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture: "Ye have not chosen Me," He said, "but I have chosen you" (John 15.16). "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us. We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:10,19). Election is everywhere asserted to be God's act, and not man's (Mark 13:20; Romans 9:17; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13). Once more, we are chosen that we might be holy, not because it was foreseen we would be so (Eph. 1:4), therefore to represent holiness as the reason why we were elected is to make the effect antecedent to the cause. The apostle adds (ver. 5), "having predestinated us according to the good pleasure of His will," most evidently implying that God saw nothing extra se, that is, had no motive from without, why He should either choose any man at all for that matter. In a word, the elect were freely loved (Hosea 14:4), freely chosen (Romans 11:5,6), and freely redeemed (Isaiah 52:3), they are freely called (2 Timothy 1:9), freely justified (Romans 3:24), and shall be freely glorified (Romans 6:23). The great Augustine, in his book of Retractations, acknowledges his error in having once thought that faith foreseen was a condition of election; he owns that that opinion is equally impious and absurd, and proves that faith is one of the fruits of election, and consequently could not be, in any sense, a cause of it. "I could never have asserted," says he, "that God in choosing men to life had any respect to their faith, had I duly considered that faith itself is His own gift." And, in another treatise of his, he has these words: "Since Christ says, 'Ye have not chosen Me,' etc., I would fain ask whether it be

Scriptural to say we must have faith before we are elected, and not, rather, that we are elected in order to our having faith?" Now, they who are predestinated to life are likewise predestinated to all those means which are indispensably necessary in order to their meetness for, entrance upon, and enjoyment of that life, such as repentance, faith, sanctification, and perseverance in these to the end. "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed" (Acts 13:48). "He hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). "For we (i.e., the same we whom He hath chosen before the foundation of the world) are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath foreordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). And the apostle assures the same Thessalonians, whom he reminds of their election and God's everlasting appointment of them to obtain salvation, that this also was His will concerning them, even their sanctification (1 Thessalonians 1:4 & 5:9 & 4:3), and gives them a view of all these privileges at once. "God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13). As does the apostle, when he says, "*Elect*—through sanctification of the Spirit *unto* obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2). Now, though faith and holiness are not represented as the cause wherefore the elect are saved, yet these are constantly represented as the means through which they are saved, or as the appointed way wherein God leads His people to glory, these blessings being always bestowed previous to that. And Augustine has it again:

"Whatsoever persons are, through the riches of Divine grace, exempted from the original sentence of condemnation are undoubtedly brought to hear the Gospel, and when heard, they are caused to believe it, and are made likewise to endure to the end in the faith which works by love, and should they at any time go astray, they are recovered and set right again." And, "All these things are wrought in them by that God who made them vessels of mercy, and who, by the election of His grace, chose them, in His Son, before the world began." Not one of the elect can perish, friends, but they must all necessarily be saved. The reason is this: because God simply and unchangeably wills that all and every one of those whom He hath appointed to life should be eternally glorified, and all the Divine attributes are concerned in the accomplishment of this His will. His wisdom, which cannot err; His knowledge, which cannot be deceived; His truth, which cannot fail; His love, which nothing can alienate; His justice, which cannot condemn any for whom Christ died; His power, which none can resist; and His unchangeableness, which can never vary—from all which it appears that we do not speak at all improperly when we say that the salvation of His people is necessary and certain. Now that is said to be necessary which cannot be otherwise than it is, and if all the perfections of God are engaged to preserve and save His children, their safety and salvation must be, in the strictest sense of the word, necessary. (See Psalm 103:17. & 125:1,2; Isaiah 45:17. & 54:9,10; Jeremiah 31.3. & 32.40; John 6.39. & 10.28,29. & 14.19. & 17.12; Romans 8.30,38,39. & 11.29; 1 Corinthians 1.8,9; Philippians 1.6; 1 Peter 1.4,5). And, Augustine has it again: "Of those

whom God hath predestinated none can perish, inasmuch as they are His own elect," and, "They are the elect who are predestinated, foreknown, and called according to purpose. Now, could any of these be lost, God would be disappointed of His will and expectation; but He cannot be so disappointed, therefore they can never perish. Again, could they be lost, the power of God would be made void by man's sin, but His power is invincible, therefore they are safe." And again, "The children of God are written, with an unshaken stability, in the book of their heavenly Father's remembrance." And, "Not the children of promise, but the children of perdition shall perish, for the former are the predestinated, who are called according to the Divine determination, not one of whom shall finally miscarry." And, also Luther says: "God's decree of predestination is firm and certain, and the necessity resulting from it is, in like manner, immoveable, and cannot but take place. For we ourselves are so feeble that, if the matter was left in our hands, very few, or rather none, would be saved, but Satan would overcome us all. Now, since this steadfast and inevitable purpose of God cannot be reversed nor disannulled by any creature whatever, we have a most assured hope that we shall finally triumph over sin, how violently soever it may at present rage in our mortal bodies." The salvation of the elect was not the only nor yet the principal end of their being chosen, but God's grand end, in appointing them to life and happiness, was to display the riches of His own mercy, and that He might be glorified in and by the persons He had thus chosen. For this reason the elect are styled vessels of mercy, because they were originally created, and afterwards by the Divine Spirit

created anew, with this design and to this very end, that the sovereignty of the Father's grace, the freeness of His love, and the abundance of His goodness might be manifested in their eternal happiness. Now God does nothing in time which He did not from eternity resolve within Himself to do, and if He, in time, creates and regenerates His people with a view to display His unbounded mercy, He must consequently have decreed from all eternity to do this with the same view. So that the final causes of election appear to be these two: first and principally, the glory of God; second and subordinately, the salvation of those He has elected, from which the former arises, and by which it is illustrated and set off. So that we read, "The Lord hath made all things for Himself" (Proverbs 16:4), and hence Paul says, "He hath chosen us—to the praise of the glory of His grace" (Ephesians 1). The end of election, which, with regard to the elect themselves, is eternal life. I say this end and the means conducive to it, such as the gift of the Spirit, faith, etc., are so inseparably connected together that whoever is possessed of these shall surely obtain that, and none can obtain that who are not first possessed of these. "As many as were ordained to eternal life," and none else, "believed" (Acts 13:48). "Him hath God exalted—to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins" (Acts 5:31). Notice: not to all men, or to those who were not, in the counsel and purpose of God, set apart for Himself, but to Israel, that is all His chosen people, who were given to Him, were ransomed by Him, and shall be saved in Him with an everlasting salvation. "Ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep" (John 10.26); on the contrary, they who believe, therefore, believe because they are of His

sheep. Faith, then, is an evidence of election, or of being in the number of Christ's sheep; consequently, of salvation, since all His sheep shall be saved (John 10.28). I've written another poem that I should like to share with you at this time; and I've entitled it, "*The Song Of God's Elect*":

**O Thou High Exalted Savior, can it be that Thou art mine?
Has thy love, so fix'd and changeless, pitched on me to call
me thine?**

**Has thy Father's sovereign mercy, from eternal ages past,
placed me in that pale of favor put beyond the judgment
blast?**

**O, such consolation bringing, what can fetch my soul away?
This the Lord has promised to me. Then what power can say
me nay?**

**Come, then, years of retribution for the debts of fallen man.
Mine were paid by substitution, at my bleeding Surety's hand.**

**Come, then, years of bliss and glory, for His sheep, elect,
secure. He who chose, and called, and saved them, certifies
they shall endure!**

**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.**