

Title: God's Sovereign Choice (Part 2)

Passage: Romans 9: 1-13

Summary:

I. NOT ALL OF ISRAEL IS TRUE ISRAEL (v. 6)

II. SOVEREIGN CHOICE/ELECTION (v. 7-13)

A. Example: God chooses Isaac over Ismael (v. 7-8)

B. Example: God chooses Jacob over Esau (v.9-13)

Key Truths:

- Not everyone who is part of the “visible” church is part of the invisible church. Many people may say they are “Christians” but they are not from the heart.
- God has to choose because we are dead in our sins. We cannot do anything without God intervening.
- In God’s divine wisdom, predestination and human freedom/responsibility are compatible.
- God cannot be put into a box. Rather than being frustrated, be in awe and wonder of God’s amazing character and plan.
- Though we do not fully grasp the doctrine of election, we must still study and seek to understand it as it relates to the full character of God.

Possible Discussion Questions:

- What point(s) in the sermon did the Lord most impress upon you?
- What does the passage say to those who claim to be children of God because of their heritage or past?
- What does this passage say about God’s character?
- How have you seen God’s sovereignty be displayed in your life or in circumstances you have observed?
- What next steps will you take in response to the truths you have been exposed to?

Introduction

When hiking a big, steep mountain, it can be arduous and difficult getting there. But when at the very top, get a new perspective of the surroundings of the grandeur but also recognize how small one is.

- Likewise, as read Scripture, be in awe of the splendor of God’s plan but also recognize how small we are.

Passage:

Romans 9:6-13

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. 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 Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might 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.”

EXPOSITION

Context of Passage:

Romans 8:38-39

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- If nothing can separate us from God's love and plan, what about the Jews?
 - Did God's plan fail?
 - Absolutely not!

- Romans 9:1-5
 - Paul was in deep anguish for Jews who did not see Jesus as the Promised Messiah.
 - They had the law, promises, and lineage of Christ yet were blind.
- Despite his feelings, God's Word has not failed.

Overview

I. Differences between true Israel and ethnic Israel

II. Sovereign choice/election

I. NOT ALL OF ISRAEL IS TRUE ISRAEL (v. 6-9)

Romans 9:6-7

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. 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.”

For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring

- Analogy: Distinction between the visible church vs. invisible church.
 - Visible: those in physical attendance at a church building. Those who would declare themselves publicly as “Christians.”
 - Invisible: What we cannot see - whose hearts have been truly been transformed and are Christians.
 - Note: hard to tell the difference. People can be externally be good (say and do the right things)
- Not everyone who is part of the “visible” church is part of the invisible church.
 - Many people may say they are “Christians” but they are not from the heart.

Romans 2:28-29

For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Question: If a wave of persecution would come, would people ever accuse you are a Christian?

How know part of the invisible / spiritual church?

- Have you had a moment in life where truly believe Jesus is the Messiah?

Hebrews 11:39-40

And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

- they were looking forward to when they would be saved from their sins.
 - They were looking to Christ.

II. SOVEREIGN CHOICE/ELECTION

- Question: How will people have faith?

See Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus

John 3:5

Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

A. Example: God chooses Isaac over Ismael

Romans 9:7-8

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: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.”

- God promises Abraham a son when he is 80
 - A promise is made that is so outside of human possibility.
- But they waited and waited and got impatient.
 - So Sarah gave Abraham a servant to conceive a child. A child came, which was Ismael.
- Yet God sovereignly brought about Isaac and affirmed that it is through Isaac that the nations would be blessed.

B. Example: God chooses Jacob over Esau

Romans 9:10-13

And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might 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.”

- God sovereign plan was known even before birth of man.
- It is not because of anything outward but only out of God’s sovereign plan and election.

Malachi 1:2-3

“I have loved you,” says the LORD. But you say, “How have you loved us?” “Is not Esau Jacob's brother?” declares the LORD. “Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert.”

- Love / hate is less about emotions but about actions by God.
 - Hate = does not mean emotional displeasure against Esau.
 - God not showing favor
 - God not showing preference.
- Both deserve justice. One is shown mercy.
 - The fact that God doesn’t show justice against one is out of His sovereign choice and election.

- Other passages where use of the word “hate” is a matter of priority (not of emotional repulsion).

Genesis 29:31

When the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.

Matthew 6:24

“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Luke 14:26

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

John 12:25

Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Misperception: Corporate election

- God elects groups of people. All who believe in Jesus will be saved. But God doesn't know who exactly is going to do so.

Response: This passage is about personal election. Why?:

- Paul's overall context.
- Paul uses the phrase “children of the promise”
- Paul uses the word “election” (v.11)

1 Thessalonians 1:4

For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you,

2 Peter 1:10

Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.

- Paul contrasts works with calling, which is also personal salvation

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

- Paul would not transition to idea of corporate salvation without any explanation.

Though we do not fully grasp the doctrine of election, we must still study and seek to understand it as it relates to the full character of God.

Observations

If you are a Christian and the Bible is the Word of God, you must believe in predestination in some form.

- The concept is repeated throughout Scripture

John 15:16

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

- Jesus chose the disciples. The disciples did not choose Jesus.

Jeremiah 1:5

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

Psalms 139:16

Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

Exodus 4:11

Then the LORD said to him, “Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?”

- God decides how you will come out. God designed you as you are

2 Timothy 1:9

who saved us and called us to 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,

Acts 13:48

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

Matthew 22:14

For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Ephesians 1:11

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

Some Interpretations of Passages on Predestination:

I. Universalism (heresy)

- No election or no predestination, all will be saved in the end.
- But this ignores many teachings from Jesus on the reality of hell and who He is.
- Ignores clear Scripture to the contrary:

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

II. Pelagianism (heresy)

- Based from a monk's teaching (Pelagius)
- Stressed the essential goodness of human nature. No original sin. God's grace is not necessary.
- People can make wise choices if they are good enough.
- Ignores clear Scripture to the contrary:

Romans 3:23

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Ephesians 2:1-3

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

III. Open Theism (heresy)

- Human beings are truly free because God hasn't pre-ordained the future. If God ordained the future, then humans are not free. But humans are free so God doesn't know all things. God can be surprised.
 - In the Old Testament, God says "I'm sorry"
- Response: God's plan is clear from the beginning. God doesn't learn anything new.
 - Passages were in the context of God's sovereign plan. God's omniscience is clear.

Isaiah 46:8-10

"Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,"

Orthodox Interpretations

IV. Armenianism

- Fallen and trained by sin but not to the point of able to choose salvation.
- God only chooses those whom he knows will believe.
- No one is pre-determined. Jesus dies for everyone. God's call can be resisted and rejected.
- Christians can lose their salvation if reject the Holy Spirit's influence in their lives. You must keep/hold your salvation.
 - Analogy: we are swimming and God provides a life vest to save us and we choose.

V. Calvinism

- God has to choose because we are dead in our sins. We cannot do anything without God intervening.
 - Analogy: We are dead at the bottom of the ocean. God is the one who saves us and breathes new life within us.
- Also see: Augustine, Tyndall, Wycliffe, Calvin, Luther, Spurgeon, etc.

Note: This is not a category 1 doctrine

- your salvation does not depend upon your interpretation on predestination.
 - Compare: Category 1 doctrine is reality of sin, need for salvation, salvation only through Jesus. (Heart of the Gospel).

Possible objections:

- God sounds like a tyrant. He saves some but not others.
- Are we just puppets? Do we not have freedom?

Response: Look at Jesus

- Was Jesus predestined?
 - Yes.
- Was every part of Jesus predestined?
 - Yes.
- Did Jesus have freedom?
 - Yes.
 - He faced temptations with sincere emotion.
 - He prayed frequently

In God's divine wisdom, predestination and human freedom/responsibility are compatible.

- God cannot be put into a box.
- Rather than being frustrated, be in awe and wonder of God's amazing character and plan.

Romans 11:33-36

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”

“Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?”

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.