

God's Purpose According to Election

Romans 9:1-18

We have been going through the Book of Romans, but I am not sure I will live long enough to finish it; however, I will try. It all really started with Pakistan, for those of you who do not know. They asked me to teach on Romans, and my idea was to do a chapter at a time with a broad overview of the main points. That did not work too well for them. They desired more in-depth teaching and asked me to try, even though I told them I was not going to do a verse-by-verse study. But they said they would like it to be closer to a verse-by-verse study, whatever that means. So, we are behind where they are, but we are entering the second half of the Book of Romans. We do this once a month, so it would be good to read it every once in a while. Romans is so full, and there is so much we need to learn from it.

There is so much embedded in the Book of Romans that you do not find in other places. There is a complete presentation of the Gospel of God in Jesus Christ that you cannot find in such fullness, even in Paul's other writings. So let me read from chapter 9:1-18. We will see that there is a significant shift in the book. This is Paul speaking, by the way.

Romans 9:1-18: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great grief and uninterrupted pain in my heart, for I have wished, I myself, to be a curse from the Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to flesh; who are Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the law-giving, and the service, and the promises; whose are the fathers; and of whom, as according to flesh, is the Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Not however as though the word of God had failed; for not all are Israel which are of Israel; nor because they are seed of Abraham are all children: but, In Isaac shall a seed be called to thee. That is, they that are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned as seed. For this word is of promise, According to this time I will come, and there shall be a son to Sarah. And not only that, but Rebecca having conceived by one, Isaac our father, the children indeed being not yet born, or having done anything good or worthless (that the purpose of God according to election might abide, not of works, but of him that calls), it was said to her, The greater shall serve the less: according as it is written, I have loved Jacob, and I have hated Esau.

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Far be the thought. For he says to Moses, I will shew mercy to whom I will shew mercy, and I will feel compassion for whom I will feel compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shews mercy. For the scripture says to Pharaoh, For this very thing I have raised thee up from amongst men, that I might thus shew in thee my power, and so that my name should be declared in all the earth. So then, to whom he will he shews mercy, and whom he will he hardens."

Let us pray.

Father, we thank You for giving us Your only Son. We are delighted that we could be here this morning together in Your presence to share the table and rejoice in the One who is everything, the One that You gave. Now, as we turn to Your Word, we ask that the Holy Spirit illumine Your Word. I seem to remember when we were in the book of Luke, in chapter 23, after You were raised from the dead, and You were with Your own disciples. You opened their understanding to the Scriptures. Would You do that today? We know that only the Holy Spirit can open what is divine to us. Only the Holy Spirit can give us understanding of words that are Spirit and life. Today, we once again bow our hearts and ask You to breathe upon Your Word and make it living for Your namesake. Amen.

Introduction

In chapter 9:11, this phrase is most important when you cover these eighteen verses. It says, “that the purpose of God according to election might abide.” Now, I like it better in the King James Version, which says, “might stand.” I think that is so clear.

Overview of Romans 9:1-18

As we come this morning to these 18 verses, the title is, “God's Purpose According to Election.” You will see that very clearly. As a matter of fact, that is the theme for all three of these chapters, 9, 10, and 11: “God's Purpose According to Election.”

Today, we are going to look at three things. We are going to look at these first five verses, and we will see something special as Paul reveals his deepest emotions. He speaks of his great grief, his pain, the unabating pain in his heart. So, we will first look at “The Great Grief in Paul's Heart.” Why did he do that? Why did he open up so much? And what does it mean for us in the study of God's Word

The second thing we want to look at is this phrase: “God's Purpose According to Election Stands.” This is found in verses 6-13, and it is very important. If you do not understand that singular phrase, you will never understand these three very important chapters in the book of Romans: 9, 10, and 11.

Finally, we will look at something most precious. The last part, from verses 14-18, speaks about “The God Who Shows Mercy.” Now, you would not be here, I would not be here, and none of us would have the joy of knowing the Lord if it were not for the God who shows mercy.

Transition from Chapters 1-8 to Chapters 9-11

So, this is the burden, and this is the thought. Some people look at these three chapters in Romans as an add-on. The best way I know how to explain it to you is as an appendix, a thought that is not as important as the first eight chapters. The first eight chapters we looked at are glorious, but when this book changes, these chapters are also very important. I think there are those who say, “Well, I do not usually read chapters 9, 10, and 11; I love to stay in chapters 1-8.”

There is a significant change when we come to chapter 9. Before, we were looking at the mighty works of God in chapters 1-8. Remember, Brother Joe read from Psalm 145 about praising His mighty works. These mighty works are mentioned a couple of times in this chapter of the book of Romans, and when we look back over what occurred before, we see the mighty works of God.

As a matter of fact, you may not know this, but you should notice these things when you are studying the Word in depth. The word “works” is used more in the book of Romans than in any other book in the New Testament. It talks about the evil works of man. You remember that we spent quite a bit of time on the ruined condition because Paul spent almost three chapters on the ruined condition of man. He talks about how no one can be justified by the works of the law. It is impossible! So many of us try to live the Christian life by rules, thinking we have done this, and it is enough, and thinking we have done what is right, and that is adequate. But the Word is very clear and shows us that no one shall be justified by the works of the law. It talks about a righteousness that is given to us, not according to works; that is the great redemption. That is the great rejoicing we have in the Lord. That is being justified—full justification in Christ Jesus.

Chapters 1-8: God’s Mighty Works

So, these are the first eight chapters of the book of Romans, and as we make this change, I will give you an overview of chapters 9, 10, and 11. The first eight chapters do not really dwell on man’s works, but upon God’s mighty works; it is the mighty work of the cross. The work of the cross is the greatest work ever. When you are rescued from the penalty of sin, which is the death of the cross, the Bible makes that very clear. Once we believe in the Lord Jesus and know Him as our Lord and Savior, we will never die. We may go to sleep, but I do not mind sleeping when I can sleep. But thank God, we will never die. We are released from the penalty of sin through justification. These are mighty works! Incomprehensible mighty works! Now we have a righteousness that makes us acceptable to God, which we did not have before. Can there be any mightier work than that? Well, there is sanctification. If you think you are holy, or I will put it personally, if you think I am holy, ask my wife. Holiness is sanctification.

But in these chapters (1-8), we see that God had another great work to do—not only to release us from the penalty of sin but to free us from the power of sin. He does that through sanctification. What a mighty work! God makes us holy through the indwelling Holy Spirit and conforms us to the image of the Lord Jesus, so that when we see Him, we will be among the many sons brought to glory. Finally, the mighty works are glory.

Chapter eight deals with glory and how precious it is—glorification. We are not only removed from the penalty of sin and the power of sin, but we are finally removed from the presence of sin. Can you imagine that day when there will be no more presence of sin?

What a mighty work! This is how I, at least, separate the book of Romans. You may have a different view, and that is okay. There are many good speakers and authors out there who have wonderful explanations. But this is the way I see it.

Key Points of Chapters 9-11

The Ways of God

Now, when you come to chapters 9, 10, and 11, the emphasis is on something entirely different. It is on the ways of God, and not the works of God. The ways of God are what we begin to see. It is not just what God does in His mighty work, but we also begin to see why He does it. This is the secret. When we reach the end of this section, it will indicate where I drew this from, specifically verses 33-36 of chapter 11: "O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable his judgments, and untraceable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor? or who has first given to him, and it shall be rendered to him? For of him, and through him, and for him are all things: to Him be glory forever. Amen." How wonderful are His ways!

Well, that is the difference. I know some people view these chapters as not quite as important as the first 8. I wish we would not do that. I like what Griffith Thomas said when he talked about the change in this book. He said, "The change from chapter 8 is abrupt and striking, and yet there is a close and necessary connection between these sections. Some view these chapters as an appendix which may, to some extent could be overlooked in the study of the Epistle. But this is an entirely incorrect view." That is what he said, "It is an entirely incorrect view."

He continued saying, "For the chapters are an integral part of the epistle and essential to its true interpretation. Do not ignore these chapters. This is what I want us to examine today, and to begin to see the ways of God. That is the first point in the overview.

The Replacement Theology – A Controversy

The second thing we need to do when we look at these chapters is to recognize that they have caused quite a controversy in the church. I do not know if you are aware of this, but many people ignore these three chapters because they do not agree with them and do not fully understand their implications. How is Israel still so much in view? In fact, a doctrine has emerged—a teaching, a theory—called replacement theology, which posits that the church has replaced Israel. Brothers and sisters, you may think I am a Zionist. I am not. But the church will not replace Israel. There are two different entities. The church is the heavenly people of God. Thank God, many Jews are part of it.

In the first century, during the first seven years before the Gentiles were brought in, it was the Jews who were saved. They became the heavenly people of God. But there are also the earthly people of God, which is Israel. And God has not finished with Israel yet.

You cannot, I do not think, read these chapters clearly and meditate on chapters 9, 10, and 11 and say that God is done with Israel. I do not believe in replacement theology or supersessionism. I believe that He is not done; now it is not all about the church.

So, I would urge you to read Chapter 11. I think you will be shocked when he says, “And all Israel shall be saved.” It is quite a statement. We have come into the blessings of the Lord, and God in His mercy, will eventually reconcile Israel. Now, we will save that point about all Israel because it is quite controversial.

But God can do two things at once. He will never forget His earthly people. He has made promises to them, He has covenants with them, and He has mentioned blessings for them. We just cannot, as the church, spiritualize every promise to Israel in the Old Testament and say it is all now about us as the church. That is another factor I think we need to see before we fully embrace this fulfillment theology, as it is also called.

I believe Newell mentioned something very important about this. He said, “And God, here in Romans, sets forth His ways in the past, His ways in the future, with the chosen earthly nation, Israel.” Now listen to this simple fact: the only nation on earth that was ever chosen by God is Israel. They are the only national people, God's people.

I think it is pretty amazing. Paul now thanks God for His great purpose in having something much more glorious in mind in the end, as He included Israel, if they would come into it. And that is the church, which is the full expression of His heavenly people for eternity. Do you remember the promise to Abraham? In Genesis 22:17, God said to Abraham in this promise, “Your seed shall be as numerous as the stars in the sky.” That refers to the heavenly people. He said right after that, “Your seed shall be as numerous as the sand on the seashore.” Countless! Countless! That is the earthly people, and His great purpose includes both. Do not just cast away, because God will never cast away. Now, that is something I want you to remember as you read these chapters—what the Lord has in mind.

God of Election

The third thing, as we consider the overview of these three chapters, is to think about the essential theme. What is God talking about? What is God trying to show us through the apostle? It is clearly the word “election.” I will give you a little more detail in a moment. It occurs in Romans a number of times in these chapters. Therefore, that phrase you need to understand in Romans 11 is that “the purpose of God according to election might stand.” That is the whole thing. God is a God of election.

Once we begin to understand that everything He does is guided by divine election. We realize that His actions for Israel arose from choosing that nation out of all the others, and He is not finished with them yet. Everything He does for His church, His eternal companion, His bride forever, also comes from this concept of election. If you do not understand election, you will not understand these chapters at all. So, that is the overview. I hope this gives you some direction in understanding the difference between the first eight chapters and chapters 9-11.

Knowing God's Ways and Sharing God's Agony

Paul's Agony on the Jewish People

In these three chapters, we want to examine the grief in Paul's heart as the first main point in this section. Paul is very transparent here about his agony for his natural kinsmen, the Jewish people. He is in utter agony about it. When you read those verses again, I will refer to verses 2 and 3. He says, "that I have great grief and uninterrupted pain in my heart, for I have wished, I myself, to be a curse from the Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to flesh; who are Israelites; ..."

That is quite a statement. The Apostle Paul expressed a sentiment where he wished he could be accursed for the sake of others, but he was the one chosen. In chapter 11:13, you will see that he is identified as the apostle to the nations. God chose this Israelite, a Pharisee of Pharisees, someone who far exceeded all of his contemporaries, to be the apostle to the Gentiles. However, when we reach these chapters, he speaks of an agony that is difficult to articulate—a profound grief and relentless pain. I do not think it is possible to be more graphic than that. He is not merely being dramatic, nor is this just spiritual poetry. He sensed that the people whom God had chosen as the only nation on earth had turned away from the living God. And this Israelite of Israelites could only express the deep pain in his heart. If God were to draw them back to Himself, reclaim them, and make them His own once more, Paul felt that he could endure any consequence, a curse from the Christ, and that was his request.

I think that is rather overwhelming when you read it. What does it mean? It means that here is someone who understood God's ways. I wish there were more people like that among us. He had an agony in his heart for an unsaved people who had turned away from the God who called them and blessed them with everything a nation could have. And it was uninterrupted pain; he had the heart of God for a people. This story is not just told so that you have some sympathy for the Apostle Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles. This story is told so that we might see this is what God is like. He experiences uninterrupted agony; He has a deep grief that everyone would be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.

Paul never received his request; he was never cursed. But there was One who was cursed, the Son of God, the One who had done no wrong; the one who was sinless. This is not just God talking about what He liked; it was about His ways. God actually sent His only Son, and that only begotten Son became the cursed One for you and for me. He did this so that we could be restored to God and experience all of His heavenly blessings and the true privileges of being sons of God. This includes sisters as well, by the way; it includes brothers and sisters. Let me put it this way: if you are a sister, God considers you a son of God. If you are a brother, God considers you a son of God. This is not sexist discrimination, by the way, if you were wondering. So here we see the first thing revealed in chapter 9 about the ways of God, that One would have to be cursed to redeem a lost people.

This passage that is referred to is from Galatians 3:13, where it is said "that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us," as it is written in

Deuteronomy 21: “Cursed is he who is hung on a tree.” If you read Deuteronomy 21:22-23, where that comes from, it states this phrase, “cursed is he that hangs upon a tree if he has done any sin.” Did you notice that? That is why it is important to read both the Old and the New Testament. Think about it, Christ was cursed! It was not because he committed some sin. Christ, who was sinless, was cursed. God Himself, who came in the form of man and was perfect, had committed no sin. Yet Paul, in Galatians, applies this curse of God that fell upon His beloved to show us His ways, to reveal what He is truly like. There is no one like Him. There is no one who did what He did.

Abraham Not Sparing Isaac

Do you remember the story of Abraham and how he and Sarah longed for a seed, a son? Sarah had this wonderful idea of how to make it happen on her own, and you remember the handmaid and the son that came from that union. That was not God's way; by the way, the promise was, “You shall have a seed through Sarah.” That was God's way.

Then I think of Abraham. You remember when Isaac was born, but later, God did the unthinkable. In Abraham's old age, He said, “Take your son, your only son” (He drove the stake a little deeper into Abraham), “the son whom you love, and take him up the mountain and offer him to Me.” Can you imagine? Here is this man and his wife who had experienced the agony of longing for a son; all they wanted was a son. Finally, God gave them a son. But then, in the end, He said, “Take that son and make him a sacrifice.”

I do not know if I could have done what Abraham did when he took his son and said, “Let us go and worship,” and placed him on the altar. Do you remember his son? He drew back the knife over his only son. I cannot think of deeper, more uninterrupted pain. In that next moment, he must have been thinking, “I will plunge this knife into the heart of my son.” And the angel of the Lord said, “Stop! Do not harm the lad.” The son, the only son, the beloved, was not sacrificed; God withheld the knife. But when we read Isaiah 53, as was read this morning, God Himself did not withhold the knife; He offered His only son, His perfect son, and did not withdraw the knife. Can you imagine!?

These are the ways of God; this is who He is. This is why He does what He does. We not only see His mighty works but also His wonderful nature, which is beyond anything we could imagine. And we see what He is like. He is a loving, merciful, heavenly Father who would sacrifice the only perfect One, the One who made everything as the Creator of the universe. He would become for you and me that cursed sacrifice, setting us free forever to become blessed sons of God. I think that is wonderful!

I believe I understand why He acted as He did toward Abraham, and I understand why Paul was pursued by the Holy Spirit to record these particular words. I think we catch a glimpse of the One who is much greater, who assumed that role. These are the ways of the Lord. This is the deep sorrow that resided in the apostle's heart.

Moses Understood God's Ways

He has always been looking for men who understand His ways. You remember what it says in Psalm 103:7, where David said: "He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel." You can refer to the children of Israel because they witnessed His acts. Now, do we perceive the ways of God? How precious and how wonderful they are! How beautiful they are!

You know, Moses did something just like Paul does here in Romans 9:1-5. When Moses came down from that mountain, you remember, they provoked God at Mount Sinai. By the way, I climbed Mount Sinai. People doubted I would make it to the top, but at 72 years old, I made it all the way. All I can say is that Moses was in great shape. We had people with us, and most of them went two-thirds of the way or more on camels. I said, "I am not going to do that. Moses did it. I can do it." But I thought I was going to die. I made it to the top. They said, "We cannot believe you made it to the top." I said, "Neither can I. What are you talking about?"

When Moses came down from the mountain, he saw the people rebelling against God—the very ones He had called and to whom He had given the Ten Commandments, written with His own finger on stone. He saw that they had persuaded Aaron to make a golden calf, an idol to worship instead of God. Do you remember Moses's reaction? He threw the stone tablets, and they broke apart. Do you remember that? Many people do not think about it, but when you read chapter 32 of Exodus, you can see what was in Moses' heart. He pleaded with the Lord not to curse the people. He begged the Lord.

Exodus 32:32 from the Bible states: "And now, if thou wilt forgive their sin...but if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book that thou hast written." This verse captures Moses speaking to God, asking for forgiveness for the people of Israel after they sinned by worshiping the golden calf. (If you are looking for a specific version or translation of the Bible, please let me know, and I can help with more detailed information.) I know he was begging the Lord God to forgive their sins: "And I know if thou wilt forgive their sin..." and my Bible has three dots; it must have been a long pause. "But if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book that thou hast written."

That was his request. Here is this man of God, Moses, who has this special designation: "Moses the man of God" or "Moses the servant of the Lord." He said, "Blot me out of Your book if you do not forgive them." You know, he was never blotted out of the book. Praise the Lord! Here is someone whom God is seeking: a people who understand His ways and are like Him. Paul's heart reflected God's own heart and was placed within him for Israel, his kinsmen. When Moses interceded for the nation of Israel, God was about to judge the entire nation and end it all. However, it is said that as Moses appealed to Him, God repented.

I think we evangelicals probably wrestle with the concept of "God repented." I understand the idea of myself repenting or you repenting, but God changed His mind

because He found someone who understood His ways. Well, I think you are getting the point, at least for the first part.

Eightfold Unspeakable Privileges for Israel

Then he talks about what Israel did despite having enormous privileges in the last verses, 4-5. These are the eightfold privileges they had. Listen to what he says: “Whose was the adoption?” Brothers and sisters, this is what we are all called to as the people of God. We are called into adoption as sons. That is what He wanted for all of Israel. What a privilege they had—and glory!

Think about it. When Moses came down from the mountain, they had to cover his face because it shone with such glory—such tremendous glory—that they could not look at his face. Think of the glory that was in the tabernacle, the first house of God, that mobile temple, if you will. During the day, there was a pillar of cloud; the glory of the Lord rested upon it. At night, there was a pillar of fire that rested upon the tabernacle. In the holiest of all, God's glory and presence permanently dwelt. No nation has had these privileges, nor could anyone even think of having such privileges.

When he comes to the temple and Solomon's dedication of the temple, I think you know the story. When he prayed that wonderful prayer and the Spirit of God fell, the Shekinah glory so filled that temple that the priests could no longer stand. How tremendous! What glory! That is what Paul meant. The glory and the eternal covenants were given to Abraham.

We have already talked about his seed, the heavenly seed, and the earthly seed. Moses was given these covenants. No covenant had been given like that before to humankind. Yet, they had this privilege.

The fourth aspect was the law given by God. He engraved that law Himself with a divine finger on those stones. At the height of Mount Sinai, He gave it to Moses. They had divine law for the first time, unlike any other nation. I think it is remarkable.

The promises they had as the people of God were unparalleled blessings. They were to have a land flowing with milk and honey. Such were the treasures. It is unbelievable. They had great promises. Who are the fathers? Think of their fathers, and God even revealed Himself as, “I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob.” They had the fathers, yet they turned away.

Then it says the eighth thing: “According to flesh, is the Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.” Christ was their Messiah. Brian already mentioned that there are those among them who will not read Isaiah 53 because it does not fit into their thinking, brothers, and sisters. These are the eight unspeakable privileges.

God's Purpose According to Election Stands

God will never give up. Never give up! We give up, and we fail, but God will never give up. As we move to the second point, God's purpose according to election stands firm now.

These people have altered all of these privileges and observe the reaction. In verse 9:6, Paul's eyes were opened to see that although man fails, God never fails!

Verse 9:6-7 says, "Not however as though the word of God had failed; for not all are Israel which are of Israel; nor because they are seed of Abraham are all children: but, In Isaac shall a seed be called to thee."

Brothers and sisters, our heritage in the Lord has nothing to do with natural lineage. Just because you are born a Jew, in God's eyes, you may not truly be a Jew. He is looking for the heart. He is looking for those who know Him, love Him, and serve Him. And just because you are born into a Christian home and go to church, it does not automatically make you a son of God. All Israel is not all Israel.

He Will Have a Heavenly People

Everyone who says, "I am of Christ," is not necessarily of Christ. But what Paul saw is that the Word of God never fails. He says again and again, "Not, however, as though the word of God had failed." I think that is so precious. God cannot fail. You would think that with these privileges and the way they walked away from the living God, He would have walked away from them. Believe me, I am not God; you know that. But I would have walked away a long time ago. However, God refuses to walk away from a people He has called to Himself. No matter how far they stray, and however much they deny Him, His Word will never fail. He will have an earthly people where we will see His glory. He will have it; He will have it in His kingdom.

He will have a heavenly people for all eternity because He has sworn it in His Word that cannot fail; this is what Paul said. This one thing lifted him from his depression of being in incessant pain into the glory of the Lord to see God's ways. His methods may change, and I remember Brother Kaung used to say that "His ways never change." So, Paul is in hot pursuit if I can borrow Ben's police term. He is in hot pursuit of a people that he has called and that he has chosen, and He will not ever give up. He will not ever give up until he reaches those people. This is the glory of what Paul saw. It says in verse 11, "His purpose according to election shall stand." This indicates that it will never fail. The One who calls cannot fail. The One who promises cannot lie, as stated in Hebrews. Then it says in Hebrews that He is faithful. And how we need to see that. When we see that, our spirit is lifted like the Apostle Paul. Oh, Hallelujah! May the Lord truly open our eyes to see that He cannot fail.

The Center of His Ways

Paul sees that God's sovereign election is at the center of His ways. This principle of sovereign election is fundamental to see how God operates. Paul sees that God makes choices, and this is how He finds His people. He brings those people to Himself, and He will never, ever let them go. How wonderful that is, brothers and sisters, when you think about it. I believe God's election is everything; it is His choosing. Or let me put it another way: divine selection. Do you know what happened to you? You were divinely selected. Is that not tremendous? I believe we often think that we choose God, and one day we have

had enough of life and are finally depressed by that we have made endless New Year's resolutions, and we have sworn we will never do this again. So, we finally choose God, brothers and sisters, but that is not true. One day you awaken to a God who has chosen you.

“But I Have Chosen You”

Do you understand the difference? He is the one who chooses. He is the one who calls, as a matter of fact, to His own disciples in those last words of highest assurance. In John chapters 13 to 17, the Lord said this in John 15:16 “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.”

Oh, we good evangelicals, especially those of us with a strong inclination to lead people to the Lord, often say, “Choose Christ. Choose Christ. Open your heart. All you have to do is choose Christ.” We somehow believe we have finally bowed the knee and made the decision to choose Christ. It is never that one day God awakened you to His calling. Maybe you heard a word, you heard a message, or someone shared something with you that was alive, and at that point, you thought you chose the Lord, but the Lord had chosen you. This is God's way.

The purpose of God according to election will stand. Last week, if my memory serves me right, Roger shared from Ephesians 1:3-4: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ; according as he has chosen us in him before the world's foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love;”

Is it not wonderful that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love? You were not only chosen by God; He did not suddenly have a warm impression of you and decide to save you instantly. He marked you out and divinely selected you before the foundation of the world. Can you imagine the weight of what election means? God chooses us, not that we choose God.

Illustration 1 – A Son to Sarah

He gives a couple of illustrations in the last part of that paragraph, up to verse 13, where he talks about Sarah and the promised seed. It says in verse 9: “For this word (this election) is of promise, According to this time I will come, and there shall be a son to Sarah.” It was God's Word. You may recall that the Bible refers to the three men, who are actually angels, and I believe it happened that way. One was the pre-incarnate Son of God Himself. He appeared and said that Sarah would have a seed with Abraham. You may remember that Sarah was hiding behind the door and laughing in her heart. Then He said, “Why does Sarah laugh?” Of course, she denied laughing. The Lord said, “What is that? I thought somebody said something.” She denied laughing and said, “I did not laugh.” So, God has a wonderful sense of humor. He said, “Okay, we will name this promised seed Isaac.” Can you imagine when they told all the relatives later? They said, “What is your cute little son's name?” Like Joseph and XianXuan's cute little boy in that basket, “What is his name?” And they said, “His name is Isaac.” He must have felt laughter. How strange is

that? But God showed them something of His ways, and He said to Moses, “Is anything impossible with God?” We are so limited, brothers and sisters. We live so much in our senses, so much in our feelings, that we do not understand the ways of God.

Is anything too hard for Him? I believe this is what we see when we look at the Word. He also talks about Jacob and Esau in verse 10-11. “And not only that, but Rebecca having conceived by one, Isaac our father, the children indeed being not yet born, or having done anything good or evil (KJV) (that the purpose of God according to election might stand (KJV), ...” It is never based on what we do. It is a pre-born promise. You were chosen before the foundation of the world. And even in these illustrations of the Jewish people that Paul cited, he was showing that God had long ago thought about what He would do. This is what is so beautiful about this pre-born promise. They had done nothing good or evil. The election was not based on their work. It was based on Him who calls. We need to see that.

Illustration 2 – Jacob was Loved

Then, when we get to verse 13, I think many of us become confused. When it talks about the birth of Jacob and Esau, the twins, it refers to the one who calls. It was said to her that the greater shall serve the younger. “according as it is written, I have loved Jacob, and I have hated Esau.” Have you ever thought about that? For God to say that, I think, is quite remarkable. It comes from Malachi, chapter 1:2-3, where God appeals to His people, telling them about loving Him and how they do not love Him. And He quotes this verse, “I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau.” That is what He said.

There is a famous old story that Lance used to talk regularly about concerning Charles Haddon Spurgeon, although it did not originate from Lance, by the way. I love Lance—no offense to him—and I did not hear him give credit. However, Brother Newell told this story, and he told this story in his book on Romans. And it was a sister that came to Spurgeon in distress over this single verse. “How can God say He has loved Jacob and He has hated Esau? Why would God do such a thing?” And she presented this to Brother Spurgeon, and she said, “I cannot understand why God should say he hated Esau.” Brother Spurgeon responded with something so wonderful. He said, “Madam, that is not my problem. I cannot understand why He says He loved Jacob.”

Think of it. Jacob was the swindler; he stole the birthright. I sometimes feel sorry for Esau. Jacob lied and deceived his blind, dying father and stole the birthright from Esau. I would never think of doing such a thing. And yet, in the ways of God, it is written, “I have loved Jacob.”

Do not get hung up on the phrase, “I have hated Esau.” Instead, think about what God has done and let that sink in. This is the election. The purpose of God according to election shall stand. You know, you are Jacob, I am Jacob, we are all Jacob. Jacob was changed in the end, but God called him in his terrible state. By the end of his life, we see a transformed Jacob leaning upon his staff, worshiping God in his weakness. Finally, the work was complete.

God Shows Mercy

Well, let me just take a few minutes on the last point: the God who shows mercy. He is not only the God who calls us to election; He is the God who shows mercy. When you look at that last point, it is the entire point. Do you know that God not only chose us, but He also showed us the highest mercy imaginable by calling us to be His people, His eternal people? There is nothing grander than that when you truly reflect on it.

Verse 14-16 states: “What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? (This is about God choosing Jacob over Esau.) Far be the thought. For he says to Moses, I will shew mercy to whom I will shew mercy, and I will feel compassion for whom I will feel compassion. So, then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shews mercy.”

We Are People of the Highest Mercy

How wonderful! Is that not a delight to read? These are the ways of God. He shows mercy. We are people of the highest mercy. I think of that great song, “At Calvary.” I believe most of you know the chorus: “Mercy there was great, and grace was free. Pardon there was multiplied to me; there my burdened soul found liberty at Calvary.” What mercies have been shown to me! The mystery of election is governed by mercy. That is all you need to understand. It is not about you; it is Him. It is not what you do for Him; it is Him. He chooses, He elects, and then He shows mercy—eternal mercy.

Do you remember how David, in his most famous work, Psalm 23, ended in verse 6? What did he say? He said, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” This is the way of God.

Jews and Gentiles Are Objects of Mercy

If you read Romans 11:30-31, you will discover something significant. Just thinking ahead for a moment, it calls the Gentiles who have believed “objects of mercy.” It also calls the Jews, who have not yet believed but will believe “objects of mercy.” That is what you are. That is what I am. In the final analysis, we are all objects of mercy. How wonderful this is! You know, the Bible provides us with many chances to feel offended, and many people do. Many walk away simply because they do not understand the ways of God. But listen to what the last verse says. In verse 18, the focus is on Pharaoh.

Romans 9:17-18 states, “For the scripture says to Pharaoh, For this very thing I have raised thee up from amongst men, that I might thus shew in thee my power, and so that my name should be declared in all the earth. So then, to whom he will he shews mercy, and whom he will he hardens.”

We often think about how unfair this seems to Pharaoh. God did harden his heart. God used him as an instrument to show His ways and to show His mighty works. However, if you read the record in Exodus, you will see that Pharaoh himself chose to harden his heart ten times. I am not saying God would have changed His mind and shown mercy had Pharaoh not hardened his heart. But I am saying this is the way of God. Thank God if you

are the Lord's, because you are a vessel of mercy, a vessel of God's divine selection, and you are one to whom God has shown mercy.

Conclusion

Newell said something I like very much. He said that up until now, he is speaking of the first 8 chapters. "The grace of God has been spoken of in this epistle often before. But not until these chapters is mercy named; and until mercy is understood, grace cannot be fully appreciated." Brothers and sisters, this is the glory of the ways of God. The invisible hand that chooses, selects, and calls has His whole purpose wrapped up according to election, and that will stand. It will never fail.

One day, God chose you, and you realized it and simply responded. At that moment, you realize that you were selected, divinely selected, as He had determined before the foundation of the world. You are a testament of divine election, but you are also a testament of divine mercy and unfathomable mercy. Every judgment should have been ours, but instead, in His ways, He replaced it all by showing us mercy.

This is the first part of chapter nine.

Lord, we confess that we do not always understand Your ways. But when You open our eyes to see Your ways, we fall in worship. How glorious it is to be one who is divinely selected! How glorious it is to be one who has had divine mercy shown to him by the God who shows mercy. Lord. We ask You to continue to teach us Your ways. We do not want to just appreciate Your works, Your wonderful works. We want to be like Paul was, like Moses was, and be those who understand Your ways. We ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

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