

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

TEXT: ROMANS 9:6-18

INTRODUCTION:

1. Romans 9-11 deal with the nation of Israel (9:1-4). Israel was chosen by God. Deuteronomy 7:6 says, "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."
2. The Bible reveals God as an absolute Sovereign who by His own will has chosen to create this universe and to direct its history according to His foreordained plan.
3. Part of this plan includes the doctrine of election, which is probably one of the most misunderstood and difficult doctrines in the Bible.
4. As taught in the Bible, the doctrine of election refers to the act of divine selection taking effect upon human objects so as to bring them into special and saving relations with God.
5. In the Old Testament, the emphasis is on Israel as God's chosen people, and in the New Testament, the emphasis is on the church as God's chosen people.
6. This does not mean God is finished with Israel (cf. Romans 11:1).
7. Ephesians 1:4 says that God "hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love."
8. Here we see why God has chosen those of us that are saved – "that we should be holy..."
9. There is no question but that this divine choosing is mysterious and beyond the comprehension of mortal men (cf. Rom. 9:10-13).
10. God chose Sarah, and not Hagar. God chose Isaac and not Ishmael. God chose Jacob and not Esau, etc. (9:7-13).
11. From Romans 9, we can see five aspects of election:
 - * Election should not be a deterrent to soulwinning (9:1-3)
 - * Election is apart from man's works (9:11).
 - * Election takes place before we are born (9:11-13).
 - * Election is according to God's sovereign purpose (9:15).
 - * Election is by God's sovereign discrimination (9:18-23).
12. This evening, I would like for us to focus on four particular individuals who are mentioned as illustrations of God's election, Jacob and Esau (9:10-13), Moses (9:15), and Pharaoh (9:17).

I. THE CASE OF JACOB AND ESAU (9:10-14)

1. In Scripture, there is a distinction between individual election and national election. The Bible speaks of a national election in the choice of Abraham and his posterity (Rom. 9:1-5; cf. Gen. 12:1-3).
2. That is the primary idea here in Romans 9 – God chose Jacob, not Esau, to be the father of the twelve tribes of Israel.
3. Therefore, Romans 9:11 is not speaking of salvation but of service and of the blessing that comes with being in the lineage of the Messiah.
4. Jacob was a saved man and he is in heaven right now because he believed God and was converted. Hebrews 11:21 says, "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff."
5. Jacob is mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11 along with Abraham, and Isaac, and Moses and others who were saved by faith in God.
6. Those who believe the Gospel are saved, those who do not believe the Gospel die and go to hell. Sinners are in hell, not because God chose to put them there, but because they turned their back on God.
7. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).
8. First Timothy 2:4 says God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."
9. Election never appears as a violation of the human will. Man is responsible for his deeds and his choices.
10. "In the Bible the relation of the human and Divine wills is inscrutable; the reality of both is assured" (Handley Dunelm, *ISBE*).
11. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, "The reconciliation of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility is beyond man's power. The Bible states and emphasizes both, and then leaves them. We shall be wise if we do the same" (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*).
12. Some one once complained to a preacher that he could not understand how God could hate Esau (Rom. 9:13; cf. Mal. 1:2, 3). The preacher wisely replied: "I can understand how God could hate Esau. What I cannot understand is how He could love Jacob!"
13. When reading the Bible it is good to keep in mind that when the Bible speaks of "hate," it often means to love less, which is seen as hatred by comparison.
14. Our Lord said in Luke 14:26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

14. Obviously we are not to hate our relatives. What our Lord meant was that our love for Him was to be so strong that our love for our family members would seem like hatred in comparison.
15. We often think of love and hatred as emotions, but in Scripture, love and hatred refer to a decision of the will. One chooses to love, and one chooses to hate.
16. If more people understood this, we would not be seeing so many divorces today. People talk about "falling in love," but you do not see that expression in the Bible. One chooses to love someone, or one chooses not to love someone.
17. In Romans 9:13, Paul is quoting Malachi 1:2, 3 and is referring to the nations of Edom and Israel, not to individuals. God does not hate sinners – God loves sinners (John 3:16).
18. It also should be pointed out that Romans 9:12 is a quote from Genesis 25:23.
19. The Lord spoke these words to Rebekah before the twins were born. However, Romans 9:13 is a quote from Malachi 1:2, 3, written over 1,000 years after Jacob and Esau.
20. God hated the idolatry of the Edomites and judged them accordingly, but to teach that God hated Esau before he was born is unscriptural.
21. H. A. Ironside said, "Esau received instruction from the lips of his parents, but for a morsel of bread he sold his birthright. And his descendants have ever been characterized by the same independent lawless spirit. Dispensationally, Jacob was loved, Esau hated. There is no reference to the individual as such. 'God so loved the world,' and therefore every child of Jacob or of Esau may be saved who will. But no one can dispute the fact that Jacob and his descendants enjoyed earthly privileges, and spiritual, too, that Esau and his children had never known."

II. THE CASE OF MOSES (9:15, 16)

1. Sometimes God chooses certain people for some office or function. This is another aspect of election. The Bible plainly teaches that God chose Moses.
2. Psalm 106:23 says, "Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them."
3. We can see that Moses was chosen by his providential birth (Exodus 1:22; 2:1-10) and by the way God appeared to him in the backside of the desert (Exodus 3:1-12).

4. People frequently raise objections to the doctrine of election. Some have accused God of being "unrighteous." To these objections, Paul says, "God forbid" (9:14-16; cf. vss. 19-21).
5. Who can say that God Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, does not have the right to show mercy and compassion on whom He chooses to do so?
6. Romans 9:15 is a quote from Exodus 33:19. The LORD said to Moses, "I...will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy."
7. Israel agreed to keep God's law, but soon were worshipping a golden calf. When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp."
8. And then the next verse: "And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear" (Ex. 32:18).
9. This transgression occurred while Moses was up on the mount. God would have been perfectly justified in destroying all of them, but He chose not to. The LORD was gracious and merciful (Exodus 33:17-19; Rom. 9:15).
10. Paul is not denying the freewill of man by saying it is "not of him that willeth" (9:16; cf. Rom. 10:9-13). Rather, he is emphasizing God's grace and mercy. No man can get saved unless God touches his heart. Man cannot save himself (John 1:13; 6:37).

III. THE CASE OF PHARAOH (9:16, 17)

2. "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up" (9:17) does not mean God created Pharaoh for the purpose of hardening his heart, and drowning him in the Red Sea, and casting him off into hell.
3. James Denney says this means God brought Pharaoh up onto the stage of history (cited by W.H. Griffith Thomas, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*).
4. Pharaoh had a free will. Pharaoh was responsible for his conduct.
5. The problem with Pharaoh was pride and unbelief. Pharaoh wanted to exercise his power, and he wanted to declare his name throughout all the earth (cf. Exodus 9:16, 17).
6. But God was patient and long-suffering with Pharaoh (Exodus 5:1, 2). He sent Moses and Aaron to talk with him eight times, and each time they were refused (Exodus 10:3). Finally, there was no more hope for Pharaoh – God gave him up to judgment (Exodus 10:27-29).
7. Likewise, today God is patient and long-suffering with sinners (Romans 9:22).

8. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, "Neither Pharaoh nor anyone else is ever created in order to be hardened, though secret disobedience on the part of a sinner may lead to his being made a public example, as was Pharaoh, of God's judicial displeasure against sin. The Apostle all along is dealing with human pride, and for this reason he does not in any way soften his statements" (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*).
9. God's sovereignty is seen not only in showing mercy to some but in hardening others, such as Pharaoh (Romans 9:18; cf. Exodus 4:21; 7:13; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7,12, 27, 34, 35; 10:1-3, 20, 27).
10. "Light rejected, rightful obedience refused, inevitably hardens conscience and heart" (Scofield, p. 75). The same sun that melts the wax, hardens the clay. Grace rejected is grace denied.

CONCLUSION:

1. In his commentary on the book of Romans, W.H. Griffith Thomas said, "God has sovereign right over His creatures, and any questioning of Divine procedure is really rebellion" (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*).
2. Thomas compares our text with Ephesians 1, where there are three references to the will of God.
 - Ephesians 1:5 refers to "the good pleasure of His will." God does whatever He wants according to His good pleasure.
 - Ephesians 1:9 refers to "the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself." God's will often seems mysterious to man.
 - Ephesians 1:11 says God "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." This means that God's will is never arbitrary, but is based on reason.