

Romans
Divine Election (Part 10)
Romans 9:6-29
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I still vividly remember the night in August of 1969 that my family and I hunkered down in our small home in Mobile, Alabama as hurricane Camille battered a huge swath of the Gulf Coast. I was eight years old at the time; it would be 14 years before I met my wife Sheila and before I learned what had happened to her Uncle George who was living with his wife in Biloxi, Mississippi, directly in the path of that powerful storm. George had decided to ride out the storm on one of the upper floors of his apartment building near the beach. In fact, he and his friends were planning a hurricane party. As they continued their plans, he got an urgent call from Sheila's grandfather, demanding that he take his wife and leave that place and find shelter some distance from the coast.

Reluctantly, George agreed to do so; he packed up a few belongings, threw them in the car, and they left Biloxi for the storm. Camille came ashore in Mississippi with sustained winds of 190 miles per hour and a 24-foot high storm surge. It killed 259 people and created \$10 billion in damages in today's money.

After the storm had passed, George returned with his wife to Biloxi a few days later, and it was then that he discovered that where his multistory apartment building once stood, all that remained was a concrete slab. It had been completely wiped clean. As he walked around that clean slab, to his complete shock and amazement, he found only one small object resting on that open piece of concrete. Remarkably, it belonged to him. He had left this in his apartment along with his other belongings as he rushed to leave with his wife. It was his high school ring. One small ring was all that remained on that concrete slab in the middle of utter and complete destruction. That ring is like a parable of the truth that we will learn today in Romans 9. It is a truth about what Paul calls "THE REMNANT," "THE REMNANT."

For many weeks we have been learning about the doctrine of divine election here in Romans 9, beginning in verse 6, running down through verse 29. Just to remind you of sort of the path that we have followed and Paul's logic, he begins in verses 6 to 13 with divine election explained and illustrated. Then in verses 14 to 23 there is divine election defended, where he answers the

two main objections that always surface about divine election. We are looking at the third part of this paragraph about election, it is divine election applied, verses 24 to 29. Here, using the Hebrew Scriptures, Paul proves to us that the Old Testament prophets, hundreds of years before, had taught two things. They had taught, first of all, that it was always God's plan to save Gentiles; and secondly, it was always God's plan, shockingly, to save only a remnant of the nation of Israel. This was God's plan.

Now Paul's application of divine election begins, as we noted last week, with a theological conclusion, and that theological conclusion is that God, in His sovereign grace, chose both Jews and Gentiles. Look at verse 24. In verse 23 he alludes to the "vessels of mercy," that is, those people on whom God decided to show His mercy and grace. And in verse 24 he says, "even us, whom He also called," and here is the main point of verse 24, "not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles." God's plan was always to save both Jews and Gentiles. That is Paul's theological conclusion, to select, to choose, "vessels of mercy" from both "among the Jews" and "from among the Gentiles."

Now, having presented his conclusion then, Paul provides us with the biblical evidence of that conclusion, the biblical evidence that God chose both Jews and Gentiles. That is the message of verses 25 to 29. In fact, if you will look in your Bible, you will notice that those verses, in most English translations, appear in all capitals. That is the translator's way of telling us that these words are quotations from the Old Testament. So this is Paul's biblical evidence.

Now, his biblical defense then begins, as we noted last week, with God's amazing choice to save Gentiles, that is the message of verses 25 and 26, look at them with me.

As He says also in Hosea,

"I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,'

AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'

AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU
ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,'

THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD."

The prophet Hosea wrote those words about the 10 northern tribes of Israel who became thoroughly idolatrous and pagan, so much so that God said to them, you are not my people and I am not your God, and I don't love you. But then God, in His grace and mercy, said, I am going to come back to that very people; and for some of them I am going to say, you are My people, you are the object of My love, you are My sons and daughters.

Paul uses that to say, that is exactly what has happened with Gentiles. Many of us in this room are Gentile by birth, we are not Jewish, we have no Jewish descent. We were not God's people. We were not the objects of His love. We were not His sons and daughters. But, by amazing sovereign grace, we have become so. That is an amazing choice of God. That is the message of verses 25 and 26.

Now this morning, Paul leaves the Gentiles and he focuses, in verses 27 to 29, on God's amazing choice and decision to save only a remnant of Israel, God's amazing, we could even say shocking, decision to save only a remnant of the nation of Israel. Now here in verses 27 to 29, Paul applies the truth of divine election to the very issue that he raised back at the beginning of the chapter. Here he explains that only a small number of Jewish people had believed, in the first century, in their Messiah, because, and this is shocking, that was God's plan. God's eternal plan of redemption always, Paul argues here, was to save only a small remnant of the Jewish people.

Now to prove his point Paul cites three verses from the Old Testament that come from two separate passages in the prophecy of Isaiah. And in these verses Paul really explains what God's decision about the Jewish people and their spiritual condition was. What was God's decision about the physical descendants of Abraham and their spiritual salvation? There are really two parts to his decision, let me give them to you and then we will see them unfold in this passage.

First of all, God decided to pass by most of Abraham's physical descendants, leaving them to suffer the divine justice that their sins had earned, just like He does with the rest of mankind. Secondly, God decided to choose only a small remnant of the physical descendants of Abraham, that He would spiritually rescue, by His grace alone; again, just as He does with the rest of mankind.

Now in the verses from Isaiah that Paul uses here we learn three important points about God's decision concerning the spiritual future of the Jewish people. Let's look at them together. First of all, we learn in verse 27 that God's decision is biblically clear. It is biblically clear. You can't really argue with it because in verses 27 and 28 Paul quotes from Isaiah, specifically he quotes from Isaiah 10:22-23. Now, we are going to look at those in a moment, but for now let me just remind you that the original context of these verses from Isaiah, like the previous verses from Hosea, is in the same time period, about the 700's B.C.

Let me remind you of the basic historical context. After the death of Solomon, who united the kingdom (Under Saul, David, and Solomon the kingdom of Israel was united, the entire nation was one great people ruled over by one ruler.), after the death of Solomon, Israel was divided into two separate kingdoms. The 10 tribes from about the middle of the land of Israel north were called the Northern Kingdom or Ephraim, which was the largest of the 10 tribes, or most commonly it is called Israel. So the whole nation is called Israel when they are united, but after the division of the kingdom, the north, the northern 10 tribes, is referred to as Israel. Now the northern kingdom of Israel quickly embraced idolatry under Jeroboam and never, never came back to God. Until her destruction by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., there wasn't a single good king in the north, not one. They were all wicked idolaters. And they were participating in the grossest kind of pagan idolatry; you read about it in the Old Testament.

Now the two tribes from about the middle of the land of Israel south were Judah and Benjamin. And that kingdom, the southern kingdom, is usually called Judah. In the kingdom of Judah there were 19 kings, most of them were bad, but eight of them, eight of the 19, were actually good and righteous men, at some level.

Now the verses that Paul quoted, look back at verses 25 and 26, the verses Paul quotes from Hosea there, were addressed to Israel, were addressed to the 10 northern tribes, by Hosea who was a prophet to the north. Verses 27 to 29, these were written by Isaiah who was actually a prophet to the south, a prophet to Judah, but he also addresses here Israel, the northern tribes. So he is a prophet in the south, talking to the north, talking to those northern 10 tribes.

Verse 27 of Romans 9, "Isaiah cries out concerning Israel," concerning the north. Now that word "cries out" is a very interesting word. It can mean to scream or to shriek in distress.

Isaiah here intentionally addresses the situation with Israel, the 10 northern tribes, God's chosen people, but he does so with great emotional conflict and distress. Why? Because Isaiah realizes, when he realizes God's plan for Israel, he is personally shocked and amazed in grief over what God has given him to say. Verse 27, "Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, 'THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA.'"

Stop there for a moment. I think you recognize, in that expression, the promise that was made to Abraham back in Genesis 22:17, where God says to Abraham, "I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore." This was a promise that his physical descendants would, over time, fill the earth, but that is not the message. Look back at verse 27, "Isaiah cries out concerning Israel," in this distress and grief, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA," now here is the main point of the verse, "IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED," "THE REMNANT."

Now the Greek word remnant literally means a relatively small surviving group, a relatively small surviving group. This is not the first time in the Bible we have encountered this idea. In fact, in the Old Testament, it is a very common concept. I won't take you through it but there are actually six different Hebrew word groups that are used in the Old Testament for this concept of a remnant. Let me give you an overview; it is used primarily in two ways, this concept of a remnant. First of all, it is used in an historical sense, a historical remnant who survive either a military battle or a natural catastrophe. So there is a physical survival idea, a remnant, like those who survived a catastrophic battle or a catastrophic natural disaster. That is not what Isaiah means here, or Paul.

The second way this word remnant is used, this is what Paul means and what Isaiah meant, a spiritual remnant who exercised genuine saving faith in God and whose sins have been graciously forgiven. That is what he means, that kind of a remnant. A relatively small number of people out of the whole who have come to genuine saving faith in God, whose sins have been forgiven.

Now with that background, go back to Isaiah and let's look at it in its context. Isaiah 10, Isaiah 10:22, here is exactly what Paul quotes, but I want you to see it in its original context.

Remember Isaiah, 700 years before Christ, is talking to those northern 10 tribes who have recently experienced complete devastation by the Assyrians. And he says this in verse 22,

For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea,
Only a remnant within them will return;
A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness.

For a complete destruction, one that is decreed, the Lord GOD of hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land.

Now even as I read that, you can immediately see that the Old Testament doctrine of a remnant is a message at the same time of both judgment and hope. Did you see that in that context? It is both judgment and hope. It is judgment in that it means that even if the sons of Israel number as many as the sands of the sea, only a remnant will be saved. In other words, most Jewish people will face God's judgment; it is a message of judgment. In fact, you can see it here in Isaiah, it is even clearer than it is in Romans 9. This is a message of judgment. Do you see verse 22? "A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness. For a complete destruction is decreed."

So the message of a remnant is a message of judgment, on the one hand; but the message of a remnant is also a message of hope because it promises that a remnant will be saved. Not everyone will be destroyed. So what is the point of these verses here in their context in Isaiah? What was Isaiah saying to his eighth century B.C. audience? He was saying that after the Assyrian invasion only a remnant of the people of Israel would return. They would return, not just to the land, but they would return, a remnant would return to God in true and genuine repentance.

Look at verse 20, Isaiah 10:20, "Now in that day the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who struck them, but," notice this, "they will truly rely," they will truly trust, "on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel." This is a spiritual return. This is repentance. This is genuine faith in God. Verse 21, "A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, [*Notice, not to the land, but to whom?*] to the mighty God." This is spiritual repentance.

In other words, you know what Isaiah was saying? He was saying, after the Assyrian invasion, after the northern 10 tribes were practically wiped off the map in a complete destruction, there would be, by God's grace, a true believing, redeemed remnant who would know their God. That is what he was saying.

Now, turn back to Romans 9. Let's see how Paul uses it. Romans 9, when Paul quotes Isaiah here in Romans 9 and he speaks of a remnant, he too is referring to a true, spiritual, believing remnant from the nation of Israel. Notice verse 27, "IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED." He means, just like Isaiah did, who will be spiritually saved, who will repent, who will come to truly trust, to truly rely on the Lord through the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

But when? When will this remnant exist that Paul refers to? Obviously Isaiah was talking about the eighth century B.C. What is Paul talking about? Well, there are two answers to when Paul sees this remnant existing. First of all, we need to understand that there was a remnant of Jews in the first century and there will be, throughout the church age, a remnant of Jewish people who believe in their Messiah and His gospel. Turn over to chapter 11. This is exactly what Paul says. Chapter 11 verse 2, "God has not rejected his people," now he is talking about Israel, verse 1 makes that clear, descendants of Abraham, "God has not rejected his people," the Jewish people, "whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?"

And he goes back to the post Mount Carmel experience. You remember, on Mount Carmel Elijah confronts the prophets of Baal that Jezebel has brought into the land, there seems to be a victory, he kills them, and then Jezebel says the next day, I am going to kill you. And he flees and he comes to this conclusion, notice verse 3, "LORD, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT," I am the only one who truly believes in you, "AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE." Verse 4, "But what is the divine response to him? 'I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL.'" God says, oh no, Elijah, you are not the only one. I have got 7,000 true believers in the nation. There is a remnant. Yes, it is a small remnant, but it is not just you. There are 7,000 who have believed in Me and continue to believe in Me.

Now notice Paul's conclusion in verse 5, "In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time," notice that, in the first century, "a remnant according to God's gracious choice," "a remnant according to God's gracious choice." You know what Paul is saying? He is saying, listen, in the first century, as I write this letter to you, Roman believers and the churches there in Rome, you need to understand that there is a remnant; God has brought physical descendants of Abraham to believe in their Messiah. And that continues throughout the church age.

Notice verse 7, "What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen," chosen by God, who were elected, "obtained it, and the rest were hardened." That is right back to what we have been studying in Romans 9. Paul is saying, listen, from the first century and throughout the church age, there is a believing remnant of the physical descendants of Abraham who have come to see Jesus Christ as their Messiah, to believe His gospel.

By God's grace, some of that remnant is sitting right here in this room today; you are of Jewish descent, and you have come to understand that Jesus of Nazareth was, and is in fact is, the Messiah, and you have come to believe in Him and His gospel. And the reason that is true is because that was God's plan, that there would be a remnant of the Jewish people who would believe. That is why, by the way, in Galatians 6:16, Paul speaks of the church and "the Israel of God." There "the Israel of God" is not referring, as some believe, to the entire church made up of both Jews and Gentiles, but rather to believing Jews within the church; it is "the Israel of God," God's true people.

So there was, in the first century, and there will be throughout the church age, a remnant of Jewish people who believe in their Messiah and in His gospel. But that is not all Paul is talking about. There will also be a remnant, secondly, of Jews in the future who will believe in their Messiah and His gospel, in the future. Paul talks about this in Romans 11, beginning in verse 25, "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery – so that you will not be wise in your own estimation – that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in," until God has done all that He wants to do in saving a people for Himself from the Gentiles, "and so," verse 26, underscore this, "all Israel will be saved." He talks about the future. There is going to be a massive salvation of the physical descendants of Abraham,

just as it is written,

“THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION,
HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.
THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM,
WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.”

From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

God is saying, through Paul, that there is coming a time in the future when He will save a remnant. There will be true believers from the physical descendants of Abraham. When? In the future.

Well, there are two parts to this future remnant. First of all, during the tribulation period, during The Great Tribulation, that seven-year period when God rains out His judgment on this earth. Revelation 7:1-8, speak of 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from every one of the 12 tribes. They will become a huge evangelistic force. Israel will finally be God’s witness nation. They will believe in their Messiah and they will preach His gospel during that awful period we call The Great Tribulation.

Then, at the second coming, at the end of that seven years, at the second coming when Christ returns, that is when you have, Paul describes here in verse 26, “all Israel will be saved.” It is described in other places. Listen to this, this is from Zechariah, Zechariah 12:10. In fact, turn there with me, let me show this to you. Turn to Zechariah 12:10. Go back to verse 9, it gives you context.

“in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that have come against Jerusalem. [*This is a description of the end of The Great Tribulation. This is Armageddon. And in response to all of that, verse 10, watch this, Zachariah 12:10,*] I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they

have pierced; they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.”

In other words, at the second coming, as Jesus returns, they will recognize that Jesus of Nazareth was, in fact, the Messiah, and they will mourn over Him and weep for Him as an only son, saying, we have rejected our Messiah. This is when the words of Isaiah 53 will be spoken, as they look back and say, we thought He was stricken by God, but in fact, He was pierced for us, He was bruised for us. Go over to chapter 14 of Zechariah, chapter 14 verse 1,

Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, [*There is going to be complete destruction.*] but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle. [*He goes on to describe topographical changes as a result, apparently, of a massive earthquake. Verse 6,*] In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle, it will be a unique day, [*verse 7, and then verse 9, as a result of all of this*] the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one.

You see, God has promised a remnant. There is a remnant, today, of believing Jews, and there will be in the future. During the tribulation, 144,000 of them. At the second coming, all who survive will be saved. So, although it is all Israel, verse 26 of Romans 11, it will be only that portion of Israel that survives the tribulation; and so in the sense of the whole, it will still just be a remnant. So God’s decision to save only a remnant of the Jewish people is biblically clear. It was clear in Isaiah’s time. It was clear in the first century. It is clear today. It will be clear during the tribulation period and it will be clear at the second coming.

Secondly, back in Romans 9, God’s decision regarding the Jews is unchangeably certain. Look at verse 28, “FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND

QUICKLY.” Now, you remember what we read in Isaiah? In Isaiah 10:23, the Hebrew there makes the message crystal clear. It is not quite as clear here in the Greek translation, but listen to it from the Old Testament. This is Isaiah 10:23, “For a complete destruction, one that is decreed, the Lord GOD of hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land.”

You see, Romans 9:28 is primarily a message of judgment, “FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH.” He will execute or carry out His word of judgment on the whole land, meaning the whole land of Israel. God will judge the vast majority of the Jewish nation. And when He brings that judgment on the majority of the nation, notice verse 28, He will do so “THOROUGHLY,” that is, completely. God’s judgment of Israel will be complete and utter destruction; He will bring devastating, comprehensive, eternal judgment on most of the physical descendants of Abraham. The exception will be a small remnant that He will save, just like George’s ring lying on that otherwise completely destroyed surface.

Isaiah adds, verse 28, that God will execute “HIS WORD” of judgment on the nation “QUICKLY.” Probably a better translation is decisively. God’s decision to eternally judge and condemn most of the Jewish people, most of the physical descendants of Abraham, is unchangeable, and it is certain God will execute His word of judgment on them completely and decisively, just like He did with Assyria in the Old Testament, just like he did with Babylon in the Old Testament.

Now I have to tell you, as I read and studied this passage this week, verse 28 is an extremely sobering verse, extremely sobering, and yet in it there is an inviolable truth. Listen carefully, I can’t sugarcoat this for you. This is what Isaiah said. This is what Paul says. This is what God says. God will not hesitate for a moment to execute judgment on sinners, and He will do so thoroughly and decisively.

Now why is this important? Because there are many people today who think or even say something like this, you have heard it, I have heard it: You know, God is just too loving to judge anyone, He is just too loving to do that. Maybe you have thought that or maybe you have even said that, and maybe you are betting on that being true for you.

Listen, let me be as forthright with you as I can, and I say this in love, this is what the Scriptures teach. Isaiah says to you, Paul says to you, ultimately God says to you, don't you dare bet on it. The same God who is truly loving and truly gracious, who makes you an offer of His Son, forgiveness in and through His Son, that same God is unalterably just, He is perfectly just, and He must and will act on that justice.

Listen to God's self-revelation, this is Exodus 34:7, this is God speaking. He says, this is what I am like, yes, I am gracious, I am compassionate, I am forgiving of transgression, iniquity, and sin. But then He says this, and "yet I will by no means leave the guilty unpunished." That is God's self-declaration.

If you don't repent and if you don't accept God's provision of forgiveness in Christ, accomplished through the death of His Son on the cross for the sins of those who would believe in Him, God will not hesitate for a moment to treat you as your sins deserve. In fact, His just character will compel Him to do so, thoroughly and decisively. You fast-forward to the end of the New Testament, Revelation 20:15 says this, "if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." Don't you dare bet that God is too loving to do that, and don't you dare bet that you will be the exception. Come to Christ. Find forgiveness in Him. Don't you bet that God isn't just and He won't do to you. If He was willing to do it to His chosen people, the vast majority of His chosen people, to act toward them in justice and devastation, He will toward anybody else who doesn't come to Him His way, His justice demands it.

There is a third point that we learn in Romans 9 and that is, that God's decision about the Jewish people and their salvation is both perfectly just and at the same time, perfectly gracious. Look at verse 29,

And just as Isaiah foretold,

"UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOth [That is a Hebrew word that means the Lord of hosts, the Lord of armies. Unless the Sovereign of the universe] HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH."

Here Paul quotes from Isaiah again, but from the first chapter of Isaiah's prophecy in verse 9. In this passage, both in Isaiah 1 and here in Romans 9, there are two major points you need to get from verse 29.

First point is this, the Jewish people and all of us are as wicked and deserving of punishment as those in Sodom and Gomorrah. God was completely just to judge and destroy those twin cities, and God would be completely just to judge and destroy every human being including every Jewish person. That is what Isaiah was saying. That is the first point.

Second point, the only reason anyone is saved, including anyone from Israel is saved, just like it was in Sodom and Gomorrah with Lot and his two daughters, the only reason anyone is saved is solely God's grace. Look at verse 29 again, "UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOOTH," unless the Sovereign of the universe, "HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WE WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH."

Listen, the Jews and all of us Gentiles, all of us together, are as guilty before God as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and we all deserve exactly what Sodom and Gomorrah got, immediate, total, and eternal destruction. The only reason that we are saved, and the only reason that any Jewish people are saved, is that the Sovereign of the universe has acted toward us in sovereign grace and decided to give us a future. Only a remnant will be saved. On what basis? The sovereign grace of the Sovereign of the universe. Do you see why election matters? Because if God doesn't act in grace, nobody is saved. We are all like Sodom and Gomorrah, that is what we deserve.

Listen to Lloyd-Jones commenting on this passage. I can't say it better than he does, listen to what he writes, "Nobody at all deserves to be saved. Every one of us merits destruction and condemnation. Every one of us deserves to be overwhelmed with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The fact that anybody is saved at all is to be attributed to one thing only, and that is the mercy and grace of God. It is God who saves you. The Lord of Sabaoth has left us a future; and if He had not, there would be nobody saved at all. A man does not become a Christian by making a decision. He is made a Christian by God who had marked him out before the foundation of the world, and who sees to it that he is born, and sees to it that he believes. The

work is entirely His. ‘By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.’” Lloyd-Jones says, give Him the glory.

The amazing thing is that there is such a thing as a single Christian and nothing explains the existence of even one Christian but the love and the grace, the mercy and the power of the Lord Almighty. The only reason I am a Christian, the only reason, brothers and sisters, that you are a Christian, if in fact you are, is because God is gracious. Because in sovereign mercy and grace, He acted to save us from what we deserve, which is what Sodom and Gomorrah got.

Now, I want us to conclude our study of the doctrine of election by asking one question. I want you to stay with me just for a moment. Why? Why does Paul spend all of this time developing this doctrine to the Roman churches, most of whom, by the way, were Gentile. Why does he spend all of this time? Or let’s ask it more specifically, why does God, through His Spirit, inspire Paul to spend all of this time and why have we spent all of this time? Listen, I know how it goes. You know, some people are sitting there thinking, look, I mean, but can’t we just skip this and get the good stuff? Can’t we just skip this and get to like the practical how I am supposed to live stuff?

When we say that, when we think like that, we are betraying our own immaturity and ignorance, because think about how it is as parents. All of us grew up, obviously, under parents and some of us are parents. You teach your children a lot of things that they have no idea are important. You know they are important, and so you teach them to them; but while they are learning them, they don’t get it. You are teaching them they are under authority; they don’t understand how important that is, but you do. You understand that if they grow up understanding that they are under authority, that God has placed them there, then that is going to make a difference their entire lives, and so you teach them even though they are sitting there scratching their heads going, why does this matter?

You watch them as they grab their spoon like a shovel and throw their food at their mouth, and it is going everywhere. And you teach them how to hold that spoon, and you teach them the manners that they need to know how to eat. Why? They don’t get it, but you know that is going to matter a lot someday. We teach our kids constantly all kinds of things that they don’t get, but we know it is important, and we know the impact it will have.

The same thing is true with the doctrine of election. As we sit here this morning, we don't get everything God is teaching us through this. This is obviously important, it is influencing and impacting our thinking in ways I am confident we don't even fully understand. Just like that child, we will look back someday and say, wow, that makes sense.

I can tell you one thing it is doing, and this is immeasurably important in your Christian life and experience. If it does nothing else, even if you have missed some of the details, you know what this does? It helps you have a high view of God and a low view of yourself, and nothing could be more important to your spiritual progress than that. God is God and He is on His throne, and He has a right to be there; that alone is worth this study. Election matters because it reminds us of who God is, it reminds us of who we are, and it reminds us of how it is we got to be His, by sovereign grace alone. Let's pray together.

Our Father, thank You for these magnificent verses. Thank You for the great truths that we have learned throughout this section. Thank You, Father, that You have exalted Yourself in our thinking, that we have seen You as You are, upon Your throne as the Sovereign of the universe, with a right to do what You choose as long as it is just, and it is always just. Father, we humble ourselves before You and acknowledge Your sovereignty. But Father we also acknowledge Your amazing grace, what grace is this. Lord, if You had left us alone, we would have gotten what Sodom and Gomorrah got. But in grace, You have redeemed us, You have sought us out in Christ. Lord, give us a sense of Your grace, a sense of Your greatness. May these truths shape our thinking of You in profound ways that we will only grasp in the future.

And Father, I pray for those who may be here this morning who are not in Christ. O God, bring them to see the reality of who they are, of the certainty of judgment, that they will not be the exception to Your justice. And may they run to the gift of Your grace, Jesus Christ, whose death made their forgiveness possible, whose resurrection sealed it. Father, may they repent and believe in Him even today. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.