

Jacob Loved, Esau Hated

Romans 9

We begin our message today with three basic observations every Christian could and should make.

1. Number One: *God is in control.* He is over all, and mighty to do all things, even the impossible things. This is the attitude every believer has when praying – “Lord, you are in control. With Daniel, you rule the kingdoms of men.” No believer begins prayer, ‘Lord, I know you can’t help me, but I just had a few things I want to get off my chest...’ *God is in control.*
2. Number Two: *God has a plan.* What God does is according to his own thoughts and purposes. He does what you and I do every day – he works out his purpose for the day. Ephesians 1:11 rings clear – “the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.” All creation is according to design and understanding! God does all things well. We might say, ‘I wonder what I will do today’, but not the Lord. “Known unto God from eternity are all His works” Acts 15:18 *God has a plan.*
3. Number Three: *God’s purpose includes salvation.* Our God has a purpose to save, to redeem, to rescue our poor, wretched planet from sin, from Satan, from serving ourselves. The exalting of the Son of God by the Father to be the sum of all things and save a countless host by grace is at the center of His plan. And this plan includes who is to be saved; who will be given a new heart, a pardon for all their sins, faith to believe the promises of God, and a sanctification to bring them all the way home. This world’s central

concern is about Christ and His Bride, the church. *God's purpose includes salvation.*

This brings us to our text in Romans 9:13 – “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” If salvation is a major part of God’s purpose and rule over all things to His glory, **who** is saved is a part of this purpose.

If God chooses some, he does not choose others. That is the practical matter addressed in the first 12 verses. Not all or even most of Israel are saved. They have rejected the Savior.

The Jewish people, once rescued from Egypt, have returned to side with Pharaoh whose heart was hardened. They did this in spite of so many miracles performed by One greater than Moses, Jesus the Christ.

And Paul summarizes this sharp contrast with a verse from Malachi. This theme echoes for a while in Romans 9. Jacob loved, God shows mercy and compassion on some and not others – 15; which depends on God’s will and not man’s – 16; God hates and hardens Esau and Pharaoh – 17; then again – read 18.

Election to eternal life is the crown jewel of God’s majesty; the glory of his sovereignty; the heartbeat of His grace; and the hammer of his rule over his enemies.

How are you hearts so far? Are your hearts hardened to the Word of God, to the gospel? Or does God’s sovereign grace, his omnipotent message to save, does it humble and cause thanksgiving in you? Remember how Jesus rejoiced seeing the Father hiding these things from the wise and prudent but revealing them to babies.

This is a humbling passage. Flesh and blood cannot receive it. “This is unfair! This is arbitrary!” say many. JC Ryle says: “Nothing gives such offense and stirs up such bitter feelings among the wicked, as the idea of God making any distinction between man and man, and loving one person more than another.”

Let us start and see that unconditional election is a BIBLICAL teaching.

Election is clearly in the Bible. “The Elect” is a name put on his children repeatedly. Election is central to this chapter in 9.11, “the purpose of God according to election stands”. And it stands out in chapter 11, verse 5, an election of grace.

Spurgeon said “You must first deny the authenticity and full inspiration of the Holy Scripture before you can legitimately and truly deny election.”

The great author of Pilgrim’s Progress summarized this:

God has engaged himself, having chosen a people for himself, and secured them from all that any can do against them. Election is as eternal as God is, without variableness or shadow of change, and thus is called ‘an eternal purpose’, and it must stand (Ephesians 3:11, Romans 9:11). It is absolute and unconditional. No works were foreseen in us that were the cause of God choosing us; and no sin in us shall frustrate or make election void. By the act of election, we are wrapped and covered in Christ; he has chosen us in him; not in ourselves, not in our virtues, no, not for or because of anything but his own will (Ephesians 1:4-11). Election is the permanent resolution of God

to glorify his mercy on the vessels of mercy he foreordained unto glory (Romans 9:15, 18, 23). John Bunyan, Works, 1:163-164

This is high and mysterious doctrine. But say not that it is no biblical doctrine.

“Take away the glorious truth of God’s unconditional election and not only would every Christian fall out of the church, but every star would fall out of the sky and every page out of the Bible!” John Blanchard

Some hate this doctrine so much that they would not even believe it if it were in the Bible! A man named Greenhough said: “Whatever St. Paul meant, we feel that he could not mean that, and even if he did we should decline to follow him.”

Paul’s answer is something very high, profound and mysterious. It is not easy to grasp. But he appeals to God Himself in order to defend what he says in 9.11 – God cannot be unjust or unfair since he acted in this way toward his enemy Pharaoh and showed mercy to thousands according to HIS Will. God is the Potter who has sovereignty over all men, who justly judges the wicked, and can do with his clay as he sees fit. He is an unfailing sovereign God. He is a successful sovereign God. He is a just and fair God as well as a gracious and merciful God. He is in control of man’s destiny as sure as a potter is over mud, and even more so since he made the clay.

So secondly understand how this is a very HUMBLING doctrine.

The greatest problem that people have with this is how they begin with man, and a very wrong view of man. God is not passing over and sending pure-as-snow angels straight to blazes! In fact, all of us are by nature Ishmaels, Esaus and Pharaohs!

But we want to believe we are better, and would have God treat us according to our merits, to how awesome we are. We are all pretty good people seeking God and all of us should be welcomed into heaven with a few exceptions.

And this is exactly what got the Jews in such trouble in the first place! Sin is not felt as it ought to be!

This really gets at the heart of grace. We don't grasp how deeply sinful we are, how horrible we are to God, how worthy of hell we are, and so, how great grace truly is!

Why one comes to God and another doesn't is not left up to chance! And it is certainly not left up to us, or none would come to God! Spurgeon felt correctly: "I believe the doctrine of election because I am quite sure that if God had not chosen me I would never have chosen him; and I am sure he chose me before I was born, or else he never would have chosen me afterward!"

But somewhere along the way, grace and mercy is redefined. Mercy is no longer God's treating us as miserable sinners; and grace is no longer God giving what we can never deserve – His Son, His love and eternal life!

Were the hymn Amazing Grace written today, it would read quite differently:

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a male-adjusted victim like me; I once was misguided but now I have a road-map; was nearsighted, but now I have glasses.

The truth is as an ancient voice put it: “In whatever dunghill God’s jewels are hid, election will find them out and fetch them from there.”

God must stoop very low to those who are in the dunghill; who love the dunghill and are of the dunghill. Election and calling reaches down and pulls up those who never otherwise would change. It shows election does not lead to more ‘dung-hillism’ – living in and loving sin!

Men are truly sinful, filthy, ugly, and let us say it fully – we are naturally wicked, evil, and of our father the devil. It is right for God to hate us, loath us, despise what we have made ourselves by our thoughts and actions! “Jacob is chosen and differs from the rejected Esau by God’s predestination while not differing from him in merits,” says Calvin

Back in the 1800’s there was a famous Christian tract. With a picture of a table on the cover, it had the Lord on one side and the devil on the other. And it said: “God votes for you, Satan votes against you, **you** cast the deciding vote!” So salvation is of man!

But the picture really is this: Satan votes against you, the world votes against you, and you in your love for sin vote against you – three strikes, you’re out!!

But praise be to God – “In the election of man to salvation, God has the only vote.” says John Blanchard.

But it is here where people go haywire and see in this teaching things that aren’t there. They make it a monstrous dogma. Our response is, REALLY?

Consider now in our third point several things about this being a GLORIOUS Doctrine and not a horrible one:

1. First, predestination reveals a Redeemer who saves all who come to him, and saves to the uttermost. Jesus is the Chosen One, the Elect One, to whom all who come are saved. We find the grace of God in him that is before time began and prior to our sin. There are no limits in man, as though Jesus is only for some subset of the children of Adam. There is no racism in the gospel.
2. Second, predestination appoints means, especially promises. Promises are God's predetermined, self-commitments to carry out his word. God is all in by this gospel. This is the part of election that is revealed! But the secret things belong to God. There should be NO QUESTION that we are to deal with our duty before God and not His decrees directly. He has not revealed his decrees except as they unfold day by day. You don't wait until you know you are elect to choose the Lord. GET THIS! His decrees are not our guide, they are his! "The decrees of God are rules for his own actions – not for ours. They are nothing more than his own wise plans, eternal and unchangeable, according to which He chooses to act. If he had no such plans he could not be wise... Until he acts you know nothing of his plans, his predestination... His decrees are not laws for his creatures, but rules for himself." Ichabod Spencer
3. Third, predestination secures the free agency of man. Man is not worked on *against* his will but in accord with it. God gives men exactly what they want all the time. But thankfully God can and does change the hearts of men to love what they once hated. There is NO FATALISM here. Man is no mere machine – people will and act freely according to their nature, even after the fall. People will

argue, if I am not elect, then why pray, why read the Bible, why try to seek the Lord? Well, why breath? Breathing is a means to an end; do you really know that God has chosen to give you your next breath? Why not wait on that? Hey, why are you turning blue?

Let me share a conversation with you:

A man believed in this teaching as fatalism, and said since God ordained whatsoever comes to pass, he had nothing to do. “I can do nothing toward my salvation” he said strongly.

The Pastor replied – ‘did you eat your breakfast this morning?’ He replied, ‘yes, I surely did.’

“Why?” asked the pastor – “how could you do it if God ordains whatsoever comes to pass – you can do nothing! Did you eat your dinner today?” The man replied, “yes, I never skip dinner”.

“How” asked the pastor “what have you to do, you can do nothing if God foreordains everything that comes to pass. Are you going to sleep tonight?” “Yes – I shall try” said the man.

“Why will you try? What have you to do? You can do nothing! Will you answer me one more question?” “Yes” replied the man.

“Why do you say ‘yes’ – what have you to do? You can do nothing!” replied the pastor.

Man has the capacity to choose God – he is still a creature in God’s image; but he has not the ability to do so because of depravity. At the heart of the matter is our wicked opposition to a God of love and incomprehensible greatness. We are glad to bring him down to our level, or worship an idol we can control. So we use many things,

including the high doctrine of election as a buffer to keep us from coming to him. To say I first must comprehend the incomprehensible, is to say I will not comprehend at all!

The bottom line is all are responsible to turn to God, to be converted, to believe and be saved. But all are in incapable of doing so without the perfect help of God, and they continue to do things as they please instead of doing what God says to do.

So what is the remedy? Nothing but continue to preach duty to the despairing; preach dependence to the arrogant self-trusting soul! And insisting to both that God saves! Do I feel proud and independent – look to the greatness and power of God to save. Do I feel unable and despairing – look to the ability of God beyond your own! You see, in both cases, it is not of him who wills or runs, but of God that shows mercy.

This 4thly then is a GLADDENING doctrine.

The point of election is largely a positive one. That God can save all kinds of sinners, since salvation is what HE does and not what we do.

Yes, there is a fearful flip side to this – *reprobation*.

“Saving election and sovereign reprobation are mutually required”, said Calvin. “Unless God predestines both salvation and damnation, He predestines neither.” Richard Phillips

God does not merely pass over the reprobate – he judges them for their sin, and prepares them for destruction, and this destruction comes from his plan.

But – and this is so important – “The ground of the *discrimination* that exists among men is the sovereign will of God and that alone; while the ground of *damnation* to which the reprobate are consigned is sin and sin alone.” John Calvin

The positive point to be made is clear – is God saving me? Is Jesus my savior? Do I have the fruit of a new life in him? Then I am elect and redeemed, and by his grace I will persevere to the end. But if my life is not in Christ, I am in great danger and have no reason at this point to entertain a hope of heaven! I am lost.

But there is a remedy! God can make the unwilling willing – he does so for every soul that is saved! If salvation is in His hands, it is not in yours; and he can put this redemption into your hands, but only freely! And that is what you must deal with. You are not told to deny that you are a hardened sinner, but to come to him **AS** a hardened sinner, with your sinfulness, and repent and believe!

Your will cannot do this, nor can any creaturely will, but God’s loving, sovereign will can!

This is the blessing, the glad part of this teaching:

'Tis not that I did choose thee,
for, Lord, that could not be;
this heart would still refuse thee,
hadst thou not chosen me.

But know this – that if you are to die and to go hell, you will not blame God for it, that you were not of the elect!

What sends you to hell is your own love for your sin, and God's part is to act justly, fairly and powerfully against you, a sworn enemy to Him.

The means that brings you to judgment is your sins, for which Christ has come to cover and pardon.

Oh, come today!