

Romans  
Divine Election (Part 3)  
Romans 9:6-29  
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We are studying together the third major section of Paul's letter to the Romans. This section begins in chapter 9 and runs through chapter 11. I've entitled it, "The Gospel Defended." He has shared the gospel with us; he's communicated it clearly; he's explained the benefits, the joys of that, the security of our justification in chapters 5 through 8. And now he defends that gospel.

This section begins in verses 1 to 5 of chapter 9, with an introduction, highlighting Israel's rejection of God's gospel. And really, Paul is dealing with this troublesome question: Why has a majority of God's chosen people, Israel, rejected their Messiah and His gospel? To that question, Paul really provides three basic answers, and we're looking at his first answer which comes in chapter 9, verses 6 through 29, and the answer is because of the reality of divine election. Paul explains here that not all of the ethnic descendants of Abraham ever have or ever will be saved, and that's not some flaw. Rather, it was never God's plan that all of them would be saved, and that is demonstrated throughout the history of Israel through the doctrine of sovereign election.

In verses 6 through 13, as we begin to see Paul unfold the truths here, we're looking at "Divine Election: Explained and Illustrated," Divine Election: Explained and Illustrated. Let's read this portion of this text together. You follow along, Romans, chapter 9, beginning in verse 6.

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: “THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED.” That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. For this is the word of promise: “AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON.” And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, “THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.” Just as it is written, “JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.”

Now, as you look at this section we've just read together, in verse 6, Paul lays down for us a foundational explanation that really serves as the basis for the rest of his argument. A foundational explanation, look at verse 6, “But it is not as though the word of God has failed.” He says it is not as though the word of God, specifically God's Old Testament promises to Israel, have somehow failed. And then he explains why those promises have not failed, the second half of verse 6, and this is so foundational, “For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel.”

Now, I won't go through this in detail, but just to remind you, Paul here identifies three groups. First of all, all of the physical descendants of Abraham who are God's chosen people, collectively as a nation. And then as he looks at all of those physical descendants; he breaks

them into two spiritual categories. First of all, there is unbelieving Israel, those who have Abraham for their physical father, but not their spiritual father. They have Abraham's blood running through their veins, but their hearts are not characterized by the faith of Abraham.

And then secondly, within that larger context of all of physical Israel, there is true spiritual Israel. These are the true spiritual descendants of Abraham, and it's important to understand that God's promises in the Old Testament were addressed to this group, true spiritual Israel. Of course, there are promises to the physical descendants of Abraham as well; we'll get to that in chapter 11, but here, he's saying that those promises were made to the spiritual descendants of Abraham, and those promises have not failed and never will fail.

Now, having provided that foundational explanation, Paul then gives three biblical illustrations to show exactly what he means. And we see this in verse 7 down through verse 13, three biblical illustrations. Verse 6 explains that not every physical descendant of Abraham belongs to true spiritual Israel, but the question is why? Why is that true? And Paul says it's because of divine election. God chose specific descendants of Abraham. So this section then, in Romans 9, is dealing with God's choice, God's selection of specific individuals out of the nation of Israel for salvation, for spiritual salvation. He begins with Abraham in verse 7; he just really mentions him in passing, but we looked at Abraham in detail. God came to Abraham while he was still worshiping idols. He found him in Ur and called him to Himself and He made, with Abraham, a unilateral covenant; that is, He made to Abraham a legally binding promise that was completely one-sided, all on God's side. God said this is what I'm going to do, no conditions placed on Abraham. So clearly, the choice of Abraham was based solely on God's sovereign grace. He

was an idolater like Ruth, and God just went in and snatched him out. It was completely undeserved; it was completely unilateral because God chose him.

That brings us to the second example, and it's really the primary focus of verses 7 through 9, and that's Isaac. God chose Abraham's son, Isaac, over Ishmael, and we looked at the reasons for that and how that unfolded when God said, "Before Isaac was conceived," he said, "I am going to come and Sarah will have a son. I'm going to miraculously intervene because the one who has not yet been conceived, he's the one I've chosen."

Now today, we come to the third-generation and to Paul's third illustration of divine election with Abraham's descendants, and this is the clearest and the most definitive of all of his illustrations, and it has to do with Jacob. And Jacob is the focal point in verses 10 through 13. Now, after Paul's first two examples, some might be tempted to say, "Okay, I see it; I agree; the Bible teaches election; it's clear that God chooses certain individuals for salvation, but that leads doesn't it, to the crucial question. Why? Why does God choose some and not others?"

Well, in these verses, verses 10 through 13, Paul answers that question and explains to us the basis of divine election, the basis on which God chooses. Now, as I mentioned to you when we began this series, most Christians who take the Bible seriously don't ignore all of those references to election in the Bible, and they agree that God has chosen certain individuals for salvation. But the key point is on what basis? And it comes down to this. There are two essential options. Is God's choice conditional; that is, is it conditioned on or based on something in the person He chooses, conditional, conditioned on them? Or secondly, is God's choice

unconditional? That is, He bases His choice on nothing in the individual. That's the key question.

Now, let's admit that there are many Christians, many of our brothers and sisters in Christ who believe that election is conditional. And I grew up in a setting like this, and here's how it's often described. Here's how God makes His choice according to conditional election. God looks down in His foreknowledge through the corridors of time and He sees those, who given the chance, will believe in Him; and seeing that they will believe, He chooses them; He elects them. This is the position of all Arminians, those who either consciously or unconsciously follow the teaching of Jacob Arminius. Let me give you an example. Here's a textbook that, at one point in my life, I had, written by Henry Theissen. He defines election this way. It is, "The sovereign act of God in grace whereby He chose in Christ Jesus for salvation (Listen to this.) all those whom He foreknew would accept Him." That is conditional election; God chooses on the basis of or conditioned on His knowledge of our choice.

Now, there are two variations of this view. One of them says God doesn't choose you until, in time during your life, you believe; and when you believe, then He chooses you. That's not as popular. But there's another view, the more common view says, "No, God chooses in eternity past on the basis of His foreknowledge of what will happen in time." Regardless of which of those variations, essentially this view says this, "God chooses based on whether or not you will believe." This view is called 'foreseen faith' or 'prescient' or 'simple foreknowledge view.' All of those titles are used; you'll hear them.

Now is that what the Bible teaches? Well, I want to approach this in two ways; and first of all, I before we get to the text itself, I want to show you that there are several clear, profound, biblical arguments against conditional election, and then we'll look at the arguments for in our text itself.

So let's start with the biblical arguments against conditional election. This is not all of them; I'm giving you a small sample, but I want you to see these. First of all, the Bible teaches this can't be true because this view ignores the fact that whatever God sees in the future, He brings to pass. Ephesians 1, verse 11, says God "works all things after the counsel of His (own) will." So even if God looks through the corridors of time and sees that someone has believed, that doesn't really deal with the issue because how did they come to that faith? God causes "all things (to work) after the counsel of His (own) will." And Ephesians 2:8 says what? That salvation is a package, including faith itself, is a "gift of God." So the whole 'looking down through the corridors of time' doesn't really deal with the issue at all.

Secondly, biblical foreknowledge, the true biblical sense of this word 'foreknowledge' is not foreknowing something about someone, but it is foreknowing that person; those are two very different things. You see, Armenians interpret foreknowledge, that word 'foreknowledge,' as God knowing a certain fact about people, specifically their faith, and they'll point to, here close to our text back in chapter 8, verse 29, "For those whom (God) foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son."

Now, I'm not going to go back through this, but when we studied this text together, we learned clearly that it doesn't teach what they claim because you'll notice it says, specifically, that God foreknew people, "those whom He foreknew." It's not that He foreknew something about them; He foreknew them, and we looked at that word and how it's used throughout the rest of Scripture. What Scripture teaches is that God foreknew certain people in the sense that He pre-determined a relationship with them; He set His eternal love upon them. That's the true meaning of the word 'foreknowledge.'

I think a third argument that just jumps out at me from the pages of the New Testament against conditional election is that Jesus Himself taught that people who would have believed, given the opportunity, were not given that opportunity, and therefore were not elect. Turn with me to one of those passages; turn to Matthew, chapter 11; Matthew, chapter 11, and notice verse 20:

Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of (the miracles) His miracles were done, because they did not repent. (He said,) "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! (Now watch this.) For if the miracles (which) had occurred...if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Nevertheless, I say to you, it would more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment, than for you."

Did you hear what Jesus just said? In His denouncing of these cities, He said, “If they had been given the same chance you have been given, they would have believed,” but they weren’t given that chance. And He, in one sweep, dismisses the idea of God looking down through the corridors of time and seeing who would believe and choosing them. God, for His own purposes, did not choose them, did not give them those opportunities; and by the way, we’ll get to this; they weren’t treated unjustly; nobody is. God is a God of perfect justice.

We could add another argument, a fourth argument, and that is the Bible argues for the opposite. It argues for unconditional election, and we’re going to examine that in a moment and in a couple of weeks to come. So, the Bible then does not teach, and that's just a very simple survey of some arguments, that God's choice of certain people for salvation is conditional, that is conditioned on their choosing Christ or on anything in them. Instead it is unconditional. What we mean by that is, in eternity past, God chose certain individuals to be saved, based solely on His sovereign grace, and His sovereign pleasure, and on no condition in them whatsoever. It's 2 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 9, God “has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.” That is exactly what Paul teaches here in Romans 9, using the illustration of Jacob and Esau. Let's look at it together.

Go back to Romans, chapter 9. Now after the illustration in verses 7 through 9, some might say, “Well, of course God chose Isaac and not Ishmael; I mean think about it. Ishmael was born out of Abraham's scheme and not according to God's plan and God's time and God's promise, and Ishmael was the son of Abraham, but he was not the son of Sarah. Instead, he was born to



Sarah's handmaiden, to Hagar.” So there were several strikes against Ishmael; so you could be tempted to say, “Maybe it's possible God chose Isaac because of something in him that wasn't in Ishmael.”

So Paul brings up Jacob to drive home that election is, in fact, unconditional. Jacob is the perfect example of God's choice being unconditioned on anything other than God Himself. Now let's look at the lessons we learn from the illustration of Jacob.

The first lesson is this, Paul insists that election is not based on an individual's genetics or relationships; it's not based on individual's genetics, their ethnic connections, or their relationships. Notice verse 10, “And not only this, but there was Rebekah also.” Now that expression, “not only this,” makes it clear that Paul continues here in these verses his argument; he's going to take it even a step further. He's saying basically this, “The illustrations of Abraham and Isaac were not enough; there's something else you need to learn, so I'm going to give you a third illustration.”

Now when you think about the two mothers of these two illustrations, there are some interesting similarities between Sarah and Rebekah. Just like Sarah, Rebekah was unable to have children, and like Sarah, God had to miraculously overcome Rebekah's barrenness. We talked about the implications of that last week; that in the same way God has to miraculously intervene to give life where there's death in us. Here's how it's put in Genesis 25:21, “Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived.” God had to miraculously intervene to accomplish this.

Another similarity between these two women is that God called Rebekah's son, Jacob, like Sarah's son, Isaac, to be the heir of the Covenant Promises made to Abraham. So there are these similarities between the women, but don't get lost in that, because Paul's point here is not the similarities between Rebekah and Sarah, but the similarities between Jacob and Esau. Notice what he says in verse 10, "And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac." Now, let me just note that by referring to Isaac as our father, Paul is showing that he is still Jewish and not ashamed of his Jewish heritage. But the translation here could be a little confusing, and I understand why the translators did it because there's a word that's a little more difficult to talk about in a polite setting. The Greek text here doesn't focus on the fact that these two boys were conceived by one man which is how it kind of reads here. But rather that they were conceived through one sexual act; that's the point. He's stressing that they were twins, conceived at exactly the same time.

Now, why does this matter? Why does Paul include this third generation of the patriarchs? Because it's going to prove to us that God's choice is not based on anything about the one He chooses, because think about what we've just learned there in verse 10. Jacob and Esau had the same father, Isaac; they were both descendants of Abraham and they both had the same mother, Rebekah. She was the rightful wife of Isaac, unlike Hagar had been with Ishmael both are with Abraham. Both Jacob and Esau were conceived at the same moment, and the point of verse 10 is in the same sexual act. Both of them were conceived, as well, by a direct miraculous act of God in answer to prayer, and both of them were born at the same time.

You see the point? Clearly God's choice is not based on an individual's genetics or their human relationships. What Paul does here is slam the door on the absolutely universal idea among the Jewish community, in the first century, that if you had Abraham's blood flowing in your veins, then you were automatically chosen unto eternal life. He says that's not true, and he's proving that in this very passage.

But Paul's not content with having made the point that it's not about your ethnicity; it's not about your genetics; it's not about your human relationships; because secondly, he goes on to prove in verse 11 that election is not based on personal merit or demerit. Election is not based on personal merit or demerit. Verse 11, “for though the twins were not yet born, (verse 12) it was said to her, ...though the twins were not yet born...it was said to her, (it's going to be) Jacob.” God chose Jacob before the twins were born, and He told Rebekah that He had chosen Jacob. Now what are we to conclude from that? What are we to conclude from the fact that God chose Jacob and not Esau before these boys were born?

Well, Paul explains with the very next phrase. Here's what God wants us to conclude from that, “for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad... (verse 12) it was said to her.” You see, God made His choice when neither Jacob nor Esau had been born; and therefore, and this is the key, neither of them had done anything morally good or morally bad.

Now if you read the stories, and I trust you have of Jacob and Esau in the Old Testament, then you understand why this would be important. Because with Esau, you might conclude that it

was the content of his character that caused God not to choose him. But Paul here says, “No, that's not it.” God didn't pass over Esau based on anything bad he had done. Or maybe you read the Scripture, and you assume that God chose Jacob because of some admirable decisions that he made or some qualities in him. Of course, if you've read the Old Testament, not many of those, but there are some; maybe you could conclude that. Paul says, “No! God didn't choose Jacob based on anything good he had done.” God did not choose Jacob because of his good works, because of his spirituality, because of his religious devotion, or even his faith. Why exactly did God choose Jacob then? Verse 11, notice those little words, keywords, “so that,” so that. God chose Jacob and chose to pass over Esau before they were born; and therefore, before they had done anything good or bad for one specific reason, and this is key, verse 11, “so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand,” so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand.

Now the word ‘purpose’ here refers to that which is planned. We met this word back in verse 28 of chapter 8, where God refers to believers as those who are called according to His purpose. Purpose then is that which is planned, that which is purposed, that which is resolved, and this is key, in advance. The Greek word has a preposition on the front of it that speaks of ‘before.’ In other words, this is a predetermined plan; that's a great way to think of it, God's predetermined plan, that's His purpose. And notice that predetermined plan is according to His choice. Now that word ‘choice’ is a very important word. It means, literally, ‘a selection from a group, to choose from a group.’ This is the word for election.

In the New Testament, this word 'choice' or 'election' is used in three ways. It's used of God choosing someone for service from time to time. For example, in Acts 9, verse 15, it's used when God says, "I have chosen Paul to be my representative before kings and so forth."

(Paraphrased)

Secondly, this word 'choice' or 'election' is used of God choosing individuals or a group for special privileges, not necessarily for salvation, but for special privileges. It's used this way in Romans 11, verse 28, of Israel, the nation Israel. God chose the nation to have special privileges, to have special advantages for a special purpose.

There are also times like this when this word 'choice' or 'election' refers to God choosing specific individuals for salvation. For example, in 1 Thessalonians, chapter 1, verse 4, Paul writes to the Thessalonian believers, and he says, "knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you." And in context, he's clearly talking about salvation.

Look at Romans, chapter 11; Romans, chapter 11, and verse 5, here you see the word used that way, "In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time (So he's talking about the first century.) a remnant." What is he talking about? Well, as we're going to see in chapter 9, and we'll see here again in chapter 11, he's talking about a believing remnant. In other words, among all the physical descendants of Abraham, there were some who were his true spiritual descendants in the first century, a small number who would believe in their Messiah, who would come to embrace the gospel. There is a remnant. Why? Verse 5, "according to God's gracious (Here's our word.) choice (election); ...according to God's gracious choice," literally, God's

choice of grace, His choice based solely on His grace. “But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.” Verse 7, “What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained (That is all the physical descendants of Abraham.) but (that remnant, those who are, here's our word again.) ...chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened.”

So understand then, this is the meaning of the word. Or take Ephesians, chapter 1, verse 4, the word ‘chosen,’ in that verse, is from the same root, it's the verb form of this noun ‘choice’ or ‘election.’ There Paul says this, Ephesians 1:4, the Father “chose us in (Christ) before the foundation of the world.” He selected us from a group.

Now, the New Testament often uses another form of this word ‘election’ to refer to all believers. You read the New Testament and you see it. Believers, all of us are called ‘the elect.’ In fact, go back to chapter 8 of Romans, verse 33, we met it here, “Who will bring a charge against (Who?) God's elect?” The word means ‘the ones God has chosen.’ Who is going to bring a successful charge and somehow undermine the justification of those whom God has chosen, meaning all believers?

Now, back to chapter 9. God deliberately chose Jacob and not Esau in order that His predetermined plan, a plan which is implemented by the process of His choice, His election, so that that plan, notice how he puts it, “would stand.” That is that it would continue to exist, that it would last, that it would endure. Now, I think you understand that God's purposes always stand. God cannot be undone; His plans cannot be frustrated.

I have to show you some of my favorite passages. Go back to Psalm 33. This is true with whatever God decides to do, and therefore it's also true with election. Psalm 33, the Psalmist here celebrates God's work of creation, but also God's work of providence over the nations of the world. Verse 10, Psalm 33:10:

The Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations;

He frustrates the plans of the peoples.

Listen, the people on this planet can get together and decide to do whatever they want, but God rules! Verse 11:

The counsel of the Lord stands forever,

The plans of His heart from generation to generation.

That's our hope.

Turn over to Isaiah; there are several other passages I love here. Isaiah, chapter 14, makes this same point; Isaiah 14 and verse 24, as Isaiah pronounces God's judgment on Assyria, he says this, verse 24, "The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, 'Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand.'" God says, "Listen, if I intend it and if I plan it, it's going to happen, and nothing will frustrate that purpose." Go down to verse 27, "For the LORD of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched out hand, who can turn it back?" We sang about that this morning. Nothing, nothing, no one, no human being, no demon, no angel, no one can frustrate the purpose and plan of God. It will be done!

Turn over to chapter 46 of Isaiah. I love the comparison here in Isaiah 46. He begins by talking about idols, the idols of the nations, and how they're made and how they depend on the people

who make them; they don't really exist; they're nothing; they're like dust; they have to be carried from place to place. Verse 7:

They lift it on the shoulder and carry it;

They set it in its place...it stands there.

It doesn't move.

...one may cry to it; it can't answer;

It (can't) deliver him from his distress. (Those are idols!)

Verse 8:

Remember this, and be assured;

Recall it to mind, you transgressors.

Remember the former things long past,

For I am God, and there is no other;

I am God, and there is no one like Me.

Now what does God point out that distinguishes Him, the true and living God, from all of the false gods, the pretend gods, the gods that are empowered and enabled by demons, according to both the Old and New Testaments, what's the difference? Verse 10, here's the true God:

Declaring the end from the beginning,

And from ancient times things which have not been done,

Saying (I love this.) "My purpose will be established,

And I will accomplish all My good pleasure."



You come to the New Testament; the same thing is emphasized in reference to even our salvation. Turn to Ephesians, chapter 1; Ephesians, chapter 1, and look at verse 11, “we have obtained an inheritance, (This is us as believers. How did we get this inheritance?) having been predestined.” Don't be afraid of that word; it's made of two words obviously, pre, 'before,' destined, 'destiny.' In other words, we have obtained this inheritance because God predetermined our destiny. How did this happen? “According to His purpose.” We're back to that purpose. God's predetermined plan and notice how that plan and how God Himself is described. He is the God who sets this purpose and then works all things after the counsel of His will.

Turn over to chapter 3 in Ephesians; chapter 3, Paul's talking about God's wisdom in the church that now God has created this, as he talks about in Ephesians 2, this one new man, the church bringing Jews and Gentiles together in this new organism that we're a part of and in this, verse 10 of chapter 3, God's manifold wisdom is now being displayed. Do you realize the church, this church and other churches that are true churches around this world, they are the primary stage in which God is putting Himself on display in the world? And this is exactly what He wanted to do, verse 11, “This was in accordance with the eternal purpose.”

Now if you have a Bible that has a marginal note, you'll notice it tells you what the Greek text says literally out there in the margin, “This was in accordance with the purpose of the ages.” This is God's eternal plan which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord. Listen, God's purposes always stand; what God decides, what He determines, what He intends, He does!

Now, go back to Romans, chapter 9; because what I want you to see here, having looked at that larger picture, here in Romans 9, Paul chooses this word ‘stands;’ you’ll notice there in verse 11, the middle of verse 11, “so that God’s purpose according to His choice would stand.” He chooses that word ‘stand’ for a reason. You remember when we looked at verse 6? Back in verse 6, he says, “it is not as though the word of God has failed.” The word ‘failed’ there, the Greek word is ‘fallen.’ You remember we talked about that? It’s not as though the Word of God came out of God’s mouth and fell to the ground. And Paul says, “Oh no, instead God’s purpose stands.” It hasn’t fallen; it stands. His point is, and don’t miss this because here’s where it gets to us very specifically; his point is, if God’s redemptive purpose had been based upon something in us, then God’s Word might have failed; it might have fallen to the ground, and it would have fallen to the ground long ago. But His purpose in redemption stands; it endures; it lasts; it exists; it continues to exist. Why? Because He Himself chooses those whom He will save entirely separate from anything in them. It’s the only way His purpose stands. If His purpose relied on us, then His Word might come out and fall to the ground, but that’s never going to happen.

Verse 11 goes on to say, “so that God’s purpose according to His choice (or His election, His selection,) would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls.” You see, God’s purpose in election stands because it is literally, in the Greek text, “not (out) of works.” He’s talking about the source; God’s choice, His election, doesn’t find its source in our works. I think Paul clearly intends this phrase as a summary of verse 11 where it says they “had not done anything good or bad.” And so he’s not talking about just the works of the Law, keeping the Mosaic Law; he’s talking about all human works. So he’s saying here the source or the basis of

God's choice is not human works of any kind. Rather, notice what he says, God's choice, and this is fascinating, was out of the one calling, literally is what it says, out of the one calling.

Now that is remarkable because as we walked through Romans, you have seen Paul throughout this entire book contrast works with what? It's not by works, but by faith, and that's exactly what you would expect him to say here. If he had said that, however, he would've been saying that election was based on foreseen faith. But he doesn't say that. He intentionally changes his pattern. What he says is, "so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works, (not out of works), but because of Him who calls."

Who is the One who calls? This isn't a trick question. Who is the One who calls? God! God is the One who calls. Go back to chapter 8, verse 28, "Those who are called according to (God's) purpose." God is the One who calls. Verse 30, "He also called." This is God's effectual call. We talked about this where you heard the gospel many times; but there came a time when you heard the gospel, and through that gospel message, God was calling you powerfully, effectively, irresistibly, to Himself. He's the One who calls.

Now look at that verse again. Paul says election is "not because of (our) works, but (it's) because of (the One) who calls; it's because of God." God does not choose based on something in us, but based on something in Him, His own free and sovereign grace. That's what we saw. Look again at chapter 11, I read it just a moment ago. Chapter 11, verses 5 and 6, there's this remnant, this believing remnant who comes to faith. Why? According to God's choice of grace and "if it's by grace, it's no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace."

Election then, listen carefully, and we'll look at this more next week. But election is based on one thing and one thing only--God's sovereign grace?

Douglas Moo, in his commentary, writes this, "Any basis for God's election outside God Himself defies both the language and the logic of what Paul has written." Any basis for God's election or God's choice outside of God Himself defies both the language and the logic of what Paul has written.

Charles Hodge puts it this way, "As plainly as language can express the idea, the ground of the choice is not in those chosen, but in God who chooses." Augustine, the early church father, early in his life and ministry, embraced this idea that was popular among the early church fathers, of foreseen faith as the basis of God's election. Later, as he worked through the issues in his defense of the Christian faith against Pelagius, the heretic, he came; Augustine came to completely deny that election is based on anything in us. In fact, listen to what Augustine wrote, couldn't be clearer. He said, "God does not choose us because we believe, but that we may believe." God does not choose us because we believe, but that we may believe. This is what we're going to see in verses 15 and 16 of chapter 9. Notice what he writes, "For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." And then notice for 16, this is key, "So then it (What's it? God's choice, God's election.) it does not depend on the man who wills." It doesn't depend on the decision of the human will "or the man who runs, (That is human effort.) but it depends on God who has mercy." Romans 9 is crystal clear.

Now let me just make sure your thinking about you as we go through this passage. I want you to let this sink into your mind at a very personal level. If you're in Christ, if you have repented and believed in the gospel of Jesus Christ, God did not choose you in eternity past because of anything He saw in you. In fact, when God looked down the corridors of time, you know all He saw in you and me was bad? That's it! That's all He saw. We saw that in Romans 3. That's all that was there. We would never have sought God; we would never have chosen God. God chose us solely because of what is in Him, His sovereign grace. So Romans 9 makes it crystal clear that election is not based on personal merit or demerit, even foreseen faith.

Thirdly, verse 12 teaches us that election is not based on normal reasons or human expectations. God contradicts human logic and reason in His choices. Verse 12 says, "it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER." This is from Genesis 25, verses 22 and 23. God comes to Rebekah before these boys are born, and He says, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER."

Now this is a crucial point. Remember, God knows they are going to be twins, but He comes in and He says it's going to be the one who's born first; nope, it's not. It's going to be the one who is born second. Now, why is this important? Because we've looked at all the similarities between these two boys. What is the only inherent difference between these boys that could have even possibly affected God's choice? Esau came out of Rebekah's womb first and then Jacob, seconds later, holding onto Esau's heel. So the only possible human factor that could have been the basis for God's choice was their birth order, this cultural custom of the priority of the firstborn in the family. This was huge in the ancient world, and it's even reflected in the

Law of God. But God here intentionally acted contrary to the normal birth order and what was normally expected. Verse 12, “it was said to her, “THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.” Why? Well remember the explanation is in verse 11 right before it, in order that “God's purpose according to (election might) stand...it was said to her, ‘THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.’” God intentionally chose Jacob, the younger, to establish the fact that His choice is not based on any normal human reasons. God intentionally acted contrary to human expectations in order to make this point; His choice is always unconditional.

But I know what you're thinking because it's what I thought for years. But how do we know for sure? Well, let me tell you that the strongest argument for unconditional election comes in the verses that follow; because whatever Paul was teaching in the verses we're looking at, whatever he was promoting here, he expects there to be two objections. The first objection that he anticipates is found in verse 14, “What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there?” You see, whatever Paul is teaching here in Romans 9 about election, the very first response that he expects is, “It's not fair!” That's what he expects, “It's not fair.” And we'll look at his response to that, but what I want you to see is the very fact that Paul anticipates this objection is an argument for what I've been teaching you this morning. Because let's say for a moment, that he's teaching conditional election; that the God looks down the corridors of time, and he sees that you're going to believe, and He chooses you on the basis of your free human decision. Who is ever going to say, “Wait a minute, that's not fair!”? Nobody is ever going to say that.

The second objection that Paul anticipates here is that election violates human freedom, verse 19, “You will say to me then, “Why does He...find fault? For who resists His will?” What I want you to see is the very objections that Paul anticipates only drive home the truth of what I'm saying to you this morning, because if Paul were teaching, and clearly he's not, but if he were teaching conditional election, that God's choice of you is conditioned on something in you, what could be fairer? What could be a better reflection of your will than that? And yet the objections Paul anticipates are it's not fair, and you must be saying man's will is not free. The only teaching of this chapter that fits with those objections is what I've just taught you together this morning. You see, Paul chose the example of Jacob and Esau in order to prove to us unequivocally from the scripture that election is unconditional.

Christian, think about this, God chose us and He called us based on nothing in us. In fact, He chose us contrary to normal human reasons and expectations. Turn to 1 Corinthians, chapter 1. This is the very point Paul makes here. It's a pretty remarkable chapter. Paul basically says the gospel I'm preaching, that God gave me, well guess what; “It's a stumbling block to the Jews. Oh, and by the way, it's foolishness to the Gentiles.” You say, “Wait a minute, Paul. What kind of message is that? Nobody wants it! So how does anybody ever come to believe it?” Verse 24:

...to those who are the called, (those God effectually calls through this gospel) both Jews and Greeks, Christ (is) the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (And then he says, let me just remind you that God's choice of you and me, well, it wasn't because of who we were.) consider your calling, brethren, (those of you who have

been called to believe the gospel who have believed it, powerfully called through the work of the Spirit through the Father, brethren) there were not many wise according the flesh, (not many of the worlds intelligentsia; those who are thought of the great minds of the planet,) not many mighty (that is not many with power) not many noble; (not many who have an aristocratic background) but God has chosen (Notice this.) has chosen the foolish things of the world (This is us, sorry.) to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not (The nothings and the nobodies, that's most of the ones God calls through the gospel to Himself.)

Why? Why does God choose the way He chooses? Verse 29, “so that no man may boast before God.” And then he says this in verse 30:

But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written (Here's the bottom line, here is why God has done it the way He has done it, all of sovereign grace so that you and I don't get one ounce of the credit.) “LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.”

The point of this doctrine of election is not to make us feel small, although we are; it's to make us see the greatness and the grandeur and the grace of our God.

If you're here this morning and you're not a follower of Jesus Christ, let me just say that in one sense, you're kind of reading somebody else's mail because this chapter really is not where you need to start. You need to start in chapter 10 that we're going to get to in a few weeks; because



in chapter 10, he says this, Romans, chapter 10, and notice verse 9. “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Don't worry about whether or not you've got an “E” tattooed on your back. That's somebody else's mail. Here's your mail, “for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, “WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.” You're not going to be put to shame at the judgment if you will come in repentance and faith and put your hope in Jesus Christ and in Him alone. Verse 13, “for ‘WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.’” That's God's Word to you, and I plead with you to respond to that gospel even this morning; and if you respond, then it will be clear God has been calling and drawing you because you're His.

Let's pray together. Our Father, we love you. We are overwhelmed by what we have studied together. Lord, we deserve nothing from you except your judgment, your eternal wrath. And yet because of nothing in us, but solely because of what is in you, you chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, not because of our works, good or bad, but because of nothing to do with us at all, just because you decided to love us. May we be overwhelmed with that; may we worship you; may we love you; may we live our lives to serve your Son who has accomplished that redemption at the cross. And Father, may this humble us so that we exalt you. May our boast be in you, our great and sovereign God, who, for nothing in us, has saved us.

And, Father, I do pray for those here this morning who are not in Christ, who've sort of listened over our shoulders to something that's really intended for us. Lord, I pray that you would use

even this passage to call them to yourself through the gospel; and that today, they might confess Jesus as Lord, believing in their hearts that He is everything that He claimed to be, everything that you revealed Him to be, and find in His perfect life and substitutionary death and resurrection, their great hope. We pray it in Jesus's name, Amen.