

## The Elect of God - radio (12-Mar-2017)

The text of our sermon today is Romans 9:1-24. I've entitled this message, "*The Elect of God.*" Paul says in v1...

*"1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, 2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. 3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: 4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; 5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. 6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: 7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. 9 For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son. 10 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; 11 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) 12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. 14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. 15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. 17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. 18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. 19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? 20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast*

*thou made me thus? 21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? 22 What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: 23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, 24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”*

If God made so many promises to Israel, that nation of people who were born to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, why did so many in that nation perish in their own unbelief? If God promised to be their God, if He promised they would be His people, if He promised to take away their sins and remember their sins no more, then why did most of the people in that nation remain in their sins and unbelief and were eternally lost?

- The answer is given in Romans 9. That answer is that not all in the nation of Israel are in the true Israel. Birth to Abraham does not make one a child of God. Ishmael was born to Abraham, but only Isaac was given the blessings of God's eternal promises in Christ. Jacob and Esau were both born to Isaac, but only Jacob was given spiritual blessings in Christ.
- It was not failure on the part of God's word, but it was because God's word did not promise to everybody born to Abraham that he would be God's adopted son. Nor did God promise everyone born to Isaac that he would be God's adopted son in Christ. Nor did God promise to make everybody born to Jacob His own adopted son.
- You see, men naturally have a mistaken notion about God's word. Men naturally think God's promises in some way depend on man. They do not. If God's promises depend on man, then God would have pointed to Israel's unbelief and disobedience as the reason why Ishmael and Esau and most in Israel perished in unbelief. But the only reason He gives is His own sovereign, eternal will.

## First objection

Men have three objections to God's electing love in Christ for His people. The first objection comes as an assumption, a false premise. That false assumption is that God's word requires man's cooperation. Men think God requires them to meet conditions before God will to do His will. How often do you hear this expressed by people today? How often do people today say that God can only save you if you will let Him? But this is not the truth of scripture!

- The most common way in which this objection is expressed is as follows. It is almost universally claimed that God loves everybody and that Christ died for everybody, and that it is up to you to accept, or to decide, or to exert your will for God to save you. Because it is mistakenly thought that God loves everybody and that Jesus died for everybody, then it must come down to man to make the difference between himself and others. When we do not understand God's salvation, we cannot get beyond thinking that salvation ultimately hinges on something that I do. As if God cannot save unless those He saves approve or help Him in some way, or simply cooperate! But this makes salvation conditioned on man. God here denies this in Romans 9. He says, "*Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect, for they are not all Israel which are of Israel.*" In other words, there is no deficiency in God's word. The reason most in Israel perish is because God did not choose to rescue them from their sin and unbelief!
- Scripture makes clear that salvation is God rescuing those who are not only unable to save themselves, but positively opposed to God, who are His enemies. They oppose the truth of the Gospel and therefore oppose God and their own salvation! But this is the glory of God. He will have mercy on such as these! By motives of grace, found in His heart from eternity, without any influence from men, and without any conditions placed on men, God has chosen to have mercy on whom He will, by choosing them in Christ to eternal salvation! And this is all to the praise of the glory of His grace! God saves rebels by His sovereign will, because of His sovereign grace, by the work of Christ alone, and He tells this to sinners, who are bound in the

prison of our own unbelief and their own heart's deception! And in telling them this, He opens the hearts of those He will, and gives them faith to see and depend on Christ alone as all of their salvation!

- The best news any sinner ever heard is that in spite of my sin, in spite of my rebellion, in spite of my hatred for God and my love for myself, in spite of my pride, in spite of my self-deception, in spite of my lust that always seeks my own way, God, has from eternity, stepped in by His sovereign will to save hell-deserving sinners by giving them to Christ in eternal election!
- There is no greater news to this sinner than that in the eternal purpose of God, He has found complete satisfaction to His justice and perfect fulfillment of His righteousness in His Son for chosen sinners (Isa. 53:11; Rom. 4:25; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; Titus 2:14; Heb. 9:26; 10:1-19)! He does not look for one thing from me, the sinner, but looks to His Son for all that He requires of me (Rom. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 1:30)! O, blessed Gospel, O blessed, sovereign God of all grace in Christ Jesus the Lord!
- If God were to look to me to meet one condition, I could not do it! If salvation depends on me in any way, then I will justly perish under God's wrath! But God has eternally ordained that Christ should stand for His people, and that they should stand before God in Him. He has eternally ordained and to receive from Christ all He demands and requires of His people. And He has determined to accept them for what Christ has done in their place (Rom. 3:21-25; Rom. 5:6-10; 1 Pet. 2:24)! God justified His people when He justified His Son (Rom. 4:25). God made His people holy by the offering of His Son (Heb. 10:10). God has blessed and will continue to bless His people with all of the blessings He gives to Christ for His obedience unto death, the blessings Christ earned for His people (Eph. 1:3-7; Php. 2:6-8; Rom. 10:4; Isa. 45:25)!
- The fact is, the only condition I can meet is that I am a wretched, hateful sinner, without strength to remove one sin or to obey one law (Rom. 8:7; 7:14-15, 17-18, 21-24)! In myself, my sin is great (Ps. 25:11)! My sins are many (Luke 7:42,47)! I cannot obey God (Rom. 8:7; Jer. 13:23; 1 Kings 8:38,44). And I cannot believe His Son (Rom. 11:32; Gal. 3:22-23). But in spite of my complete inability to do what God requires and my utter inability

to suffer what God demands to pay for my own sins, in spite of all that I am, God looks to His Son for sinners like me (1 Tim. 1:15; Luke 18:13; Hosea 13:9)! This is the truth of scripture, and this is the good news of the Gospel! *“Of Him (of God) are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, that according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the LORD”* (1 Cor. 1:30-31). *“In the LORD shall all the house of Israel be justified and shall glory”* (Isa. 45:25). All of the chosen people of God are *in Christ*, and in Christ, all of them are justified. For this, they boast in Christ alone as their all before God, exactly according to the truth of the way it is and has been from eternity! This is the faith of God’s elect (Titus 1:1).

- Election is God choosing His people in Christ from eternity, and finding them in Christ, not having their own righteousness, but the righteousness of God, the obedience unto death of His own Son in our human nature, the righteousness of God which we receive from God by faith alone in Christ alone (by grace, freely, apart from all conditions on my part, received as an established, everlasting, accomplished righteousness, made mine own by God in Christ)!

First objection summarized

The first objection God deals with in Romans 9 is swept aside as a faulty premise. Men naturally assume God's word requires them to meet conditions for His promises to be fulfilled. But Rom. 9:6-8 exposes this as a false assumption. God’s word always accomplishes His will (Isa. 55:11). The problem, is not that God’s word cannot save because man failed to meet the conditions. The truth is, God's word actually and unfailingly saves all those God intended to save.

*“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it”* (Isa. 55:11). Jesus said, *“All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me”* (John 6:37). Therefore, we see that God’s word unfailingly accomplishes God’s intended will. (Christ said again, *“As thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given*

*Him*” (John 17:2)). It is therefore unmistakably clear. All whom God chose in Christ from eternity, are saved in time, they shall never perish, they shall have everlasting life!

The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation because in it the righteousness of God is revealed! And that righteousness is the obedience of Jesus Christ in His life and death, even the death of the cross. He answered justice and fulfilled God's law by His obedience (Rom. 5:19; Php. 2:6-8). That is what the Gospel declares. God gives faith to His chosen people to believe this truth (Rom. 1:16-17)! “*When the Gentiles heard this, as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed*” (Acts 13:48). God’s word in the Gospel is His power to salvation.

## Second objection

The second objection men raise against God's electing love of His people in Christ is that God is unfair. We know this is the second objection because this is addressed in what follows in Romans 9:11: “*11 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) 12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. 14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. 15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy” (Rom. 9:11-16).*

- Make no mistake. Salvation is not of him who wills. It is not of him who runs (who expends all of his strength to obtain eternal life (Matt. 19:16-26). It is of Him who shows mercy! “*Salvation is of the LORD*” (Jonah 2:9)!!
- In these verses, God anticipates and answers this objection: if God, before Jacob and Esau were born, before they did any good or evil, if God loved Jacob and hated Esau, isn’t God unrighteous? But notice, scripture reveals this truth and makes this claim without apology. Knowing what man’s

reaction would be, the Spirit of God raises the objection: “*What shall we say then, is there unrighteousness with God?*”

- What do you and I think? Don't you and I naturally think that if God alone made the difference between these two twin boys, without regard to their good or bad works, that God must somehow be unfair in His choice? Isn't that our objection?
- But God answers our objection. And it is in His answer that we are greatly instructed. He says, “*God forbid.*” Now, that simply “no” is sufficient. God is a God of truth (Ps. 31:5). He is holy in all His ways (Ps. 145:17; Deut. 32:4). Therefore, if God did it, it is right! But what the Spirit of God does next, teaches us how we know truth, the truth of anything, and how we are to be assured in our conscience of what is true (Heb. 11:3; John 3:33). Scripture is brought to bear on the objector's question!
- The Gospel is “*according to the scriptures*” (1 Cor. 15:1-4). That fact gives the strongest assurance possible to believers. Scripture is unshakably and unalterably true. It cannot be broken (Matt. 24:35; Dan. 10:21; John 10:35). Scripture is God's word written! It is for this reason that when Jesus was tempted by the devil, He responded three times with, “*It is written.*” He referred to God's written word as the ultimate authority (Ps. 138:2; Ps. 119:89,160). That is what the Spirit of God does here in Romans 9:13-15. And that is what we must do. We must never make our confidence in God to hinge on our own reason. To do so is to elevate man's reason above God's written word. We only know anything because God has spoken. And He has only spoken in scripture. The Bible alone is the word of God. All additions and subtractions all false. God repeatedly pronounces His curse on all who add to or take away from His written word. If Christ, who is God over all, and if the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Truth, make their final stand on scripture, then scripture must be our only ground of confidence and our assurance before God. It is what God says, not what I think, that is the answer to every question.
- Paul therefore says, “*It is written, Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated.*” This establishes the undeniable truth that God loved Jacob and hated Esau

before either of these twins were born. It also proves that God does not love everybody! He did not love Esau. Scripture continues.

- *“For He saith to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.’”* (This is the infallible truth brought to bear.) This scripture establishes without a doubt that salvation is by God's sovereign mercy to sinners, a mercy that springs from His own will. It must spring from God alone for several reasons.
- Mercy must be by God's will alone because mercy, by definition, presupposes that mercy is the only solution! Understand this, where there is a Savior, there is a sinner! And where sovereign God wills to show mercy in that almighty Savior, there is a sinner who deserves wrath in himself, but is unfailingly saved from the wrath he deserves in His Substitute!
- When God speaks of salvation, two things are always held in contrast to display His great grace. First, the complete ruin and utter helplessness of those He saves. Second, the perfect work of salvation that our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, accomplished.
- Scripture says that Christ is the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8). If there is a Lamb slain, there is a sacrifice. If there is a sacrifice, there are sinners for whom that sacrifice is offered. If there is an accepted sacrifice for chosen sinners, the sins of those sinners are remembered no more. And if their sins are remembered no more, they have been saved in the Lord. These two things are always held up to our view: what we are in ourselves as sinners, and what we are in Christ: washed, redeemed, clothed, righteous, perfected (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Isa. 61:10; Jer. 23:6; Heb. 10:14)!
- *“When we were yet without strength (that's what we are in ourselves), Christ died for the ungodly (that's what we are in ourselves). If when we were enemies (that's what we are in ourselves), we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled (that's what are in Christ), we shall be saved by His life”* (Rom. 5:6-10). It's because of what we are in Christ that we are saved, even, and in spite of, what we are in ourselves. God speaks of His chosen people as they are in themselves, “without strength, ungodly, sinners, enemies of God.” And He speaks of them as they are in



Christ. “Reconciled. Justified. Perfected. Righteous in Him. Sanctified. Raised from the dead” (Rom. 5:9-10; Heb. 10:10,14; Rom. 5:19;10:4; 1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Pet. 2:24).

- God has mercy on sinners, but His mercy is sovereign. It is mercy out of His uninfluenced will. It is mercy that is free and depends on the goodness of God in Christ alone. It is not mercy that finds something in the sinner. And it is not mercy that waits for the self-condemned sinner to respond. It is a mercy that saves the undeserving, and the helpless, in spite of their sin and their unbelief (without strength)! And it provides all that justice demands in the sinner’s Substitute! It is a mercy that brings every grace: repentance, and faith and love that works by faith (Gal. 5:6). It is a mercy that gives righteousness (Rom. 5:17) and gives eternal life (Rom. 6:23). None of these can be earned. None of these come from the sinner. All flow from and come from God alone because of His sovereign grace alone, in Christ alone, to chosen sinners alone.
- Now, who could fault God for showing such undeserved grace?!
- But men will point to Esau and say, “God hated Esau before the world began! That makes God unjust and unfair!” Does it? If mercy is holy God’s prerogative to sinners, if mercy is the only wise and good God choosing His people in Christ, so that their standing is only what they are in Christ, if by God’s mercy, Christ answers all for His people, in their place and on their behalf, then what injustice is there in God that He would choose one in Christ and leave another to answer God in his own person? What injustice is there in God that He would predetermine to deal with a man in his own person, according to God’s justice? Isn’t the most we can say about this is that God is just?
- Think again what this sovereign mercy is. It is the free mercy of God in Christ. But what does mercy in Christ mean? It means that God determined before to lay the sins of His people on Christ. It means that God determined before to punish His Son for the sins that were not His, but made His by the sovereign will of God. And it means that after the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled all righteousness by His own obedience to the will of God, that God poured out His wrath on Him as the greatest sinner that ever lived! Christ, more than

any man, deserved to die, because Christ bore the sins of everyone of God's elect people. Their sins were made His. God therefore plunged the sword of His justice into the heart of His own dear Son (Zech. 13:7)!

- Now, think again about your objection that God is unfair because He hated Esau before Esau was born. Which was more unfair: that He determined Esau would stand before Him in his own person, outside of Christ, and require Esau to obey His law and answer justice for his own deeds; or, that God required Christ to answer for the sins of His people in His own person (1 Pet. 2:24; Isa. 53:4-12)?! Which should raise our sense of abhorrence more, that God would eternally require Esau to keep His law and suffer under the hand of His justice for disobeying that law, or that God would require Christ who is without sin and obeyed God perfectly, to then bear as His own, the sins of foul sinners who only deserve God's wrath?
- I think if we are fair, we will judge God to be fair for requiring that sinners be punished for their own sins, while we stand incomprehensibly amazed that God would punish His Son to save chosen sinners!
- What is more shocking, that God required Esau to answer His justice for his own sins, or that God saved that lying, cheating Jacob by requiring Christ to answer justice in his place?!
- It doesn't surprise me that God judges men for their sins. What surprises me is that God judged Christ for the sins of His people!
- God was uninfluenced by men to offer His Son, in sovereign mercy for His sinful people. And God was uninfluenced by those sinful people whom He would save, because there was nothing but sin in them to influence Him!
- Who can fault God for holding Esau to the demands of His justice?
- But someone will say, "Didn't God hate Esau before he was a sinner?" God hated Esau by not choosing him in Christ. God left Esau outside of Christ (mercy is in Christ alone, Luke 18:13, Esau was not shown mercy, therefore, God determined to leave Esau to himself rather than in mercy choosing him in Christ). All men in themselves are sinners. It is only in Christ that any are righteous. Therefore, outside of Christ, all men are hated of God.

- In justice, God says, “*Thou hatest all workers of iniquity*” (Ps. 5:5)! But in sovereign mercy in Christ, He says, “*I have not beheld iniquity in Jacob*” (Num. 23:21)!
- But doesn’t this doctrine make men fatalistic? If God damns men for no cause, why concern myself with these things at all? God will do what He will do! No one can resist Him!

That is the third objection that sinful men raise to God’s electing love of His people in Christ. If God has mercy on whom He will, and gives men up to their own hearts’ lust, pride and deceit, why does God then find fault with men, “*For who has resisted His will?!?*”

- God answers this objection. He answers it from scripture. Again, we too must find peace in what God says. To go beyond scripture, to rely on our reason to determine why God chose one and did not choose another beyond His declaration that it seemed good to Him who alone is good and who alone is wise, is to put our reason above God’s word. It is to make God answer our reasoning. But this is idolatrous pride of man’s heart! We don’t even practice what we demand of God! Who, in a family or a business or in government, requires everyone affected by decisions to be involved at every step in the process to understand why a decision is made, and to be satisfied with the outcome?! Any family or business or government that attempts to operate on such a principle will miserably fail! Is not God sovereign? Is He not all-wise? Does He not do what pleases Him at all times?! Isn’t He alone good?! Is not His wisdom beyond men to comprehend? Therefore, to require God to answer our reason before we can be satisfied is the height of folly and pride. It is a flat denial that God is God and we are only flesh!
- To the objection, “Why does He yet find fault, for who has resisted His will?” God answers: “*Nay, but O man, who are you that repliest against God!?! Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, ‘Why have you made me thus?’ Doesn’t the potter have power over the clay, to make of the same lump, one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor??*”
- Scripture answers simply and unapologetically: It is right for God to do with His own what seems good to Him (Matt. 20:15). He created all things for

Himself, even the wicked for the day of evil (Prov. 16:4). He does not give account of His matters to any created being (Job 33:13)! God is God!

- Let us therefore come as the Publican, and cry, “God, be merciful to me the sinner! Look upon Christ for me! Receive satisfaction from Him for me! And receive His obedience as all my righteousness! Find me, gracious God, in your own dear Son!” (Luke 18:13)! This is the true mercy of God declared in the Gospel.