

Reprobation

by Charles Finney

The doctrine of reprobation teaches that God reprobates people because they are unwilling to be saved and because their heart, conduct, and stubbornness are so abominable in his sight that it would be unwise for him to use further means to secure their conversion.

Scripture: Isaiah 1:18, Jeremiah 6:30, Romans 1:24

Topics: "Free Will", "Reprobation"

Description

Charles Finney addresses the doctrine of reprobation, emphasizing that God has made every effort to save the obstinate and impenitent people of Israel, yet they remain unyielding. He explains that reprobation is not due to God's malevolence but is a consequence of individuals' unwillingness to accept salvation on God's terms. Finney argues that reprobates are not lost because they are reprobated, but rather because they persist in their wickedness and reject God's grace. He concludes that the salvation of the reprobate hinges on their own choices, and that God's justice and benevolence are evident in the doctrine of reprobation, which ultimately serves the greater good of the universe.

Transcript

JEREMIAH vi. 30.--Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them.

These words were spoken of a generation of Israel, with whom God had used every suitable means to reclaim and save them; and who had withstood them all, and had remained obstinate and impenitent to the last. God says to them, "O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes; make thee mourning as for an only son; most bitter lamentations, for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us."

"I have set thee," he says to the prophet, "for a tower and a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their ways. They are all grievous revolters, walking with slanders; they are brass and iron; they are all corrupters. The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain, for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them." This is a striking instance of the use of figurative languages in the Bible, as the best possible means of conveying truth. Literal language may vary its meaning; may be understood differently by different individuals, and change with the lapse of years. But figurative language always remains the same, conveys the same ideas in all ages and to all nations. Here the people of Israel were compared to metal, which a refiner was trying to purify in the fire. The means which God had used to sanctify them, are

compared to fire, and the refiner is represented as having raised his heat to such a degree as to burn the bellows, and, as it were, to consume the metal itself by the intensity of the heat; and yet could not succeed in separating the dross from the silver. He then pronounces it reprobate, or refuse silver, fit only to be thrown away. That is, the house of Israel were incorrigible; and the more strenuously God pressed the means of their sanctification, the more did their reprobacy and obstinacy manifest itself. God therefore declared that men should call them reprobate, and should understand and say that the Lord had rejected them.

You will perceive that my present object is to discuss the doctrine of REPROBATION. The following is the order in which I shall present the subject.

I. Show what I understand by the doctrine.

II. What are not the reasons on which this doctrine is founded.

III. What are the reasons.

IV. When men are reprobated.

V. Why the reprobate were created.

VI. That the reprobate are not lost because they were reprobated.

VII. That the salvation of the reprobate is still suspended upon their own choice, and put within their own power.

VIII. That the doctrine of reprobation is just.

IX. That it is impartial.

X. That it is benevolent.

XI. It is the best thing that can be done for the universe, all things considered.

XII. How it may be known who are reprobates.

You will see that I must very much condense what I design to say under each of these heads, and content myself with giving but an outline of this important doctrine. The subject is so copious, that in looking over it, my mind has been embarrassed to know what to leave out, rather than what to say. It is like a mine of gold; the deeper you go, the richer the vein.

1st. What is the doctrine of reprobation?

The term signifies something refuse, good for nothing, rejected as of no use. To reprobate a thing is to pronounce it good for nothing, rejected, cast away. The reprobate among mankind are they who are to be lost, to be cast out from the presence of God, and the glory of his power for ever. It is no part of my present design to prove that any part of mankind will be finally lost. I am preaching to a congregation who admit this to be true. To attempt to prove this, therefore, is unnecessary and irrelevant on the present occasion. It is only necessary now, to say that those who will be finally rejected and lost, are the reprobates.

2d. I am to show what are not the reasons upon which this doctrine is founded. In other words, what are not the reasons that reprobates are lost.

1. Not because God has any malevolent feelings to gratify, or any ill-will towards them. His feelings are always entirely benevolent toward all his creatures. He never feels malevolently toward the most wicked beings in the universe. He blames them, and feels grieved and indignant at their conduct, but he is never malevolent. God is often represented in the Bible as being angry with the wicked; and these representations are just, and the Bible means as it says. He is angry, but his anger is not malevolent. He has the feelings of a good governor, who sees rebels arrayed against the government, introducing disorder, and destroying public and private happiness. God feels a benevolent opposition to such conduct, a holy indignation, in degree equal to his love of virtue and happiness. His love to the public good makes him resolute and firm in executing the laws against them.

2. They are not reprobated because the glory of God or the interest of the universe require their damnation, if they will repent. Some have represented the reprobation and damnation of a part of mankind, as indispensable to the glory of God and the good of the universe. They have supposed that God's whole moral character could in no other way be displayed. They suppose that sin was the necessary means of the greatest good, and that God decreed the sins, the reprobacy, and damnation of the finally impenitent as the only means of developing before the universe the whole circle of divine attributes, and producing upon the whole the greatest amount of good. That consequently, he really prefers the existence of sin to its non-existence, rebellion to obedience, the damnation of a part of mankind, to the salvation of the whole. Now I look upon this to be a dangerous error, to be highly dishonourable to God, injurious to his government, and in a high degree calculated to stir up rebellion against his throne. I do not suppose that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, and I look upon punishment as rendered necessary only because moral agents have not been, and will not be, obedient without witnessing execution of law. If all the subjects of God's government had continued obedient, a practical illustration of Divine justice had been uncalled for. If without the infliction of the penalty, all God's subjects had continued to obey, it would not have been to the glory of God, but to the infinite dishonour of God, to have sent any one to hell. Such strong measures as the execution of the infinite penalty of God's law, so far from being called for in the abstract, and essential to his glory, are only warrantable and appear glorious in him, when all milder means fail to procure and perpetuate obedience. I would ask, what is the particular use in developing the attribute of justice, but to procure respect for God's authority, and thus secure obedience? But if men were obedient without this practical illustration or exhibition of justice, certainly punishment would be uncalled for.

God's glory required that men should be reprobated and damned simply in view of the fact, that they would sin and persist in rebellion; not that his glory required both their rebellion and damnation, in preference to their obedience and salvation.

3. Men are not reprobated for want of any sufficiency in the atonement. That is an injurious representation of the atonement, which exhibits it simply as a commercial transaction; as if the persons in the Godhead had made a bargain, in which the Son agreed to pay the Father so much suffering for so much sin committed, like the payment of a promissory note, the exact amount of suffering paid by the surety which was due to the guilty. This is injurious in many respects.

First, it excludes the idea of mercy from the government of God; for what grace or mercy is there in discharging an obligation when the debt is paid? Furthermore, it is gaining nothing, if Christ must have

suffered just as much as sinners would have suffered had they been sent to hell; there is just as much suffering in the universe as if the penalty of the law had been visited upon the head of every sinner. Some who have maintained this idea of the atonement, to avoid the inevitable conclusion, that if the debt were literally paid for all, then all would be saved, have maintained that no atonement was made but for the elect, and represent the non-elect as entirely unprovided for in the atonement as the devils are. This represents God as having sold the elect to his Son for so much, and as leaving the rest to go to hell without any chance for salvation. Neither my Bible, my intellect, my conscience, nor my heart, will for one moment admit such a view of the atonement to be true. The atonement is a transaction of such a nature as to render the salvation of every sinner possible, but not calculated nor designed so to pay the debt of any sinner as to make his salvation an act of justice. It provides for the salvation of all men; but of itself makes sure the salvation of no man. If not one had been saved, it would have reflected infinite glory on the character of God; displayed, in the most striking and impressive manner, his whole heart on the subject of his law, its precepts, penalty, and the desert of sin; and if all men should reject it, it would still be glorious, and throw a radiance around the sceptre of his justice that would light their footsteps to the gates of hell.

But III. What are the reasons why reprobates are rejected and lost.

1. Because they are unwilling to be saved; that is, they are unwilling to be saved on the terms upon which alone God can consistently save them. Ask sinners whether they are willing to be saved, and they all say yes; and with perfect sincerity they may say this, if they can be saved upon their own terms. But when you propose to them the terms of salvation upon which the Gospel proposes to save them; when they are required to repent and believe the gospel, to forsake their sins, and give themselves up to the service of God, they will with one consent begin to make excuse. Now, to accept these terms, is heartily and practically to consent to them. For them to say that they are willing to accept salvation while they actually do not accept it, is to utter an infamous falsehood. To be willing is to accept it; and the fact that they do not heartily consent to, and embrace the terms of salvation, is demonstration absolute, that they are unwilling. Yes, sinners, the only terms on which you can possibly be saved, you reject. Is it not then an insult to God for you to pretend that you are willing? The only true reason that any of you are not Christians, is that you are unwilling; you are not made unwilling by any act of God, because you are a reprobate; but if you are a reprobate, it is because you are unwilling.

But do any of you object and say, why does not God make us willing? Is it not because he has reprobated us, that he does not change our hearts and make us willing? No, sinner, it is not because he has reprobated you; but because you are so obstinate that he cannot, wisely, and in consistency with the public good, take such measures as will convert you. Here you are waiting for God to make you willing to go to heaven, and all the while you are diligently using the means to get to hell. Yes, exerting yourself with greater diligence to get to hell, than it would cost to insure you salvation, if applied with equal zeal in the service of your God. You tempt God, and then turn round and ask him why he does not make you willing! Now, sinner, let me ask you, do you think you are a reprobate? If so, what do you think the reason is that has led the infinitely benevolent God to reprobate you? There must be some reason, what do you suppose it is? Did you ever seriously ask yourself, what is the reason that a wise and infinitely benevolent God has never made me willing to accept salvation? It must be for one of the following reasons; either

He is a malevolent being, and desires your damnation for its own sake;

Or, he cannot make you willing if he would;

Or, you behave in such a manner that, to his infinitely benevolent mind it appears unwise to take such a course as would bring you to repentance.

Now, which of these do you think it is? You will not probably take the ground that he is malevolent, and desires your damnation because he delights in misery; nor will you, I suppose, take the ground that he could not convert you if he would.

The other, then, must be the reason, to wit: that your heart, and conduct, and stubbornness, are so abominable in his sight that, every thing considered, he sees that to use such further means with you as to secure your conversion, would, upon the whole, do more hurt than good to his kingdom. I have not time to-night to agitate the question whether you, as a moral agent, could not resist any possible amount of moral influence that could be brought to bear upon you, consistently with your moral freedom. That subject I design to discuss on a future occasion.

Do you ask how I know that the reason why God does not make you willing is, that he sees that it would be unwise in him to do so? I answer, that it is an irresistible inference, from these two facts, that he is infinitely benevolent, and that he does not actually make you willing. I do not believe that God would neglect any thing that he saw to be wise and benevolent in the great matter of man's salvation. Who can believe that he can give his only-begotten and well-beloved son to die for sinners and then neglect any other benevolent means for their salvation? No, sinner, if you are reprobate, it is because God foresaw that you would do just as you are doing; that you would be so wicked as to defeat all the efforts that he could wisely make for your salvation. What a variety of means he has used with you. At one time he has thrown you into the furnace of affliction; and when this has not softened you, he has turned round and loaded you with benefits. He has sent you his word, he has striven by his Spirit, he has allured you by the cross; he has tried to melt you by the groanings of Calvary, and tried to drive you back from the way to death by rolling in your ears the thunders of damnation. At one time clouds and darkness have been round about you; the heavens have thundered over your head, divine vengeance has hung out all around your horizon, the portentous clouds of coming wrath. At another time mercy has smiled upon you from above like the noon-days sun, breaking through an ocean of storms. He urges every motive; he lays heaven, earth, and hell, under perpetual contributions for considerations to move your stony heart. But you deafen your ears, and close your eyes, and harden your heart, and say, "Cause the holy one of Israel to cease from before us." And what is the inference from all this? how must all this end? Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them.

IV. When are men reprobated?

1st. As it represents God from eternity. But as it represents men, they are reprobated when they become refuse and good for nothing. As God knew from eternity how every event would be; how every sinner in the universe would behave himself--as this was always present to his mind as much as it ever will be--his decision upon it all, must have been from eternity just what it always will be. So far as the making up of his own mind is concerned, he needs only to have all the evidence in the case, and this he has always had, as much as he ever will have. If, at the day of judgment, he will see cause to reprobate them, and send them to hell, he has always seen this cause, and always been of one mind upon this subject. But so far as the reprobates themselves are concerned, they become reprobates when they pertinaciously, and finally refuse to accept eternal life on the terms of the Gospel. The doctrine of reprobation is just like the doctrine of election, in this respect, as existing in the mind of God; like all other purposes of the Divine mind, it is eternal. He has no new thoughts, nor new knowledge, nor purposes, nor designs. But as it respects us,

reprobation is just like election, conditional, a contingency. It is just so on every other subject; man's life and death are all fixed, and his days are numbered. God has set the bounds of his habitation that he cannot pass, and all the circumstances of his life and death are settled; yet, who does not know that the time of every man's death, so far as he himself is concerned, is a matter of entire contingency; that his days may be lengthened or shortened by his own conduct; that years, and scores of years, may be added to, or subtracted from, his life, through the instrumentality of his own agency. The fact of its being settled in the mind of God does not alter the contingency with regard to us. It is to us just as much a matter of contingency as if neither God nor any being in the universe had any foreknowledge of the event. So in regard to our salvation or damnation; although God is perfectly acquainted with what the result will be, still the event is to us, just as contingent and just as much suspended upon our own voluntary agency, as if God knew nothing about it. The event alone develops to us what was before a certainty in the mind of God.

V. Why did God create the reprobate?

If God knew beforehand that such multitudes would sin, and behave themselves so wickedly that he should be obliged to cast them off forever, did he not create them on purpose to damn them? I answer, no. He made them not to damn them, but for other and important purposes. It is true, that he knew they would be damned, and created them notwithstanding this knowledge. It is not for this reason that he created them, but in spite of it. He had other and so weighty reasons for their creation, that he created them for these beneficial reasons, not for the purpose of sending them to hell, but so urgent were the reasons for their creation, that he proceeded, notwithstanding the knowledge of their frightful end was full before his mind. There are many wise and benevolent purposes answered by the existence of reprobates, that we can discern; and doubtless, many other reasons with which we shall be acquainted hereafter. In spite of their wicked intentions, God makes use of them to do a great deal of good. The devil himself has been an important agent in some of the most glorious transactions in the universe. But no thanks to him. When he put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ, he manifestly intended it for evil, but God meant it, and overruled it for good; neither he nor Judas intended to glorify God or benefit mankind; but they actually were both concerned in slaying the very corner-stone of man's salvation. Wicked men are often in stations indispensable to the welfare of society. The existence of reprobates is indispensable to the existence of the elect, for they are often the parents of the elect; while they themselves are cast away in consequence of their rebellion, their children are often converted, sanctified, and saved.

If the non-elect were never created, the elect could never live. In building up the kingdom of Christ, God often employs the hands of wicked men. To be sure, it is not their intention to build up the kingdom of God, but they lay such a train of events, that in the pursuit of their selfish ends they are often instrumental in promoting his kingdom.

There is a wicked man who hates God and religion; he loves the world, and is hoarding up a great deal of wealth for his children. He gives them a finished education, designs them to shine in the world, and cares not how much injury they do to the cause of Christ. But God meets them by his Spirit, converts and sanctifies them, and leads them to devote the hard earnings of their ungodly father to the building up and extension of his holy kingdom. Thus proving that "the wealth of the wicked is laid up for the just."

VI. I am to show that men are not lost because they are reprobated. That is, their reprobation is not the reason why they are lost. God does not condemn them because they are reprobated, but because they are wicked. It is their own act that leads him to send them to hell, and not his act in reprobating them. He

reprobates and punishes them for their sins, because that, in spite of all he could wisely do to reclaim them, they would remain in their sins. He always foresaw how wicked they would be, and always designed to treat them accordingly.

VII. The salvation or damnation of the reprobate is suspended on their own choice. This, sinner, is the turning point. If you choose the way of life, you will be saved; if you choose the way of sin, you will be damned.

Your creation as moral agents, and making you the subject of moral government, suspends your salvation upon your own choice, and renders salvation impossible to you in any other way. If you are reprobated, it is because, when the choice is given you, you choose wrong and obstinately persist in it. The reason why God rejects you, is because you reject him. He reprobates you, because you reprobate him. He does it because you do it, and for no other reason. But will some object, and say the heathen never had the offer of salvation; and the decree, therefore, respecting them, must have been irrespective of their conduct? I answer, this is a grand mistake. God judges men according to the light they have. They that sin without law, shall also perish without law, says the apostle Paul; and they that sin under the law, shall be judged by the law. Those who have only the light of nature, if they improve and obey that light, shall be saved. But Paul affirms that the heathen do not do this. He says that they are unwilling to retain God in their knowledge, and that for this reason they have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the image of corruptible men, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things; so that they are without excuse. They violate their own rules of action; they do what they know to be wrong; their thoughts meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.--They practice those things which they condemn in others, and thus pass sentence upon themselves; and for this they may be justly reprobated.

VIII. Reprobation is just.

Is it not just in God to let men have their own choice, especially when the highest possible motives are held out to them as inducements to choose eternal life. What! is it not just to reprobate men when they obstinately refuse salvation? When every thing has been done that is consistent with infinite wisdom and benevolence to save them? Shall not men be willing to be either saved or lost? What shall God do with you? You are unwilling to be saved; why then should you object to being damned. If reprobation under these circumstances is not just, I challenge you, sinner, to tell what is just.

IX. Reprobation is impartial.

It has always been found convenient, by the opposers of election and reprobation, to represent them as partial. If by partial be meant that some are elected and not others, that some are reprobated and not others; in other words, that a part of mankind only are elected or reprobated; I have no objections to the term. But if by partial we are to understand any undue favour toward one, or want of favour to the other; if by partiality be meant that God reprobated some rather than others, on account of any prejudice, or improper bias against them, or on account of any particular dislike which he felt towards them more than towards the elect; if this be what is meant by a partial reprobation, I utterly deny it, and maintain that reprobation is entirely impartial. That is an impartial act that takes into view all the circumstances of the case, and acts for the general good without any undue bias in favour or against any one. I have already endeavoured to show the reasons for reprobating sinners relate entirely to their own wickedness, and the public interest; the public interest requiring their reprobation and damnation, because they refuse to obey God.

X. Reprobation is benevolent.

It was benevolent in God to create men, though he foresaw that they would sin and become reprobates. If he foresaw that upon the whole he could insure such an amount of virtue and happiness under the influence of moral government, as to counterbalance the sin and misery of those who would be lost, then certainly it was a dictate of benevolence to create them. The question was, whether moral beings should be created, and moral government established, when it was foreseen that a great evil would be the incidental consequence. Whether this would be benevolent or not, must turn upon the question whether a good might be secured that would more than counterbalance the evil. If the virtue and happiness that could be secured by the administration of moral government, would greatly outmeasure the incidental evils arising out of a defection of a part of the subjects of this government, it is manifest that a truly benevolent mind would choose to establish the government, the attendant evils to the contrary notwithstanding. Now, if those who are lost deserve their misery, and bring it upon themselves, by their own choice, when they might have been saved, then certainly in their damnation there can be nothing inconsistent with justice or benevolence. God must have a moral government, or there can be no such thing as holiness in the created universe. For holiness in a creature is nothing else than a voluntary conformity to the government of God.

Doubtless God views the loss of the soul as a great evil, and he always will look upon it as such, and would gladly avoid the loss of every soul, if it were consistent with the wisest administration of his government. How slanderous, injurious, and offensive to God it must be, then, to say that he created sinners on purpose to damn them. He pours forth all the tender yearnings of a father over those whom he is obliged to destroy--"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim; how shall I deliver thee, Israel; how shall I make thee as Admah, how shall I set thee as Zeboim; my heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." And now, sinner, can you sit here and find it in your heart to accuse the blessed God of a want of benevolence. "O ye serpents! ye generation of vipers!" how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

XI. Reprobation is the best thing that can be done for the universe, all things considered.

Since the penalty of the law, although infinite, under the wisest possible administration of moral government, could not secure universal obedience; and since multitudes of sinners will not be reclaimed and saved by the Gospel, one of three things must be done: either moral government must be given up, or the wicked must be annihilated, or they must be reprobated and sent to hell. Now, that moral government should be given up, will not be pretended; annihilation would not be just, inasmuch as it would not be visiting sin with what it justly deserves. Now, as sinners really deserve eternal death, and as their punishment may be of real value to the universe, in creating a respect for the authority of God, and thus strengthening his government, it is plain that their reprobation and damnation is for the general good, and making the best use of the wicked that can be made.

XII. How it may be known who are reprobates.

It may be difficult for us to ascertain with certainty in this world, who are reprobates; but there are so many marks of reprobation given in the Bible, that by a sober and judicious investigation, we may form a pretty correct opinion whether we or those around us are reprobates or not.

1st. One evidence of reprobation, is a long course of prosperity in sin. The psalmist lays it down as such in the 93d Psalm:--"When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." God often gives the wicked their portion in this world, and lets them

prosper and wax fat like a stalled ox, and then brings them forth to the slaughter. "The wicked are reserved unto the day of wrath." Where, therefore, you see an individual for a long time prospering in his sins, there is fearful reason to fear that man is a reprobate.

2d. Habitual neglect of the means of grace is a mark of reprobation. If men are to be saved at all, it is through the sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; and it will probably be found to be true, that not one in ten thousand is saved of those who habitually absent themselves from places where God presents his claims. Sometimes, I know, a tract, or the conversation or prayer of some friend, may awaken an individual and lead him to the house of God; but, as a general fact, if a man stays away from the means of grace, and neglects his Bible, it is a fearful sign of reprobacy, and that he will die in his sins. He is voluntary in it, and he does not neglect the means of grace because he is reprobated, but was reprobated because God foresaw that he would take this course. Suppose a pestilence were prevailing, that was certain to prove fatal in every instance where the appropriate remedy was not applied. Now, if you wish to know whose days were numbered and finished, and who among the sick were certain to die with the disease, if you found any among them neglecting and despising the only appropriate remedy, you would know that they are the persons.

All this was known to God as certainly beforehand as afterwards. Now, if you wish to know who are reprobates in this city, or in any city or village, look abroad upon the multitude of Sabbath breakers, swearers, drinkers, and whoremongers; upon the young men that "assemble in troops at the harlot's house;" or the boys and young men that you may see assemble on the Sabbath before grog shops, or at the corners of the street, with their segars,[sic.] their bloated cheeks, and swollen, blood-shot eyes. Look through the length and breadth of the land, and see the thousands of young men who are utterly neglecting and despising eternal salvation. O horrible! poor dying young men, not one in a thousand of them is likely to be saved; perhaps some of them came from a family of prayer, where they used to kneel morning and evening around the domestic altar. And now where are they? and where are they going? They are already within the sweep of that mighty whirlpool, whose circling waters are drawing them nearer and nearer the roaring vortex. They dance, and trifle, and sport themselves. They heed not the voice that cries from heaven, nor the wail that comes up from hell, but nearer and nearer, with accelerated motion, they circle round and round till they are swallowed up and lost in the abyss of damnation.

3d. Where persons are entirely destitute of the strivings of the Spirit. I speak not of those who never heard the Gospel; but in gospel lands it is doubtful whether any, except they are given up of God, live without more or less of the strivings of the Holy Spirit. Where, therefore, it is found that his strivings have entirely ceased with any mind, that soul has solemn and alarming evidence that it is given up of God. God says, "Yea, also, wo[e] unto them when I depart from them."

4th. Where persons have passed through a revival, and are not converted, it affords evidence that they are reprobates. I mean here, not conclusive, but presumptive evidence; and this presumption grows stronger and stronger every time an individual passes such a season without conversion. It is common for persons, in seasons of revival, to have more or less conviction, but to grieve away the Spirit. Some such persons are perhaps here to-night, and perhaps dreaming away one more offer of eternal salvation. If you have once resisted the Spirit until he is quenched, I have but little hope that any thing I can say will do any good. The great probability is that you will be lost.

5th Those who have grown old in sin, are probably reprobates. It is a solemn and alarming fact, that a vast majority of those who give evidence of piety, are converted under twenty-five years of age. Look at the

history of revivals, and see, even in those that have had the greatest power, how few aged persons are converted. The men who are set upon the attainment of some worldly objects, and determined to secure that before they will attend to religion, and yield to the claims of the Maker, expecting afterward to be converted, are almost always disappointed. Such a cold calculation is odious in the sight of God. What! take advantage of his forbearance, and say, that because he is merciful you will venture to continue in sin, till you have secured your worldly objects, and worn yourselves out in the service of the devil, and then turn your Maker off with the jaded remnant of your abused mortality! You need not expect God to set his seal of approbation upon such a calculation as this, and suffer you at last to triumph, and say that you had served the devil as long as you pleased, and got to heaven at last.

You see such a man passing on from twenty years old and upwards, and the probabilities of his conversion fearfully diminish every year. Sinner, are you forty years old? Now look over the list of conversions in the last revival; how few among them are of your age? Perhaps some of you are fifty or sixty! how seldom can you find one of your age converted. There is only here and there one; they are few and far between, like beacons on distant mountain tops, scattered sparsely long, just to keep old sinners from absolute despair. Aged sinner, it is more than fifty chances to one that you are a reprobate.

6th. Absence of chastisements is a sign of reprobation. God says, in the epistle to the Hebrews, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth; if ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not; but if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."

7th. When men are chastened, and not reformed by it, it is a mark of reprobation. A poet has said, "When pain cannot bless, heaven quits us in despair." God says of such, "Why should ye be stricken any more; ye will revolt more and more." When your afflictions are unsanctified, when you harden yourselves under his stripes, why should he not leave you to fill up the measure of your iniquity?

8th. Embracing damnable heresies is another mark of reprobation.

Where persons seem to be given up to believe a lie, there is solemn reason for fearing that they are among that number upon whom God sends strong delusions, that they may believe a lie, and be damned, because they believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Where you see persons giving themselves up to such delusions, the more honestly they believe them, the greater reason there is for believing that they are reprobates. The truth is so plain, that, with the Bible in your hands, it is next to impossible to believe a fundamental heresy, without being given up to the judicial curse of God. It is so hard to believe a lie, with the truth of the Bible before you, that the devil cannot do it. If, therefore, you reject your Bible, and embrace a fundamental falsehood, you are more stupid and benighted than the devil is. When a man professes to believe a lie, about the only hope of his salvation that remains, is, that he does not cordially believe it. Sinner, beware how you trifle with God's truth. How often have individuals began to argue in favour of heresy, for the sake of argument, and because they loved debate, until they have finally come to believe their own lie, and are lost forever!

REMARKS.

1. The salvation of reprobates is impossible only because they make it so by their own wicked conduct.

2. God will turn the damnation of the reprobate to good account. In establishing his government, he foresaw that great evils would be incidental to it--that multitudes would sin, and persevere in rebellion, until they were lost, notwithstanding all that could consistently be done to save them. Yet he foresaw that a vastly greater good would result from the virtue and happiness of holy beings, and that he, also, could make a good use even of the punishment of the wicked. Here is an instance of the Divine economy in turning every thing to the best account. I do not mean that the damnation of the wicked results in greater good than their salvation would be, if they would repent. If their salvation could be secured by any means that would consist with the highest good of the universe, it would be greatly to be preferred. But, as this cannot be, he will do the best that the nature of the case admits. When he cannot save them, he will, by their punishment, erect a monument to his justice, and lay its foundation deep in hell, and build it up to heaven, that being seen afar off in the smoke of their torment that ascendeth up forever and ever, it may ever stand as an affecting memento of the hatefulness and desert of sin.

3. It is very wicked and blasphemous to complain of God, when he has done the best that Infinite wisdom, benevolence and power could do. Who should complain? Surely not the elect; they have no reason to complain. Shall the reprobate complain, when he has actually forced upon God the necessity of giving up his government, or of sending him to hell?

4. Reprobates are bound to praise God. He has created and given you many blessings, sinners, and offers you eternal life; and will you refuse to praise him?

5. God has every reason to complain of you, sinner. How much good you might do! see how much good individuals have often done! Now, of all the good you might do, you rob God. While eternity rolls its everlasting rounds, on how many errands of love you might go, diffusing happiness to the utmost bounds of Jehovah's empire? But you refuse to obey him; you are in league with hell, and prefer to scatter fire-brands, arrows, and death, to destroy your own soul, and lead others to perdition with you. You drive on in your career, and help to set in motion all the elements of rebellion in earth and hell. Will you complain of God? He has reason to complain of you. He is the injured party. He has created you, has held you in his hand, and fanned your heaving lungs; and, in return, you have breathed out your breath in rebellion and blasphemy and contempt of God, and compelled him to pronounce you reprobate.

6. There is reason to believe that there are many reprobates in the church. This is the probable history of many professors of religion. They had convictions of sin, and after a while their distress, more or less, suddenly abated. If their distress had been considerable, if the Spirit left them, their minds would naturally go toward the opposite extreme. When their convictions left them, they thought, perhaps, this was conversion; this very perhaps created a sensation of pleasure, and the thought that this felt pleasure was evidence that they were converted, would naturally increase their confidence. As their confidence increased, their joy at the thought of being saved would be increased. This selfish joy has been the foundation upon which they have built their hopes for eternity; and now you see them in the church, transacting business upon worldly principles, pleading for sin, and finding a thousand apologies for conformity to the world. They live on in sin, perhaps not only vicious, but negligent of duty, cold and formal reprobates, and go down to hell from the bosom of the church.

7. Reprobates live to fill up the measure of their iniquity.

We are informed that the Amorites were spared, not because there was any hope of their reformation, but because their cup of iniquity was not yet full. Christ said to the Jews, "Fill ye up the measure of your

fathers;["] and God said to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose have I sustained thee, that I might show in thee my mighty power." Oh, dreadful thought! live to fill up the measure of your sins! the cup of trembling and of wrath is also filling up, which shall be soon poured out to you without mixture, when there shall be none to deliver you. Your judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and your damnation slumbereth not.

8. Saints should not envy sinners.

The Psalmist once had this trial. He says, truly, "God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart; but as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped, for I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked, for there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terror." How can a saint envy them, standing upon a slippery steep, with fiery billows rolling beneath them! "their feet shall slide in due time." Christians, don't envy the wicked, though they enjoy the wealth of the world; do not envy them; poor creatures! their time is short, they have almost had all their good things.

Probably there are individuals here, to whom I have been preaching, that have not been in the least benefitted by any thing I have said, or could say. You have set yourselves to oppose God, and have taken such an attitude, that truth never reaches you to do you good. Now, sinner, if you do this, and go home in this state of mind, to-night you will have additional evidence that God has given you up, and that you are a reprobate. Now, will you go away in your sins, under these circumstance? don't talk of the doctrine of election or reprobation as being in your way. No man is ever reprobated for any other reason than that he is an obstinate sinner.

Have you not to-night been listening to find something in this sermon that you can stumble over? Take care, if you wish to cavil, you can always find occasions enough. Sinners have stumbled over every other doctrine of the Bible into hell, and you may stumble over this.

What would you say of any man that should go home to-night and cut his throat, and say he did it because God foreknew that he would do it, and by creating him with this foreknowledge, designed that he should do it. Would saying that excuse him? No. Yet he is under just as much necessity of doing it as he is of going away from this house in his sins.

You only show that you are determined to harden your hearts, and resist God, and thus compel the holy Lord God to reject you. There is no doctrine of the Bible, that can save you, if you persevere in sin, and none that can damn you, if you repent and embrace the Gospel. The blood of Christ flows freely. The fountain is open. Sinners, what say you? Will you have eternal life? will you have it now, or will you reject it? Will you trample the law under foot, and stumble over the Gospel to the depths of hell?

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

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net