

God's Sovereignty in Salvation
Romans 9

The English Baptist, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, called the Prince of Preachers in the 19th century wrote this about God's sovereignty in salvation. (insert here)

As soon as you mention the subject of sovereign divine election some people become concerned, others become confused, and some even become upset. Many think it too controversial to mention, but it is hard to deny this teaching since it is woven throughout the Bible. Whole chapters such as Romans 9 and 11 are given to this subject. If it was not important, why would God have included it in the Bible?

Actually, it does not have to be controversial at all and I hope that as we look at God's Word together on a topic that frankly has divided well-meaning Christians through history, we can gain the practical lessons from this truth that God intended for us.

The subject of predestination and election begins in Romans 8 and extends through all of Chapter 9. In fact, Romans 8:28-30 is a wonderful **assurance** of salvation for every believer in Jesus Christ!
And it is a favorite verse for many.

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

It is so comforting, especially when we are experiencing trials, troubles and difficulties, that God is in charge and ultimately will do us good through them. All things are not good in themselves. Death is the last *enemy* that Christ will

defeat, but it is in some ways still an enemy. The comforting truth is that if we are God's called, then we can be assured that God is so overruling all our circumstances that they will turn out for our ultimate good and his ultimate glory.

The reason that is true is explained in vss 29-30. It is the great chain of divine salvation. God begins in eternity past by foreknowing us which seems to imply a relationship with us initiated by God. He predestines, that is determines ahead of time our destiny which is that we will be conformed to the image of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ! God has determined to make us like Christ! That ultimately must mean that he will take us through the process of suffering as he did with Jesus to perfect and complete us.

Then once we are born into the world God takes the initiative and calls us to himself. At some point in our lives God sees to it that we hear the gospel and so moves in our hearts that we want to respond in faith. At that moment God justifies us and begins the process of actively changing us to look, think, and act like His Son. Finally, in due time he glorifies us at the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ where we are resurrected to receive a glorified body like that of Christ. Thus, "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as he is!"

As Jonah praised God from the belly of the fish after he was rescued from drowning in the sea, "Salvation is of the Lord." This has been Paul's consistent message throughout the book of Romans.

Remember Romans chapters 1-3 largely tell us that we are all sinners before a holy God and we cannot measure up to his holy standards. We do not deserve salvation and neither can we earn salvation by keeping the law or doing good works!

But God has provided *another way to be saved*. His plan of salvation was initiated before creation and will be finally completed in the New Heavens and earth. God not only sent Christ to die for us, and be raised to pay the full penalty of our sins, He has set Christ at his own right hand until it is time for Jesus to come back to earth to reign.

More than that, God has made sure in his plans that Jesus' death will not be in vain! God has his elect, his chosen ones who he will bring to see his Son for who he really is, and to love His Son and appreciate what a great sacrifice Jesus made on their behalf. In verse 33 Paul calls these people, "God's elect."

Now being loved by God and chosen by God may be spiritually comforting, but in this world, it is a designation that puts a big target on your back. As "the elect of God" Satan hates you and the world is very hostile toward you. That is the "downside" of election, if you will, that comes out in the words of Tevya, in *Fiddler on the Roof*.

"I know, I know. We are Your chosen people. But, once in a while, can't You choose someone else?"

Paul's Great Sorrow (pain) is for His Jewish People's salvation

Note the deep compassion of the Apostle Paul for sinners. In order to stress that this is not an "act" Paul insists it is his real heart. I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, He has great sorrow and unceasing grief in his heart that the vast majority of his fellow Jews are lost, without Christ and headed for eternal judgment. Again, in Chapter 10:1 Paul states his deepest heart's *desire and prayer to God for them is for their salvation*.

Don't miss Paul's heart. He believes in predestination and election, yes, but his heart is breaking and his prayers are unceasing to God that they might be saved! Of all his tormenters, persecutors, and enemies, his fellow Jews were the worst. He would have had no trouble with the Roman government, if unbelieving Jews had not complained and accused him. They pursued him relentlessly. They were the cause of his many imprisonments. Instead of hating them for it, Paul's heart is broken and grieved over their lost condition and he prays fervently for their salvation!

How much are we like that?

Does it grieve us that our loved ones or our neighbors are lost?

Are we concerned that friends may be lost to a Christ less eternity?

Do we really believe what we say we believe about hell?

What is our attitude toward our enemies?

For whom do we agonize in prayer that they may be saved?

Israel's Great Spiritual Privileges 4-5

Israel's rejection of the gospel is even more sad and grievous because of their great spiritual privileges. The list is as impressive as is their tragic failure to perceive the Messiah was the Lord Jesus. The list reaches a crescendo with one of the strongest affirmations of Jesus' deity in the Bible. If you had any doubts about Paul's view of Jesus, this should settle it! The Christ (Messiah) is over all, He is supreme, He is God, blessed forever! **Jesus Christ is God**, the Son, who became true man without ceasing to be fully God. Their national rejection of Jesus is so very tragic because they have rejected God Himself!

God's Great Purpose:

Everything in the OT prepared Israel for his Messiah, but when that Messiah came- “his own people received him not.”

Does that mean that God’s Word and promises have failed? Israel has failed but God’s Word and God’s Purpose in Election has not and cannot fail 6-13!

Paul explains Israel’s rejection with the doctrine of the Remnant”

You all know what a remnant is. It is the small piece of cloth at Hancock fabric rolled up with a rubber band that is left after most of the original roll has been sold. You could call it “leftovers.”

All physical descendants of Israel are not truly spiritual Israel. Only a small remnant are or ever were actually “saved.” OT Israel was made up of a small group of true believers amid many unbelievers in nearly every historical period. Their spiritual condition in the OT was very similar to the large professing “church” today. Both were large organizations with many who profess, but a far smaller number of true believers. The true church of Jesus Christ is made up of only those who are regenerate, who really believe their Bibles and who truly know Christ is a personal saving way. Many profess- far too few possess.

Paul calls that difference the election of grace. God’s purpose according to his choice stands. To understand election we need to grasp that without God taking the initiative to set his heart upon us and to open our eyes to see our sin and his righteousness, NO ONE would ever come to Christ! An election reminds us of how grateful we should be that we were able to see and accept the gospel and to trust in

Christ. For all eternity we will praise God for his mercy and grace!

Election assures us that there are many others alive today who will respond. No matter how hard they seem and how blind and even violent they are now- God can break through and save them. There will be people who will believe. It is not a matter of human statistics, but divine election!

Right away our “fairness” warning goes off. Like children complaining because one got something they didn’t get.

Answering the Objections to Election

1. *Is God unjust to choose some and not others?* 14-18
Absolutely NOT! The Scriptures support God’s right to have mercy or compassion on whomever he wishes. We don’t have a problem with God’s mercy but with his hardening. If you look closely, 5 times Pharaoh hardened his heart and then 5 times more God hardened it. Sin hardens man’s heart.

I have a dear friend whom I respect and alongside whom I worked in a church setting- he was a layman. He professed faith, served God with zeal and excellence at one time. Recently he filed for divorce and when I met with him questioned whether or not he even believed in God. What happened? I discovered he has another woman. First the moral failure, then to squelch the conscience – deny the authority of the Bible and even the existence of God! Atheists rarely begin with an intellectual objection to God, they began with moral violation and conform their theology to fit! And sometimes God lets them go!

2. *How can God condemn those he has hardened; How can God justly condemn the non-elect?*

Four Characteristics about God comprise Paul's answer:

A. **God's Supremacy:** 20

Who are you to question God?

Paul rebukes the objector for his irreverent & blasphemous objection. Man likes to judge God-but God is the judge, not man. We best get that straight! If it is an honest question, here is the answer. God never condemns anyone because they were not elect. He condemns them for their sin and unrepentant hearts. They will perish because they did not want God and his authority- because they did not believe.

B. **God's Sovereignty**

21

God has the right to do whatever he pleases

C. **God's Longsuffering** 22

God has patiently endured their sin

Jonathan Edwards in his sermon "Sinners in the hands of an angry God" did get it right. The only thing that stands between us and an eternity in hell is the good patience and long suffering of God who is able at any moment to snuff out our lives and give us the judgment we completely deserve. Why?

D. **God's Saving Purpose** 23

God's purpose is to save some sinners

So that God may show mercy on vessels prepared for mercy. If God had judged this world when Hitler's gas chambers were burning all across Europe, millions of us who now believe in Christ would never have come!

God's purpose is to bring in a great harvest of people among all the nations of earth. The reason he does not immediately judge this world, is not that he is tolerant of sin, or has changed his attitude toward it. His purpose is salvation. Christ will have the prize for which he died, an inheritance of nations!

The reason that Israel failed is the same reason that anyone fails to receive eternal life. It is not God's fault. You cannot use the excuse, well I am not elect. Israel rejected Christ and did not obtain righteousness before God because they did not *pursue it by faith vs. 32*. Those who do not believe stumble over Christ the stumbling stone.

But to those who believe the stone is not a stumbling stone but the cornerstone and whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed!

God is completely sovereign in salvation, as he is sovereign in everything else. But do not despise his election. It is a matter of praise forever and ever if we have come to believe in Christ because we would not have done that on our own. Yet the offer is there to everyone who will take it, whoever believes will be saved. Don't use election as your excuse to hate God, for you are then stumbling over the stumbling stone. Instead Praise God for his amazing grace in salvation that as Romans 10:12 says, "the same lord is lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him.

H. A. Ironside put it this way: "Over the entrance at the gate of heaven is written, "Whosoever will may come." But as you enter by faith and look back at the gate on the other side is written, "Chosen and elect before the foundation of the world." The choice is YOURS, what will you do with Jesus Christ?