



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

The Difficult Doctrine of Election - Part 1 - (Romans 9:1-18)

Pastor Jeff Bucknam

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

I witnessed a fist fight while I was in seminary - it was after a class actually, lucky it wasn't in a class. Although the two guys who got in a fist fight wanted to fight during class. Ah the subject - I had a class called, Soteriology, that is a theological term referring to the doctrine of salvation: how are people saved, who is saved, what is required to be saved, can people lose their salvation - anything having to do with a question of salvation, it was addressed in Soteriology class. Well this particular class, we were talking about the question of the doctrine of election, which is a subject that's brought up in the Scriptures, in the New Testament in particular, in passages like Romans 9, where it says that God elects some to salvation and he leaves others. Now everybody agrees basically that there is a doctrine of election in the Bible because it's pretty clear to see, it's just on what basis does God choose some and leave others right? Does he choose them based upon something he sees in them, or does he just choose? So we're getting into this class, I'm listening intently to the professor, well one guy is not very happy with what the professor's saying and so he starts to push back strongly, you know he, "That's not right, and what about this and that?" And the other guy, hearing this debate between this guy and the professor starts to jump on the professor's side - tries to answer the questions instead of the professor. Now the professor being a good guy, I guess he just decided, "Man I don't have to teach anymore, so just go at it, right." So these guys are going back and forth in the class, the class is about 100 people in it right, they're going back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, one of the guys stands up at one point. He starts, you know ready to pull his shirt off right, "It's go time." And the other guy was equally as angry, the professor had to step in and say, "Woah, woah, woah, woah, hey, settle down guys, listen this is a civil conversation, let's just talk it through." Well things quieted down, and then after class these guys are kind of walking next to each other on the way out, you know, and kind of getting chesty, and bumpin them, one of the guys saying, "You know I'm right." The other guy, "No I'm right."

"No, you know I'm right."

"You know I'm right."

"God's sovereign."

"No people are free."

"Sovereign!"

"Free!"

"Sovereign!" Seriously, one guy just clocks the other dude right there. The other guys on the ground, he jumps back up and he tackles the other guy, and they start going at it, you know. "Sovereign!"

"Not!" You know, holy smokes. So they got in trouble. [Laughter]



This is one of those subjects, this doctrine of election thing; this is one of those subjects that gets the juices going. Several of you who are here, well you know full well that this is a subject that in your life if you've ever dealt with it, if you disagree with someone about it. I mean it's a good three hour conversation, and the conversation might get elevated at times. It has to do with who God is, and what he's like, and who's saved, and what about my sister, and all sorts of questions. A few theological issues get the juices going like the doctrine of election. So why even talk about it? Why even address it in a church, why don't we just get on the stuff that we all agree about. Well to be honest with you, most churches, and most pastors don't. And I totally get why - because they don't want people punching each other up in the back. There's a girl, actually who - I teach a classes here and I've taught classes at the university level and other places in my life and I've taught this subject repeatedly in classes. After one of the classes that I taught, this girl came up to me and she said to me, "Ah, you know, I have been a Christian for 35 years and I have never heard anybody *read* Romans 9 before and certainly not teach on it." I said, "Really, 35 years and you've never read that?" She said, "No. I've read it once or twice while going through the Bible - Bible in a year you know. But nobody has ever talked to me about it. I've never studied it, never looked at it for 35 years." Now that makes sense to me, to be honest with you, because people get so fired up about it, I get it. Just let's keep the peace. But I got to tell you, the reason that we're going to go through it is because I have a very simple job: my job before God is to take what's in the Bible and to study it and then report to you what it says in a way that you can see where I get what I'm teaching from - and then I go home and I take a nap. [Laughter] It's a good gig, right. If we were to skip over Romans 9, in our study of the book of Romans, some of you would say, "You skipped Romans 9." And you'd be upset, and you should be upset. We don't skip over difficult bits, we preach the whole counsel of God and we live with what it says. And let's be honest, you know thinking rightly about God is a really good thing, isn't it? I mean if God is the greatest thing in the universe, then thinking rightly about the greatest thing in the universe is the greatest thinking in the universe, yes? I'm not smart enough to come up with other ideas about God that Scripture doesn't teach and so I'm just going to tell you what I think the Scriptures teach here.

For the next two weeks in fact we're going to study Romans 9 and the difficult doctrine of election that is taught there. Here is my outline - this is going to be more Bible study than sermon, I'm just going to tell you that right. So I am intending today to stir your thinking up, and so I'm going to walk through the passage. Here's my outline, at first I need to give you some preliminary thoughts, okay some ground rules. Second, I want to look at the passage with you, just walk through the text so you can see Paul's argument, my intent there is not to illustrate a whole bunch other than just give you exactly what the text is saying, and third, I want to give you the point that I think he's making. Alright so preliminaries, the passage, the point.

[The Preliminaries]

Here are the preliminaries. A few favours I'm going to ask you, or things that you need to know ahead of time, alright before we get into this.



1. You may be challenged.

And I'm being really nice by using the word, *may* there. You probably will be challenged. Here's my history with this. I used to hold a position on this subject that I do not hold now. When I held the position that I used to hold - that doesn't mean that I'm right now, I might have been right in the past. But when I used to hold that position, okay, I was the kind of person, and still am, that if I disagree with you about something, you'll probably know about it. So when I disagreed with professors who were teaching this to me, the other view point, I would get very angry with them. I would be one of the people in the class who was pushing back. There was several times in fact, in large classes, of like 300 students, that I would commandeer the class so it was just me and the professor going back and forth. I had professor, Dr. Pine, who would say to me at points, "Jeff, Jeff, we need to talk about this in my office."

"What are you afraid to say it in public!?! [Laughter] You know I was right in it, you know. Talk to my next door neighbours about it, I talked to anybody who wanted to talk about it. "What they're teaching here is absolutely ridiculous." And I was determined that I was going to prove them wrong. So I had a lot of work to do in terms of reading and studying, and so when I finished my studies with the classes that I had, I would spend another two to three hours every day for two years. I am not kidding now, in the library, reading everything about this. Walking through Romans 9 to show the way that they were teaching it was not the way it should be understood. I could not find anybody who could explain it in a satisfying way along the lines that I was thinking. So angry - wake up in the middle, ask my wife, wake up in the middle of the night and I'd try to strike up conversations with my dear wife who was laying there next to me. "Honey do you think, okay, so when the language of election..." She'd be like, "Shut up, go to bed, stop! Why are you awake?" I'd get up and I'd walk around the house, not let it alone. I will say that after a while, I learned more and more and I studied more and more and I remember the day that I walked into my class, it was a Greek exegesis class, you study the Bible in the Greek language on the book of Romans. And we were in Romans 9 and I was ready for a fight a week prior, but when I arrived there, I just decided in this moment, I am going to leave behind all of my assumptions about this, all of my fight, all of my push back, and I'm just going to sit finally underneath the Word of God and let it judge me. And I found, honestly, by the time I left the class, that I had changed my mind.

That doesn't mean that you need to change your mind. I'm just telling you that that's what happened to me, and so now I teach it from the other point of view, and people get really mad at me and I kind of giggle, "Oh, I so remember myself. You're so like me, not as cute, but you're just great you know." This passage is going to challenge your thinking about God, how people are saved, why some aren't. You need to be prepared for what we call cognitive dissonance. You need to be prepared - like my job here in fact, is to get inside your mind and just start stirring it up a little bit - right, that's what I want to do. So if you walk out a little troubled, it's okay, it's okay; it's good to be troubled when we're thinking about God.



2. You don't have to believe one particular view to be a Christian or a member of our church.

Now I'm going to say this unequivocally, good Christians disagree on this. Good Christians; honourable, God-loving, Christians, disagree on this subject. It's okay if you walk out and don't agree with me over the next two weeks. Okay, you're wrong, but it's okay. [Laughter] I'm kidding. We have people on our staff who disagree, we make fun of each other all the time, right - send mean emails and jokes, and it's fine. It's civil, it's kind, we love each other, when I'm usually teaching this, I teach it in a classroom setting; and I teach Romans 9 and then follow that by an entire hour and a half class on the two different major views on it so that I can get into the details, not just about the text, but the theology in general. I don't have time to do all of that so I'm going to try to squish it all together, a little bit. But it's okay, it's okay not to agree. Our job here is to learn from each other, commit to brotherly and sisterly love, not punch each other at the end.

3. Try to be shaped by what Scripture says.

Let's agree though, that what's not okay is for us to reject the Bible for reasons other than what are in the Bible. Let's in other words, try to be shaped by what Scripture says, we have these lovely neighbours in our life who God has placed next to us. They have four girls, they're sweet girls, all of them, they're good friends with my daughter and they play together all the time. We have a dog and when we first kind of met them, they came over to our house and they all stood back from my dog. My dog by the way, is the weakest animal in the world, right. If you want to steal something from my house, go ahead, come on in, he's not doing anything at all. So he's just, useless dog. But he likes to like, he's socially awkward and he bumbles into people and stuff and so he, he does this to these little girls when they first met, I don't know what their background was with dogs, but apparently they were a little bit frightened of them, maybe they was a story in their lives, or maybe they just hadn't been around them whatever. They had a whole set of presuppositions about dogs in general that when they met my dog they were a little freaked out by him. I mean now they sit on him. But, at that moment, they had presuppositions about it. Listen, you and I have presuppositions about everything when we come to it for the first time. Right, we are not blank slates. So when we come to this subject in this passage of Scripture, we are not coming blankly, we come with assumptions about who God is, what he's like, many of those assumptions are good, some are not. Many are informed by Scripture, some are not. One of the most common things I hear people say after I read Romans 9 to them, and study it with them, and say, "Well my God's not like that." Yeah okay, fine, if you're God's not like that, Paul's God was, so maybe if you just drop your, "My God" behind you for just a second and say, "I'm going to let God tell me what he's like through his apostle now." Our job is not to judge the Bible, it's to let the Bible judge us. So I think you'll find the text here is relatively clear, it's not actually complicated very much, but the implications are really hard. So can you just hold, just wait with the implications. We'll study the text and then we'll talk about implications later. You ready? Okay that was a lot of preamble, I apologize, right.



[The Passage (Bible Study)]

Here's the passage, Romans 9:1-5, Paul writing,

“I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit— [Now listen to him now,] I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people [that word there means family, his kinsmen], those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.”

So you hear his heart, we studied this last week, hear his heart. “Oh if I could trade places, see I'm saved, and they're not. Whenever I go to a location and I preach the gospel to the Jewish people who should receive the gospel because it's about their God, and the Son of God who is sent for them, their Messiah, some believe and some don't. So my problem,” he's saying, “is that some people believe the message about Jesus and other people don't believe the message about Jesus. What do I do with that?” You should be able to feel that, cause you are in the same position as he's in. But you're position's a little bit different, he's concerned especially because, hey God gave all of these promises to the Jewish people as a whole. At least it sounded that way. He adopted them as sons, he gave them the covenant, he gave them all this stuff. If God doesn't fulfill the promises he made to all of them, then why is it that you Christian believe that God's going to fulfill the promises he made to you. He says the same stuff about us, right. We're adopted as children, we are given membership in the covenant and all the sudden - if God didn't fulfill it for the Jews, why should he fulfill it for us? So God's very name is at stake here. Do you see what he's after? But ultimately his big concern is; how do I explain that some people are believers and others are not?

Romans 9:6,

“It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.”

Okay so here's his answer to the question. What do I do with the fact that some Jews believe and others do not, and that ends up making it sound like God has given up on his plan for the Jews and isn't fulfilling it in its totality. Not everybody who is Jewish is really Jewish. It's an interesting image, he's basically saying, there's a group called Israel, right, which was the other name for a guy Jacob, which we'll mention in a minute. But he's saying okay but in the nation, the ethnic people of Israel, there's also, Israel, you know. There's Israel, but then there's you know... <whispering> Israel. There's general Israel, and then there's true Israel, there's physical Israel and then there's spiritual Israel, the real ones. His argument through this is basically going to be, God is keeping his promises because in all of Israel's history God has always chosen a group within the larger one. He hasn't chosen based on anything he sees in those people, he's chosen purely because he wants to choose. Now that's his argument, let's see if what I just said is what the text says. Romans 9:6-9,

“It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. [verse 7] Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. [So because you got his blood in your veins does not mean you're an actual a child of the covenant.] On the contrary [see now, a lot of people are thinking, 'Ah come on Paul, that's not true, God made all the promises to all of Israel.' So he's like let's go back to the very beginning of the nation,



Abraham and Sarah and their kids. On the contrary], 'It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.' In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. For this was how the promise was stated: 'At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son.'"

I am so excited about this flip chart. I have two pens, just in case. Okay, so you have, you have Abraham, and Abraham has two kids, he has one named Ishmael, and he has one named Isaac, yeah? Now most of you have been around the church long enough that you know the story behind it. We actually studied this story in detail just a little while ago. But just for review, ah God comes to Abraham, says, "You're going to be my guy, I'm going to select you out of all of the nations of the world, to bless you, make your name great, give you descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky." Abraham's like, "Awesome!" And then for years, nothing happens. I mean he and his wife are trying to produce kids but nothings happening; she's barren, she's old. So there's no way this is going to take place and they start looking at their circumstances and thinking, "Okay so maybe the way it works is this God comes to us and he says I'm going to give you descendants and then it's up to us to work that out. And Sarah you're not producing any kids anytime soon, in your age and your state, so what else can we do?" And she says, "Listen, maybe if you took my maid, Hagar, you could have kids with her and then they would count, right?" And he's like, "Okay." So they do. Hagar has a child, his name is Ishmael, and they think, "Great, God gave the command, we worked it out in our strength, it's going to be awesome." And then the Lord comes and says, "No, no, no, no, no, that's not at all what I had intended. I'm going to give you a child all by myself. It's going to be a child of the promise, not a child of the flesh." And so in her old age she gives birth to Isaac. Now here's the point that, that Paul is making here. God chooses Isaac to inherit his covenant, but he leaves Ishmael. Both children of Abraham, but one of them, Isaac, is the one God chooses, and the other one God leaves.

Now, if you're Jewish at this point you'd say, "Well yeah, of course God chose Isaac and not Ishmael, because Isaac is way better than Ishmael, he's pure bred Jew, right?" I mean if he were Mennonite he'd be a Klassen, right? Born from a Sawatzky-Klassen mix. Of course he's got full blood Jew in his veins, and Ishmael's got some Egyptian in him. So one of them is actually better than the other. And so Paul's like, "Oh, oh, okay, okay, okay, let's go down a generation from there, let's take Isaac's kids." So you have Jacob and you have Esau, and let's see what happened with them. Here you go, Romans 9:10-13,

"Not only that, but Rebekah's children [so Isaac and Rebekah have kids, Rebekah's children] were conceived [listen to what he says now, they were conceived] at the same time by our father Isaac. [So they're twins.] Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls—she was told, 'The older will serve the younger.' Just as it is written: 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.'"

Okay so what's their story? You might remember the story of Jacob and Esau, she also - Rebekah is barren, just like her mother-in-law. And God comes and says, "I'm going to give you kids, continue the line of the covenant." I'm going to give you children. So she has not just one but two and they're in her womb at the same time and she is experiencing serious birth pains. Right, like in her stomach, it's like the two kids are fighting and God actually comes to her at one point and says, "Yeah actually they are fighting cause there are two nations in your womb and they don't like each other." So that's what the experience is, but here's what's going to happen. And this is where the quote comes from, the older is going to serve the younger. I'm going to choose, so before you even have the baby, you don't even know what they look like, you know nothing about them, I am choosing which one of the two of them



is going to inherit the covenant, and it's not the one you expect. God says I'm choosing Jacob and I'm leaving Esau. Now that comes to fruition in their life because later on, Esau's a big hunter and he's out there hunting and he comes back to the cabin, and Jacob's there, mixing up some stew, smells real good. And Esau's like, "I'm dying!" Sounds like my son after volleyball, "I'm dying, ohhh feed me so many things." Well and Jacob who's a schemer says, "Oh I'll feed you this." You can imagine Jacob blowing the smell over toward him, "You like that? Oh you like that Esau? I'll feed you some ... for your birthright." And Esau's like, "Ohh what good is my birthright if I'm going to wither away and die right here, so sure you can have my birthright for a bowl of porridge." What this passage is saying is the reason that Esau doesn't care about the covenant, and the God of the covenant is because God didn't move in his life to make it so. And the reason that Jacob cares about the covenant, even though he's scheming jerk, the reason he cares is because God has moved, so he does, before they had been born or done anything good or bad. There's nothing about them that drew God's attention prior to his choosing.

Now I'm going to step back for a minute here, let me give you some theology alright? There are two major views, as I said, on this subject. As I said, when I say the subject, the subject of election, is the one I'm talking about, okay. And as you can tell the Bible talks about election. The words are there. Every learned Christian that I know of, every scholar that I know of, does not deny the doctrine of election. What they argue over is, on what basis does God choose. So you'll hear people from time to time say, "Well I don't believe in the doctrine of election." Listen, the Bible teaches the doctrine of election, the question is, on what basis does he choose?

Option #1: God Responds

So option one; I call it the God responds view. Well this view says, listen what happens, because what God can see all of time, when he starts out before the world was made and he looks down the corridors of time and he says, "Okay so I see Joe down there, and I see that if I organize the circumstances of Joe's life in just such a way that he has a free choice for me, unencumbered by all sorts of things, I lift him up out of his depravity and all of his challenges and I give him in a moment, this choice for me, I see that he will choose me if I do that. So in response to his response, I will elect him. You see, God responds. He initiates yes, but responds. Election is based upon the response that he foresees in a person.

Option #2: God Directs

The other view is what I, <writing> my goodness, that's not even a two, Jeff, come one. God directs. And it basically says, no, no, no, there's nothing in a person, there's no foreseeing faith, there's no like, ethnic background, there's no like, he would be a really great Christian, none of that is why God chooses. God chooses based purely on his own will.

Now here's the question that you have to answer. When you come to a passage like Romans 9, which one of these two views makes the most sense of this passage? Romans 9:11-12,

"Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls—she was told, 'The older will serve the younger.'"

What so is God responding or directing? So think about this for a minute, in the God responds view, if Joe, organized the circumstances in the life of Joe and he chooses, right, but Steve, God does the same thing, organizes the circumstances in Steve's life so he's lifted to a point where he can choose and Steve doesn't choose - what's the difference between Joe and Steve? God acted the same



toward each of them, lifted them both out of their depravity and challenges. They're sitting there equally, what is the difference between Joe and Steve? And isn't it basically that Joe just sees things a little bit better? Like that he recognizes truth just a little bit better than Steve; he's a little bit smarter than Steve is ... and yet God, according to Romans 9, elects based purely on him who calls. And that point you're like, "No, that can't be the case!" Alright, alright, what is the question that is rattling in your mind? Like if we were to pause here and I were to take you know, "Let's take a little question." Like what is the thing that would be turning your stomach at this point? Isn't it this? That is so unfair!!! What do you mean God chooses some and he leaves others? That's absolutely outrageous, in fact it's unjust! Romans 9:14-18,

"What then shall we say? Is God unjust? [So here's what you need to do at this point here, is you need to recognize that whatever viewpoint that I just gave you, whatever viewpoint, whatever option causes that question to arise is what Paul has been teaching up to this point. Like you've understood him properly if the question that arises in your mind has something to do with the injustice of God. So what shall we say? Verse 14, is God unjust?] Not at all! [verse 15] For he says to Moses [Listen to what he does here, he's going to put two characters in your mind, he's going to talk about Moses and the people of Israel on one hand and Pharaoh and the people of Egypt. He says to Moses], 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For Scripture says to Pharaoh: 'I raised you up [here's your second example, I raised you up] for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.' Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden."

Okay so let's break this down, this gives you two illustrations. This is really great. The question is, is God unjust? Alright let me give you two illustrations, says Paul. First, Moses and the people of Israel. So Moses goes up on the mountain and he's up there and he's receiving the law from God and down in the valley, Aaron, the associate pastor is doing what associate pastors do and ruining everything right? And so he's down there and he's given in to the people. And they're like Moses is gone and God is left us, there's no fire or cloud anymore so you need to make for us a god, cause we're out here all alone and all the nations around us are going to attack us, so we need to make a god! Make one!" "Alright give me all your gold and we'll melt it down and turn it into a cow." And they do,, they make this beautiful cow and they march around it and they sing and they have revelry, which has all sorts of sexual connotation, all sorts of things that are going on in this valley. And God says to Moses, while he's up on the mountain, "Hey do you see what's going on down there?" Moses turns around is like, "Oh my goodness, oh my goodness." And God says, "Here Moses, here's what I want you do, they are totally turning away from me, so just move out of the way a little bit and then I got my cannon here, just move out of the way, I'm going to death star 'em." But Moses is like, "Woah, woah, woah, woah!" Moses goes down, he has a word with them, comes back up, God's still holding - ready to go, and Moses says, "No, no, no, no, don't judge them, judge me in their place but don't lash out in anger at them." And God says, "Alright, alright, alright, I won't but keep me at a distance from them right now, for fear that I might." So Moses goes and he kind of represents God to the people for a while but eventually Moses gets to the point where he's like, "Man I can't live this way, I can't live with the knowledge that God might just break out and destroy us all at any moment." So he says to the Lord, "Lord, you have to show me your glory to guarantee that you're with us." The Lord said, "Alright. I'm going to hid you away in this little cleft of the rock, because if all my glory passes by you Moses and you're not shielded from it, you will die. I'll hide you away in the cleft of the rock and when the Lord passes by," he said, "I am the Lord, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have



compassion on whom I have compassion.” So the people of Israel, who deserve God’s judgement receive God’s mercy. Put that in your head over here.

Alright Pharaoh, well, Pharaoh’s story’s interesting because God comes to Pharaoh through Moses and says, “Let my people go.” And Pharaoh says to Moses, “Ah who is this God that I should obey him? I don’t know if you realized this but I’m Pharaoh, I’m the biggest cat on the block and there’s no God who can compete with me.” And the Lord, Yahweh, hears that and says, “Ohh a fight. Okay, let’s go, ten rounds, man let’s do this thing.” So they do, they start doing the 10 plagues on Egypt, halfway through those plagues, Pharaoh is like, “I am done.” Tapping out, like they’re lifting the arm and he’s dropping, and he’s lifting the arm and he’s dropping. But God says, “Woah, woah, woah, woah, woah, you wanted to go 10 rounds with me, right? You wanted to fight, and now you’re already giving up this quick?” So what God does is he, and the language is he hardens him, but the word means he’s strengthens him right? So like he gives him 5-hour Energy, or like, Gatorade in him, pulls back a bit, let me prop you back up so we can keep going. Goes a little bit more, he’s like, “I’m done.” Put him on the IV table, away we go again. You wanted to fight, I wanted to fight. See but God says, “I raised you up for this very purpose Pharaoh, that by defeating you I may proclaim my name in all the earth.” And he does, so Pharaoh and the people of Egypt, who deserve judgement, receive judgement. Moses and the people of Israel who deserve judgement and receive mercy, Pharaoh who deserves judgement receives judgement. So is God unjust? Is God unjust in giving judgement to those who deserve it and giving mercy to those who don’t? Well kind of - but not unjust in a way that you think, see God’s injustice, if he has any, is only to your benefit. See you and I approach this sort of question thinking, “Look doesn’t everyone basically deserve God to treat them fairly, and with good will and niceness cause they’re all really nice.” Actually Paul says, everyone is wicked; Israel, Pharaoh, everybody, and if God treated everyone with justice he would destroy all of us but he doesn’t. He shows mercy to some and a God who shows mercy to some and shows justice to those who deserve it, is not unjust, he’s merciful.

So theologians use an image for this sometimes, they say well God is basically like, he’s like a God and all the people of the world were running off a cliff and they hate God, they don’t want to have anything to do with him, spitting in his face, flipping him off, and they’re running off this cliff and God says, “Well some of you I’m going to let you go off the cliff because that’s what you want.” And others, “I’ll take that one, and I’ll take that one.” But he doesn’t do it based on anything he sees in them, do you see that’s the point here? That Paul’s argument is, throughout Israel’s history God has been selecting a people for his purposes and leaving others. I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and he hardens those he wants to harden.

But oh my goodness, so, alright - we’re done for today. So look ah there’s all sorts of questions that remain. Let’s just own them. Okay so I said there’s the text. Ah how can God choose some and leave others and still say he loves the world. Cause he said, the Bible is clear, God loves the world. Ah what about free will? Like God’s just doing whatever he wants, how can he still hold us accountable for the choices that we make? So you’re going to have to come back next week to hear some answers to some of those. Ah, you should know that Paul is thinking along the same lines, and he is going to address those very issues, you should come back next week, right?

[The Point - Salvation Belongs to the Lord]

But let me just make the point here, in the last few minutes, here’s the point that I think he’s after; salvation belongs to the Lord. It’s a theological point but it’s critical you get this. Salvation belongs to the Lord, so just to show you that this isn’t the only place in the Bible where this sort of thing is talked



about, I'm just going to kind of give you three passages, I could give you like 20, but I'm going to give you three passages that sound the same way that Romans 9, that Paul in Romans 9 sounds. So, Matthew 11, this is our Lord Jesus, Matthew 11:25-27,

“At that time Jesus said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things [Now these things in the context are things pertaining to repentance. You have hidden things pertaining to repentance] from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do. All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.’”

2 Timothy 2, Apostle Paul's dealing with how it is that we should treat false teachers and what kind of attitudes we should have toward them. He says, that passage, 2 Timothy 2:25-26,

“Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will [get it now] *grant* them repentance [Wait a minute, repentance is something that's granted? Yes! Treat them nicely in hopes that God will grant them repentance] leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses [because he's granted them repentance] and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.”

So there's a way out for them, but the Lord has to move to grant it. Acts 13:48, Luke writing about just in almost in passing about how people came to faith, he says,

“When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.”

See now you and I, we flip that, we say, “No, no, everybody who believes is appointed unto eternal life.” And Luke's like, “No, no, no, no that's the wrong way, the horse in the equation is the appointment, the cart is the eternal life, or the belief.” God appoints, people believe - in that order. Listen, you and I know this is the case, like when you look back at your own salvation, you know that deep in your heart the reason that you're here as a Christian is not because you saw it better than somebody else, the reason you're here as a Christian is because God made it so. The reason that you're here, because God opened your eyes to see, you had your own Damascus Road, he struck you down perhaps through years and years of your indifference and frustration and obstinacy, and he broke your will, and he dragged you. C.S. Lewis called him the hound dog of heaven - that's how it happened. J.I. Packer, and I'll finish with this, with this wonderful little book, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, he said it this way,

“As you look back, you take yourself to blame for your past blindness and indifference and obstinacy and evasiveness in face of the gospel message [you take yourself to blame for that]; but you do not pat yourself on the back for having been mastered by the insistent Christ. You would never dream of dividing the credit for your salvation between God and yourself. You have never for one moment supposed that the decisive contribution to your salvation was yours and not God's. You have never told God that, while you are *thankful* for the means and opportunities of grace that he gave you, you realize that you have to thank, not him, but yourself for the fact that you responded to his call. Your heart revolts at the very thought of talking to God in such terms. In fact, you thank him no less sincerely for the gift of faith and repentance than for the gift of Christ to trust and turn to. This is the way in which, since you became a Christian, your heart has *always* led you. You give God all the glory for all that your salvation involved, and you know that it would be blasphemy if you refused to thank him for



bringing you to faith. Thus in the way you think of your conversation, you acknowledge the sovereignty of divine grace. And every other Christian in the world does the same.”

Let the emails begin. [Laughter] Let me pray. Father, I’m so thankful, I am thankful Father for your word and for brothers and sisters in Christ who push back and wrestle with it. Father, we have no claim on you to say that we understand you fully Father for the the things that you’ve revealed to us, would you help them to understand them well. And this is one that we pray that you help us understand well. There are other things to say about it, there are other points of view and other push backs that need to be made to nuisance this in all sorts of ways so I pray that as the conversation unfolds you’d find it civil and that you would find us loving you in the process of learning more about you. We pray more than anything that you would reveal yourself to us afresh, that we may know the true God and all that means to worship him. We pray in Jesus name, Amen.