

The Glories of the Doctrine of Election

The Book of Acts
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Take our Bibles and we're going to open them up to Acts 13. This is the last week that we'll spend here in chapter 13 before moving on with this missionary journey that Paul and Barnabas are on. This is the first of three missionary journeys that are recorded in the book of Acts, and if you remember, we have been in the place called Pisidia Antioch which is part of the province of Galatia, so these are actually the Galatians who are being spoken of here, and today we want to focus our attention on a single verse and the doctrine that flows from this verse. It's not the only verse in Scripture this doctrine flows from, you'll see a number of them laid out before you, but this one is, Luke is particular in his choice of words here and we want to examine that more closely.

Acts 13:48 says this,

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

We're going to do business with God today on the meaning of that particular verse in the book of Acts.

Let's pray together.

Father, you alone know the heart. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it. You know it, Lord, you know every heart in here. You know the thought that is in every mind at this very moment. Lord, you know the purposes that you have for us. Lord, you know the grace and the mercy that you have spread throughout this creation, Father. Lord, you are the most merciful, the most gracious and most loving of all beings and yet, Lord, how often your name is maligned and the doctrine of Scripture reviled on the basis of verses like this one. Lord, I pray that you would give to us clarity of thinking, Father, that you would give us humility before the word of God, Lord, that we might consider together what this verse teaches, what this doctrine declares about who you are and who we are, and how you have worked things in order to

bring glory to yourself and salvation to many. Father, I pray that you would help me today. These things we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

We know this, at least twice Paul and Barnabas had opportunity to preach in the synagogue at Pisidia Antioch. At least twice and in a time in between, they spent a lot of time laying out the gospel to all of the people who came to them. The first time they preached, they preached the gospel and the Apostle Paul was able to lay out the gospel, and as you hear the gospel preached in Acts 13, what you hear over and over and over again is, "God did. God did. God did. God did." It begins with Paul saying to them, "So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: 'Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great,'" and then he continues on from there. He says, "God did this. God chose our ancestors. God led them out of Egypt. God supported them in the land. God brought them into a Promised Land. God gave to them judges. God gave to them kings. And God has given to you a Savior and what have you done? Human responsibility, you rejected that Savior, you crucified him and then God raised him from the dead." It should not surprise us that both Paul and Luke say, "And God gave life to all those appointed for eternal life." It follows in the stream.

Paul begins preaching. The first time he preaches this sermon, we're told that the people begged for more, that's day 1. Begged for more, "Preach longer! We want to hear more about this gospel and about the grace, about the mercy, about how Jesus came, Son of David, but was crucified and raised up King of all the world. Tell us more." Eight days later, the whole city shows up, the whole city shows up, Jews and Gentiles, everybody wants to hear the message preached and some of the people begin to revile and blaspheme and malign the Apostle Paul and contradict the things that he's saying. And things get harder and harder in Pisidia Antioch until finally Paul and Barnabas are thrown out and shake off the dust and go on elsewhere, but a church has been established and they're filled with the Holy Spirit and with joy. And here is the question: what is the determining factor when the whole city arrives and the gospel is preached and everybody there hears the same gospel proclaimed by the same man, and it's the same gospel that I preached to you and that is preached in every faithful pulpit? Why is it that some of them believe and some of them revile and some of them presumably shrug their shoulders and go home? And Luke tells us that the determinative factor is this, that all those appointed to eternal life believe.

Now before, I'm going to get to this point in a minute, people hear that and hate that. It's a natural human reaction to hear that verse, go, "I don't like that. I don't want God to choose. I want to choose." But before you rise up in rebellion against the word of God, let's go a little bit further down this road. This verse is one of many that teaches what we call the doctrine of election, or what is more commonly known as the doctrine of predestination. What is this doctrine? Here it is as simple as I can make it for you. The doctrine of election is this, that God has chosen on the basis of his own counsel, not on the basis of anything else, it's unconditional, on the basis of his own counsel to have mercy and save some humans though they have done nothing to merit his favor while passing over others in justice. God's will, not man's will is determinative in the matter of

salvation. And I say to you today before I go any further, this is a glorious gracious doctrine that when you understand it should cause you to rise up in praise of God's name and cheer and say, "Praise be to God!" And it doesn't do that for a lot of people because they don't understand what's going on. We're going to talk about that for a few minutes today.

That's the doctrine of salvation, that God has chosen and God's will, not man's will, is determinative in all matters of salvation. You go, "Is that really what the Bible teaches? Maybe we're just twisting this one passage here." But this one passage here, there's no way around what Luke has said. He has chosen intentionally a word which could mean "written beforehand" or could mean "ordained" or could mean "decreed," but there's no way around what Luke has written. So either Luke is out of step with the rest of Scripture or our thinking is out of step when we begin to argue, "No, no, this is not what God has done."

So here is just a little portion of what the Scripture has to say about it. Jesus declares in John 6:37, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me," those are words of election and predestination, "but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.: Jesus.

Jesus again, John 10:27, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I will give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me," words of election, "is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

The Apostle Peter on that great day of Pentecost as he preaches a sermon that ushers into the church thousands of people, concludes his great sermon with these words from Acts 2:38. It's a general call. It's a universal call. It's proclaimed to everyone who listens. It's proclaimed to you. This is what he says, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." Words of election.

The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 1, speaking about the glories of salvation and this is how I know this is a glorious doctrine, this is meant to be gracious and merciful and to delight your soul, because Paul glories in this. He says this, "Blessed. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved." You hear in that

chose us in him before the creation of the world, predestined us for adoption to himself according to the purpose of his will.

Romans 9. You want to do business with God, you must do business with Romans 9. Romans, the whole book of Romans is a legal argument laying out God's entire plan of salvation from beginning to end. Romans 8, that glorious glorious part of the Bible, perhaps my favorite chapter in all of Scripture, Romans 8, "There is now no more condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." It begins that way, it concludes with the words, "there is nothing in heaven and earth that can separate us from the love that is in Christ Jesus." And then Romans 9 comes along to answer the question how is it that Israel who was chosen by God, that some of them have missed it? And the whole of Romans 9 lays out the argument for God's divine choice in his election. Here's a little bit from Romans 9. I want you to hear the same womb, different results, same lump of clay, different results. Here's Romans 9:10, "when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad--in order that God's purpose of election might stand, not because of works but because of him who calls--she was told, 'The older will serve the younger.' As it is written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.'"

Here's a good question for that rabbit trail Thursday coming up and here's part of the answer, and if you've been to Bible study, you've heard this part of the answer before. When you hear, "Jacob I have loved and Esau I have hated," I know the thought that comes to your mind. You go, "Why would God hate Esau?" And that's the wrong question. The right question is, "Why would he love Jacob?" There's nothing lovable about Jacob. There's nothing better about Jacob. Jacob and Esau are equally wretched. One despises God, the other lies and deceives and cheats constantly. "Jacob I have loved, Esau I have hated." Same womb, different result. Before either one of them was born, either one had opportunity to do good or bad, God said, "I chose. I did that."

One more, Romans 9:19 and 21. The Apostle Paul all through Romans answers the questions that come up and this is the answer he gives to one of the questions. He says, "You will say to me then, 'Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?' But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me like this?' Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?" This is a smattering. I could fill the entire morning today with passage after passage. We haven't touched the Old Testament. Go read Isaiah 46 and hear what God has to say about himself. We could fill the morning.

The doctrine of election, the doctrine of predestination is not a debatable doctrine in Scripture. It is so clearly manifested. There are very few doctrines, that word "doctrine" means "teaching," there are very few teachings in all of Scripture that have more support than this, that God is determinative in salvation always, that if you are saved it is because God has determined to save you, and that's a glorious gracious truth and some of you still don't see that.

The initial response on hearing the doctrine of election described is often one of shock and dismay. It does not sound kind, and does not sound gracious, and it doesn't sound merciful. It certainly doesn't sound glorious on first hearing and it doesn't lead many people to break out rejoicing but I want to show you, I want to answer four questions with this sermon today that I think arise out of that complaint, and at the end of it, I hope you will say, "Yes, this is a rich, glorious, good, gracious doctrine. I am so, so, so glad that God has done this." Here are the four questions I intend to ask. If you've got more, Thursdays are coming. Doesn't this make God unjust or unfair for God to choose? Is that a real question? I think so. Doesn't this make God unloving, then, if he chooses? Doesn't that make God a liar because I've got passages in my Scripture that says everyone and whoever? Isn't God lying then if he means the elect? Doesn't this rob evangelism of its very fuel so that I say, "Well, if God is going to choose, why should I bother to ever preach or speak or say again come and believe on Jesus?" Those are the four questions I intend to answer with the time left to me this morning. I hope that I have your attention for this.

First question: doesn't the doctrine of election make God unjust? Isn't this unfair that God would choose to give mercy to some and not to others? When we speak of fairness, when we speak of justice, fairness is something that is to be in part, it means impartial or just treatment, right, and God says he is just, that he is the very foundation of justice. God must act justly. He owes it to himself to do what is right. We don't have very much respect for unjust judges. Merciful judges, yes, but unjust judges, no. A judge who hears a case and says, "I'm simply going to dismiss the case," and put no penalty, does not help the other side that says, "But wait, this hasn't done justice for me." The question of fairness asks the question what does God owe? What does God owe to humanity? Does God owe to humanity some sort of a chance? That's the question.

Here's what the Bible has to say about humanity, first of all. Romans 3:10 says this, "None is righteous, no, not one." Let's pause for a moment. That little bit, "None is righteous, no, not one," there are people who want to push back and say, "I've got all kinds of non-Christian friends who I like who are nice, who are good, who are better than other people." This text says none of them satisfy God's demands. If God were to put them in the dock, in the defendant's booth and examine them according to the law, none would be found righteous. That's a legal term.

"None are righteous, no, not one, no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood." You say, "Is this really true?" Go on Facebook and look at the posts that are being made by everybody about this election right now on every single side. You want to hear the poison of asps upon their lips? "In their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Even if God were to wipe out every sin that you have ever done, that the world has ever done, and say to the world, "Beginning today I'll give you a do-over. Now here's what

you must do to be declared righteous, here are the 10 Commandments. Do these things every day, all day, without fail. Be righteous." Who would make it? No other gods before me. Not your money. Not your sports. Not your pleasure or your leisure. I am God, worship me. No idols. No taking the Lord's name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. The fact that churches are empty and closing indicates to us that we have a world that cares nothing for God.

We could keep going but if God would just make the gospel available and not worry about choosing or electing anybody, he just, Jesus died, he is risen, here is the gospel, believe it, that would be enough. That would seem fair. But we have another passage. Ephesians 2 says this, "you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience--among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." Here's what it says about the rest of mankind: all of mankind, children of wrath. Why? Because they're born dead. Because they're spiritually dead.

They're not mostly dead, they're dead, spiritually dead in their trespasses and sin and you say, "Well, how is that the case? Did God do that?" God didn't do that. It's how you were born. Adam did that. And in case you say, "Well, it's not my fault, then it's Adam's fault." He goes on to say, "and you loved it." And you have pursued the desires of your flesh, and you have pursued delighting in sin and reviling against God. You have desired your own pleasures rather than God. You have loved it. You have heaped up for yourself offenses. It's not just the way you were born, you were born that way and you continued that way.

You say, "Well, just make the offer of salvation and maybe somebody would respond." And here's what God says, you're dead in your trespasses and sin, and so it would be not unlike walking into a morgue in a city with a million dollar check in your hand and saying, "I will give this million dollars to the first one who speaks up and says, 'Give it to me.'" You'd sit there for a long time in that morgue. "Come on, there's got to be a cadaver here who wants a million dollars. Must be a corpse that wants to be rich." You could plead with them, you could explain it to them, you could hold it in front of their dead eyes and they would not respond because they could not respond because spiritually they're dead and unable to respond. And it carries on that way. We know this because Paul says, "while we were yet dead, God made us alive." It wasn't that we stirred, that we started to wake up, that all of a sudden we kind of fluttered our eyes and said, "God, I'd like that million dollars now." He says, "No, no, your choice was not determinative in this. You didn't begin this, God made you alive while you were dead." That's grace, that no man may boast, that no one can brag, that no one can say, "I was smarter than my neighbor because he didn't receive and I did receive." If you received, God acted first.

Is God unfair? If God were just, who would be saved? If God were only just, who would be saved? God does not prevent any. Understand that, the doctrine of election does not teach that God prevents the unsaved from coming. God prevents none from coming. God

makes this offer to all. He sends his missionaries throughout the world and if God did not act, none would come. Jesus would come, suffer, die, be buried, rise again on the third day, God would make the offer to all the world, dead in their trespasses and sin, no one would be saved. The whole world would go to hell. And so God in his mercy that goes beyond his justice, God is not fair in this because he gives justice to all but mercy to some, and if he did not do that, none would come.

Doesn't that make God unloving? If God can make alive those who were dead in their trespasses and sin, doesn't God have to make alive those who are dead in their trespasses and sin in order that he might be declared loving? God who sends sun and rain on the wicked and the righteous, God could say, "I have shown love to the insurgence against my rule and they have still not responded. I have shown love to you every single day that you have woken up and breathed my air and drank my water and eaten the food, and seen this world that I have created and enjoyed that and appreciated that and have not given glory to the God who made it. I have loved you."

Let me ask you a different question. Some of you support Compassion Child, send off \$41 every month to feed and clothe and educate some little girl or little boy in a third world country, or maybe you do it through World Vision. Does your kindness towards that child, does that kindness towards that child, is that an act of cruelty and neglect to all the other children you don't support in this world? What about walking down the street in Toronto and you've got a little bit of change in your pocket and you're thinking, "I might buy myself a coffee and a bagel at the next Tim Horton's I see," and then you see a homeless man on the street and it's too late, you've walked past him and you see another one and something kind of tugs on your heartstring and you think, "I don't know what they'll do with this money and I'm kind of conflicted about it but I feel," and you take out that \$2.50 and you put it in their cup. Does that make you unkind to the whole street of homeless people you didn't give \$2.50 to? What if you could afford to give \$2.50 to everybody along that street? You've got the money, they've got the need, don't you owe it to them?

Well, we could make a case that because there are starving children in the world and we have enough money, that we should give until we have no more to give. We could make that case, and we might be able to make the case that because there's homeless people in Toronto and we have money in our bank accounts, we owe something to them. But that's not exactly the case that we face with God because it is not homeless people who are down on their luck, it's not hungry children who through no work of their own have ended up hungry, this is revilers and the enemies of God who having been given the opportunity to obey God have reviled God and said, "I'd rather sleep in on a Sunday morning and go work in my garden than I would to worship you." These are the enemies of God.

Does God owe, we come back to the question again, does God owe us something? Does God owe my children something because I'm a godly man who has been awakened to God's call and has followed him for salvation, that, "God, you now owe my children salvation." He does not owe me anything. He doesn't owe it to my children. But God in

love chooses not those who deserve because there are none who deserve, chooses those who have no reason to expect mercy from God and says, "I will give to you mercy out of the desire of my heart to be merciful to you." If you press this a little bit, I don't have time to go down a rabbit trail and I won't, if you press this a little bit, get into Romans 9 and press this a little bit, and the question will come, "If God can, why not all?" And the Apostle Paul will give the answer, "Who are you, O man, who are you, O woman, to ask such a question to God?" A person who has no reason to expect mercy comes to the person who has given mercy and says, "We don't find you very merciful because you didn't give mercy to everybody the same way."

Does that make God a liar? This one won't take long. John 3:16, you know it, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him," that whosoever believes in him, "should not perish but have everlasting life." I believe that verse. That verse is true. Well, what about this one, Romans 10:11, "For the Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.'" Everyone who believes will not be put to shame. If God as elected to salvation, if God's choice is determinative in salvation, are these lies? Whoever believes. Everyone who believes.

We believe the Bible, right? Not a little bit, we believe the Bible. We believe that the Bible is the word of God. We believe that the Bible does not contradict itself. We believe that there are difficult things that we find in the Scripture, so you be the Bible exegete, you be the preacher for a moment. Here, this is what you must do. We believe the whole Bible is true, we believe the Bible doesn't contradict itself, we have this passage, "Whosoever believes has eternal life." We have this passage, "Everyone who believes will not be put to shame." You've got those "whoever, everyone." We also have this, "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, predestined us according to the pleasure of his will. All that the Father gives to me will come to me." We believe the Bible is true. We believe we find no contradiction in the Scripture. How do we put together "everyone" and "whoever" with "all that the Father gives will come"? "Everyone" and "whoever" with "God chose before the foundation of the world, predestined in love according to the good pleasure of his will"? It's not hard to do. Who comes? Who receives? All those who God has chosen. God has acted first because you were dead in trespasses and sin. You could not act on your own until God who is rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved, and everyone who believes and whoever believes will be saved.

Now listen, this rabbit trail I go for a second. If you can hear this today, if you can hear this and say, "I'm a sinner and Jesus is a Savior, I want to be saved. How do I know if I'm elect?" The fact that you hear it tells you something because there's no way that God doesn't put a little checkmark on your forehead, doesn't put some little earworm in your ear that says, "You are elect. You are elect. You are elect." He makes you alive so that you can hear, so that you can see and you believe and you are saved. So if you hear today and you understand the message today, believe and be saved and concern yourself not for one more second with the question, "Am I elect?"

So to the last question, it doesn't make God a liar. It doesn't make God unjust. It doesn't make God unloving. On the opposite, it makes God merciful. It shows that God is tremendously loving to act. It shows that God has told us the truth, everyone who believes will be saved, whoever comes will be saved. Doesn't this rob evangelism of its fuel? I wonder was the Apostle Paul robbed of fuel, the Apostle Paul who wrote the book of Romans and Romans 9 in particular, and Ephesians 1 and 2 and 3, and 2 Timothy 2, and all of these rich doctrinal documents about election? Was he robbed of his power of evangelism? Did he somehow think, "Do you know what? God's going to save who he wants. I'm going to go back and go on vacation in the Adriatic." He didn't go on vacation in the Adriatic, he went on mission in the Adriatic. I'll tell you why in a minute. Was George Whitefield who preached in the fields of England because they wouldn't let him have a pulpit and led a great revival and believed in the doctrines of grace and particularly in the doctrine of election, was he robbed of fuel? What was he doing out there in the fields having dirt and stones and rotten fruit flung at his head while he preached the gospel if he believed in election, God's going to choose? Was Jonathan Edwards who led the Great Awakening in America robbed of fuel? Was William Carey, father of the modern missionary movement who packed his belongings in a casket because he knew, "I'm going to India and I'm going to die there preaching the gospel because I believe that God has ordained for life many of the people in India," were they robbed of fuel? There are two false premises that lead us to this conclusion that the doctrine of election will rob me of the fuel that I need to do evangelism. One is we deny the need for ordinary means, and two is we presume to know the secret will of God that no man may know.

Here's the first one: we deny the need for ordinary means. This is what we read, Acts 13:48, this is why we're here, "And all those appointed for eternal life believed." That verse doesn't exist all by itself. That verse exists in a context. What's the context? The context is Paul and Barnabas in a synagogue in Pisidia Antioch preaching the gospel for at least two weeks to a number of people and speaking it in the streets using this ordinary means, the regular everyday means of preaching the gospel. How is it that they're saved? They're saved by faith. What do they have faith in? They have faith in the gospel that they have heard. How did they hear it? They heard it because somebody preached it to them. Why did some believe and some did not? Because God in his mercy made them alive, opened their eyes, and they said, "I believe it." And others God didn't prevent them, God simply passed over them in justice and left them to their own devices.

We neglect that God has ordained prayer and preaching. Too often we do this, we say, "Why do I pray if God is sovereign? And if God is omnipotent and omniscient and omnipresent, if God knows the end from the beginning, why do I pray?" We neglect when we say that that God has ordained, has planned, has purposed my prayer to effect a change that he is going to bring, that he has ordained my preaching, that he has ordained that you would be here to hear this today, all of these things are the things that God is working. He works through ordinary means to bring about the effect that he effects in the end and if we neglect ordinary means, we will be faithless to what God has called us to do because he calls us to pray and he commands us to preach the gospel knowing that he is going to save through the preaching of the gospel.

Here's the second and we wrap up here. We sometimes falsely infer that we know what God's secret will is. What I mean by that is we look around and it's like we take a snapshot of this moment and we take a snapshot of our lives, and in that snapshot of our lives is our unsaved spouse, and one of our unsaved children, and our unsaved neighbor that we have been witnessing to, and we say, "They're not saved and I have told them the gospel and they went to Sunday school and heard the gospel, and I know that they've seen televangelists on tv who have told them the gospel and they are not saved, and that means they have been passed over and are lost forever and I have lost any sort of interest in doing evangelism." We take a snapshot and we say, "That's God's will," and I say to you, you do not know the secret will of God. In fact, here is the reason why this doctrine is so rich and so glorious and so gracious. Listen to the Apostle Paul for a minute in 2 Timothy 2:10. He says this, "Therefore I endure everything," what's included in everything? Well, we don't have time to talk about everything: shipwrecks, beatings, stonings, imprisonments, revilement, being stripped naked in the center of cities so he can be beaten with rods, being spit upon, being hated. "I endure everything." Why? "I endure everything for the sake of the elect." Well, Paul, wouldn't it be sufficient to just show up in a city like Pisidia Antioch, put a sign on the bulletin board and say, "Would all who are elect from the foundation of the earth please raise their hands so we can share the gospel with you. The rest of you can go home." He doesn't do that. Why not? We endure everything for the sake of the elect, "that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." He says, "Because they don't always come at the first preaching and they don't always come at the second preaching, and they don't always come at the fifth preaching, and they don't always come after years of preaching." How do you know, Paul? He says, "Because I was reviling the church, I was Saul the persecutor, I was breathing out murderous threats. There is nobody who thought to themselves, 'This man is one day going to be a trophy of grace. God is going to save him.' They said, 'That guy is consigned to eternal perdition in hell because of the wicked things he has done in slaying the church.' And God saved me. It wasn't the first time I heard the gospel, you can trust that."

God saved the Apostle Paul. You go, "Well, yes, that's Saul of Tarsus but what about Zacchaeus who was a tax collector, who was despoiling people of all sorts of stuff, making himself rich? Nobody thought, 'Boy, Zacchaeus, he's going to turn himself over to Jesus Christ and be converted.'" But he did on that day.

What about the woman at the well? If you were the mother of the woman at the well and she's had six or seven husbands, the man she's living with now is not her husband, and you're thinking to yourself, "My daughter is lost forever. If it is up to her choice and her decision and her will, what does she will? She wills fornication. She wills constant adultery. She lives this stuff. There is no hope for her. My only hope is that she might slowly begin a process of awakening to this thing." And then she meets Jesus at a well in the middle of the afternoon and he saves her right there.

What about the Philippian jailer who 30 seconds before he is saved has his own sword in his hand and is about to take his own life? Here is suicide imminent, this is not a man

who chooses salvation, this is a man that God says, "In your trespasses and sins, I make you alive. Here's the gospel, believe it."

And if you're the parent of the thief on the cross, a man so wicked that the Roman Empire has decided that for his crimes they're going to put him to open shame, you think, "There is no hope for my son. What has my son willed with his will? My son has willed wickedness with his will all his lifelong and now he is dying for his wickedness. I am hopeless." But God who is rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, made us alive together with Christ. Jesus says, "I will see you this day in paradise."

Friends, if you really believe that it is the human will that decides, this is how you must pray for the lost, "Lord, please respect the will and decision of my child. He has no desire for you, he has rejected the gospel and, Lord, because his choice is ultimate, please honor his wishes and allow him to make the final decision to damn himself for eternity to hell because he does not love you and does not want you." That's how you have to pray if you actually believe that human will is determinative, you have no other choice but to pray, "God, honor the will of every person who has rejected you and leave them alone. They've made their decision." But if you believe that God is sovereign over salvation, you can pray, "Lord God, would you open his eyes? Would you change his heart? God, be merciful to him. Do not give to him the fate that he deserves but change his heart. Let him see the doom that awaits. Break his heart. Give him no peace." Or just pray, "God, save him in spite of the fact that he hates you today."

Do you see? Do you see how this doctrine is the most gracious, kind, glorious doctrine? It is not a doctrine that says God holds back those who would come, not a doctrine that says God blinds those who would see, it's a doctrine that says God declares the gospel to everyone and bids the whole world come, and knowing that none of them would come unless he by his mercy does something, God, because of the great love with which he loved us, made us alive together with Christ and he has chosen because of his mercy to save some who had no reason to expect salvation. And if he passes over others, that is his right because he is a just judge who will give to us what our sins deserve.

This doctrine should cause you to sing the praises of God. This doctrine should send you to your knees praying that God would be gracious to save your loved ones, even the loved ones who have said, "With my will, I reject you, God." And pray, "God, save that one." And should give you the courage to say the gospel to people not worried that I might say it wrong and mess everything up because that can't happen unless it is human choice that is ultimate, but if it is God who is going to win for himself an inheritance from every tribe and tongue and language and people and even from your neighbors and some of them people who hate God today, then say to them, "I've got good news for you. Jesus died to save you."

In just a moment we're going to break bread together and I know I've preached for a long time and I hope I haven't worn you out because we do want to sing God's praises together. If you're here today and you say, "I don't know for sure," I'm not sending you out of here saying I want to crush your hopes, in fact, I want to give you hope. If you can

hear the fact that you are a sinner, that Jesus is a Savior and the result of that is you want to say, "Jesus saved me," then do it. Do it and don't ever concern yourself again with, "Am I elect?" That is the evidence of election upon a person is that they recognize their need and their provision in Jesus Christ and they trust in him.