

Double Predestination - Part 1

Luke

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Bible Text: Luke 8:10

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Luke chapter eight, if you would please, turn there. Luke chapter eight. And we are going to read beginning with the fourth verse down to verse 15.

And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold." As he said these things, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.' Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard. Then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.¹

We are going to set our focus this morning and this evening on verses nine and 10. It says:

And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for

¹ Luke 8:4-15.

others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'²

Let's go to our God together in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, we thank you for your Word. We thank you for your Spirit who teaches us your Word. And, Lord, we rely upon you even as we look to you in this hour asking, Lord, to receive your Word from you hand in such a way that our hearts are changed, our minds are changed and instructed, our wills are, Lord, submitted to you. We pray that you would magnify yourself in our midst this morning that, Lord, we would see your greatness, we would see your glory and we would love you for it. We would worship you, Lord, and submit ourselves to you joyfully in the knowledge of who you really are. We pray for the lost in our midst and our desire is their salvation. We sorrow, Lord, over their lost condition. . And we pray that you, Lord, would have mercy upon them today so that they see your Son for who he is, they hear the command that is in the gospel that they would turn from their sins to trust in Christ. We pray for this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, as Butch mentioned, we have been studying the parable of the soils. We did that last Sunday and we return this morning to the section of Luke's gospel. And last week as we were digging into this parable we made mention of a particular subject matter in theology. I asked you a question last Sunday evening. I asked intentionally in a provocative way because I wanted you to think about it. I asked you the question: Do we believe in double predestination? Do we believe that the Bible teaches double predestination? And our answer to that is yes, we do. The Bible does teach double predestination, but I said to you that that is a qualified yes, because we need to think about this carefully and we need to express it carefully. In fact, I think Wayne Grudem in his systematic theology is right when he says that this is probably not the best way to even speak of the subject, to talk about double predestination. And there are a couple of reasons for that. One is because the terminology has sort of been hijacked by the critics of the doctrines of grace, Calvinism. They paint double predestination in terms that we would not recognize and would not agree with in many cases. And so rather than start with terminology that has been hijacked and try to redefine it in the minds of people, sometimes it is better just to begin it at a different place and describe it in a different way.

But another reason why double predestination may not be the best way to state it is immediately there is the impression left that there is a symmetry to the way that God works when you talk about salvation and then you talk about reprobation, that God works the same way in the judgment and damnation of people that he works in the salvation of people, that there is this symmetry in terms of God's activity. And that would not be accurate. That is not true.

So rather than speak of double predestination, today I want us to think about the doctrine of reprobation. Actually what I want us to think about is the doctrine of predestination. And if you think about predestination as a large umbrella, what we are acknowledging

² Luke 8:9-10.

when we talk about predestination is that God determines the destinies of all people. God has determined from all eternity the destinies of all people. All men have a pre planned destiny. That is predestination.

Does the Bible teach that all man have a pre planned destiny? And then under that large umbrella of predestination, there are these two doctrines, the doctrine of election and the doctrine of reprobation. Now when I say that God has preplanned the destinies of all men, we need to be clear that God has done this in a way in which men are fully responsible for their choices. It is right that we recognize that men are thinking, willing, making choices on their own. That is, every person lives a voluntary life. No one is constrained in the sense that they are robotic or forced down a particular course. Men are making voluntary choices and they are responsible for those choices and yet at the same time the Bible teaches that God is sovereign over everything and that he works providentially so that his decrees are always finally accomplished. God is sovereign. Men are free to the degree that they are living the lives that they want to live. But man's freedom is restricted. God's freedom is not. God is sovereign.

So now when we think about election this is a doctrine that no one who believes the Bible can deny. You may define it differently. Believers may define it differently and quite frankly I don't understand just within my own heart how some believers come to their conclusion about how to define the doctrine of election, because it seems to absolutely ignore the biblical evidence, but it is true to say that there are believers who define the doctrine of election differently, but no one who believes the Bible can say that the Bible doesn't teach election with respect to salvation. The word is used: elect, chosen. Believers are called the elect of God. So you have to do something with that language. You have to, if you believe the Bible, you have to do something with those words. What does election mean? So you really don't find anybody who will deny, who believes the Bible, who will deny that there is a doctrine of election with respect to salvation. However, the question is: Does the Bible teach that there is a preplanned destiny when it comes to those who are lost who will finally be judged, who will spend eternity in hell? Does the Bible teach that God has made a choice when it comes to those people?

No one can deny God has made a choice when it comes to the saved, but has God made a choice when it comes to those who are judged?

This is the doctrine of reprobation. And Wayne Grudem offers a very helpful definition of reprobation. You may want to write this down. Let me give it to you twice. He says this. Reprobation is the sovereign decision of God before creation so this is a decision made in eternity past. This is a decision made before anything was created. Reprobation is the sovereign decision of God before creation to pass over some persons in sorrow deciding not to save them and to punish them for their sins and thereby manifest his justice.

I am going to give that to you again. Reprobation is the sovereign decision of God before creation to pass over some persons in sorrow—and I want you to underline that.

We are going to talk more about that. In sorrow deciding not to save them and to punish them for their sins and thereby manifest his justice.

Now the only thing I would add to that definition is that God's choice to this not only manifests his justice, it also magnifies his mercy. God has done this not only to manifest his justice, but to magnify his mercy. God manifests his justice by allowing some men to go their own way. You notice he said to pass over. God allows them to go their own way. God gives them over to their own desires. He judges them as sinners deserving of his wrath and at the same time he is giving them over to what they have chosen.

Now it is important when you hear this definition to recognize that the choice is between mercy or justice, wrath, mercy or judgment, which means God is working when it comes to this choice, he is working with the falseness of man before him. In terms of the logical order of these decrees, God makes this choice with the fall already in view. You have one lump of fallen clay, all men deserving the wrath of God. All are seen before God as sinners, all deserving of his wrath so that he magnifies his mercy and grace by choosing some to rescue, passing over others and leaving them to what they want, leaving them to what they desire, leaving them to what they choose. And the result of that is one day he will punish them for their sins and in that way manifest his justice also magnifying his mercy.

Now there it is just in terms of definition. The most important question, the only question at this point that matters is: Does the Bible actually teach that? Does the Bible teach that you have this large umbrella called predestination and underneath it you have election unto salvation and you have God making a choice to pass over some, leave them to their own desires. He does this in sorrow. But on some other level he also will take joy in the manifestation of his justice. Does the Bible teach this?

Well, we believe the Bible does. Does the Bible teach that there are some people destined for judgment? Jude, the book of Jude the fourth verse says this:

“For certain people have crept in unnoticed...”³

He is talking now about false teachers. Those:

“...who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”⁴

Jude writes that these false teachers were long beforehand marked out or destined for this condemnation. Now if that was the only verse that we had you might could explain that in a way that wouldn't speak of a predetermined decision by God in terms of their judgment, but there are other verses.

Romans chapter 11 verse one says:

³ Jude 4.

⁴ Ibid.

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” But what is God’s reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened...⁵

Right? You have two groups, those who have obtained salvation, the elect of God and those who are hardened. And listen to how Paul describes this hardening, next statement.

“...as it is written, “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.”⁶

God gives salvation. It is of grace. It is by grace. It is not of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. The elect obtained it by grace. That is God’s choice. Others are hardened and he describes it in terms of God giving to them a spirit of stupor. So God is making a choice to save and God is making a choice to judge.

1 Peter chapter two verse six says:

For it stands in Scripture:

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious,
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone,”

and

“A stone of stumbling,
and a rock of offense.”

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a

⁵ Romans 11:1-7.

⁶ Romans 11:8.

people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.⁷

Christ has set before people. To some he is salvation. To others he is a stumbling block. And to those who stumbled, they stumble because they disobey the Word. I mean, they are making choices. They reject Christ. They disobey the Word. But, Peter writes, as they were destined to do.

So you have God choosing some for salvation. Others are destined to stumble over Christ. And then I want you to keep your Bible marker here in Luke and go to Romans chapter nine. And just so you know, this morning I am just laying a foundation. Tonight we are going to come back and not only dig into Luke 8:10, but the parallel passage in Matthew's account, Matthew 13. And we are going to dig in to the passage we are about to read right now in a deeper way.

Look at Romans chapter nine. Look at verse 17.

For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.⁸

Who is making this choice of mercy? God is. Who is making the choice of hardening. God is. Next statement, verse 19.

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 honored use and another for dishonorable use?⁹

Let me remind you again. There is one lump of clay in this analogy. And from this one lump of clay God either shows mercy or he brings judgment, but realize something. The clay is fallen. All of it deserves wrath.

Next statement, verse 22.

What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—¹⁰

⁷ 1 Peter 2:6-10.

⁸ Romans 9:17-18.

⁹ Romans 9:19-21.

¹⁰ Romans 9:22-23.

Vessels for destruction, who prepares them? And you have vessels prepared for glory, mercy, vessels of mercy prepared for glory. Who prepares those vessels of mercy? God does.

So does the Bible teach that God preplans the destinies of all men? And on one said ether is election unto salvation. On the other side there is reprobation decreed which is to say God passes over some in sorrow leaving them to their own desires, their own choices, their minds, their own wills, their own stubbornness in their sin so that they are judged for their sins and in that way God's justice is manifested. And his mercy is magnified.

The Bible does teach this. Now we have to explain it. And tonight we are going to really dig into the explanation of it. But for the rest of this morning, here is what I want us tot think about. What are the biblical attitudes? If we look into the Bible what are the biblical attitudes that God's people should have toward the doctrine of reprobation? When we think about how God deals with unbelieving humanity, if we have biblical attitudes towards this doctrine, what will our attitudes be? How should we react to this teaching?

And I want to give you several things to reflect on. The first biblical attitude is this. We must love the God who has revealed it. And this is a great test. This is a general test, by the way. We meet with this test every day. All over this world this test is being taken. In every church where the Word of God is being taught in every place where the Word of God is being read and studied this test is going on. And it is a test that people fail every day. It is a very practical test that is going to show up in the way that we live our lives. And the test is this. Are you willing to see and to love and to submit to the God whom you actually find in Scripture? Are you going to love the God who has revealed himself for who he is in the Bible? Or are you going to make up a God in your own mind?

You know, if I were to ask you today: Are you ignoring the Bible, all together ignoring the Bible as you construct in your mind an image of God? I would be confident in saying that most people here could say, "No, I am not doing that. I mean, I take my views of God from the Bible. I use the Bible. I read the Bible. What I believe about God I in some way tie to the Bible." I think most people here would say that is you. But if I were to ask you: Are you guilty of picking and choosing from the Bible so as to construct a god in your imagination who is different from the God who has revealed himself in the Scriptures, are you guilty of that, picking and choosing from the Bible what you will believe about God? I think the truthful answer is there are many, many people who profess to be Christians who do that very thing. They pick and choose what parts of God they are willing to accept. And when you do that, just recognize you are not worshipping God. You are worshipping an idol.

You know, idols, we think of idolatry many times in terms of its physical expression. And we say, well, we are not idolaters. We don't have relics. We don't worship images. You know, we don't do that. But always remember, folks, every idol made with hands, was first an idol made in the mind. This is where idolatry happens. And idolatry takes place when we refuse to accept the God who has revealed himself in Scripture and

instead construct a God that we are comfortable with. That is idolatry. And so the test, as we study the Bible is: Are we willing to be silent before the self revelation of God and let him tell us who he really is? And are we willing to see him for who he really is? Are we willing to love him for who he really is? Are we really his people, a people who belong to the God of the Bible? Do we submit to him? Do we glorify him by agreeing with his glory? What is God doing when he makes himself known? He is putting his glory on display and do we magnify his glory?

In fact, do you know what the essence of unrighteousness is? The essence of unrighteousness is a suppression of the truth about God. Unrighteousness is when God says, "Here I am," and man tries to cover it up, suppress it, not hear it, not look at it. And push that revelation of God to the side and substitute for it with our own God. We exchange the glory of God for images. That is unrighteousness.

Look at Romans chapter one since you are still in Romans. Look at Romans chapter one and look at verse 18 and look for this definition of unrighteousness. Look at verse 18.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."¹¹

Suppress it, push it down, diminish it, try to get rid of it. Well, what truth does he have in mind? Next statement.

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.¹²

As men try to get rid of what God is plainly made known to us through creation. When we devise some theory where I can get rid of the creator. Next statement.

...ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity...¹³

And on you can go and read the rest. Well, what is this? This is unrighteousness at work. Let me suppress the truth of the true God. He is showing us who he is, but I don't want to see it. And this test becomes acute at the point of the Bible's declarations about the sovereignty of God. Even among professing Christians this is where people get uncomfortable. This is where we begin to retreat and shrink back. This is where all the

¹¹ Romans 1:18.

¹² Romans 1:19-20.

¹³ Romans 1:20-24.

qualifications begin, all the explanations begin that will tell us that the Bible can't be meaning what it clearly seems to be saying. It seems to clearly be saying that God is sovereign over everything including the destinies of men, but it can't mean that, can it? This can't really be God, can it?

And so man begins to suppress the truth of the God who is absolutely sovereign over all things. God is sovereign, folks, and we are to love him and glorify him and worship him as the sovereign one.

That its he first attitude. Will we love the God of the Bible? And love him even in the light of the doctrine of reprobation? Will we love him and worship him as that God?

Second, a second attitude as we react to these truths is we must share the sorrow of the God who reveals it. He has revealed the doctrine of reprobation, but not without sorrow. I go back to Grudem's definition. It is a fantastic one. Let me read it again.

Reprobation is the sovereign decision of God before creation to pass over some persons in sorrow deciding not to save them and to punish them for their sins and thereby manifest his justice. Grudem's definitions says that as God decreed to pass over some, he did it with sorrow. And you have not understood the doctrine of reprobation unless that attitude which is present in Scripture's revelation of God is also present in your heart. When you consider the condition of lost humanity does it break your heart? When you think about men being damned forever, is there sorrow present? Does the Bible teach that God sorrows over this? Now we have got to be clear about something. God is not conflicted with himself. So he does have sorrow in some sense in some level even as he delights to make his justice known. So he delights in justice, but he sorrows over the damnation of sinful men at the same time and in a way that is perfectly meshed within God in a way that we would struggle to find that same balance.

Does God have sorrow over this? Well, look at God in human flesh. Look at the Lord Jesus Christ in Luke chapter 19 verse 41 when he draws near to the city of Jerusalem. The Bible says this.

And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes."¹⁴

There is a just judgment going on as Israel is given over to a stubborn, sinful, rebellious heart. These things are now being hidden from their eyes and yet Christ weeps over the lost condition of the city.

Other than the Lord Jesus Christ, other than our Savior, who do you think had the best understanding of any man you could ever think of in terms of the doctrine of election, predestination? Who comes to mind? Who wrote a lot about it? The apostle Paul. Well, I want to ask you a question. Did his understanding of election and reprobation make him

¹⁴ Luke 19:41-42.

cold toward the lost condition of sinners? Or did he have just the opposite heart. Romans chapter nine verse one.

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.¹⁵

In fact, he expresses his anguish to a degree that is almost unbelievable. He says:

“For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”¹⁶

I mean, I so long to see my kinsmen come to salvation that if it were possible that my sacrifice, the loss of my salvation could bring it to pass, I could almost wish it to be so. I mean, this man has sorrow. And, by the way, that is the introduction to the very section, Romans nine, 10 and 11 that teaches us about election and predestination. That is where he begins with this expression of sorrow.

Ezekiel 18 verse 30. The Lord says this:

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live.¹⁷

God says, “I have no pleasure in the death of anyone.”

Ezekiel 33:10.

And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus have you said: ‘Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we rot away because of them. How then can we live?’ Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?¹⁸

The Lord in sorrow makes the decision before creation to pass over some leaving them not to a sinfulness that God produced in them, but leaving them to the sinfulness that is already there, the unbelief that is already there, the insane way of reasoning that is

¹⁵ Romans 9:1-2.

¹⁶ Romans 9:3.

¹⁷ Ezekiel 18:30-32.

¹⁸ Ezekiel 33:10-11.

already there because of the fall, because of sin. God in sorrow decides to pass over and to leave them to their voluntary course, which, because of their sinful nature deserves the wrath of God. God leaves them to their own course.

Third attitude. We love God for who he reveals himself to be. We share his sorrow over the lost condition of mankind. Third, we understand the gracious nature of the God who reveals it.

Is it true to say that God is a God of grace, that God is a God of love, that God is a saving God? Yes. Listen. There are two errors that we have to avoid. On the one hand to be a people who so delight in the grace of God that there is no place in our thinking for a delight in the justice of God.

Folks, listen. You cannot love the God of the Bible if you don't love the fact that God is a God of justice. What would you think of a world in which there was no justice? What would you think of a world that would look at something like what Hitler did and say, "Oh well." I mean, it doesn't deserve judgment. Did not the world rejoice at the thought that the Nazi regime experienced a form of justice even while looking to the fact that God will bring final justice there? Did not the world rejoice in the thought that there was justice for such crimes?

Well, what do we think of a God who would look at the sinful state of humanity and not bring justice? We cannot be a people who so magnify grace that we diminish justice and don't delight in that. But on the other end of the spectrum is the idea that we so magnify the justice of God that we forget he is a God of grace who delights in showing mercy, who desires the salvation of lost humanity. And, in fact, in Scripture God places his emphasis on his mercy.

In Exodus 33 verse 18 Moses said to God:

"Please show me your glory."¹⁹

And he, the Lord said:

"I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."²⁰

Moses says, "Tell me who you are." And God says, "I am sovereign."

This is why it is such a serious thing to say you love God, but deny his sovereignty. He, when given the opportunity to show his glory to Moses says, "I am sovereign." But in both expressions of his sovereignty where does he lay emphasis? I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious. I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy.

¹⁹ Exodus 33:18.

²⁰ Exodus 33:19.

All men deserve the wrath of God. God reserves the right to show mercy to some, to be gracious to some in the sense of saving them.

1 Timothy 1:15 says—and, by the way, tonight when we come back we are going to see in Romans nine, in the very way the text is constructed God does lay emphasis on his mercy. We will see that this evening.

1 Timothy 1:15.

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.²¹

Paul places emphasis on the mercy of God. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and I am the worst. And he chose me and he showed mercy to me to be an example to all those who will receive eternal life hereafter. God is a God of grace. God is a God of mercy. And so as we think about election and reprobation, we need to emphasize to this world our God is a God who is gracious and merciful and willing to save.

Fourth attitude. How do you react to these truths? Well, fourth, you demonstrate that grace by sharing the gospel. You tell the truth about the nature of your God by being faithful with the message he has entrusted to your care. He has called you to be an ambassador. He has commanded you to fulfill the Great Commission. And we reveal the truth about our God's nature, our trust in his sovereign power to save sinners who are unsavable apart from his power. We show our trust in his sovereign ability to save sinners by going out into this world and doing what this parable talks about sowing the seed of the good news of the kingdom of God.

I will say it this way. No one ever understood the doctrine of election and reprobation better than God in human flesh and it did not restrict him in his preaching of the good news. He went about in the synagogues, the villages, the cities and he is preaching the good news of the kingdom of God everywhere, so much so that when later on toward the end of his earthly ministry they are asking Jesus, the Pharisees are asking Jesus, "Tell us what you really believe."

And he says, "I told you. Everything I have done, I have done in public. I have been preaching in your synagogues. I have preached in the time. I mean I have told you. Open sharing, open sowing the gospel of the kingdom of God." That is how you respond to these truths. And I asked you earlier. Outside of our Lord who do you think probably had the deepest understanding of these doctrines? We all agree it is the apostle Paul. Did it

²¹ 1 Timothy 1:15-17.

restrict him as an evangelist? Was Paul not the greatest missionary this world has ever seen? And that is with an understanding of the doctrine of election and the doctrine of reprobation. How did it move him? It moves him. It compels him to go out and share the gospel because, folks, nobody is walking around this world with a big E on their back. We don't know who the elect of God are or are not. What we are called to do is to go out into this world and spread the seed of the gospel and then trust God to do what only God can do and that has raised dead men, spiritually, from the grave. And make new creations and bring his people into the sheep fold. This is what we trust him to do.

So how do I respond to this? By sharing the gospel. And if your understanding of election—and this happens all the times in churches that believe the doctrine of election—if your understanding of election makes you sit and say nothing and imagine, well God is sovereign, so it relieves me of the responsibility to share the gospel, I say to you. You have twisted, defective understanding of the doctrine of election. It fuels evangelism when rightly understood and believed.

Which gets to the last thing I will mention this morning. What attitude, biblical attitude? Because everything I have said to you, we find it in Scripture. We love the God who is sovereign. We share in his sorrow. We trust him to save, understanding his gracious nature. We demonstrate that by sharing the gospel.

Finally, we then, after being faithful with the gospel message must thank God both for his mercy and for his justice. We have to be in a position where even though there is sorrow in our heart on some level over the rejection of the gospel, we thank God and worship God for his sovereign mercy and his divine justice.

I want you to look at Mathew chapter 11. And look at verse 20.

Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.”

At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children...”²²

Infants. What does the Lord mean by that statement? Every one here should be able to praise God for this. Salvation is not a matter of intelligence, is it? You don't have any

²² Matthew 11:20-25.

advantage. If you are this supper smart, wise, intelligent person, astro physicist, whatever you want to imagine, you have no advantage when it comes to salvation on the most humble person you could ever envision, because these things are spiritually revealed. God doesn't bypass the mind, but he enlightens the mind when he bring salvation so that the gospel is perceived and grasped. No one will be able to say one day, "I was saved because I was so smart." This doesn't rule out, by the way, the wise and understanding from being saved. It just makes plain that they can't attribute their salvation to their own wisdom or understanding. Because you have wise and understanding people who are still blinded by their own sinfulness, God giving them over to their own sinfulness so that now it can be said he is hiding these things from them. And on the other end God reveals these things to simpletons. And then profoundly saves them.

This is God's glory and Jesus thanks the Father for this. Verse 26.

"...yes, Father, for such was your gracious will."²³

This is your grace. We all deserve judgment. That you would save any of us is amazing. So that salvation is gracious every single time.

Verse 27.

All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.²⁴

Christ says to the world, "Come for salvation. Come. You are invited. If you want me, her I am." Jesus says, "Come. Will you have life? Will you choose life? Do you want to be saved? Come."

And then he knows this, that those who come are those to whom the Father has revealed him, those who whom Christ wills to make himself known so that salvation is not attributed to intelligence, but to God's grace. God's grace and Christ is giving thanks for this.

Let me show you one other passage. Look at Luke chapter 10 verse 21. Christ has sent out 72 on a mission. They are rejoicing because the powers of Satan are subject to them in the name of Christ. He says to them in verse 20:

"Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."²⁵

²³ Mathew 11:26.

²⁴ Mathew 11:27-30.

²⁵ Luke 10:20.

And by the way, folks, when were they written there? Before the foundation of the world. Next statement.

In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." Then turning to the disciples he said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."²⁶

This is the Son of God rejoicing in the Spirit of God giving praise to Father God. God rejoices in his own sovereignty. God rejoices in the sovereign expression of his gracious will. Here is the question. Will his people rejoice in it? Do we love this God who is absolutely sovereign? Do we thank him for the grace that brings salvation to anyone? Do we rejoice in our hearts? And, by the way, if you're filled with the Spirit, you most certainly will, because this joy in Christ was in the Holy Spirit. Will you rejoice by virtue of the empowering teaching presence of the Holy Spirit? Will you rejoice in your heart when you think about God's absolute sovereignty and the fact that he has had mercy on your soul? Will you give him praise? Will you recognize it is not attributable, not only to your intelligence, it is not attributable to anything that has to do with what you have done. Not the home you were raised in, not the good things you have tried to do with your life. God chose you, Christian, before you were ever born and not only brought the gospel to you, but then worked by his Spirit to open your mind and heart to the gospel message that you repented of your sins and trusted in his Son. It is God's gracious will that has made you a Christian. Do you love him for that? And will you rejoice in him for that? And will you at the same time be able even with this mixture of sorrow to thank him that he is not just sovereign over his church, he is sovereign over every human being?

The Church would say...

Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, thank you for your Word. Thank you, Lord for the reminder of who you are. I pray for any lost soul in this place that they would hear the offer that your Son makes to them this morning. He cries out to this world that if anybody is hungry, if anybody is thirsty, if anyone is willing, if they will come to him, he will have mercy upon them and save them. Let them hear, Lord, the command of your gospel. And may your church not replace you, Lord, with the images of our won understanding, but instead just look into the mirror of your Word and love you for who you have revealed yourself to be. And I ask of this in Jesus' name. Amen.

²⁶ Luke 10:20-24.