

You Were Born for This

Romans 9: 13 - 18

- Last week, what did we say that God's election was all about?

Ephesians 1: 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace

- Election is all about God's purpose, and what is God's purpose? The praise of His glorious grace. Now, as we think about how heavy all of this, remember what the Hebrew word for glory really means. It means heavy, weighty.
 - Any discussion we have of the glory of God isn't going to be frivolous and light. It is going to be heavy, and since election is a glory issue with God, every conversation we have about it is going to be heavy.
 - Not many of us like to carry heavy objects, our desire is to put them down as quickly as possible, and that is true with this topic of election, isn't it? It is not something we want to carry, because it is heavy, but we can't just put it down and ignore it. We have to pick it up and carry it.
 - Think of the pole that a tight rope walker carries to help them balance on the tightrope. In 2013 Nic Wallenda tight roped the Grand Canyon and to do that he carried a 20' long 43-pound pole.
 - The pole is heavy, but he can't put it down or he will lose his balance. In general, the same is true with the glory of God and with this topic of election that has to do with the glory of God. It's heavy but we can't put it down, or we lose our balance.
 - Think what Paul says happens to us when we put down the glory of God.

Romans 1: 22 – 25 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever!

 - When we put down the glory of God because it is too heavy, we lose our balance and plunge to our death because we worship the wrong thing.
 - This is the inescapable fact of the way things work. The more of God's glory we see, the more we worship, and the more we worship the more we serve and obey.
- Psalms 119: 32** I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart!
- As I said last week, in these verses Paul is giving us a glimpse into the secret counsels of God. Why is Paul doing that? For the glory of God. So that we would see God in His mercy in a life changing way—a way that enlarges our hearts and causes us to run in paths of obedience to God. A way that totally re-orientes the priorities of our lives, because we see God as the heaviest most glorious thing.
 - Think of it this way. All of our sin, every bit of it, is rooted in self. Therefore, if you are struggling with sin, it is for no other reason other than self. How do

we fix that? We take our eyes off of self and put them where they should have been all along, on God. How do we do that? By seeing the glory of God.

- Yes, it is heavy, but without it we lose our footing.

- We can't just put this doctrine of election down and ignore it, but we also must handle it correctly. This is not a doctrine that we use to beat people up. God didn't give us this doctrine to win debates and prove our intellectual and theological superiority over others. God gave us this to show us his glory.
 - John Calvin said that the doctrine of election is one of the most difficult doctrines of sacred Scripture and must be handled with care, caution, tenderness, and patience among those who struggle with it, but it should not be neglected. The doctrine comes from the Word of God, and even though we struggle with it, we must not sweep it under the rug; we must deal with it, albeit carefully.

Romans 9: 10 – 18 And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, ¹¹ 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— ¹² she was told, "The older will serve the younger." ¹³ As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." ¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." ¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." ¹⁸ So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

- God didn't have to let us in on His secret workings. He could have let us go on thinking that He loves everyone the same and it is up to everyone to choose Him. That would be so much easier, wouldn't it? But God doesn't do that, does He?
- Look what God makes clear in these verses. He chooses (or elects) some and not others. He shows mercy to some and not to others. In fact, he actually hardens the hearts of some. And every bit of God's election is not based on works—what we do, but on His sovereign love alone.
 - Verse 12 not because of works but because of him who calls
 - Verse 16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy
- These are stunning truths for us to wrestle with. Truths that the world and even many Christians don't like. But truth doesn't have feelings. It just is what it is, and we need to reckon with it, so we can see the truth of God and His glory and be changed by it.
 - Our only options are to either say Paul is wrong and these verses don't belong in the Bible. Or Paul is right and figure out what do we do with it.
 - We believe Scripture to be the word of God, so we obviously believe Scripture to be true, so all we are left with is trying to figure out what we do

with this truth, and I promise we will do that before we end, but first let's understand the truth.

1. What does Paul mean in the phrase, "Jacob I loved Esau I hated?"

- The first thing we have to understand is that this phrase did not originate with the Apostle Paul. It originated with God. God spoke those very words through the prophet Malachi in Malachi 1: 2 – 3.
 - So, this is not something Paul is making up. God really did love Jacob and hate Esau. We know that is true because God Himself said it.
 - But what do we make of the word hate? It seems unseemly to say that God hates anyone, doesn't it? The world wants to believe and wants you to believe that God loves everyone.
 - In fact, they love to misuse **1 John 4: 8** God is love to allow themselves to behave however they want. "It doesn't matter what I do, because God loves me no matter what." That is a very dangerous way to think. It is a distortion of the truth.
 - God is love, and if a person is part of the elect and truly in Christ, then God will love them no matter what. But if a person is not in Christ they are not loved by God. To go deeper into sin because they think God's love gives them license to do so, only takes them deeper into judgement.

Romans 2: 5 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

- No one who is part of the elect, no one who is in Christ, no one who is saved, will desire to continue to live in sin, or use the justification that "It doesn't matter what I do because God will love me anyway" as a justification for their sin. A person who truly knows the love of God will instead

Colossians 3: 5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

- But there is indeed a sense that God loves everyone.
 - In a certain sense, God loves even those who are enemies. We know that because God cares for all by sending the rain and the sun on the just and the unjust, on the evil and the good. But God's loving care of His creation is not the same as His covenantal saving love that saves people and draws them into a saving relationship with God.
- We are not all children of God as the world wants us to think. The only ones who are the children of God are the elect of God who have been saved by God.

John 1 : 12 – 13 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

- It is not really that hard to understand that God can love all of His creation in one way, but not in another way, is it? I love my job. But the love with which I love my job is not the same as the love I have for my wife and my children.



- God loves all of His creation and cares for it. The proof of that love is the God does care for His creation sending the sun and the rain etc. But can you not see that the love God has for His creation is not the same as the love God has for His Son. That is a very different kind of love.

- Now as you think about, remember that as a Christian, you are in Christ.

Galatians 3:26-27 For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ

- If by faith a person is in Christ, they are one with Christ, and because of that God has the same love for them as He has for His Son. That is hard for us to grasp. How can God love a sinner like me, the same way He loves His son? But it is true. This is the Gospel.
 - But does God love every single person that way? No just those who are the elect, and who are therefore in Christ.
 - This is Paul's whole argument. There are two kinds of people in the world. The elect who are specially loved by God and the non-elect who are not.
 - People love to say that God hates sin, but loves the sinner, but as R.C. Sproul used to say, "On judgment day, God doesn't just send the sin to hell. He also sends the sinner to Hell." This is why people so desperately need Jesus. It is only in Christ that we are loved with God's saving love.
 - One of the things that we often lose sight of is that there are only two groups of people in the world. Those who are in Christ, and those who are in Satan. That is, it. There are just two kingdoms. The kingdom of the world, which is Satan's, and the Kingdom of heaven, which is Christ's. And a person is only in one of the two. A person is either in Christ, or in Satan.
 - Nowhere could you possibly argue from Scripture that God loves Satan. God justly hates Satan because Satan is evil. So, if a person is in Satan, they are hated by God in the same way that a person who is in Christ is loved by God.
 - This is the point that Paul is making. Those who are in Christ are the elect who are loved by God. Those who are not the elect are not in Christ, and are therefore in Satan, and are therefore hated by God.
 - How could a holy God not hate sin and all who are in sin? We want and need God to hate Satan and work toward Satan's destruction, and if a person is not in Christ, then they are in Satan, meaning they too, along with Satan, must be judged and destroyed. God's hatred of sin and sinners is a settled opposition against sin and sinners that seeks to bring them to judgment, so His wrath can be poured out on them.
 - You might be tempted to say, "That's not fair. How can God choose to love some and not love others?" Paul anticipates that question in verse 14 with the question:
- 2. Is there injustice on God's part?**
- Do you realize that the fact that Paul asks this question proves that the view of election that we are teaching is correct?



- If you doubt that what we are teaching is true, think about this: Paul would not ask this question if God chose everyone, or to put it another way, left it entirely up to people to choose him. There could be no charge of injustice if God just stood back and left it up to each of us to make the choice.
- In the same way, at least on a surface look, there could be no charge of injustice on God's part, if God based his choice on our merit, on our earning our salvation through our works.
- The only way God could be charged with injustice is if God is choosing some and not others simply on the basis of his own free will. His own sovereign choice to love some and to not love others.
- And at first glance that doesn't seem fair to us that God chooses some and not others. But we have to look at this correctly. We'll take a deeper dive into God's justice next week, but for now let me simply explain it by illustration.
 - Imagine for a moment a kingdom with a good, kind, benevolent king. However, in spite of the king's goodness and kindness, one of the cities in the kingdom chose to follow a wicked leader and enter into a wicked, treasonous rebellion against the good king's power and authority. All the citizens of the city joined in the rebellion. There were none who were faithful and true.
 - The king crushes the rebellion. What should happen to the leader of the rebellion? What should happen to those who were with the leader and engaged in the rebellion? Does not the good and benevolent king have every right to have a settled opposition against them, to judge them, condemn them, and destroy them?
 - Would you say it was unjust or unfair for the king to demand the life of the rebels? Of course not.
 - But what if the king wanted to display both justice and mercy? What if the king had the rebels count off by 7s and every seventh person's life was spared. What would you think of that? Would you accuse the king of being unjust, or unfair to only choose to save some from death? Or would you think not only is the king, good, kind, and benevolent, but he is also most merciful—to spare the lives of some but not all? Rather than charging the king with injustice you would proclaim His mercy.
- All of humanity chose to enter into rebellion against God. Every time we sin, it is a cosmic act of treason against God. We all deserve death, but God in His mercy chooses to preserve some. God's choice of some but not others is not unjust. No one deserves mercy if they deserved it, then it wouldn't be mercy, would it?
 - Because of man's Satan-incited rebellion, God is free to punish all whom He chooses to punish and save all whom He chooses to be merciful toward.

Romans 9: 15 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

3. God's sovereignty in mercy



When did God speak those words to Moses? In Exodus 33: 19, right after Israel had sinned by worshipping the golden calf. All of Israel deserved to be judged and condemned by God, and God sent a plague that indeed took the lives of many. But, in His mercy, God also spared a remnant of His own choosing.

- After all of that took place, Moses asked this of God.

Exodus 33: 13 If I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight.

- Do you remember what God said in response to Moses' request?

Exodus 33: 17 – 19 the Lord said to Moses, "This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." ¹⁸ Moses said, "Please show me your glory." ¹⁹ And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

- Now we need to notice three things here that tie into what we are talking about.
 - First, what God did was in response to Moses' request for God to show him His glory. So, the essence of what we are about to talk about is a glory issue.
 - Next notice God's response to Moses' request. "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.'
 - When you see LORD in all caps in your Bible it is referring to the name that God gave to himself when He first met Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3. In Hebrew it would be the name we know as Yahweh. What does that name mean?

Exodus 3: 13 Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" ¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."

- Yahweh, or LORD in all caps literally means I AM WHO I AM. Well, what does that mean? It literally means I am complete in myself. I am completely sovereign. I am not contingent on anything or anyone.
- Now with that in mind think again about what God said in response to Moses' request to "Show me your glory," in Exodus 33.

Exodus 33: 19 "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

- The very essence of God's glory, the very essence of who God is, is found in "And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."
 - The very words that Paul quotes here in Romans 9. The essence of who God is, the essence of God's glory is that God is dependent on no one, and this is best displayed in God's choice to love some with a saving love while choosing not to love others.

4. It all depends upon God's mercy

Romans 9: 16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.



• God is the mover, the chooser. We are not. We do not and cannot initiate mercy, only God can.

"There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.' All that are in Hell, choose it." C. S. Lewis *The Great Divorce*

- All who are in hell have chosen it. People don't believe that, but it is true. Those who end up in hell are there because they chose their will over God's. They chose to rebel against God. And the truth is we have all done that.

Romans 3: 10 – 12 "None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

- If God does not intervene to change our will from my will be done, to your will be done, we all end up in hell.

Romans 9: 17 – 18 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." ¹⁸ So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

- Think about Pharaoh. As you think back to the Exodus account, whose will was Pharaoh intent on seeing done? Obviously his own. He thought he could take on God and win.
 - Pharaoh had a severe case of hardening of the heart. Even as God sent one plague after another, what happened to Pharaoh's heart? Did it soften and turn to God? No, it grew harder and harder.
 - Why? Because God chose to not give Pharaoh his electing mercy. God was sovereign over Pharaoh's heart. God didn't try to change Pharaoh's mind or heart. He allowed it to go further and further into the direction it was already bent to go.

"The same sun that hardens the concrete, melts the wax."
 - Think of God and His glory as the sun. If a heart is made of concrete, the sun of God's glory shining upon it will just make it grow ever harder. That is what happened with Pharaoh.
 - And the truth is we are all like Pharaoh. There is no one righteous. We all have hearts of concrete. Hearts of stone. The only way we will ever have a heart of wax that can melt in the radiance of God's glory is if God in his mercy elects to give us that kind of heart.

Ezekiel 36: 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

- Who is doing the sprinkling? The cleansing? Who is giving the new heart and the new Spirit? It is God. "I will have mercy on whom I

have mercy.” Not based on works or human exertion but God’s free and sovereign choice. “I will take your heart of stone, that on its own would only grow ever harder, and give you a heart of flesh that will melt in the radiance of my glory and love.

- God’s election of who to harden and who to soften isn’t based on works, or even counting off by sevens. It all depends upon God’s sovereign mercy.

5. The effect of God’s mercy and compassion

- Why was Pharaoh born? Why did God raise him to power and allow his heart to harden? It’s there in:

Romans 9: 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth

- God brought Pharaoh to life, God raised him to power, God allowed his heart to remain in its natural state of hardness, so that God’s power and glory would be displayed through Pharaoh’s rebellion.
- Every human being who has been born has been born for that purpose—to glorify God. Either in God’s justice or God’s mercy. One way or the other, God will be glorified in our lives.
- If you are here and are not a Christian, consider this carefully. Consider what the effect will be if you continue to insist that your will be done. You will still glorify God one day, but it will be by being an object of His just and holy wrath.
 - But it doesn’t have to stay that way. Today, you can bend the knee to God and ask God to take your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh—making you alive in Christ. If you have questions about that or doubts about your salvation, please don’t leave without speaking to me.
- But for the rest of you here today, who are in Christ and trusting Christ—remember this: Before you were born God chose you to be the object of His mercy. God through His Spirit has moved in your life to take your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.
 - Why has he done that? For the same reason He allowed Pharaoh’s heart to remain hard: that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth
 - God has shown you mercy for one reason to make you part of:

1 Peter 2: 9 – 10 a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

- If you are in Christ, God elected you before the foundation of the world for His mercy to have this effect on your life. If God has taken your heart of stone and given you a heart of flesh, it is so that you would proclaim His excellencies.
- By God’s mercy and grace, may we live in that purpose and give Him the glory forever. Amen.