

## Double Predestination - Part 2

*Luke*

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If you would please turn to the gospel of Luke chapter eight I want us to read beginning with verse four.

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.’<sup>1</sup>

We are going to come back here, but I want you to go to Matthew chapter 13, if you would. Look at verse 10.

Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

“ ‘You will indeed hear but never understand,  
and you will indeed see but never perceive.  
For this people’s heart has grown dull,

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 8:4-10.

and with their ears they can barely hear,  
and their eyes they have closed,  
lest they should see with their eyes  
and hear with their ears  
and understand with their heart  
and turn, and I would heal them.’

But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.  
Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see  
what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not  
hear it.<sup>2</sup>

Look back, if you would, to Luke chapter eight. And let’s go to the Lord in prayer  
together.

*Father, I thank you for the privilege I have tonight to share your Word with your people. It is a sobering responsibility, one that I am inadequate for in myself. But I look to you, Lord, and ask you to strengthen me and to be at work, Lord, for the glory of your name and to fulfill the desire of my heart, to serve you well and for the blessing of your Church. Lord, I pray that you would be at work in the hearts of people in our midst who are unregenerate. Our desire and our prayer is that you would grant them life and light, that they would turn from their sins to be saved by faith in your Son. Lord, wash your Church. Strengthen us, correct us, build in us, Lord, what would please you and we will thank you for it in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

The doctrine of election does not destroy present reality. The doctrine of election, when we look at salvation from the vantage point that God has revealed, the vantage point of eternity past, we need to understand that that view doesn’t negate the reality of what goes on in this present world. Some are chosen from the foundation of the world for salvation. And yet the following realities are still true. These people who are chosen for salvation are still born sinners. Everyone of us who is a believer, though we were chosen for salvation before time, we were still born sinners. These people chosen for salvation deserve damnation because of their sins. We all, if God gave us what we deserved, outside of what he did for us in Christ, we all deserve damnation just like the rest of mankind.

These people chosen for salvation were really lost without Christ, enslaved without Christ, would have entered hell without Christ. I met Christ when I was 17 years old. I was lost for 16 years. I was enslaved. I was on my way to hell, deserving of hell. These people who were chosen for salvation had to be brought the gospel in order to be saved, could not be saved apart from the gospel message. These people had to respond to the gospel message with repentance and faith in Christ in order to be saved. No one is saved apart from faith in Jesus.

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 13:10-17.

These people, having been saved, we still have to overcome the world, the flesh and Satan throughout this process of sanctification that takes place in this world, that is to say, the Lord has to preserve us in faith. We have to persevere. These things are still true.

These people chosen for salvation will be tempted, will be persecuted, will have great triumphs and great failures along the way as we journey toward heaven. And the triumphs are real and the failures are real. And if the Lord carries these people chosen for salvation will have to pass through death on their way to glory.

God having chosen these people for salvation guarantees that they will be saved, but not apart from the all of the realities that we just mentioned. God's choice in eternity past does not negate all of these present realities.

I think we understand that. But I want us to understand tonight that in the very same way the doctrine of reprobation does not destroy present reality. This is something we need to stress, because I think we go astray in our thinking along these lines. I want us to understand that these people whom the Lord chose in eternity past to pass over, right? He chooses some for salvation. He passes over others, leaving them to the destiny that belongs to their own choice in sin. Though he passed over them, these people are really loved by God in the present. God has a real love for lost people, even those who are the objects of his decree or reprobation. These people are loved by God. Now they are loved by God in a way different than his elect, but nonetheless they are loved by God, otherwise when the Lord teaches us to love our enemies, and he says that when we do so we will be like our Father in heaven who does good to his enemies, that comparison would make no sense whatsoever if God doesn't really have some kind of love for the lost. He does. These people who are passed over in terms of God's choice of salvation, these people are really truly recipients the grace of God in the present age. It was noted this morning that yesterday and today when the rain fell it fell on the just and the unjust. God is showing grace this moment to people who not only do not know his Son, but who will never come to know his Son. God has grace in the present age that he demonstrates toward these people. These people are really offered the possibility of eternal life. It is a real offer through the gospel message on condition of repentance and faith in Christ. It is true to say to any man, any woman, "If you will repent of your sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved." That is a truth and that is a genuine offer of life. These people are really objects of the work of the Spirit of God. I hope that we realize that the Spirit of God really does strive with sinners even those who are not converted. He strives with sinners in a way that brings enlightenment, in a way that brings conviction, in a way in which at times the Word of God can describe them as being near the kingdom. Yet he does not regenerate, he does not work in them in a way that produces new birth. Nonetheless, the Lord really does strive with these people.

These people are making real personal choices with respect to God. And when they are given the gospel, they make real personal choices in response to the gospel. God is not dealing with them in a way that is disingenuous. The offer is real and their response is their own personal response for which they will be held accountable.

These people are not made unbelievers by God. These people are left unbelievers by God. God has made the choice to leave them to their own choices. That is what God has done.

Now that does not relieve God from the reality of predestination, rather it makes clear that reprobation does not make God to be one who encourages evil or imparts evil or engages in acts of evil. God made an active choice to make a permissive choice. God's active choice is to leave those who are not chosen for salvation to their own choices. And then God also makes an active choice in time, in the present age to judge these same people often times by giving them in increasing way to the insanity that belongs to their own sinful choices. He just gives them over to their own thinking, to their own counsels, to the course that their own dark nature leads them down.

Psalm 81 verse 10 says:

I am the LORD your God,  
who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.  
Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.  
“But my people did not listen to my voice;  
Israel would not submit to me.  
So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts,  
to follow their own counsels.<sup>3</sup>

There it is. That is an act of judgment on the part of God. He chooses to leave them in their unbelief and, in fact, to give them over to a greater degree of unbelief which is already at work in their soul.

We see this same truth in Romans chapter one verse 24.

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.<sup>4</sup>

God gave them up to the insanity that belongs to sin.

So we need to bear that in mind, that his eternal choice when it comes to election and his

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<sup>3</sup> Psalm 81:10-12.

<sup>4</sup> Romans 1:24-28.

eternal choice when it comes to reprobation both of those choices determine the ultimate outcome of things. However, it doesn't destroy in any way these present realities.

John Piper had an instructive comment about Romans chapter nine. I want you to look there, please, Romans nine. And look at 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—even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?<sup>5</sup>

I know this morning we saw it together that the English word prepared is found both referring to what God has done, in the case vessels of wrath and in the case of vessels of mercy. 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?”<sup>6</sup>

You have vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. Next verse:

“...in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory”<sup>7</sup>

The vessels of wrath are prepared. The vessels of mercy are prepared. Well, there are two different Greek words that are used translated prepared. Not only are there two different words, but the first word is in the passive voice. The second word is an active verb.

And Piper comments on this and listen to what he says trying to explain why God through Paul would use the passive verb in the first instance, in terms of the vessels of wrath and the active verb in terms of the vessels of mercy. Why would he use these two different words in two different voices? Why?

He says this. “Perhaps it is that he really does want to make a statement about the way God works. Though God does accomplish all things by the counsel of his will, he does not bring about all things in the same way. In the accomplishment of some things he employs intermediary agency, perhaps. Or, to put it another way, his heart is engaged differently in different acts, loving some deeds in themselves and inclining to others only as they are preferable in relation to greater ends.”

And then at that point Piper cites Lamentations 3:31. And listen to what Lamentations 3:31-33 says.

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<sup>5</sup> Romans 9:22-24.

<sup>6</sup> Romans 9:22.

<sup>7</sup> Romans 9:23.

For the Lord will not  
cast off forever,  
but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion  
according to the abundance of his steadfast love;  
for he does not willingly afflict  
or grieve the children of men.<sup>8</sup>

Which is say God judges, but his delight is not in judgment. His delight is in mercy.

I will return to Piper's comments.

“Listen. If this is the case, Paul would be implying that not wrath, but mercy is the greater overarching goal for which God does all things.”

And I mentioned this morning that the truth reprobation does not only speak of God demonstrating his justice, but magnifying his mercy. God places his emphasis on the fact that he shows mercy. Before God is this lump of fallen clay. And out of this entire human race, all deserving his wrath, he has chosen to show mercy to some. And that is what he means to magnify, that he would have mercy upon any of us. And even in our text here in Romans nine notice that in this way mercy is magnified, because here he uses a word that speaks of purpose.

You see it at the beginning of verse 23. Look again at 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.<sup>9</sup>

Piper citing Canfield it says this. “We now turn to the three statements of purpose contained in this passage, that the last of these is dominant is clear. It alone is introduced by henna and it is given special emphasis by its position in the sentence by the fact that it is extended by means of the two relative clauses which follow and by the fact that verses 25 through 29 focus further attention on it. Above all its content marks it off from the others for the manifestation of the wealth of the divine glory is nothing less than the ultimate purpose of God. The ultimate purpose of God is to demonstrate his glory and to do so by having mercy upon some.”

Ephesian two states the same truth, Ephesians two verse four.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he  
loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive  
together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up  
with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so

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<sup>8</sup> Lamentations 3:31-33.

<sup>9</sup> Romans 9:22-23.

that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.<sup>10</sup>

I think it says something about the sinful condition of man that people are amazed that God didn't choose everyone for salvation, instead of being amazed that God chose anyone of salvation. Should we not be amazed that God chose anyone for salvation? This is his grace.

Now there is one more present reality associated with reprobation that I haven't mentioned and I want us think about this and that is in the present the doctrine of reprobation does not destroy the reality that on the way to destruction those whom God leaves to their own choices may have greater times of light, greater times of understanding, greater times of sensitivity to the revelation that God gives than at other times. And I know you have seen this in your own experience. You begin to witness to someone. They show what seems to be genuine interest. There seems to be a desire. They want to talk about the Bible. They want to talk about Christ and you watch this progressive kind of hardness set in until finally they may even come to the point they don't even want to talk about it anymore. At one point you thought, I think they are about to be converted. Only later on to say, "I don't know if the gospel will ever penetrate their heart."

That is a reality. And as we witness that reality we need to understand that God does this. This is a form of God's judgment than when light is rejected, as we have already seen, God gives people over to the darkness that they love. So that the words can be used, what they have is taken away from them. Even what they have is taken away. While the vessels of mercy get greater abundance. God gives even more. And that is his sovereign choice.

Now look back at our Luke passage. All of this discussion today has been necessitated by what is said in verse 10. You have to explain what Jesus said in verse 10. Verse nine:

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.'<sup>11</sup>

Look, again, real quickly at Matthew's account and notice this additional thought. Matthew 13. Look there again, verse 10.

Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is

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<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 2:4-7.

<sup>11</sup> Luke 8:9-10.

why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

“ ‘You will indeed hear but never understand,  
and you will indeed see but never perceive.

For this people’s heart has grown dull,  
and with their ears they can barely hear,  
and their eyes they have closed,  
lest they should see with their eyes  
and hear with their ears  
and understand with their heart  
and turn, and I would heal them.’<sup>12</sup>

Look back at Luke chapter eight. The disciples ask a question. What does the parable mean? And we find out from Matthew’s account they asked an additional question. Why do you teach in parables? And the answer of Jesus is an answer that has to do with the sovereignty of God. It is a form of judgment that leads Jesus to teach in parables. In fact, we saw in our earlier study of this parable that he gives the parable of the soils and he doesn’t give the explanation of it. He just leaves it there. And then when the disciples come to him privately, then he gives the interpretation of the parable. But to the crowd that heard it initially, they are just left with the parable. Why would you do such a thing? Why would you teach them in such a way?

And Christ says, “I have done this because it has been given to you to know the secrets of the kingdom of God. But for others, for the rest, it is in parables so that seeing they may not see and hearing they may not understand.” That is, it is a judgment. And he ties it to a passage in the book of Isaiah.

By the way, this is a good time to remember. God is not only sovereign. When we think about the doctrine of reprobation, God is not only sovereign to give an understanding of truth to some and to leave others to their own understanding, but God is sovereign even when it comes down to who it will be that he gives truth to. He doesn’t give the same information to everyone. He chooses in this case to give information to his disciples that he didn’t give to just anyone. That is God’s sovereign right.

There is a verse quoted often from the book of Amos to speak of a need for revival and to note sadly the lack of preaching. I mean this is often applied in our nation to speak of a lack of biblical preaching. You probably know the passage very well, Amos 8:11.

“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD,  
“when I will send a famine on the land—  
not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water,  
but of hearing the words of the LORD.  
They shall wander from sea to sea,

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew 13:10-15.

and from north to east;  
they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the LORD,  
but they shall not find it.<sup>13</sup>

Right? A famine. Not for bread, of thirst, not for water, but there is this absence of the preaching of the Word of God in Old Testament times and, as I said, this verse is often quoted to speak of our own situation. But what is often times passed over as we use those verses is the acknowledgement that the famine is sent by God. The reason why you can't find the Word is because God is judging. Listen again, Amos 8:11.

“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD, when I will send a famine on the land...”<sup>14</sup>

Did you get that? I will send a famine on the land. I will judge by not giving my Word.”

So God is sovereign not only in the understanding of his Word, but God is sovereign in the declaration of his Word, who receives it, who doesn't. Not only should we understand we don't have a right to be saved, we don't have a right to the gospel. I know you stop and acknowledge God's mercy to you in having saved you, but do you ever stop and acknowledge God's mercy to you in giving you the gospel, in exposing you to the truth that has brought you to Christ and brought you salvation. And even now as a believer do you stop to acknowledge the mercy of God in the constant exposure you have to his Word? That is mercy, folks. It is not deserved.

So in a sense Christ gives them an answer that is much deeper than they asked for. This is a demonstration of his sovereignty. He is giving them more information than they asked for. He is giving them an answer they had no access to if he doesn't explain it. They didn't understand why he is using parables. And he gives them an answer that then goes on to help them understand the parable that he gave.

Now I told you that the source of his answer to them is actually an Old Testament passage. When he says to them:

“...seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.”<sup>15</sup>

He is quoting from Isaiah six and I want you to look over there if you would, Isaiah chapter six. Now most believers are very familiar with what we might call Isaiah's call to the ministry to the prophetic ministry. We are familiar with the first seven verses, but let's read those anyway.

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<sup>13</sup> Amos 8:11-12.

<sup>14</sup> Amos 8:11.

<sup>15</sup> Luke 8:10.

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory!”

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.” And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.”<sup>16</sup>

The Lord calls, “Who will go?” and Isaiah without even asking about the mission says, “Here I am. Send me.”

And he said, “Go, and say to this people:

“ ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand;  
keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’

Make the heart of this people dull,  
and their ears heavy,  
and blind their eyes;  
lest they see with their eyes,  
and hear with their ears,  
and understand with their hearts,  
and turn and be healed.”

Then I said, “How long, O Lord?”

And he said:

“Until cities lie waste  
without inhabitant,  
and houses without people,  
and the land is a desolate waste,  
and the LORD removes people far away,  
and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.  
And though a tenth remain in it,  
it will be burned again,  
like a terebinth or an oak,

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<sup>16</sup> Isaiah 6:1-8.

whose stump remains  
when it is felled.”  
The holy seed is its stump.<sup>17</sup>

Isaiah, you are going to go on doing this for the rest of your life until finally the people are carried away. The fall of the northern kingdom to Assyria in 722, the fall of the southern kingdom to Babylon in 586 and they are carried away and a tenth is left and it is like a tree that has fallen and has been burned. There is going to be desolation, destruction. The people of God deported from their land, judgment.

Now this is one of the most often quoted Old Testament passages in the New Testament. This passage is quoted in Matthew 13. We already read that. But it is also mentioned in Acts 28, Mark chapter four, Romans chapter 11, John chapter 12. And if we ask: How are we to understand the Isaiah six passage, it is interesting to go through each of the times it is used in the New Testament and ask: Well, how were the New Testament authors using it?

And you find out that they used this passage in two ways. One they used it to answer why Jesus was teaching in parables. Obviously, I mean, it is {?} they are just quoting Jesus. Jesus uses it to explain why he is teaching in parables. We read that in Matthew 13, but listen to Mark four verse 11.

And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, so that  
“they may indeed see but not perceive,  
and may indeed hear but not understand,  
lest they should turn and be forgiven.”<sup>18</sup>

So Christ, it is noted by Matthew, Mark and Luke used Isaiah six to explain why he is teaching in parables. But then Luke uses it or records it in Acts chapter 28. Look over there if you would, to explain why the Lord is saving Gentiles in large numbers in this age of grace, this Church age, Acts 28. And he is actually just noting Paul’s teaching. Listen to this Acts 28 verse 17.

After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews, and when they had gathered, he said to them, “Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation. For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing

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<sup>17</sup> Isaiah 6:9-13.

<sup>18</sup> Mark 4:11-12.

this chain.” And they said to him, “We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. But we desire to hear from you what your views are, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against.”<sup>19</sup>

So he has a fresh opportunity, fresh Jewish ears in the city of Rome.

Verse 23.

When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: “The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:

“ ‘Go to this people, and say,  
You will indeed hear but never understand,  
and you will indeed see but never perceive.  
For this people’s heart has grown dull,  
and with their ears they can barely hear,  
and their eyes they have closed;  
lest they should see with their eyes  
and hear with their ears  
and understand with their heart  
and turn, and I would heal them.’

Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”<sup>20</sup>

So this explains this hardening of Israel, but this opening of the door of grace to the Gentile world. And then look at Romans chapter 11 and look at verse seven. Let’s begin with verse one.

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

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<sup>19</sup> Acts 28:17-22.

<sup>20</sup> Acts 28:23-28.

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,

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.”

And David says,

“Let their table become a snare and a trap,  
a stumbling block and a retribution for them;  
let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,  
and bend their backs forever.”<sup>21</sup>

I mean, he is clear that what is happening in Israel is a judgment from God, but not one that catches God off guard. This is one that has been predestined. This is one that has been predicted. This is what the Holy Spirit has said will happen. And there is a purpose for it, verse 11.

So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means!  
Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!<sup>22</sup>

I am still looking forward, he says, to this out pouring of salvation and when the Lord does this it is going to be glorious, just like this out pouring of salvation upon Gentiles is glorious, so when the Lord again pours out salvation on Israel it is going to be glorious.

Verse 13.

Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.<sup>23</sup>

Again, Isaiah six is quoted to demonstrate what? To demonstrate this inclusion of Gentiles, this out pouring of salvation upon the Gentile world. Paul uses it that way in Acts 28 and now he uses it here in Romans chapter 11. Why does Jesus teaching parables? Judicial hardening. What is going on with the hardening? Well, the Lord has a plan for salvation and it is going to involve the Gentile world and that is what we are witnessing right now.

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<sup>21</sup> Romans 11:1-10.

<sup>22</sup> Romans 11:11-12.

<sup>23</sup> Romans 11:13-14.

Notice in each of these passages, though, there is an element of mercy in every one, mercy. It is not complete hardening, there is still a remnant.

I will give you another example. Look at John chapter 12. This is the other place we find Isaiah six mentioned, John chapter 12. Look at verse 31.

Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. So the crowd answered him, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” So Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.

Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

“Lord, who has believed what he heard from us,  
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said,

“He has blinded their eyes  
and hardened their heart,  
lest they see with their eyes,  
and understand with their heart, and turn,  
and I would heal them.”

Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.

Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.<sup>24</sup>

You have this explanation of the unbelief of those who were exposed to the brightest light possible, the light of God in human flesh. All of this was predicted. All of this was destined. All of this was told to us before it happened. It is all a part of God’s sovereign working in salvation and yet these people are fully responsible for what they did, for what they rejected. And they are being reached out to in mercy. While the light is among you, look at it, he says. Believe in the light that you may become sons of light.

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<sup>24</sup> John 12:31-43.

Look back at Luke chapter eight verse 10.

So Isaiah six is used here. What are the inescapable implications of his answer? He answers why he is using parables or in this case what does the parable mean. And he launches into an explanation of why he uses parables. What are the implications of his answer?

One, God is sovereign to disclose truth to whomever he wants. Two, God is sovereign to hide truth from whomever he wants. And this determination is from eternity. This is from all eternity that God is determined to do this. And Jesus, as we saw this morning in Luke 10 verse 21, Jesus rejoices in this.

“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.”<sup>25</sup>

Is it not a powerful condemnation to us when the trinity takes pleasure in the sovereignty of God in salvation and that professing believers in that God hate the thought of it. If the Holy Spirit produces joy in God’s sovereign activity in the life of the Son of God, then who produces hatred of it? If the Holy Spirit causes Jesus to rejoice in God’s sovereignty, then would he not cause us to rejoice in God’s sovereignty? His sovereign purposes don’t negate present realities, but his sovereign purposes explain and make sense out of these present realities.

Final thoughts. First of all, God covers and God reveals. He covers and he reveals sin in salvation and in judgment. All of our sins have been covered in the sense that they have been washed away, hidden from God’s sight in the sense of judgment. You know, speaking in anthropomorphic terms, God knows everything, but in a sense he has forgotten our sins. They are put away through the death of his own Son, covered by the blood of Jesus. In judgment God is going to reveal even the thoughts and the intentions of the hearts of men. He is going to reveal conversations that no one else was ever privy to. He will reveal motives even the motives of men’s hearts. God has the sovereign power to cover and to reveal when it comes to salvation and judgment. That is God’s glory.

Second, God is sovereign not only in the apprehension of truth when men and women are being converted. This is an amazing thought to me. God is sovereign as he discloses his truth to his own people, as he gives power to his own people to be able to apprehend truth. He is sovereign there, too.

Look at Luke chapter 18 if you would. And, look. Just like man is still responsible as God is sovereign in the apprehension of the gospel, so we have a responsibility when it comes to growing in the knowledge of the truth. We re responsible for how hard we work at it, how devoted we are to it, where the genuineness is in our hearts in terms of the

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<sup>25</sup> Luke 10:21.

receptivity of truth. And yet it is still true to say God is sovereign when it comes to what we get and when we get it.

Luke 18, look at verse 31.

And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise." But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.<sup>26</sup>

They got it later. They reflected upon it later. It made sense to them later, but at this time it was hidden. They did not understand it.

That is a good thing to remember. You know, it keeps us humble, doesn't it? Even as we learn as believers to recognize we don't learn one thing that God doesn't disclose to us. whatever we know we give him thanks for what we know.

I was reflecting as Butch was talking about loving the doctrines of grace and where he came from. I will never forget being a new Christian. I have told you this story before, but sitting down with an older man in the church who just loved the Lord and studied doctrine and here I was a brand new zealous evangelist of a believer wanting to share the gospel with everyone I met and sitting down and telling me about the sovereignty of God in salvation. And I told him there is no way. Don't you know John 3:16? I mean, this was my mindset. This was my attitude. And I haven't talked to him since those days, but I would suspect if he doesn't know about this already, he would be shocked to know that I preach these things that once I so zealously rejected.

I think about Butch. Before Butch was taught by the Lord these doctrines of grace, do you know he taught a Sunday school class that was entitled, "The Sovereignty of Man." Now he teaches our member orientation class in which explains the doctrines of grace to everyone who visits the church and is interested in joining the church. Now what is the difference between where I was and what I know now, where he was and what he knows now?

You say, "Well, you have had time and you have grown and you matured." And all of that is true.

But I want to ask you: Who determined when I would receive the gospel? Who determined when I would receive a better understanding of these doctrines and who strengthened my mind and hear to be able to receive these things? That is God's sovereign Word. And in a way that I cannot fully understand there are things that you will learn along the way that you were not ready for at this particular point in your walk

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<sup>26</sup> Luke 18:31-34.

with Christ, but you will be able to receive these things and rejoice in these things and grow in these things as you receive them in God's proper timing. He doesn't dump everything on us at once, does he? He brings us along in terms of strengthening us to be able to grasp these things. We give him praise of what we know.

A final thought. We have already mentioned this this morning, but I want to underscore. Rejoicing in God's sovereignty is not incompatible with sorrow over man's lost condition. I want to end on that thought tonight, because I want us to remember that we are surrounded by a world full of people who desperately need Christ and just like us, they will not be saved without receiving the gospel. They will not be saved without repenting of their sins and trusting in God's Son. And if you ask: What is God's plan of getting the gospel to them? The answer, Christian, is you. You are God's plan. I am God's plan. The Church is God's plan. We have been given a commission. We have been given a command. We have been given a responsibility to take God's good news concerning his Son and share it with the world. That is our responsibility. And I ask you. Humbly I ask you. Are you fulfilling that? Are you sharing the gospel? Do you realize there are people all around you who are ready to hear? God has them ready and he wants you to go and share the good news with them.

This past Saturday we were playing flag football and there is a man I have been praying for and praying for his father and his dad comes with him to these games and watches. And this man is dying of brain cancer and I have asked the son on several occasions now if I could go by his dad's house and just talk to him about Christ, because I don't know how long this man has to live. And his son has been willing to have me come over and said that he would go with me. It just hasn't come to pass. And on this past Saturday the Lord sent the rain and so we are out there playing in the rain and his dad is by himself sitting in a chair up against the wall of the school so he can be out of the rain under an overhang. And we finished the early game and his son was officiating the second game so that his dad is sitting there all by himself and I had the opportunity to and sit down beside his chair. He comes from a Roman Catholic background and I just shared the gospel with him. At least five times as he listened he said, "Really? Really?"

You know, when I told him that salvation is a matter of grace. Really? That Christ died for sinners so that we are not going to get to heaven by our works or by the church or by the sacraments, but faith alone, faith in Christ. Really? And he listened and I just had the sense it was sinking in.

I want you to pray for that man. I don't want to give you his name. I just want you to pray for him. But my point is the Lord orchestrated the circumstance where my heart's desire to share the gospel with him was fulfilled. The Word has gone out and now it is in the hand of our sovereign God and he has the power to take that man and to give him life just before he exits this life. That is God's calling to all of us. Will we be faithful because God is sovereign knowing there is no one beyond his saving hand? Will we be faithful to share the good news? I pray that we will.

Let's bow together for prayer.

*Lord, we rejoice in who you are. We rejoice tonight in your mercy upon us. We did not deserve to receive the gospel. We did not deserve for there to be a gospel. But, Lord, you did not owe salvation to us. The fact that you would have planned a way for man to be saved is amazing grace and that you would bring the gospel to us is amazing grace. And that you would open our hearts and shine your light in so that we could see and understand and receive, Lord, it is amazing grace. And that you go on teaching us that now that we are you people and allowing us to grasp more and more of the truth of who you are and what is truth. Lord, this is amazing grace. And that you preserve us so that we persevere in faith throughout our lifetime, that is amazing grace. And that in our death, Lord, you bring us to yourself, into your own presence. That is amazing grace. And that we will live for ever with our Savior body and soul where there is a new heaven and a new earth, for this is amazing grace. And I pray it would be sweet to our ears, a sweet sound that we would magnify you for who you are, love you for who you are, worship you for who you are. You are sovereign. You are right when you judge and you are amazing, Lord, when you pardon. Thank you. And may we your forgiven bride be always ready to give an account for the hope that we have. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*