

“God’s Sovereign Choice Of Jacob”

Romans 9:10-24

Message by Michael J. Barnard

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Teaching Aim: To demonstrate the doctrine of “*election*” is a biblical concept that every Bible believing Christian must deal with. To realize this doctrine should not cause division within the church but rather is a means by which God demonstrates His mercy and compassion to underserving sinners like us. To encourage every believer to understand that we cannot allow our emotions to dictate our theology, “*The Scriptures and the Scriptures alone are the authority for what we believe.*”

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (BIBLE STUDY)

PART I: Before the twins were even born, God chose Jacob to receive divine favor (Rom. 9:10-13)

1. In **Chapter 9** Paul uses the illustration of three individuals who were chosen by God for divine favor: Isaac (**vs. 7**), Jacob (**vs. 13**), and Moses (**vs. 15**). He also uses the illustration of three individuals whom God passed over and left to receive the justice they deserve: Ishmael, Esau, and Pharaoh. Who was the common father of both Isaac and Ishmael? Did Isaac and Ishmael have different mothers? (**See Gen. 16:1-3; 21:1-3**) What made Isaac different from Ishmael? (**See Gen. 21:12**)

2. Who fathered the twins Esau and Jacob (**vs. 10**)? Who was their common mother? Do you think God purposely chose twins to illustrate the doctrine of election? Why? According to **verses 11 & 12**, when did God elect Jacob for his special role? Was Jacob’s election based upon anything he did or was it based on God’s own purpose and good pleasure (**vs. 11**)? (See **Eph. 1:7-9**) What does the name “*Jacob*” mean? (Hint: Search online) What can we learn about Jacob’s character from his name? Why do you think so many people get angry at the doctrine of election? Do you? If so, why?

3. Why was it unthinkable in the Hebrew mindset for the older child in a family to serve the younger (**vs. 12**)? What special rights did the firstborn usually have? How is this different from our culture today? What can we learn about God’s sovereignty from His selection of the younger over the older? Was this true with Ishmael and Isaac as well? What was the basis of God’s election according to **verse 11**? (see **Eph. 1:7-9**).

4. **Verse 13** is one of the most difficult verses in the Bible to interpret. We have little trouble understanding that God loved Jacob, but how could God “*hate*” Esau even before he was born? There have been several interpretations historically: 1) God hated Esau because of his character (see **Psa. 5:5; 10:5**); 2) Jacob and Esau represent the two nations of Israel and Edom. God hated Edom and saw that the nation was destroyed (See **Gen. 25:23; Mal. 1:2-3**); 3) Hate can be a Hebrew idiom which means “*loves less*,” in other words God’s love for Esau was like hate in comparison to his love for Jacob?(see **Luke 14:25-26**); 4) Charles Ryrie believes “*loved*” means “*chosen*,” while “*hated*” means “*rejected*.” Which of the above do you believe is the correct interpretation of this Scripture? Why?

Part II: God chose mercy for Moses but justice for Pharaoh (Rom. 9:14-18)

1. What outcry does Paul anticipate from his readers in **verse 14**? Do people still cry, “*That’s not fair!*” today when the topic of election comes up? Why? According to Paul, is there ever a time when God is unrighteous (**vs. 14**)? Is it even possible for God to be unrighteous? Why or why not? (See **Isa. 6:3; 1 Pet. 1:15**)
2. When Moses asked God to show him His glory in **Exod. 33:18**, how did God respond? (See **Exod. 33:19-20**) How do the attributes of God demonstrate His glory, meaning the sum of who he is (**vs. 15**)? The attributes of God describe Him to us in words that we can understand. What are some of your favorite attributes of God. What are some of the “*communicable attributes*” and how can we demonstrate them in our own lives? What effect do you think living like Jesus will have on the world around us?
3. It is important to note that God always reserves the right to have mercy on whom He will have mercy and compassion on whom He will have compassion; after all, He is God. If God chooses to be merciful to some, is he obligated to be merciful to everyone? Note: Mercy means “*God not giving us the punishment that we deserve*.” Is a Governor issuing clemency to one murderer on death row now obligated to issue the same clemency to every murderer (**vs. 15**)? Why or why not?

4. The “*Prescient View*” of “*foreknowledge*” understands it to mean that God looks down the corridors of time and sees who will choose to believe in Him on their own apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Regeneration then follows. In other words, salvation is dependent upon something people do, these are the ones whom God predestines to salvation. The Prescient View is by far the most popular today, but is it the biblical view? The Augustinian (or Calvinistic) view of “*foreknowledge*” is the belief that those whom God foreknew (or knew beforehand) He predestined to salvation. In this view: God chose, God initiated, the Holy Spirit regenerated and the person dead in their sins spiritually was quickened (or made alive in Christ), then came to faith. (See **Eph. 2:1-5**) In this view, regeneration precedes faith. Which of the two views do you think best fits **verse 16**? Why?

5. We hear a lot today about something called, “*decisional regeneration*.” In other words, people who are dead spiritually make the decision for themselves to be saved. Besides **Romans 9:29** and the questionable definition of foreknowledge, how many other verses can you come up with in Scripture to show that unregenerate (or fallen) man has within himself the ability to choose to be saved without God’s help? (See **vs. 16; John 1:12-13; 3:3; 3:5; 6:37; 6:44, 65; 10:26-30; 17:9, 11-12; Acts 13:48; Eph. 1:4-9**) Do the preceding verses point to the Prescient (or Arminian) explanation of salvation, or to the Augustinian (or Calvinistic) explanation?

6. What do invitations like **John 3:16, Acts 16:31, & Rev. 22:17** teach us about “*how a person actually comes to the point of believing?*” What do verses like **John 3:3, 5; 6:44 and 6:65** teach us about how a person comes to faith? According to Jesus, what are the necessary conditions for the unbeliever to come to believe? Are there any exceptions to God first doing a work in the believer’s heart according to **John 6:44 and 65**?

7. In **verse 17** we learn that it is not an accident when someone is raised up to hold a political office, there are no surprises with God. According to **verse 17**, why did God raise up Pharaoh? How did Pharaoh's being in the office glorify God? God chose to have mercy on Moses; did he choose the same mercy for Pharaoh? According to **verse 18**, what happened to Pharaoh's heart? There is a difference between "*active hardening*" & "*passive hardening*." "*Active Hardening*" would mean that God actively created the evil and unbelief in Pharaoh's heart. *Passive hardening* on the other hand means that God removed his restraining hand from Pharaoh and let him do exactly what he had wanted to do all along. By doing so Pharaoh's heart only became harder and allowed God demonstrated His power. Which view of "*hardening*" do you think fits better biblically? Why?

Part III: The potter reserves the right to choose some clay for noble purposes (Rom. 9:19-24)

1. What complaint does Paul anticipate in **verse 19**? Do we still hear this same complaint today, even among Christians? Why? In **verse 20** Paul rebukes anyone who would foolishly try to make God answerable to them. Why is this such a dangerous sin for us to fall into? (See **Job 38-42**) Have you ever been guilty of questioning God? If so, when?
2. Describe the work of a potter (**vs. 21**)? Is there any life in the clay when the potter begins working? Does the potter have the right to choose some clay for special (or noble) purposes and some for not so special. Must the potter treat all the clay in the same way? In Paul's analogy, who is the Potter? Who is the clay?
3. Is the focus in **verse 22** God's wrath or God's grace? Why? What can we learn about God's love for us through His longsuffering? (See **1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:9**) Not all Christians have the gift of evangelism, but should all Christian's should evangelize? Why or why not? (See **Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 10:8-11**).

