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TULIP – The Fundamentals of the Faith by which we are Saved

Sermon #4 – Unconditional Election – Why are You a Christian?

January 9, 2022

Sermon Text:

Scripture Reading: Leviticus 10:1-7

Eph 2:4-5 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, (5) even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

We resume this morning with our series on the five fundamental points of our faith:

- Total Depravity

- Unconditional Election
- Limited (definite) Atonement
- Irresistible Grace
- Perseverance of the Saints

We have seen that in the Fall, man became what we call “totally depraved.” That does not mean that everyone is as evil in practice as they possible could be (God in His mercy restrains evil), but “total” means that every part of the human being is fallen, dead in sin, unable to even desire to seek God. Intellect, will, emotions and affections, spirit, flesh – every part is fallen. There is no “island of goodness” in him.

Unless we get this right, our entire religion will be wrong.

And we saw that many who claim to be Christians do indeed get the “T” wrong. They believe that the sinner is able to choose God, that he is not so fallen as to be totally fallen. And you can see, if you give

some thought to it, how this error then affects everything that is so commonly being done by people and groups who claim to be Christians.

Then we considered, in contrast to man's total depravity, the holiness of God. We said that God's holiness is what we might call His "otherness." Here is a good comment from an article in the Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible:

Hosea 11:9 supplies the most succinct declaration of God's holiness found in the Old Testament: "for I am God and not man, the Holy one in your midst." This pregnant statement lays stress (a) on the 'otherness' of God, His majesty and incomparability with any created being, and (b) His nearness and involvement in the affairs of His people...

The Holy One is also the kindly God who has chosen Israel and has mercy on His people.

The "goodness" of God is highlighted by the word 'holy' when it is used in connection with Him...As holy, He is thus unique and incomparable and therefore "unapproachability is an element which is never absent from the notion of holiness." Holy is at once exalted, supreme, and fearful.

Holiness also manifests God's attitude to sin. God's holiness denotes not merely His separation from sin in the perfection of His own being, but His abhorrence of it and hostility to it...Hence, the connection between divine holiness and divine judgment. A holy God who abhors sin can do no other than to punish it. He is "not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not sojourn with thee." (Psalm 5:4).

When fire came out from the presence of the Lord to devour Nadab and Abihu in their impiety, Moses explained to Aaron: "This is what the Lord has said, I will show myself holy among those who are near me, and before all the people I will be glorified" (Lev 10:3). Similarly Korah and his band of

Levites perished because they had despised the Lord by violating His holiness (Num 16:30).

Lev 10:1-7 Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. (2) And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. (3) Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD has said: 'Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.'" And Aaron held his peace

When we think then of these two doctrines: the total depravity of the sinner and the holiness of God, we understand that the two cannot dwell together. The thing is impossible. Unless something is done, unless some radical change in one of the two parties is effected, God and the sinner will never be reconciled.

We know that God does not and cannot change. The solution to this dilemma therefore cannot rest in God somehow becoming less holy. No, the change has to be effected in the sinner. In fact, *the sinner must be made holy as God is holy*, or no one would ever dwell in the holy of holies of God's presence.

And this then is precisely what has happened in Christ. God has effected a way by which God can dwell in us and we in Him – and we not be consumed. And the first step in this remedy is *Unconditional Election*.

Salvation is of the Lord. Dead men can do nothing, and the sinner is dead in his sin. The initiative then necessarily lies with God. Salvation is what we call *monergistic*, which just means, "single work." Just as Lazarus could do nothing to be resurrected, so also Christ must declare to us "come forth."

But before all of this, before God calls us to Himself, before He regenerates us and makes us new creations, *God must choose who*

He is going to save. He must elect us to salvation. He could save all. He could save none, Or He could save some, but not all and that is exactly what the Bible says He has done:

Eph 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, (4) even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love (5) he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

Chosen by God. Why is the Christian a Christian? Because God chose him in eternity past. God chose to set His mercy upon us.

Joh 17:2 since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

Joh 17:6 “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.

Joh 17:9 I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.

Joh 17:11 And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

Rom 8:28-30 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (29) For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (30) And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Rev 13:8 and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

Now, it is obvious then that predestination or God's election is a biblical doctrine. That cannot be denied. But what is the basis of God's choice? Why does He choose one and not the other? Why am I a Christian and other people perish in their sins? Well, this is where that word *unconditional* comes in.

And I think it would be profitable for us to look carefully at the section of the Baptist Confession of Faith, Chapter 3, "Of God's Decree." You can look at the Westminster Confession and other Reformed confessions and you will find the very same doctrine taught. Here we go then:

1. God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and

unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established; in which appears his wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing his decree. (Isaiah 46:10; Ephesians 1:11; Hebrews 6:17; Romans 9:15, 18; James 1:13; 1 John 1:5; Acts 4:27, 28; John 19:11; Numbers 23:19; Ephesians 1:3-5)

2. Although God knoweth whatsoever may or can come to pass, upon all supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed anything, because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions. (Acts

15:18; Romans
9:11, 13, 16, 18)

3. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated, or foreordained 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. (1 Timothy 5:21; Matthew 25:34; Ephesians 1:5, 6; Romans 9:22, 23; Jude 4)

4. These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished. (2 Timothy 2:19; John 13:18)

5. 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 counsel 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 thereunto. (Ephesians 1:4, 9, 11; Romans 8:30; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; Romans 9:13, 16; Ephesians 2:5, 12)

6. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so he hath, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained 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, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto

salvation; neither are any other redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only. (1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:9, 10; Romans 8:30; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:5; John 10:26; John 17:9; John 6:64)

7. The doctrine of the high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men attending the will of God revealed in his Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election; so shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel. (1 Thessalonians 1:4, 5; 2 Peter 1:10; Ephesians 1:6; Romans 11:33; Romans 11:5, 6, 20; Luke 10:20)

You can see then that the *unconditional* aspect of election to salvation means that God did not choose us because of anything in us, but only out of His own good pleasure for His glory. We were not even created yet, and when we were born into this world we were born dead in sin and deserving of hell. Why am I a Christian? Because God in His mercy chose me in eternity past. Look carefully here:

Rom 9:10-16 And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, (11) though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— (12) she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” (13) As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” (14) What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! (15) For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” (16)

So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

And do not miss this:

Rom 9:19-21 You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” (20) But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” (21) Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

Understand? If in fact God made His choice based upon His foreknowledge in the sense of His knowing all things, and so He knew in eternity past who would choose to believe in Christ and so God elected them to salvation, *all that Paul would have had to do in order to answer this objection is to say so!* But he did not. Why? Because the Potter has the right over the clay.

And this is why:

Eph 2:9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

No boasting. All glory to God. Grateful thanksgiving to the Lord that He chose us and brought us to faith in Christ. That His calling was *effectual* and (as we will see in the “I” in TULIP, irresistible).

And this doctrine gives us clarity. It shows us, for example, *where we would be if not for His choosing us. We were just like all the rest, dead in our sins and without hope.* This should surely humble us and deflate any prideful notion in us that we are better than others.