

Election and Reprobation

by Charles Finney

Charles Finney's sermon explores the biblical concepts of election and reprobation, emphasizing God's sovereignty and human free will in the context of salvation.

Scripture: Jeremiah 6:30, Matthew 22:14, John 6:37, Romans 8:33-34, Ephesians 1:4-5, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Timothy 2:19, Hebrews 10:26-27, 1 Peter 1:2, Revelation 20:15

Topics: "Election", "Reprobation"

Description

Charles Finney addresses the concepts of election and reprobation, emphasizing that God has chosen some for salvation while rejecting others based on His infinite wisdom and foreknowledge. He clarifies that election is not based on human merit but on God's sovereign will and the individual's response to the gospel. Finney encourages listeners to examine their lives and attitudes towards the truth of the gospel as indicators of their eternal destiny, highlighting that the elect will show a genuine interest in salvation while the reprobate will remain indifferent or hostile. He concludes by urging individuals to make their calling and election sure through self-examination and a sincere pursuit of truth.

Transcript

"Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them." --Jer. 6:30

"For many are called, but few are chosen." --Mat. 22:14

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." --1 Pet. 1:2

From these texts you will perceive that I have chosen for my subject ELECTION AND REPROBATION. In discussing it, I propose

I. TO DEFINE THE TERMS.

II. SHOW WHAT THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE REALLY IS.

III. STATE THE REASONS FOR ELECTION AND ALSO FOR REPROBATION

IV. SHOW HOW, AS A GENERAL FACT, WE MAY DETERMINE TO WHICH CLASS ANY INDIVIDUAL BELONGS.

First of all, let me admonish you not to be frightened at the terms, Election and Reprobation. They are Bible terms, and therefore need not alarm any but those who contend against the truth. They are Bible terms, yet have been greatly abused, so that my first business must be to define them, and then in my subsequent remarks, to illustrate them, in order to remove the stumbling-blocks occasioned by their abuse.

I. "Elected" means chosen. It means precisely this--neither more nor less. A "reprobate" thing is a thing rejected or cast away. To reprobate is to reject, to disapprove, and hence to set aside. It is the counterpart of elect. Such is the meaning of the terms.

II. What now is the Scripture doctrine?

Briefly this: God has chosen to salvation a part of mankind, and has also made up his mind to cast off a part. The whole doctrine is embraced in this: God's mind is made up as to what He will do in the matter of saving or not saving the individuals of our race. His mind, I say, is made up; of course it is if it ever will be, for He has no new mind, and cannot ever have any new views, new knowledge, or new plans. All things are present to God from the beginning. To deny that God has made up his mind as to what He will do in this matter is to deny the essential attributes of God, for both the beginning and the end are both alike known to Him. With perfect and infinite knowledge ever present to his mind from all past eternity, it is impossible that his mind should not be made up, as to what He will do in the matter of human salvation.

III. But God has good reasons for all He does. He never makes up his mind without having good reasons, and never otherwise than in accordance with those reasons.

The elect, therefore, are those whom God has, for the best of reasons, determined to save; the reprobate, in like manner, are those whom, for infinitely good reasons, He has made up his mind to cast off for perdition.

What are these good reasons?

1. Not any arbitrary sovereignty on God's part, a sovereignty which has no good reasons for its foundation. God is indeed a Sovereign, but only in the good sense. He judges and decides alone, unaided by the wisdom of any created being; and this, not because He is above taking counsel, if there were any being whom He could wisely consult. God's acts of sovereignty, therefore, are all infinitely wise and benevolent. They are determined on and fixed, only because they are infinitely right and reasonable, and because He sees the reasons for them with perfect clearness, and feels their force so strongly that He cannot do otherwise than act accordingly.

2.* The elect are not chosen on account of their own desert or righteousness. Mark what I say: not because they are by nature any better than others. They are not by nature any better than the reprobate, for they had nothing in the constitution of their being better than others had.

Nor was it because their sins were any less in number or aggravation than the sins of those whom God will cast away; but it was because He saw that He could save them under the wisest possible administration of government. He saw it possible to secure their salvation without departing from his chosen system of moral administration. He could secure their confidence in Him and their assent to his scheme of salvation. Yet let it be observed, not for their concurrence in this gospel scheme, considered as a thing of merit, a thing which in justice claims salvation, but only as being a condition of their salvation. God could so

arrange his government as to secure their voluntary consent.

The reprobate are cast off for their foreseen rejection, not on condition of their future wickedness, but for it. The elect are chosen on the condition of its being possible to secure their confidence in Him and their assent to the scheme of salvation.

When I say God foresaw, I use the term, not as when it is used of men. We do not foresee as He does. God sustains no such relations to time as we do. He dwells in time absolute. With us, events transpire, but not with God. Before Him all things are present.

The things which are always present to God, become known to creatures only as they transpire--only as they develop themselves in time. The things always known to God, become known to us only as they develop themselves in their occurrence. They were a secret from all eternity in his bosom. In the lapse of time, they come forth, boiling up before the eyes of creatures.

God's knowing future things does not make them occur. His omniscience no more controls our conduct than our knowing how men will act controls their action. The acts of free agents may be certain, in the sense that God knows with certainty what they will be, yet are they none the less free and voluntary.

In the case of those who are chosen to salvation, all the facts in view of which God made up his mind, will come out before the view of the finite minds of his creatures. On the other hand, all the reasons in the case of the lost will come up to view. All will pass in full review before the universe in the solemn judgment, so that all intelligent beings of the universe will say, God could have done no otherwise than He has. They will see that the elect were chosen and finally saved on the condition that God could win them, and that the wicked were reprobated and lost because of the fact that God could not win them to give up their sins and accept of salvation.

Now, mark what I say: A great deal is said about God's sovereignty--a great deal of nonsense too. But mark this--it is not so much the sovereignty of God as the sovereignty of man, on which this question turns. No man can deny his own freedom, and to act freely is to exercise, in this respect, the attribute of sovereignty. Man is free, for how can he either promise or purpose anything without freedom? If he is not free, he can no more promise or purpose than a wind-mill can. Go up to a wind-mill, accost it by name, assuming its sovereignty and free independence, and ask it if it will please turn so and so, and with such and such velocity. You stand rebuked in your folly, for that is a wind-mill, not a man--a wind-mill acting without free agency, and not a man, conscious of freedom.

Man always assumes his own liberty and freedom. He can no more deny it rationally than he can deny his own existence. The fact is, every man knows himself to be free, and in this sense a sovereign.

God puts man upon his own character and responsibility; holds him to his responsibility, and cannot righteously do otherwise. He places before him law; this the sinner rejects. Then God presents the gospel, and having exerted such influence as He wisely can, leaves him ultimately to his own responsibility. God can do no more than to place before him motives to induce right voluntary action. If God should attempt to convert him in any other way than by acting upon his free mind, by means of truth, it would avail nothing. Some suppose that God takes hold of a man and changes his nature, the very constitution of his being. But this would not convert him unless it changed the voluntary state of his mind. A change in the voluntary attitude of the mind is primarily all that is needed. This, and nothing else or other than this, is conversion. God never acts on man otherwise than upon a moral being. Hence, man's own sovereignty must

determine his destiny.

IV. The destiny of men for eternity is in general very plainly indicated in their lives. For if men are ever saved by the gospel, they must be savingly influenced by it while yet they live on earth. If they are ever lost, it will be because they reject the gospel. Now, therefore, if we see that the gospel is taking effect on any mind, we see reason to conclude that that individual will be saved, for he is being saved already. The gospel is already renewing his soul and saving it from sin. We have therefore the appropriate evidence that he is elected unto salvation.

But if we see that an individual is being cursed by the gospel--if it only serves to harden his heart and make him more obstinate, more wicked, more the child of hell than before, we see conclusive marks of his reprobation.

Hence if we would know whether men are elected or reprobated, we must watch. We must notice how the gospel affects them, and what attitude they take towards it. This we may with considerable certainty foresee their destiny--and in like manner our own.

How then may it generally be known whether or not any individual is elected to salvation?

It is not always possible for us to judge accurately in this world. Sometimes things are working deep in the mind which we do not see. Sometimes men seem to be going in the wrong direction with alarming certainty, but at length they turn, unexpectedly to us, and we find the gospel asserting its due power over their minds. So on the other hand, some seem to be running well for a time, but by a sudden turn they take the way of death, and crush all our fond anticipations.

Yet these are only the exceptions; the Bible teaches us that as a general rule we may judge who are reprobates. It requires us to prove our own selves and gives us the tests whereby we may know whether we are reprobates or not.

I therefore proceed to notice some of the indications by which men may know whether they are or are not reprobates.

I do this for two reasons, (1.) It is due to all the saints that they should have the consolation of knowing that they are among the chosen. (2.) It is of great importance that saints should know the marks as they appear upon others to show whether or not they are elected. It is also well that sinners should be able to see as in a glass their own coming destiny, that being warned of their peril they may escape while yet salvation is possible. Yet let me say again, I do not imply that these marks are infallible. They are approximate indications--probable signs, sometimes amounting almost to certainty; but nothing more.

1. Those who are elected to be saved attend to the means of salvation. This is plain, because if they are ever to be saved, it must be through their attention to those means by which God saves men. Men are saved if at all by the agency of these means. God cannot save by merely physical influence; the nature of the case forbids it. Moral and physical government are entirely distinct and contrasted. The planets are not moved by motives, nor free minds by gravitation. Matter requires one form of moving power--mind another. It is simply absurd to confound the distinction between the two.

The elect, then, will attend to the truth--will hear, and having heard will think. They will, if they can, attend the places of religious worship and instruction. I do not assert that every man who goes to meeting will be saved, or that all who sometimes stay away will be lost, but I speak of the general law that obtains in this

matter and of the general influences that stand connected with men's salvation or damnation. As a general thing, the elect will go to meeting--will search for truth. They are indicated by their attention to these means of grace, and the non-elect for the same reason by their neglect of these means.

A personal and permanent interest in gospel truth must be awakened in the minds of the elect, for they are to be saved through the influence of this truth.

I have preached in many hundreds of congregations. I have seen hundreds of persons of whom observers could say as they saw their aspect in the house of God--"That man's ears are opened; he is attentive and solemn;--pray for him--he will be converted." Soon he is converted.

But some of you come here, all inattentive, with no serious thought or concern about God's truth or the relation which your souls bear to that truth. Such persons are reprobated--with almost an entire certainty,--reprobate for the very reason that they would not attend to the truth and would not think on their ways. Have I not touched the case of some among you? You come into the house of God, but you treat the truth of God presented here as a reprobate would--as one whom God cannot save because He cannot get your attention. You say, "O I hope God won't send me to hell-- why should He"? What else can He do with you? He cannot get your attention when He speaks to you. Of course He cannot reach your heart, for He cannot even arrest your thoughts and put you upon noticing what he has to say.

But you say--What is it that I have done so very bad? What have I done, do you say? If your professor should speak to you in the recitation--and speak again--no answer--and speak again--ten times repeated, yet you deign not one answer, but go on with your amusements, reading your book or otherwise diverting your mind, treating him with the utmost contempt, could he teach you and thus do you any good? And would it be quite proper for you to ask as if in amazement--What have I done?

So are you doing, sinner, in your abuse of God by utter inattention to what He has to say to you.

A candid state of mind is a hopeful indication. It is both a fit state of mind in itself, and also an essential condition of arriving at the knowledge of the truth and of being benefited by it. Hence you may safely set this trait of mind down as one of the marks of the elect.

But the reprobate are cavilling and captious, full of subtle reasoning and sophistry. At least this is the fact with many of them.

And how is this with some of you? Are you candid and honest, or are you cavilling and captious? --You know in the depths of your soul how this is, and you ought to know what these traits of mind indicate.

Again, the elect are too much taken up with the plain things of a sermon and the great duties inculcated, to be stumbled at what they do not understand. They are so much engrossed in what is good, that they naturally overlook what is objectionable.

But the reprobate will do the very opposite. They overlook the good and seize on the objectionable; they overlook the plain things because they teach unwelcome duties, and set themselves to cavil at the mysterious things. How often are they found stumbling at the doctrine of the Trinity, wresting and misrepresenting the scriptures!

And are not such men reprobates? Of course they are--unless they speedily repent. Of course this must be a mark of reprobation, because men are reprobated for these very things. In time they manifest their

evil captious hearts, just as God foresaw they would.

Now how is it with you? When you hear a sermon, are you so much taken up with its great and good thoughts and its useful things that you have no heart to think of its defects; or does your mind fasten on the defective things, to the neglect of all that is useful and good? There are two classes of hearers;--one class hear as critics; the other as Christians. One class are wholly engaged in criticism and cavil; being pert scholars in grammar, their attention is all arrested by some slip of the tongue or some inadvertent violation of syntax, so that they can think of nothing else through the balance of the sermon. Some read the Bible just so. They will ask--not how much of Cain's sin ought to lie on their own conscience for having hated their own brethren, but, Where did Cain get his wife? This and a thousand other caviling questions they ask just as reprobates naturally do, because it is for these every things that they are reprobated. They come sometimes to the house of God, but they take their seat far back--a great way off--perhaps in the window with their eyes abroad, or with book in hand so that they can readily divert their mind. There they read or play or whisper in the most perfect indifference and carelessness. Truth preached is to them as seen sown by the way side--trodden under foot and forbidden to vegetate.

Are not some of you not applying these things to yourselves, as already true in your own experience? Thus far in the moral pathway of your life, you have gone in the road of the reprobate, nor have deviated from it by one single step.

Another mark of the elect is this; they search for truth, while reprobates search for error. They love it and therefore must search for it, it being a demand of their hearts. This must be a distinguishing mark, for the elect must of necessity believe the truth, else they cannot be saved; in order to believe, they must know and in order to know they must search--search in candor and as for hid treasures. Some are so earnest for the truth that they really dig and mine into the Bible in search for its treasures. But the reprobate are uncandid when truth is presented before them, and as for searching it out, they are much more likely to be on the scent after some foul, long rotten error. The beauty of truth has no charms for them; but you cannot say the same of the ugliness of error.

Again, the elect will believe the truth. Having studied and understood the truth, they are sure to believe and embrace it. They do so because they mean to be candid. But the reprobate may be known by the readiness with which they believe lies and the very great difficulty they find in believing any valuable moral truth. I recollect that I received a pamphlet some years since, full of mesmerism and its monstrous absurdities. I could not read it without being greatly affected with the testimony it bore to the moral state of the writer. Is it possible, said I, that such a man, of such education, of such intelligence and good sense, can get into such a relation to great moral truth as to believe this nonsense! Is it possible that he can believe such fooleries as these and yet reject the gospel as not fit to be believed?

Some men will believe anything they please. In the line of lies they can believe with great ease that Jonah could swallow a whale; but in the line of truth they cannot even believe that the whale could swallow Jonah! They cannot believe the most simple things in the gospel, however well sustained by evidence, but they can believe mesmerism and all similar nonsense, or any other absurdity which men of perverse minds and reprobate as to the truth are palming off upon our age.

Of the two classes of people morally divided on the point of being saved or not saved, the one have no time to attend to the faults of other people;--the other class scarcely find time for anything else; the one are too much engrossed in studying and obeying the demands of an enlightened conscience to be easily

diverted, while the other class are tenfold more inquisitive about other people's conscience than about their own, and commonly are quite ready to take upon themselves to keep the conscience of all the church and of the world besides--so much taken up with picking a hole in the hedge to peep at the weeds in a neighbor's garden that the weeds in their own grow unmolested till they utterly swamp their owner. O how many men of this stripe help to compose our Christian communities!

One class are so much engaged in self-improvement that they get no time to look after other people's faults, while another class are so familiar with other's faults, that they commonly hear sermons chiefly for the benefit and rebuke of their neighbors. O how long their necks become while they sit and reach over and around to see how their neighbors receive the merited castigation!

One class receive what condemns as well as what justifies; with equal readiness what exposes their own wrong as what commends the right. Not so with the other--the class of reprobates, for they receive of a sermon what seems to them to commend, but set aside promptly what does not.

The elect are often found condemning themselves even more severely than anyone else condemns them; often they are more searching, severe and straight-forward in applying the truth to themselves than others in giving it such application. The reason of this often is that they are honest and know their own faults and defects better than anybody else does. You will find them peculiarly unwilling to take credit to themselves. They say--"O my soul, come forward to this light--come up to this strong and clear light and let all thy sins be set in order before thine eyes.["] O how his soul sweats with agony! He is determined to be thorough and searching in his application of the truth. He sees so much more to condemn in himself than in others that he wonders at the favorable estimate which others are wont to make of him.

Exactly the opposite is true of reprobates. They have an excuse for every offence. When they cannot actually make out anything in real defence, they yet toil hard for apologies. Instead of coming down to their knees and pleading there for mercy, they resort to special pleading in self-vindication and thus ruin their own souls.

The elect give themselves thoroughly and with great jealousy to understand the spirit of God's requirements, fearful lest they shall not admit the claims of God fully to their hearts. It by no means satisfies them that the external is blameless;--they must go deep to the heart and know that all is right there, asking continually at the door of the heart--What is thy motive?

Right over against these are the reprobates--reprobated because they take the opposite course. Their self-application of truth never goes beyond its letter. They say--"If I do about what is honest, God will accept me and I can rest on his justice"--albeit they take this term honest in a very loose and superficial sense. Hence though the outside of cup and platter are made to look decent, yet within are dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

The elect renounce and abhor their own righteousness as any ground of acceptance with God whatever. "What! their hearts exclaim, am I to be saved upon my own righteousness? I have no righteousness to be saved upon! Impossible that such a mode of salvation should ever reach my case!"

In truth nothing can be more abhorrent to their deep convictions. They would not trust their salvation on the goodness of the best hour of their lives.

But the reprobate are always blind--perversely and madly blind to the true spirit of God's requirements. They don't want to see their own hearts, nor would they like by any means to understand too well the spirituality of God's law.

You will see the elect most earnest and sincere to renounce themselves and their spirit of self-seeking--all their own will and their own way. They will not depend at all on their own repentance, their own righteousness, or their own faith; most utterly do they renounce self and all that pertains to it.

The reprobate cleave to their own self-interest as if it were the only possible good and this the only wise way to win it.

The elect will seize the present moment and not put off duty forever, or indeed, at all; but procrastination is the everlasting law of the reprobate.

I ought to have paused on each one of these many points, to ask you solemnly how the account stands in your own souls. Will you answer it now in the silence of your own reflection, and let conscience render an honest verdict!

The elect become honest with themselves, with God and with all men. Else they could not be saved. Without this, they must be reprobated.

The elect cry out--"Search me, O God, search me all out most thoroughly"; but do you ever find the non-elect doing this? Notice that elect child. The scaling tears flow down his cheeks;--his heart is tender and full of many fears lest in the hour of temptation he should sin against his God. But here is another man; long and in vain has the Lord sought and labored to draw his soul into an honest state and bring him to self-searching.

You will find that if the elect at any time fall into mistakes and errors they are ready to renounce them. At once when they suspect they may be in the wrong, they pause and say--"I will surely aim to look at the truth and search it all out. I have no fear of truth--nor dread of seeing my duty."

But the reprobate are distinguished by their pride and self-committal. You may know them by their fear of being laughed at for doing right after having done wrong. You will see them persist in their errors and evil ways and never give them up till they go down to the depths of hell.

The elect are duly actuated by fear of God--not a servile but a filial fear, well aware that it is rational to stand in awe before the great and holy God. They do not think it becomes them to be above acknowledging that they are afraid of God's judgments and terrors.

But the reprobate lift up their heads on high and disdain to be influenced by fear of punishment or fear of God in any form.

The elect are duly affected by the mercy of God. It has a deep and melting influence on their hearts. On the other hand the reprobate are for the most part unmoved by this influence. You will recollect I said some sabbaths since that some are so hardened that the mercy of God has no power on them. Instead of bowing under God's mercy, affected to penitence and tenderness thereby, they become only the more bold and presumptuous.

But the elect have the utmost fear to sin. It is not merely or chiefly the fear of being punished; they are afraid to grieve their Heavenly Father--just as a dutiful child fears to add one pang to the griefs of a mother's heart.

The reprobate, however, if they are compelled to admit the truth of the gospel, only abuse it and make the utmost use of it as an occasion for more and bolder sin.

The elect you will be likely to find in the way and use of special means of grace and favored seasons of divine influence. How many times have I seen persons who in seasons of revival, when the clouds grow big with promised rain, must be off. Away they go on some hastily projected journey, or some newly got up plan for business. In the hours of ingathering, they will not be there. Publicans and harlots will crowd into the kingdom, but not they. They are out of its way. Or if they stay at home you will mark that when a mighty shower of divine effusions descends on the congregation, the sermon that was blest to scores and hundreds will be unblest to them. They do not hear as for their lives. They hear after a sort, but they go their way, and it is as if they had heard nothing at all.

It is in view of all these facts, foreseen in the divine eye, that his mind is made up. He sees that he can do nothing with them but give them over to a reprobate mind and to its inevitable results.

The elect can never be made to rest in an unsanctifying hope. They know and feel that they must have a self-purifying hope, like that of John as he describes it in his epistle--"He that hath this hope purifieth himself even as Christ is pure." If they find they have a hope that does not induce them to purify themselves, they say at once--"This is not the hope for me!"

But the reprobate will be satisfied with the least possible evidence. The least that will suffice to allay their fears of hell will answer all their purpose. They live with little self-examination;--know that their hope is not one that purifies the heart--knows it does not lead them to break off from sin--yet since so many are seen or supposed to be in the same condition, they make up their minds to it with little difficulty.

The elect are greatly afraid of delusion; they dread it exceedingly as a real and a great evil. The Bible says of some delusions, they are so subtle that if it were possible they would deceive the very elect, assuming that this is not possible. If so it must be because through grace they can be kept watching and prayerful against every delusion. But the reprobate court it. Mark how they rush into every new form of self-delusion. Averse to the truth through hatred of heart against it, they almost pray for delusion. O how greedily they hail whatever new light in the shape of mesmerism and rappings afford a place of retreat from the unwelcome blaze of Bible truth.

The elect will be on their guard against bad company. This is one of the dangers against which they must be willing to watch, or they cannot be saved and could not have been elected. I think now of the case of a young man who began to form acquaintance with another--an acquaintance at first hopeful, but ere long something occurred which aroused his fears and soon something else of the same indication, yet more startling. Suddenly my young friend paused and said--I must cut your acquaintance at once, for how can I trust myself in your society! Such a step required moral courage. It also indicated that that young man was in the way of saving his own soul, and therefore might be presumed to be one of the elect.

Right over against this I remember the case of a young man traveling with his father and other friends. I could not but notice how the father watched that son. "I must do so, said he, for I know that he is continually rushing into bad company. The moment he sees any of that class of society, their attraction

becomes to him almost resistless. He seems to love the society of young men who will debauch his principles and deprave his morals. It seems to me often that he will ruin his own soul in spite of the utmost care I can take of him."

The elect will be afraid of bad habits, and ever on their guard against them. If at any time they have fallen under the power of temptation in this direction, they will try to recover themselves at once from the snare.

Right over against this stands the case of the reprobate, easily known by the fact that they are not afraid of bad habits, but are easily led into them, as God knew they would be, and therefore was compelled to give them over to a reprobate mind.

The elect are afraid of bad books, but the reprobate are not, but rather relish them and indulge in their perusal.

You see one class, betaking themselves to a prayer meeting, while another class wonder why any body should go there. The latter will say, "If I have not religion enough to seek my own gratification, what's my religion good for?" About as reasonable as if the drunkard should say, "If I can't get drunk, and get safely out of it again, what's my religion good for?"

The reprobate walk evermore in a worldly way, and not in God's ways and God's counsels. The ways of the world are the ways of their choice. The elect are not satisfied with merely amiable qualities, they must have the deep fountains of the heart broken up, and it's Augean stables cleansed. The reprobate satisfy themselves with the smoothest and most plausible forms--any thing that will prepare them to slide down on a glass rail road to the depths of hell.

The elect seek to mortify their pride, and often do things for this very purpose, just to crush down the hatred thing, saying--I will not bear it nor spare it; I put my heel on the very head of the serpent and it shall live no longer.

But the reprobate abhor such a course, and even cultivate their pride.

In times of revival, an elect man will say--Now is my time, I must not delay a moment longer. I must seize my opportunity while yet it is called to day. But the reprobate contrive ten thousand excuses, often self-contradictory and always senseless and vain. In point is the case of a young man in Rochester many years since, who, when the revival commenced, and he was pressed with the claims of the gospel, replied--"Shall I make myself a laughing stock among the youth of this city? Do you expect me to be so singular as to set off for the Celestial City all alone?" Ere long the masses were melted and moved. Then, pressed again with the claims of the gospel, he replied--"What! shall I go with the rabble? Do you expect me to connect myself with the masses of merely common people?" Soon the dreadful cholera came--it smote him, and in three short but dreadful hours, took him from the earth, and hurried him before that God, whose claims he had so frivolously and lightly set aside!

So with the reprobate, when the great gospel trumpet is blown, waxing louder and louder, they will not hear. Their hearts are sealed against the truth, and their doom, for this very reason, sealed for the awful judgment. They are reprobates, because they would play the fool, and, because no wisdom could be welcome to their souls.

The elect, moreover, are striving for sanctification. The reprobate, let their profession of piety be as it may, have no heart to become holy as God is holy.

The elect will persevere. Not so with the reprobate, for they are distinguished by a short-lived piety, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away. Like a boat in the Niagara, above the mighty cataract, the elect will strike firmly, and ply their oars with their might, and bear away in safety; but the reprobate, give a few feeble strokes, and then give way to the furious current, and are borne along with dashing speed, over the dreadful precipice, down, down, to ruin. Perhaps they set out in their religion, only to make a little experiment, and see how they liked it. Need I tell you, these experimenters are shortly stumbled, and when the sun is up and waxes hot, they wither away.

The elect will have more and more conscience. --Mark them when and where you will, they are becoming daily and yearly in their moral course, more and more conscientious, pure-minded, strict, upright, kind and generous. In their early stages, the natural qualities of character may predominate and chiefly obscure the spiritual, but as time rolls on, and the appliances of providence and grace have time to do their work, you see them more and more ripe for God's service, till at last they melt away into heaven.

But in the reprobate, you will see less and less that is hopeful. The blossoms that in early times seemed to promise fruit, will sicken, fade and drop, and soon the tree itself grows pale and sickly, and ripens for the burning.

The elect, will show sooner or later, that they are saved. You will see that the power of sin in their hearts is broken, and that every grace is thriving and flourishing exceedingly.

"Great is the work, my neighbors cried,

and owned the power divine."

They will not be stumbling about the doctrines of the Bible, but on the contrary will see more and more of beauty and fitness in all those great things which God has revealed of himself and his plan of salvation. To the reprobate it falls to stumble forever at the plain truths of God's word, and the plainer and the more precious the truth, the more grievous and fatal is their stumbling. What could be a more decisive mark of a reprobate than this?

REMARKS.

1. Men truly decide in time their own election or reprobation. Now do not misapprehend me. Mistakes on this subject are far too common. Some suppose that God has decided man's destiny, as absolutely, and fatally, as if he had nailed it down with iron nails, and man had no power to determine or change it. Whereas, the fact is, that man as really decides his own destiny, as if God had known nothing about it.

2. It is simply absurd to say--"A man elected, will be saved, do what he may," for he never can be saved but by doing his duty.

3. It is a mere absurdity to make election a stumbling block, as many do. Suppose that God and yourself were to commence existence to-day, together. There is no past with either, and no actions done in the past, therefore, which can in the least affect the future. Now, God determines your destiny, according to your actual conduct, and your entire voluntary activities. Would it not be absurd for you to complain of his election as interfering with your final destiny, or rather, with your power to determine it by your own free choices?

If so on this supposition, then is it so as the case actually stands, for God really determines your destiny solely upon your voluntary conduct--solely and actually as if He had never thought of it before you began to live and to act.

4. Ministers whose hearts are set on doing their work, cannot help watching the course of things, to see the indications that show who are the elect, and who the reprobate. If their hearts are really on saving souls, of course they will watch with most intense solicitude. Like a faithful physician who sees his patient in peril, he nerves are on the rock, his lips quiver and turn white, for his soul is full of unutterable sympathy and anxiety; or as the lawyer with a case on hand in which life trembles in the balance, and his sympathies are wrought up to agony: so the honest man of God, who labors for souls as one who must give account, has the sympathies of his heart taxed to their utmost depth, and cannot but watch every indication, that at last his account for each or any soul will be with joy and not with grief. As he sees the evidences of election developing themselves here, or of reprobation there, his soul swells with the varied emotions of hope and of fear; and as those evidences ripen to their maturity, and he stands by the bedside of the dying Christian conqueror, why should he not shout, "Glory to God in the highest!"? The destiny of one more soul for heaven, always known to God, is now made manifest before his eyes, and why should he not give utterance to his devout thanksgivings to all conquering grace?

5. The evidences on both sides are oftentimes so manifestly clear that the wickedest man must confess to their sufficiency as evidence. "That man," they will say, "is certainly fitting for heaven." "That other man is surely on his way down to the depths of hell."

6. The more thorough the application of means, the more decisive will these developments become. When Christ traveled with his own gospel among the people of his time, working miracles and pouring the light of truth in mighty floods upon all the land, how rapidly did some develop their character as reprobates! And on the other hand, how readily did some come to the truth, to the saving of their souls. So in these days, when the means employed are full of power, and the influences are strong and earnestly applied, and men are compelled to decide one way or the other, the work of sealing destiny and of developing its evidences, goes on with utmost terrific rapidity. There is a young woman. She scarcely sets her foot down in Oberlin before she says, "This is a holy place, and God has sent me here to secure the salvation of my soul. It must be done!" But another shall come in at the same time, and come under the same influences, but sets herself against the truth from the very first, and only becomes the more rapidly and terribly hardened in her sins.

7. We see what an inquisitive world this ought to be, to know, not who is first in office or foremost in wealth, but to see who develops the character of the elect and who the reprobate. With what amazing interest would angels study these indications, if human character and conduct were as open to their inspection as to ours! These things may be more patent to their eyes than they can be to our own.

We see why Peter said, "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." How reasonable that all men should! For consider, you have the same to do, and as much to do, in determining the eternal destiny of your own soul, as if God knew nothing about it.

Again, you see the meaning of that portion of my text--"For many are called but few are chosen." The many, God calls, but few will answer. Long and loudly does He call, and they will not hear. Of course, God could not choose them to salvation.

How does the case stand with you, my hearers? You have some new evidence developed to your view this day, showing, one way or the other, what shall be your final destiny. Do you take warning, and apply the truth to yourselves? Do you find that the gospel is saving you in the sense of saving your hearts from the power of sin?

Generally the early years of life give the cast to moral character and determine final eternal destiny. The masses who are converted at all are converted early, so that you do not need to wait long for developments which are in the main decisive. Early they strike into the path which, followed through after years, lands them at their journey's end in paradise or in perdition. Mark that young man, that mere boy. Has he a conscience? Is it becoming more and more an element of power in his character? Does he fear God and hate evil? Is he attentive to the great questions of religious duty and truth? Then you may predict, almost with certainty, his future manhood and his final destiny.

But on the other hand, if you see him indisposed towards religious truth and its claims, and only waxing more and more hardened and fixed in his aversion, you cannot help saying, "Reprobate silver shall men call them because the Lord hath rejected them." The Lord rejected them because He saw that they would turn away coldly and scornfully from every appeal He could make to either their conscience or their sensibilities. Yes, even when Jesus Christ came down to throw his arms of lovingkindness all round about you, you evaded Him and would not be embraced in his loving arms. Then you sealed your final doom as a lost sinner.

Another said, "I must bid Jesus welcome to my heart--I must and will rush to the wide arms of his offered embrace, crying "Life, Life, ETERNAL LIFE!" and so doing, he "made his calling and election sure." And did he, think you, pay too dearly for his soul's salvation? Will he regret it when, in the light of the judgment, he shall come to see what such a salvation is actually worth?

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/charles-finney/election-and-reprobation/>

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