

SALVATION BY GRACE ALONE

Preached February 8, 1959, by Pastor Fred Phelps of Westboro Baptist Church,
Topeka, Kansas

Westboro Baptist Church is dedicated to proclaim and defend the doctrine of Salvation by Grace Alone. This means that God, without consulting anyone, or considering anything, except His own will, has from eternity decreed that certain of Adam's race should in time repent and believe the gospel; this is predestination. And unless predestination be preached, we shall lack one great inducement to the exercise of brotherly kindness and charity. When a converted person is assured, on one hand, that all whom God hath predestinated to eternal life shall infallibly enjoy that eternal life to which they are chosen. On the other hand, when he discerns the signs of election, not only in himself, but also in his fellow believers, and concludes from thence, that they are as really elected as himself, how much his heart must glow with love to his fellow Christian brethren? How feelingly will he sympathize with them in their distresses? How tenderly will he bear their infirmities? How readily will he relieve the former, and how readily overlook the latter?

Nothing will so effectually knit together the hearts of God's people in time, as the belief of their names being written in the book of life from everlasting, and the unshaken confidence of their future exaltation, from one and the same state of glory above, will occasion a strong cement of affection here below. This was one end of our savior so frequently reminding His apostles of their election, namely, that from the sense of such an unspeakable blessing, in which they were all equally interested, they might learn to love one another with pure hearts fervently, and cultivate on earth that holy friendship, which they well knew from the immutability of God's decrees would be eternally matured to the highest perfection and refinement in heaven.

Paul, likewise, might have some respect to the same amiable inference when treating of the saints collectively. For, he uses those sweet and endearing expressions, such as "***He hath chosen us***" and "***He hath predestinated us***" and so forth. That believers considering themselves as co-elect in Christ might be led to love each other with peculiar intenseness, as the spiritual children of one electing father, brethren in grace, and joint heirs of glory. Did the regenerate of the present age but practically advert to the everlasting nearness in which they stand related to each other, how happy would be the effect? Hence it appears, that since the preaching of predestination is thus evidently calculated to kindle and keep alive the two fold congenial flame of love to God and love to fellow Christians, it must by necessary

consequence conduce to the advancement of universal obedience, and to the performance of every religious duty, which alone, was there nothing else to recommend it, would be a sufficient motive to the public delivery of that important doctrine.

Without a due sense of predestination, we shall want the surest and most powerful inducement to patience, resignation, and dependence on God, under every spiritual and temporal affliction. My friends, consider how sweet must the following considerations must be to the distressed believer on earth. First, that there most certainly exists an almighty, all wise, and infinitely gracious God. Second, that that God has given me in times past, and is giving me at present if I had eyes to see it, many and single intimations of His love to me, both in a way of providence and grace. Third, that this love of His toward me is immutable, that is, it is unchangeable. He never repents of it, nor withdraws from it. Fourth, that whatever comes to pass in time is the result of His will from everlasting. Fifth, that my afflictions were a part of His original plan, and He has them all ordered in number, weight, and measure. Sixth, that the very hairs of my head are everyone counted by Him, nor can a single one fall to the ground, but in consequence of His determination. Seventh, that my distresses are not the result of chance, accident, or a fortuitous combination of circumstances, but they are the providential accomplishment of God's purpose, and their designed to answer some wise and gracious ends, nor shall my affliction continue one moment longer than God sees meet. Eighth, that He who brought me to it has promised to support me under it, and to carry me through it. All shall most assuredly, therefore, work together for His glory and my good. Hence, the cup which my heavenly father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it? Yes, I will in the most difficult parts even rejoice in tribulation, and using the means of possible redress, which He hath or may hereafter put into my hands, I will commit myself and the event to Him whose purpose cannot be overthrown, whose plan cannot be disconcerted, and who, whether I am resigned to it or not, will go on to work all things, after the counsel of His own will.

But above all, dear friend, when the suffering Christian takes his election into account, and knows that he was by an eternal and immutable act of God appointed to obtain salvation through our LORD Jesus Christ, and when he knows of course that he hath a city appointed to him above, a building of God, a house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens, and that the heaviest sufferings of the present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in the saints, what adversity can possibly befall us which the assured hope of blessings like these

will not infinitely overbalance? As we say: a comfort so divine may trials well endure, and however keenly afflictions may wound us upon their first access, yet under the impression of such animating views of predestination, we should quickly come to ourselves again, and the arrows of tribulation would in great measure become pointless.

Christians need nothing but absolute resignation to render them perfectly happy in every possible circumstance, and absolute resignation can only flow from an absolute belief of, and an absolute acquiescence in God's absolute providence, founded on absolute predestination. The apostle himself draws these conclusions in Romans 8, where, after having laid down his most undoubted axioms, being the eternity and immutability of God's purposes, he thus winds up the whole: ***“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” (Romans 8:35, 37)***

Such therefore, among others, being the uses that arise from the faithful preaching and the cordial reception of predestination, may we not venture to affirm with Martin Luther that our faith and worship of God is dependent in no small degree upon our knowledge of that doctrine. Mr. Melancthon, in one of his books called *Commonplaces*, does in the first chapter, which treats professedly of free will and predestination, set out with clearing and establishing the doctrine of God's decrees, and then proceeds to point out the necessity and usefulness of asserting and believing it. He even goes so far as to say that a right fear of God and a true confidence in Him can be learned more assuredly from no other source than from the doctrine of predestination. And, he says that divine predestination quite strips man of his boasted liberty, for all things come to pass according to God's fore-appointment, even the internal thoughts of all creatures, no less than the external works.

Therefore, the apostle gives us to understand that God performeth ***“all things after the counsel of His own will.” (Ephesians 1:11)*** Our LORD Himself asks: ***“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.” (Matthew 10:29)*** Pray, what can be more full to the point than such a declaration? And Solomon says ***“The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.” (Proverbs 16:4)*** And in *chapter 20 verse 24*, he says ***“Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?”*** To which the prophet Jeremiah also affirms: ***“O Lord, I***

know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” (Jeremiah 10:23)

And, the historical part of scripture teaches us the same great truth; so, in *Genesis 15*, we read that *“the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full,”* and in *1 Samuel 2:25*, we are told that Eli’s sons *“hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them.”* What could bear a stronger resemblance to chance and accident than when Saul called upon Samuel in *1 Samuel 9*; he did it only with a view to seek out his father’s asses, yet the visit was fore-ordained of God, and designed to answer a purpose little thought of by Saul. And you see also a most remarkable chain of predestinated events in reference to Saul and that were foretold by the prophet in *1 Samuel 10*. When in pursuance of the divine preordination, there went with Saul of a band of men, whose hearts God had touched. Even the harshness of King Rehoboam’s answer to the ten tribes, and the subsequent revolt of those tribes from his dominion, are by the sacred historian expressly ascribed to God’s decree. For we read: *“Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.” (1 Kings 12:15)* What is the drift of the apostle Paul in *Romans 9 and 11*, but to resolve all things that come to pass into God’s destination? The judgement of the flesh, friends, or of mere unregenerate reason, usually starts back from this truth with horror. But on the contrary, the judgement of a spiritual man will embrace it with affection.

Can we ever quote this poem too much?

*“Ten thousand ages ere the skies
Were into motion brought,
All the long years and worlds to come
Stood present to His thought.
There’s not a sparrow nor a worm
But is found in His decrees;
He raises monarchs to a throne,
Or sinks with equal ease.”*

You will not learn either the fear of God or healthy trust in Him from a surer source than getting your mind deeply tenured and seasoned with this doctrine of

predestination. There are three additional stanzas to John Newton's immortal hymn *Amazing Grace*, and these three are generally omitted from the songbooks. I should like to quote them for you at this time.

*"The LORD has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my Shield and Portion be,
As long as life endures.*

*Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.*

*This earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine."*

This is Fred Phelps, Pastor of Westboro Baptist Church. Next week, the LORD willing, at this same time, more of the same. And now, peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the father and the LORD Jesus Christ, and grace be with all them that love our LORD Jesus Christ in sincerity.

Amen.