

Unconditional Election

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[0 : 0 0] Open your Bibles, if you have them, to Romans chapter 9.

Romans chapter 9. If you want, you can grab one of the Bibles that we have scattered around in the chairs. And if you use one of those, just turn to page 945 in those Bibles. 945. Otherwise, in your own copy of the Scriptures, open up to Romans chapter 9.

We're going to be in Romans chapter 9 for a little while, but we're going to take a break after this week to spend some time in December looking at the coming of Christ, the first coming of Christ. In January, we'll come back to Romans chapter 9.

But I want us this morning to dig in to what is the essential issue in Romans chapter 9. So we're going to pick up in verse 6 and read down through verse 13 this morning.

And I'd like you all to stand with me and honor God's Word as we read together. The Apostle Paul writes, But it is not as though the Word of God has failed.

[1 : 0 8] For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring. But through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. For this is what the promise said. About this time next year I will return and Sarah shall have a son.

And not only so, but also when Rebecca 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 continue, 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. Father, give us guidance and insight as we meditate upon this Scripture this morning.

And help us to rejoice in the truths that we see revealed here. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

[2 : 1 7] You guys take a seat. The central theme, I think, of Romans chapter 9, and particularly of this paragraph that we're looking at in Romans chapter 9, is what we sometimes refer to as the doctrine or the teaching of election.

Funny thing, though, is that this morning I posted on Facebook, as I do every few weeks, I'll post and invite people to come and join us for worship on Sunday mornings. And so I posted this morning on Facebook, you know, join us at 1030 this morning for worship at Pine Forest Elementary.

We're going to be considering what the Bible or the biblical teaching, what the Bible has to say about election. That was kind of it. None of the big deals. Give people an idea of what we're going to be talking about this morning.

To which somebody replied on there, something along the lines of, you know, make sure that everybody sees the need or the importance of impeaching President Obama.

Misunderstanding exactly what I had in mind by election. We're not talking about what we commonly refer to as election. When we talk about elections in our sort of American vernacular, but the Apostle Paul was talking about God's action, not ours.

[3 : 23] He's talking about God's act of choosing or electing people. In fact, you can see it very clearly in our passage. I want you to jump down to verse 11, and then we'll back up to the beginning of the paragraph.

But look at verse 11. Paul speaks of Jacob and Esau who were not yet born, who had done nothing either good or bad. And then he says, in order that God's purpose of election might continue, or literally God's purpose according to election.

So Paul has in mind here God's purpose. That is, God's plan. And God's plan accords with, lines up with God's election or God's choosing.

This is something that God has had in mind from eternity past. This doctrine gets us deep into the backdrop of what God has had planned for all of human history.

And that's part of the reason that it's so mysterious. Whenever Paul begins to speak about the purposes of God, he's talking about these overarching, eternal goals and plans that God has in store.

[4 : 34] In fact, you can sort of understand Paul's concept of God's purpose if you just look at the different ways that Paul uses this word in some of his other writings. I want you to hold your place here in Romans 9 and turn over to the book of Ephesians really quickly with me, if you would, to Ephesians chapter 1, where Paul uses this same word that we have translated here in Romans 9 as purpose.

In Ephesians chapter 1 verse 11, he says that in Him, or in Christ, we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose.

There it is. We have been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will. So just as in Romans 9, there is a connection here in Ephesians chapter 1 between God's purpose and what God has done in eternity past.

The terminology used in Ephesians 1 is predestination. In Romans, it's election. And those two terms have a lot of overlap in their meaning. Or you could turn over, for instance, to 2 Timothy chapter 1.

In 2 Timothy chapter 1 verse 9, Paul says that God saved us and called us with a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of His own purpose and grace, which He gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.

[5 : 58] So there it is again. God's purpose dates back into eternity past. This is about God's plan. This is about what God is doing sort of on the macro level.

This is about what God is doing throughout all of human history. What is His goal for mankind? What is He doing? And Paul tells us in Romans chapter 9 that what God is doing fully accords with, lines up with His own choosing of certain individuals.

But before we can get into this doctrine of election, first we need to be reminded of exactly what Paul was dealing with here in Romans chapter 9. We've got to remember the context because this passage is so clear, this passage is so forthright on the doctrine of election that there are many, many people who would want to try to shift our attention and say, oh, well, he's not really talking about salvation.

Paul's not really dealing with that stuff. People will do incredible things to avoid what Paul is very clearly saying in this passage. So we just need to be reminded real quickly this morning of the context so that we remember what Paul is discussing.

So if you'll remember from last week, Paul listed a number of privileges that the Jewish people have. If you look back up, you can look in verse 4. He says, they are Israelites.

[7 : 25] To them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. Verse 5. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever.

To which I don't think any Jewish person of Paul's day, and perhaps even of our day, most would not have any sort of objection to this list of privileges that the people of Israel had historically as God's people.

And yet, Paul is listing these privileges so that we can understand why he's in anguish. He's not rejoicing over these privileges. Paul is in anguish.

He is in deep sorrow because as he looks out upon the Jewish people as a whole, as he looks out on those whom he calls his kinsmen according to the flesh, he sees that they are not in possession of all of these privileges at the present time.

He sees that, in fact, they are accursed. They are, he says, cut off from the Messiah, cut off from Christ, cut off from the only one who could fully and finally provide all of these privileges.

[8 : 30] So the context for Paul's doctrine of election is the fact that as he looks at his contemporary fellow Jewish people, most of them have rejected the gospel message, they have rejected the Messiah, and therefore they are accursed.

Therefore, they are condemned at present. That causes deep sorrow, anguish in Paul's heart. In fact, in the beginning of chapter 10, he says that his prayer to God for them, for the Jewish people, is that they might be saved.

So the issue here is the fact that most of the Jewish people of Paul's day, and we could even say of our day, most of them were not and are not saved.

Most of them do not have eternal life. And so Paul says he's experiencing great sorrow and great anguish over this.

But this reality itself, that God gave to the descendants of Abraham great promises and privileges, and yet because of their rejection of the Messiah, they do not have possession of those privileges, and those promises are not being fulfilled toward them.

[9 : 40] That creates a problem. Yes, Paul has personal anguish, but this creates a real problem for Paul. You have to remember that Paul travels from city to city, preaching the gospel from place to place.

And everywhere that he goes, a handful of Jews receive the message and believe in the Messiah, but most reject it. And then he has to move to the next town, and he has to begin to preach the same gospel to more Jews, and they are aware that this gospel has been rejected.

And so Paul has to confront the reality that, even though great promises were given to the Jewish people in the Old Covenant, they are currently cut off.

They are currently accursed and destined for wrath. And that brings up in Paul's mind a great problem. Has God's Word, have God's promises that He gave to the descendants of Abraham, have they failed?

Have God's promises failed? Is God untrustworthy? That matters. We just spent three months looking at the glorious promises of Romans chapter 8, but none of those promises to us matters one bit if God is not faithful to the promises that He made in the Old Covenant.

[10 : 57] We can't count on God if He's not the kind of God who fulfills all of His promises. If He's the kind of God whose Word cannot be trusted for the people of Israel, how can His Word be trusted for anyone else?

And so Paul must confront this issue head on. He must deal with the reality that it appears on the surface as if God's Word has failed.

It appears as if God's promises have not come through. And so in verse 6, he begins to deal with the issue head on. Notice what he says.

He doesn't ask it as a question. He makes a statement. He says, But it is not as though the Word of God has failed. He will not even consider that as a possibility.

It may appear to be that way on the surface, but Paul says, No, the Word of God has not failed. Yes, He gave them promises. Yes, He gave them privileges. Yes, they have lost those promises.

[11 : 59] They have lost those privileges. But the Word of God has not failed. So how does he arrive at that conclusion? How do you move from God gave Abraham's descendants promises, Abraham's descendants by and large are not receiving those promises, but the Word of God has not failed.

How do you bridge that great gap between step 2 and step 3? That's what Paul is going to do for us in the rest of this paragraph. And in fact, in the rest of chapter 9 and on through chapter 10 and chapter 11.

But in the passage we're looking at this morning, his argument proceeds in two basic steps. He's going to take us back in time for both of these steps. He's going to take us back in time all the way to the book of Genesis.

He's going to take us back to the founding of God's covenant people, to the call of Abraham, to the promises made to Abraham, and then to Abraham's son, and then to Abraham's grandson.

Take a look at what he says first, though. First he makes a general statement about how he can say that the Word of God has not failed. It is not as though the Word of God has failed.

[13 : 11] Now we're in the middle of verse 6. For, because, here's why, for not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel.

Literally, he says, for not all Israel are of Israel. Not everyone who is outwardly an Israelite is actually truly an Israelite, he says.

And then he goes on, he adds to that. He says in verse 7, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring. So this is Paul's solution to the problem.

Paul's answer is, listen, the promises of God have not failed because not everyone who's a descendant of Abraham was actually given those promises. Not all of Abraham's physical descendants, not everyone who bears the name of Israel, not all of those were actually intended by God as the recipients of the promise.

God never promised that every single descendant of Abraham would receive the promises. He never said that all of Abraham's children would be ultimately finally saved and receive the covenant blessings.

[14 : 21] That's not the case, Paul says. Not everybody who's descended from Israel actually belongs to Israel. And not all of Abraham's children are actually to be counted as Abraham's true children or offspring.

How can that be? Two steps Paul makes. First, he takes us back to the time of Abraham and the birth of Abraham's second son.

Notice what he says at the end of verse 7. He quotes from Genesis chapter 21. It says, Not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

Now that's a significant quotation because in Genesis chapter 21, you have an argument, you have a dispute that arises between Sarah, Abraham's wife, and Hagar, the mother of Abraham's first child.

So that Sarah comes to Abraham and says, I want you to get rid of her. I want you to send her out along with her son Ishmael. I want them out of here. I don't want them around my son Isaac.

[15 : 30] I want them pushed away. And this causes great anguish for Abraham. He doesn't know what to do. He loves his son Ishmael. How can he send Ishmael out into the wilderness where certain death awaits?

How can he abandon him? How can he do that? And so God speaks to Abraham and he says, Don't worry. I will take care of Ishmael in the wilderness. I will make him into a great nation as well.

But the promises that I gave to you about descendants, they're not for him. The promises that I gave to you about great blessings, they are not for Ishmael.

It is through Isaac that your offspring will be named or called. It is through Isaac. And so Paul is pointing out that in this great conflict that Abraham had, God comes into Abraham and says, Abraham, the promises do not belong to Ishmael.

They belong to Isaac. So from the very beginning of the covenant family, Paul is able to show us that it's not all Abraham's children who are recipients of the promise.

[16 : 36] And then he quotes the original promise that narrowed it down from merely Abraham's children to a specific child of Abraham. He quotes again. He says, verse 8, This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

For this is what the promise said, this is from Genesis 18, about this time next year I will return and Sarah shall have a son.

In other words, Paul says, Ishmael is excluded from the promise because the promise was made that Sarah would have a son and it was that son who would receive the covenant blessings.

That was God's plan or that was God's purpose from the very beginning and he didn't deviate from that plan. So right there at the beginning of the covenant family, a distinction is made between Abraham's children.

Some of Abraham's children, namely Ishmael, do not receive the promises, were never intended by God to receive the promises. And some of Abraham's children, namely Isaac, were intended in God's mind to be the recipients of the promises and of all of the covenant blessings.

[17 : 45] But of course someone might say, well, yeah, maybe Ishmael is excluded, but he's excluded because he didn't have both of the right parents. He was not a descendant of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

He's a son of a concubine. Of course he's not going to receive the promises. But are not all the Jewish people, all those who bear the name of Israel, are not we all descendants of both Abraham and Sarah?

And that would be a true response to Paul at this point. If Paul had only made this argument, if he stopped right here, anybody who knows the book of Genesis well, or even just a little bit would be able to say, but yeah, but aren't you talking about the Israelites?

Aren't you trying to explain why most of the Israelites are accursed and cut off? And yet, are not all the Israelites descendants of both Abraham and Sarah? So maybe it was because he had the wrong mother.

Maybe that was the problem. So Paul has to move one step further. And he does. He moves to the next generation. Look at what he says next as he advances his argument.

[18 : 56] Verse 10, And not only so, or not only this, so I give you that example, let me throw you another example, let me build my argument and make it stronger. And not only so, but also, Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac.

So we're on to the next generation. Ishmael was rejected. Isaac was chosen. Now we're moving to the next generation. Isaac has two children, two sons.

He has them by the same woman. And Paul is careful to emphasize that these children are conceived at the same time by one man. In other words, the emphasis here is not on one father.

The emphasis is on one act of conception. At one time, two children are conceived and are in her womb. So there's no reason to distinguish on the basis of parentage now.

Not in any way. So what makes the distinction? Why does God choose Jacob and not Esau? Why does Jacob receive the promises and not Esau?

[20 : 04] Standard Jewish thinking at the time of Paul's writing of the book of Romans was that God chose Jacob because Jacob turned out to be better than Esau. Standard Jewish thinking was that God chose Jacob because God knew in advance that Jacob was going to be a more righteous man eventually at some point down the road.

Jacob would be the one who deserved, who earned the covenant promises. That was standard Jewish thinking in Paul's day. And Paul will not allow us to go down that road.

He will not allow us to think that it was merely because Isaac had the right mom that he was chosen. He will not allow us to think that it's because of Jacob's own conduct that God looked into the future and saw that Jacob was chosen.

He will not allow us to think that way. No. He wants us to really understand why one person receives the promises and not another. Why this descendant of Abraham receives the promises and not this descendant of Abraham.

Let's read on and see what he says. Not only so, but also Rebecca when she had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac. Listen. Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad.

[21 : 16] So what's the emphasis here? The emphasis here is that God's decision to choose Jacob instead of Esau was done not on the basis of anything that Jacob or Esau ever did before they were born and not only in time but also in consideration of their lives.

Before they had done anything good or bad, God chooses Jacob over Esau. Why does he do that? Well, some might say, well, what God means here is simply that he didn't choose on the basis of works.

God looked into the future and saw that Jacob would believe and he chose Jacob because Jacob believed. many people would try to make that argument and say that the reason that Jacob was chosen, the reason that anyone is chosen is because God looks into the future and sees who will believe.

That will not work. Paul does not mean just to exclude good works when he says before any of them have done anything either good or bad. He means to exclude every human action, everything that we might do, think, or feel.

How do we know that? Let your eyes glance down just a few verses to our passage we'll consider when we come back to Romans 9. Look at verse 16. Paul's talking about who gets mercy and who doesn't get mercy.

[22 : 38] And he says, so then, the receiving of mercy or the being saved, the being chosen, so then, it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God.

Pause there. So then it, what it? The receiving of mercy or the giving of mercy, God's choosing to give mercy to one and not to another. It does not depend upon either human willing or literally human running.

Paul says it doesn't depend upon the human willing. In other words, it doesn't depend on anything any man or woman or child does or thinks or feels on the inside. It has nothing to do with that and it has nothing to do with anything they do externally, the running, the exertion.

It doesn't depend upon anything that we do, think, or feel. God's choice is not based on anything that he foresees in us. No. It depends upon what?

God. And God alone. So when he says it was before they had reborn, before either of them had done anything good or bad, he means to emphasize that we cannot find any basis in the life of Jacob or in the life of Esau for God's choosing to pass the promises onto one and not the other.

[23 : 58] And he's going to give biblical support for this. Before he does, though, he's going to give us the clear reason and the clear answer for this choosing.

Look again in the middle of verse 11. Before they had done anything good or bad, here's why. In order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works, but because of him who calls.

This is why the choice is made. This is why, so that God's purpose that accords with his choice might remain and might stand, that it might be made firm, so that we will never doubt that what God is doing is accomplishing his plans in his way.

This is God doing what God chooses to do. This is not God reacting in any way to Jacob and Esau's life. This is not God reacting to anything that unfolds in the course of human history.

This is God directing the course of human history. This is God shaping and changing human hearts so that he can accomplish his plans that accord with his election.

[25 : 09] This is what God is doing. Because he will not leave any room for us to boast at all. Not because of works. Not because of human willing.

Not because of human running or outward exertion. Not because of any of those things. Why? What's the ultimate ground? Because of him who calls. Again, because of God.

God is the one acting. God is the one moving. God is the one choosing. God is in charge at every step of the way in deciding who receives the promises and who does not receive the promises.

Now the biblical support at the end of the passage. Rebecca was told in verse 12, the older will serve the younger. She was told that before they were ever born. The older Esau, he's going to serve the younger, which is a way of saying that the younger brother, Jacob, he'll receive the covenant blessings.

He's going to receive the promises. Esau, the older, will not receive the promises. And then a quotation from the prophet Malachi, looking back upon these events and the histories of their descendants as they've unfolded, says in the words of God, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.

[26 : 30] Strong, strong language. God himself speaking. God himself looking and saying, Jacob, upon him I've set my love. Upon him I have set my covenant love.

Upon him I have set my saving love. I have selected him. I have chosen him. But Esau I have not. I have not set my saving love upon Esau.

I have not given to Esau the covenant promises and the love that comes along with those covenant promises. Now is there a real and genuine sense in which God loves the world?

Yes. Is there a real and genuine sense in which God loves all people? Yes. There is a real and genuine sense. I mean, after all, we look around us and when we look at the world around us, the only thing that we really see is a world filled with people who deserve God's wrath right now.

And so it's only God's mercy, it's only God's general love for all the world that gives breath and life to anyone. So yes, there is a sense in which God loves the world and loves all people, but God's saving love, God's covenant love is directed at only some.

[27 : 44] Jacob I loved, Esau I hated. We call this the doctrine of unconditional election. We call it that because God's choosing is not based upon anything he sees in us.

It's unconditional. It's unconditional in every way that you might imagine. It's not conditioned upon any good works that we do. It's not conditioned upon who we're descended from.

It's not conditioned upon anything that we believe or any choices that we make. It is perfectly, fully, unconditional. There are no, there's nothing that constrains God to choose one person, Jacob, over another person, Esau.

There is nothing that constrains him. It is entirely unconditional. unconditional. And so Paul says, the word of God has not failed because all those whom he has unconditionally chosen to receive the promises, guess what?

They all receive the promises. Jacob was a scoundrel. Jacob is, he's not a hero early on in the book of Genesis. In fact, if Moses hadn't finished writing Genesis, if he had stopped somewhere around chapter 26, 27, if he had just stopped right there and not sort of finished the story of Jacob, where we see Jacob's sons and the twelve tribes come and Jacob becomes a wise old man and those things, if he had stopped short of that and we'd only seen the early life of Jacob, then Jacob would be the villain of the story.

[29 : 27] Jacob would be the bad guy. Jacob's the one swindling his brother. Jacob's the one who's scheming against his father and tricking his own father. Jacob's the one who runs away out of fear.

Jacob is not a hero in the early part of his story. Nothing in Jacob, nothing at all would commend him to anyone. Jacob's a scoundrel.

He's not a good guy. And yet, God chooses him. And because all those whom God has chosen, all those he also calls.

And all those that he calls eventually respond in faith because of the call. Because of that, the word of God has not fallen. Everyone that God intends from eternity past to be a recipient of the promises, they all receive the covenant promises.

The word of God has not failed. So that when Paul looks around him, though he has great sorrow in his heart because of the lostness of the Jewish people, he does not have sorrow because he fears that God's promises have fallen to the wayside.

[30 : 43] No, Paul knows full well that there is always a remnant. There is always an Israel within Israel. And that interior Israel, the true children of Abraham, oh, they receive the promises.

And all of this, all of this arguing from Paul for the doctrine of unconditional election aims to help us to trust in God's promises.

This is to help us. So many times we treat things like election and predestination as things to be pushed away, discussions to be avoided, things to be afraid of.

Talk about those sorts of things. We'll only create division within the body of Christ. We don't need to hear those sorts of things. And yet for Paul, he sees this great doctrine not as a source of trouble, but as a source of great comfort.

How can you know that all of God's promises will be fulfilled? How can you know that? Because he's sovereign. Because he cannot fail to fulfill all of his promises.

[31 : 49] Because he has never failed and will never fail to fulfill any one of his promises. To believe in the doctrine of election is to believe in your own eternal security.

To believe in the doctrine of election is to believe that God is able to complete the work that he has begun in you. To believe in the doctrine of election is to have assurance of your own salvation because it's from God.

It was never dependent upon you. Your faith, your trusting in Christ was always his work within you and he's not going to stop doing that work. He's going to continue it.

He's going to finish it all the way to the end. So this is not a doctrine that creates division. Oh no. No. This is a doctrine that creates great comfort and assurance for the people of God.

But more than that, I think if we rightly understand what Paul is saying here, I think that we will be encouraged to continue to pray for and to evangelize lost people around us.

[33 : 02] I know that sounds maybe counterintuitive to some people. I know that there are a lot of people who say, oh, if you believe that God chooses people and it's not based on anything that they do, if you believe those kinds of crazy things, you'll never go out and share the gospel.

You'll never do anything. You'll just be lazy and sit back and wait for God to do something. And yet, that's not the case biblically. It's not the case historically. Almost every major movement of God, every major awakening and revival since the time of the Reformation has been led by people who believed in this doctrine in specifically this way.

The Reformation itself was led by men like Martin Luther and John Calvin who believed in this doctrine. The Great Awakening, the First Great Awakening was led by George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards who believed in this great doctrine.

Nearly every great movement of God, the modern missionary movement was led by people who believed in this. History tells us that those who believe in this doctrine with all their hearts do not run from evangelism, they run toward the lost to proclaim the gospel.

Why would we do that? We do that because we see a history of people like Jacob, the villain of the early part of the story and yet a hero by the end.

[34 : 21] We do it because we know that if God is ultimately in control, we look at people that we love and we ourselves in our own hearts would look at them and say they're just too far gone.

They are far too much of a skeptic. They are far, they are just, they are a hater of all things that have anything to do with true religion. They hate God, they hate God's word, they don't want to hear it, they're too closed off, they're too shut off, they can never hear the gospel much less respond to the gospel.

We see people like that and we don't grow discouraged because we see Jacob. We don't grow discouraged because we see the apostle Paul who says of himself that he was the chiefest among all sinners, who calls himself a murderer and a persecutor of the church of God.

And yet we see Paul, chosen vessel of the Lord's, now writing the book of Romans. The doctrine of election doesn't make us run away from evangelism.

The doctrine of election says it doesn't matter what they've done or what they've said or how far gone they appear to be to you. God is sovereign and he specializes in turning hearts of stone into hearts of flesh.

[35 : 40] So this gives us comfort not only for our own salvation and assurance, it gives us comfort to know that we can and ought to continue to preach the gospel even to the most hardened heart because God softens and remakes the hardest of all hearts.

It gives great, great comfort, comfort, motivates us to believe and trust God that he will work out his sovereign plan in our lives and in the lives of others.

But there's a couple more things that I think rightly understanding this doctrine will do for us. I think first of all in light of what Paul continues to say throughout the rest of Romans, we could say that this particular teaching about God's sovereignty in his distribution of mercy to whomever he wants.

This becomes a great motivator not just for evangelism, this becomes a great motivator for our obedience across the board. In fact, I'd like you to turn a page in your Bible to chapter 12, verse 1.

In chapter 12, verse 1, Paul sort of turns a major corner in the book of Romans and he begins to give what a lot of scholars and preachers call his practical teachings in the book of Romans. I don't like that because I think all of Romans is practical.

[36 : 57] But he begins to tell us things that we should do as Christians, how we should live, not just what we should believe, but what we should actually be doing and how we should live our lives. But I want you to see how he starts this section on the Christian life.

Chapter 12, verse 1. I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by or in view of or because of the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

What is the basis of our obedience or what is the motive and cause of our obedience? He says it is the mercies of God. What mercies could he be talking about?

The mercies of chapter 9, verse 14. What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means. He says to Moses, I'll have mercy on whom I have mercy and I'll have compassion upon whom I have compassion.

Verse 18. So then he has mercy on whomever he wills and he hardens whomever he wills. What are the mercies of God that motivate and produce a life of sacrifice in the name of Christ and for the name of Christ in chapter 12?

[38 : 15] What are the mercies? They are the sovereign mercies of God poured out on behalf of all those that he has chosen. So understanding election is a motive to obedience.

It should move us to lay down everything that we are for the sake of this God who for nothing in us has called us and saved us and blessed us.

Last thing I want you to say this morning about this doctrine is that it also moves and motivates us to worship. I think if nothing else, if we can gain a clear view of God's sovereignty, if we can push aside for the moment the frustrations and doubts that we feel at hearing this doctrine, which Paul was going to address as we move through chapter 9, I promise.

But if for the moment we can just push those out to the side of your mind just for the moment and say, I may not like this doctrine right now, I may not like it yet, but I'll believe it because the scripture said if we can just push that aside for a moment and then begin to think about the awesomeness of a God who is so sovereign that nothing that He does is dependent upon anyone else.

He's not waiting for other people to act. He's not wondering what His next step will be. He's accomplishing His next step at every moment. If we can merely ponder that kind of a God, it will lead us to worship.

[39 : 50] Notice how Paul ends this entire section, Romans 9-11, chapter 11, verse 33. Oh, the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God.

How unsearchable His judgments. How inscrutable His ways. We have to reply that when we start to think about this doctrine. You can't fully wrap your mind around the doctrine of God's sovereignty.

You can't fully wrap your mind around what the Bible says about election or predestination. At the end of the day, what you can do is say, oh, the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God.

He has done things in a way that I would have never foreseen or I would have never laid out. Oh, He is wise beyond anything that I can comprehend. For who has known the mind of the Lord?

Who has been His counselor? Who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid? The answer is nobody. Nobody gives God counsel. Nobody fully understands God's mind.

[40 : 51] Nobody gives a gift to God. He's the giver of all good gifts. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever.

Election is meant to spur in us deep devotion. devotion. Not doctrinal dryness. Deep, deep devotion and worship.

So I encourage you this week rather than become frustrated with Paul, rather than become irritated with things that push back against maybe some of your preconceived notions about how God acts or what God is doing, I encourage you this week to rest in this truth.

Don't push back against it. Don't fight against it. Rest in it and be sure of your final salvation because the beginning of it wasn't yours and the end of it won't be yours.

Be sure that God can save the most hard-hearted person that you love with all your heart because He can save all those that He chooses to save. And then live a life of gratitude and worship and devotion response.

[42 : 03] Don't let things like this put you into a tizzy where all you do is spend your time trying to figure things out. Don't do that. Don't become a person who's just doctrinally dry.

No. Become a person who's motivated to worship and stand in awe. Let's pray.