**November 10th 2024 Twenty Fourth Sunday after Trinity**

**Text: John 10:22-30** 0746

**Theme: The Elect of God.**

May the Lord grant you comfort and hope in the midst of these troublesome times by the knowledge of salvation through the work of Christ by faith in Him. Amen. Dear Christians: Close to the time of the Reformation in Germany, led by Martin Luther, another reformation was taking place in Geneva, Switzerland led by a man named John Calvin. He was the father of what has become known as the Reformed church today, which includes Baptists, presbyterians, congregationalists, and those that call themselves non-denominational, among others. One of the highest teachings of Calvinism, though many reformed churches have unsuccessfully tried to distance themselves from this, is the acronym TULIP, which spells out the fundamental tenants of Calvinism. Each letter of the acronym stands for one basic teaching:

T= Total Depravity.

U- Unconditional Election.

L= Limited Atonement.

I= Irresistible Grace.

P= Perseverance of Saints.

Now these five points of Calvinists doctrine, still taught throughout reformed churches, are full of error and false teaching. At the same time though these five points are the mainstream accepted doctrine in most visible churches, many of which teach a form or a variety of these five points. Now these doctrines, with the exception of one, are so full of error and contradiction, not because Calvin, or those who followed after him, sought to deceive, but because they attempted to answer a question which God in His Word has not entirely answered. And that is the question: ‘why are some saved, and others are not?’ Now Scripture makes plain that those who are damned, are damned because of their own fault; and those who are saved are saved solely by the effort of God the Holy Ghost and the gift of faith within the heart. But the question of why some are brought to faith and others are not is not answered in Scripture. It is NOT because some are less wicked, it is NOT because some are predispositioned to believe. We hear the apostle: *“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 3:23-24)* It will be our purpose then to see the truth concerning eternal election or eternal predestination. In order to do so, however, we must look at each of the five points of Calvinism and undo the damage caused by their errors. The first of these is Total Depravity, which means that mankind is corrupt entirely as they are by nature. We are spiritually blind, dead, and enemies of God, and no good thing comes from us. This is the only point of the five that we can agree to. The next is Unconditional election, which means that in a bare manner, without means, God chose certain people to go to heaven, and thereby also chose others to be damned. This is entirely false for as we will see election is carried out by means of the Gospel. The third is Limited atonement, which means that when Jesus went to the cross to die for sin, that He did so only for those who are the elect of God, which is false according to Scripture: *“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.” (2 Cor. 5:14)* Here it is made clear that Christ died for all, that His grace might be offered to all. Fourth is the false doctrine of Irresistible grace, which means that when the Holy Spirit works upon a person, that a person cannot resist Him and will be converted. But this is false, as we hear: *“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.” (Acts 7:51)* The Holy Spirit earnestly works to convert all people wherever they may be found, but can be resisted because He works through earthly means, through His Word. Finally is the doctrine of the Perseverance of saints, which is the doctrine of Once saved, always saved. This grows out of the previous false doctrine, for if the work of the Holy Ghost is not resistable, then it would follow that once He has converted a person, that that person then cannot fall away from the faith. Yet we see in Scripture that King David fell away and into sin through adultery and murder, and Peter fell away in denying his Lord three times, though both were restored. And we also hear: *“For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again.” (2 Pet. 2:20-22)* Here then we have seen the false doctrine concerning eternal election. Let us then according to our text learn the truth concerning it. Our text for today is found in the tenth chapter of the Gospel according to John beginning at verse twenty two.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, O most glorious and gracious Lord, we thank Thee for bringing us to a saving knowledge of Thee by means of Thy inerrant Word. We confess that we are corrupt and sinful, and deserve no good from Thee, but Thou art gracious and hast given Thy Son into death for our sins, and sent Thy Spirit into our hearts by means of conversion to faith. We pray that Thou wouldst keep us in the one true faith, and that we be not as the dog that turns again to his own vomit, but as those that fight a good fight, and remain as Thy sheep until we shall be brought to our eternal home. Grant us Thy grace, that we may not fall victim to the curiosity of our flesh, and attempt to answer questions which Thou hast left open. Help us to humble ourselves to Thee in Thy Word, and not to doubt, but believe. Give us comfort through the knowledge of the truth concerning election, that we may not despair when thinking of it, but rejoice that Thou hast saved us from sin, death, and the devil. Grant these things unto us, O Lord, for Thy mercies’ sake. Amen.

Guided then by the Spirit of God let us learn of the elect of God, seeing first that they:

1. **Hear, know, and follow the Shepherd.** We read verses twenty two through twenty seven of our text: **read verses here.** As is always the case, our Savior clarifies some things for the people of His day, and for all in our day. He clears up for all that salvation does not depend on our conduct, for as we have seen it is nothing but corruption and sin; it has nothing to do with outward piety; it has nothing to do with us looking into our own election. It has only to do with faith. Notice the words of Jesus when He speaks of believers as His sheep and He their Shepherd. Three things are shown concerning these sheep, they hear Him, they know Him and He knows them, and they follow Him. We will take these three one by one.

First, when Jesus speaks of the elect he says that they hear Him. Jesus here shows the means that are used to gather the elect from all over the world, and over the course of centuries. This speaks against the limited atonement and the irresistible grace of the Calvinists. The means of conversion of a person is the Word of God as a whole, both Law and Gospel. The Law is applied by the Spirit to condemn a soul in its sin and shame so that it despairs of its own work; then applies the Gospel to that broken heart which binds it up and heals it. Even the very hearing of the Gospel is a work of the Spirit via the power of the Gospel: *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” (Rom. 10:17)* When a person is deaf, no amount of his own will or power can make him hear again, but God can come and unstop the ears of those who are spiritually deaf. He does so by means of the Gospel. In the end the Gospel is the means whereby election is carried out in eternity. One may think of it this way. The Gospel is like a fishing net which is cast into the world over the course of its entire history, and those that are gathered together by that net are the elect of God. Done through the work of the Spirit within His own Word spread throughout the world.

The second thing listed is knowledge. Now here we have given to us the definition of faith, Saving knowledge of God consists not in being able to quote Scripture passages or knowing a good amount of Biblical doctrine, but in receiving as a gift of God true saving faith. There are three parts to this faith: knowledge (in the narrow sense), assent, and confidence. Knowledge in the narrow sense is the knowledge of what it is that God desires we believe. Assent is the action of man to assent to the truth of what it has heard. The first two nearly all people on earth have, but saving faith has a third part, to have confidence, or trust, that what is known and what has been acknowledged to be true, actually saves our souls and reconciles us to God again. Only those who thus trust will be saved.

Third and finally Jesus says that His Sheep follow Him. This means that the elect of God do not chafe against the way in which their shepherd leads them, but trusts that their shepherd will lead them to green pastures and quiet waters. We follow even when we are led through the valley of the shadow of death. We follow wherever He might ;lead us because, at least according to faith, we trust that He leads us to a better country a better home, as the writer to the Hebrews says. Here we have seen the truth concerning conversion and the life of a Christian, now let us see that the elect of God hear, know, and follow their Shepherd:

1. **And receive life and safety.** We read verses twenty eight through thirty of our text: **read verses here.** Jesus continues to teach the Jews concerning the truth and now declares that within the gift of the Gospel is eternal life and safety from death and the devil. What Jesus here teaches is parallel to the teaching of Paul, we hear: *“For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” (Rom. 8:29-30)* Here we have an unbroken chain from foreknowledge to glorification. There is not one word here about any work of man: lesser guilt or better moral conduct; rather, only the work of God. What God determined in eternity He carried out here in time. He actually performs the Word of the Gospel from eternity to eternity. It is said in Revelation that the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, was slain from the foundation of the world. This means that before the foundations of the earth were laid God accomplished His good and gracious will and established a people for Himself. It is an eternal act which encompasses His creation and time. And here we find why God does not answer certain questions, including the reason why some come to faith and others do not, it is because God acts in eternity, and therefore if He gave us the answer we could not fathom such wisdom and it would still be useless to us. All we need to know is this. We are believers, and therefore we know that we are one of the elect, for we know that it is true that we were called by the Gospel, enlightened with His gifts, justified before God through the blood of Christ, are being sanctified by the Spirit of God and will be glorified. Is it not a comfort to know that God knows you and knew you personally in eternity and condescended to save you. Forget the questions, forget the unknown. Lean upon those things God has revealed and you can receive the comfort He is offering. You have been given eternal life, for your sins have been forgiven. You have been freed from death, and have been delivered from the clutches of the devil. These are reasons to rejoice and to give thanks to God.

Now one thing should further be mentioned. Jesus says that no man can pluck these from His hand, seemingly confirming the once saved, always saved of the Calvinists. But if we think on what Jesus here has said in its context, this safety is bound up in His Gospel, but a man can remove himself from God’s grace as King David and Peter did. This is why many warnings are given in Scripture regarding apostasy and backsliding. Do not return to the vomit, but if according to faith we remain where His Word is, we shall for certain be kept by the power of God in the Gospel. Here we have seen the truth concerning eternal election and if taught and believed properly can give great comfort to those who endure crosses, for they know that all things work together for good to the sheep who follow Christ. Let us then continue in the true knowledge of Jesus Christ, holding fast to the sound doctrine as found in Scripture, and being thereby kept unto eternal life through the work and merit of our Savior. Amen.