

The Solid Rock

Chosen...Before Time Began – Part VI

Romans 9:24-33

Introduction – Review The Doctrine of Election

Please turn in your Bible to Romans, the personal letter of the apostle Paul, written to believers living in Rome, Italy. Chapter 9 unfolds the doctrine of election – a doctrine that has and will for all of church history, spark debate.

One individual told me that their former pastor preached on the subject of election and the church split down the middle – half of the people left the church and the other half stayed.

Unfortunately, the debate over this doctrine generates a lot of heat, but very little light. We are not studying this to debate anything, and we are certainly not studying this to listen to our own opinions – we are studying this to listen to the word of God.

The Doctrine of Election

So, what have we learned from the word of God about the doctrine of election thus far?

Election is taught in scripture

1. Election is clearly taught in scripture; in fact, the entirety of Romans, chapter 9, declares it.

Election begins with the sovereign choice of God

2. Election begins with the sovereign choice of God; God chooses those who can and must choose Him.

Jesus said in John, chapter 6, verse 44,

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him . . .

Earlier, in verse 37, Jesus said,

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

Election exalts the sovereignty of God

3. Election also exalts the perfect and entire sovereignty of God, who alone has the right to determine and decree whatever He wants.

Paul made this clear in verses 15, 16, and 18 of Romans, chapter 9.

For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. . . . So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

Election elevates God and minimizes man

4. Election elevates God and minimizes man. Paul writes in verses 20b through 21,

. . . who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump

one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

We want God to be sovereign in a lot of things, but the idea of total sovereign power and purpose in the matter of salvation is, for many, just a little too sovereign.

By the way, for those who are new to this study, this is our sixth study on election in Romans, chapter 9. This is the conclusion of our study in chapter 9, so if you feel a little dizzy, we understand.

Responses to the Doctrine of Election

Now, we can respond in one of three ways to this doctrine.

Reject the doctrine of election

1. We can reject the doctrine of election.

We can adopt a view that God really does not choose the believer, He only sees ahead of time who chooses Him. This view makes God the responder and man the sovereign.

Over-emphasize the doctrine of election

2. Secondly, we can over-emphasize the doctrine of election.

In other words, one extreme is that man is responsible for coming to faith and God does nothing but respond, while the other extreme is that God does everything and man never has to respond.

This was the view held in the hyper-Calvinism of William Carey's day. It was said to Carey, who wanted to go to India to reach the un-reached, and who would become the *Father of Modern Missions*, "Sit down young man; if God wants the heathen to be saved, they will be saved."

In other words, this view says, "Don't do anything, since God does everything."

Paul will clear this up in Romans, chapter 10. Chapter 9 deals with God's election of man; chapter 10 deals with the decision and responsibility of man. Paul says, in verse 14 of chapter 10,

How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

The over-emphasis of this doctrine says we do nothing.

Ladies and gentlemen, just read the scriptures. From God's perspective, He has already predestined belief, but from our perspective, we must believe. Even though God loved us first, we must love Him too.

That is the reason our gospel involves a decision. You may remember the example, in Acts, chapter 16, when the apostle Paul was approached by a Philippian jailor. The jailor asked one night, in verse 30b,

... what must I do to be saved?

Paul did not say, "Well, are you one of the chosen? Do you understand the decrees of sovereign God who predestined the saint before the foundation of the world? Do you believe you are one of God's elect?"

No! Paul responded, in verse 31,

... Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved . . .

The only One who knows ahead of time who the elect are is God. The very fact that someone has a burdened heart and a desire to confess their sin and turn from idols to the living God, as they did in Thessalonica, requires that God has already moved toward them in His grace, to take off the blinders and bring them to spiritual life.

From our perspective, it is at that moment when, in your personal testimony, you realize as did the jailor, "Hey, I don't need a religion – that's not cutting it. And I don't need to turn over a new leaf – I continue to fail. I need forgiveness . . . I need a Savior."

So, you ask a similar question, "What must I do to be saved?"

The answer is not, "Check to see if you have a predestination certificate. Check to see if you have an election coupon."

Now, if I want a chicken sandwich for lunch, which I often do, I usually think to myself, "I wonder if there's a Chick-fil-A coupon around?"

If I find one, I will go. If not, I will still go, but I have to borrow some money from one of my kids. We have arrived at that point in life when they are the only ones that have any!

There are no coupons necessary for a salvation deal – it is free. However, genuine believers who receive salvation, which cost them nothing, become people who want to give Him everything!

As the line in the hymn, *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*, by Isaac Watts, says,
... love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.

Accept the doctrine of election

3. The third option is to accept the doctrine as plainly taught in scripture.

The Bible reveals both the sovereign electing grace of God, as well as the responsibility of mankind to believe in Christ alone.

Paul's Closing Comments on the Doctrine of Election in Romans, Chapter 9

The sovereign election by God and the responsibility of man to believe in Christ is, in fact, exactly how Paul wraps up his discussion on the doctrine of election in Romans, chapter 9. Look at verses 24 through 33.

even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

As He says also in Hosea, "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' and her who was not beloved, 'beloved.'

"And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there they shall be called sons of the living God."

Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved;

"for the Lord will execute His word on the earth, thoroughly and quickly."

And just as Isaiah foretold, "Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left to us a posterity, we would have become like Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah."

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;

but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.

Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,

just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."

Paul, in these verses, quotes Old Testament passages to reveal God's sovereignty in choosing from among both Jew and Gentile. In fact, his words are incredibly encouraging to the Gentiles, who might wonder if they could ever be considered people of God. Paul's words are also convicting, as he specifically answers the Jewish notion that they are already included in whatever God decides to do because they are Jewish.

Let me give three concise statements into which Paul's revelations can be organized.

God's inheritance is initiated according to His own will

1. First, God's inheritance is initiated according to His own will.

This first two prophecies Paul summarizes, in verses 25 and 26, are revealed through the prophet Hosea. They come from the context of Hosea's marriage to Gomer, a prostitute who will be unfaithful to him time and time again.

Gomer's moral unfaithfulness to Hosea will provide an analogy to Israel's spiritual unfaithfulness to God. God tells Hosea to give names to the children that Gomer bears that reveal God's attitude toward the nation of Israel.

The first child was to be named "Jezreel," which means "scattered". The Hebrew word has to do with the motion of the hand when scattering something to the winds; such as, when sowing seed. The second child was named "Lo-Ruhamah," which means "no love/no pity".

True to these prophecies, to this day, the Jewish people are scattered around the world, like seed thrown to the wind. And, over the centuries, including this one, they receive from the world, little or no pity.

You might say, "But they've re-gathered again, haven't they?"

They have formed the state of Israel, which was incorporated in 1948. However, my friends, there are more Jews living in New York today, than in Israel. There are more Jews in Russia than in Israel.

The prophesied re-gathering of Israel as a nation, is yet to come. It will happen during the tribulation period, after the Bride of Christ from every nation, Jew and Gentile, are caught up to meet her Bridegroom in the air and then, whisked away to the Father's house.

According to Hosea's further prophecy, God will then, once again, woo Israel as a nation to His side. The Jews will flock toward Israel. The prophet says that every boat with a sail will set off for the land of Israel.

In the meantime, look at what God is doing; look at who God is giving His inheritance to, in verses 25a and 26b.

... I will call those who were not My people, "My people," ...

(the Gentiles of the world),

... there they shall be called sons of the living God.

The apostle Peter picks up on this prophecy and applies it directly to the church when he says, in I Peter, chapter 2, verses 9 and 10,

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

The Jews who thought they were automatically in, are out. The Gentiles who thought they were automatically out, are in. Sons of the living God, or those who inherit eternal life, are not chosen by race; they are chosen by grace.

So, God's inheritance is initiated according to His own will.

God's punishment is performed according to His own timing

2. The second statement I will make to summarize Paul's next comments is that God's punishment is performed according to His own timing.

Paul quotes from Isaiah, in verses 27 and 28, and basically reminds the Jewish reader especially, that even under the Old Covenant, the nation was not chosen as a whole to be saved, but a remnant. He writes,

... Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant [small portion] that will be saved.

Paul then reminds us all of the patience of God. Instead of immediately wiping the sinner from the face of the earth, God patiently allows the sinner to offend His character; to ridicule His name; to mock His word.

Judgment, however, will eventually come. And all of mankind would be lost if it were not for the goodness and grace of God to save anyone.

Paul pulls from history that one event that no one would have ever forgotten – Sodom and Gomorrah. No one would ever forget the fire that fell from heaven and obliterated these two cities. Not even a trace of their existence, their culture, their city would remain – nothing.

I believe the patience of God is on our own nation as it is in the midst of legitimizing sodomy. Approving and condoning what Paul wrote in Romans, chapter 1, would be one of the signs of moral collapse and impending judgment.

Several reporters have called our church over the past weeks to get an interview regarding the homosexual agenda and gay marriage. As a practice, I turn them down, simply because you never know how your words will be reported or perhaps, distorted. One reporter reached my secretary a few weeks ago, to ask for an interview. She said she was a member of our church, and she was, so I felt she would represent my words well enough. I agreed to do the interview and my secretary contacted her to arrange a time to meet. She reminded us that she was not a newspaper reporter, but a television reporter and that the cameraman would arrive.

It aired this past Friday night at two different times on WUNC-TV – a station well known for its conservative stance! The clip began with a beautiful picture of our buildings, and I want to say that the reporter did a wonderful job of editing our session – choosing just the right statements to reflect our biblical position. The opposing side was represented by a pastor from a liberal Baptist church where several gay unions have already been blessed.

I could not help but think of Romans, chapter 1. In fact, the cameraman at one point, asked me to pull out a book and read so he could get some impromptu shots. I just happened to pull out a commentary on Romans, which seemed fitting to the discussion, and the book cover could be clearly seen on television. I

thought the apostle Paul deserved some media coverage.

Paul used a clear, unmistakable, black and white issue that God condemned to reveal the judgment of God, according to the timing of God, to prove the sovereignty of God. He wiped out a city, but saved one family.

By the way, in the amazing timing of God, grace is also given. How patient God was with Adam and Eve. How patient He was with the generation of Noah, which was given over a hundred years to repent.

The dying thief is a classic example of God's electing patience. He was a murderer and a thief who deserved hell if anybody deserved it! Yet, the grace of God allowed him to be hung on his cross next to the Son of God. The patience and goodness of God finally reached their climax as the blinders fell away and this man, the worst of men, at the last moment possible, saw the Lord for who He was. The Lord was not a condemned, misguided Messiah, but the King of Kings, who truly was the King of the Jews. And the thief said to Jesus, as recorded in Luke, chapter 23, verse 42,

... Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!

Jesus responded, in verse 43,

... today you shall be with Me in Paradise.

The thief could not join a church; get baptized; do one good deed; give away one copper coin, but he was redeemed.

So, not only is God's inheritance initiated by God and God's punishment of sin performed according to God's timing, but let me give a third statement.

God's deliverance is defined according to His own will

3. God's deliverance is defined according to His own will.

Paul writes in verses 31 and 32 of Romans, chapter 9, that the Jewish nation wanted heaven by virtue of their works, where God's plan was salvation by faith in the crucified Savior. How they stumbled over a slain Messiah.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, in I Corinthians, chapter 1, verses 22 through 24,

For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to

Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Salvation is not defined by the wisdom of man, but by the wisdom of sovereign God.

The nation was expecting a lion; God sent a Lamb instead. They wanted a throne in Jerusalem; God put a cross on Golgotha.

How foolish is that? How offensive is that – that the Messiah would be crucified by Romans?

But to those of us who are called to faith in Christ, we say, "How marvelous is that! God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of Jesus Christ."

We who believe, do not stumble over this Rock – we have taken our stand on this Rock; we build our lives on this Rock, who is Jesus Christ.

Perhaps you remember that encounter between our Lord and Peter, recorded in Matthew, chapter 16. The Lord asked His disciples, in verse 13,

... Who do people say that [I am]?

They said, in verse 14,

Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

Peter said to Him, in verse 16,

... You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

The Lord responded, in verse 18, by saying something that has been confusing to so many people,

I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

Many believe that the rock upon which the church is built is Peter. That is the trouble with preaching a Latin or an English translation, rather than the Greek words themselves.

The Lord was making a wonderful pun out of Peter's name. Peter is from "petros," which means, "little pebble or stone". However, when the Lord said, "upon this rock," He changed the word from "petros" to "petra," which means bedrock or large stone. In other words, "Upon this bedrock I will build My church."

The Lord was saying, "Oh Peter, little pebble, that truth which you declared about who I am is the bedrock of the church. I am the Christ, the Son of the

living God, and it will be upon Me, the eternal rock; the bedrock of sovereign deity, that I will build My church, and hell will never overcome it.”

The church is not built upon a mere pebble! It is built upon the bedrock of Jesus Christ.

The Greek word for church, when Jesus said, “I will build My church,” is “ekklesia,” which means, “called out ones”! Ladies and gentlemen, the church is an assembly of chosen ones – elect ones by the grace and mercy of God – and the gates of hell will never overcome the elect.

You might ask, “But am I one of the elect – it seems I am often overcome?”

My friend, are you stumbling over the cross of Christ? Is His death and resurrection; His deity and sovereignty foolishness to you? Are you stumbling over Him or are you standing upon Him?

If you stand upon this Rock, Paul gives you a promise in the last phrase of this great chapter,

. . . he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.

If we believe in Him, we will not be disappointed – or ashamed. This verb is in the future tense, and is a reference to that day when we stand before Him. We will not be disappointed in our Redeemer; we will not be ashamed in the presence of our Advocate!

Why? We have run to the Rock . . . we have run to the Rock. And we will then, on that day, without

the distraction of sin and the imperfections of mind and spirit, as I Peter, chapter 2, verses 9 and 10, say,

. . . proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called [us] out of darkness into His marvelous light; for [we] once were not a people [of God], but now . . . are the people of God; [we] had not received mercy, but now [we] have received mercy.

And we sing even now,

My hope is built on nothing less

Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.

I dare not trust the sweetest frame,

But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.

On Christ the solid Rock I stand,

All other ground is sinking sand;

All other ground is sinking sand.

When He shall come with trumpet sound,

Oh may I then in Him be found.

Dressed in His righteousness alone,

Faultless to stand before the throne.

Now, beloved, go . . . and while the world stumbles over Him, you stand *upon* Him; stand *in* Him; stand *for* Him . . . for the praise and glory of His name.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 6/13/2004 by Stephen Davey.

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