

**LOVE, CHOICE,
AND THE THREE WILLS OF GOD (Part 1)**
(Romans 9:1-12)

I. PRELIMINARIES

- A. Welcome
- B. Pastoral Prayer
- C. Dismiss the Kids
- D. Today's Text:

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying—my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit *when I say*² that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed—*cut off* from Christ—for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh,⁴ the people of Israel. To them *belong* the adoption as sons, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the service of worship, and the promises;⁵ to them belong the fathers, and from them, according to the flesh, came the Messiah, who is over all, God forever blessed. Amen!

⁶But it is not as if the word of God has fallen to the ground, for they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel,⁷ nor are they all children *simply* because they are the seed of Abraham; rather, “It is through Isaac that your seed will be named.”⁸ In other words, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God; rather, it is the children of the promise who are counted as the seed.⁹ For this is a word of promise: “At that time I will come, and Sarah will have a son.”¹⁰ And that is not all; there is also Rebekah, who conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac.¹¹ Yet before they were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God’s purpose in election might stand, which is not based on works, but on him who calls—¹²it was said to her, “The older will serve the younger.”¹³ Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

- E. Prayer over the Ministry of the Word

II. INTRODUCTION / OVERVIEW

- A. Opening Illustration:

- Dessert time at the Wilson household
- MP: This is a wise and loving father, training his offended and uncomprehending kids in the sovereignty of Dad! (HSL)
- MP: In today’s text, Paul is doing the same!

B. Brief Review: Paul has been exploring his theme in Romans: the Righteousness of God

- (1-3) Sinful man’s desperate *need* of righteousness
- (3-5) God’s gracious gift of *imputed* righteousness
- (6-8) God’s gracious gift of *imparted* righteousness (freedom from the dominion of sin and from life under the Law / gifts of the new life in the Spirit, hope, and assurance, all based on God’s sovereign love)

C. Now, in 9-11, he turns to a new theme: The *vindication* or *defense* of God's righteousness in his redemptive dealings with Jews and Gentiles

1. The presenting problem: The scandal of Jewish unbelief (HSL)

2. Paul's Four Explanations:

- God's OT promises to Israel have not failed because they are not fulfilled in physical Israel, but in spiritual Israel: elect Jews and Gentiles, the Church
- The majority of Jews insist on stubbornly clinging to the Law for salvation, instead of to Christ, who fulfills it (Jewish responsibility)
- Even now, God has a remnant of Jewish believers. He has not *totally* rejected his ancient people
- One day up ahead, he will again visit Israel at large and draw them to Christ and salvation: He has not *finally* rejected his ancient people at large.

3. Key Features of this Challenging Section of Scripture

- Paul affirms the sovereignty of God in salvation (unconditional election)
- Paul explains this difficult truth to us (at least in part)
- Paul defends the sovereign God against charges of injustice and unrighteousness
- Paul carefully balances God's sovereignty with man's responsibility
- Paul underscores the importance of the Church's call to world missions
- Paul discloses the stupendous mystery of God's great redemptive plan for Israel and the nations

III. (1-3) PAUL'S GREAT LOVE FOR HIS JEWISH BRETHREN

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying—my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit *when I say*² that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. // ³For I could wish that I myself were accursed—*cut off* from Christ—for the sake of my brothers, my relatives according to the flesh,⁴ the people of Israel.

- MP: Paul really, really wants the Roman Christians to know of his love for Israel. Why? (Jewish charges of apostasy, anti-Semitism)
- MP: Paul's love is astonishing because it is supernatural, a reflection of the universal love of God and Christ

³⁷ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, she who kills the prophets and stones the men who are sent to her! How often I yearned to gather your children together like a hen gathers her chicks beneath *her* wings, but you were unwilling! ³⁸ Behold, your house is left to you in ruins. ³⁹ For I tell you *this*: From now on you will not see me at all, not until the day you say,¹¹ ‘Blessed *is* he who comes in the name of the Lord!’” – Matt. 2

IV. (4-5) PAUL’S KNOWLEDGE OF HIS JEWISH HERITAGE, AND HIS RESPECT FOR IT

To them *belong* the adoption as sons // the glory // the covenants // the giving of the Law // the service of worship // and the promises; ⁵ to them belong the fathers, and from them, according to the flesh, came the Messiah, who is over all, God forever blessed. Amen!

- **MP:** Israel was *highly* privileged, but we more so, since all their blessings were only temporary outward physical types, pointing ahead to ours, which are “substantial” and eternal (HSL)
- **MP:** Israel’s SUPREME privilege was to give the world its divine/human Redeemer. *Here is Paul’s anguish: They have largely rejected the One who fulfilled the very purpose for their existence in the world! (Rev. 12:1f)*

V. JEWISH UNBELIEF: EXPLANATION #1: GOD’S PROMISES OF SALVATION AND ETERNAL LIFE WERE NOT TO PHYSICAL ISRAEL, BUT TO SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

A. (6-9) The covenant promises were given to “the children of the promise”

⁶ But it is not as if the word of God has fallen to the ground // for they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel, ⁷ nor are they all children *simply* because they are the seed of Abraham // rather, “It is through Isaac that your seed will be named.” // ⁸ In other words, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God; rather, it is the children of the promise who are counted as the seed. ⁹ For this is a word of promise: “At that time I will come, and Sarah will have a son.”

- Read and comment (HSL)
- **MP:** God’s covenant promises and prophetic Scriptures have NOT failed; let God be true and every man a liar!
- **MP:** The reason they have not failed is because they were not made to ethnic Israel, but to spiritual Israel. In essence, God promised them to us—the Church—to Abraham’s eternal seed, to all who believe in Christ (Rom. 4).

⁷ I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your seed after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your seed after you. ⁸ I will give to you and to your seed after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” – Gen. 17

¹⁵ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; *what counts is* a new creation. ¹⁶ And whoever walks *through life* according to this rule, may peace and mercy *be* upon them, even⁶ upon the Israel of God. – Gal. 6

⁹But you *are* a chosen family, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for *God's own* possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies⁹ of the One who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light; ¹⁰who once were not a people, but now are the people of God; who *once* had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. – 1 Peter 2

B. (10-13) The covenant promises were given to God's elect

¹⁰And that is not all; // there is also Rebekah, who conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac. // ¹¹Yet before they were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose according to election might stand, which is not based on works, but on him who calls—¹²it was said to her, “The older will serve the younger.” // ¹³Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

- **MP:** A *dramatic* example of God's sovereignty and unconditional election

³Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, so that we would be holy and blameless² before him in love, ⁵having predestined³ us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved. – Eph. 1

- **MP:** Our Table-turning God (Luke 6, 1 Cor. 2)
- **Question:** What does it mean to say that God loved Jacob before the foundation of the world, but hated Esau?

VI. MAKING SENSE OF THE MYSTERY: THE THREE WILLS OF GOD

A. Our text presents a great theological puzzler

- God's love for all Israel, reflected in Paul's heart
- God's choice of some of Israel, reflected in Paul's teaching on election
- How are we to think of this? How do we get a handle on it?

B. A biblical answer: The three wills of God

- Will of affection (or benevolence): The good things he sincerely desires for all his creatures (Rom. 9:1-3)

⁴¹Now when he drew near *and* beheld the city, *Jesus* wept over it, ⁴²saying, “If *only* you—especially you—had known on this day the things *that were meant* for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. – Luke 19

“From his heart He does not afflict or grieve the sons of men.” –Lam. 3:33

Say to them, ‘As I live!’ declares the Lord God, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?’ – Ezek. 33:11

- Will of command: The things he commands

³⁰ So then: Though God *previously* overlooked such times of ignorance, he is now commanding all men everywhere to repent, ³¹ for he has fixed a day on which he intends judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, proving *this* to everyone by raising him from the dead.” – Acts 17

- Will of event: The things he decrees or ordains

¹¹In him we also have obtained an inheritance,⁶ having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his *own* will . . .

When the Gentiles (in Antioch) heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. – Acts 13:48

C. Two examples of the mystery

- The Cross
- George Washington and Major Andre (Reading)

D. Questions: Why would God decree what he hates and what brings him sorrow? Why would he decree what he positively commands men not to do? Next time!

VI. CONCLUSION: FOUR PRACTICAL BENEFITS OF TODAY’S TEXT

A. It helps us make sense of the world we live in

B. It reveals the attitude we must embrace towards unbelievers: the attitude of God, Christ, and the apostle Paul (9:1-3, Mt. 5:43f)

⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may show yourselves sons of your Father in heaven; for he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. – Mt. 5

C. It raises the question: What has he chosen us FOR? What has he chosen us to feel and be and do? (More on this in days ahead; hint: Jacob, Paul)

D. Above all, it should make us FOREVER GRATEFUL

. . . that we should be to the praise of the glory of his grace. – Eph. 1

E. Concluding Prayer, Song (Larry will pray)

Relevant Texts

“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever.” – Dt. 29:29

⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor²¹ and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may show yourselves sons of your Father in heaven; for he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Don’t even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷And if you only greet your brothers, what are you doing more *than anyone else*? Don’t even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸Therefore you must be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect. – Mt. 5

But now, this is what the LORD says—he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. ²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. ³For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. ⁴Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life. ⁵Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. ⁶I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth—⁷everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.” -- Isaiah 43

“Blessed *are you* who *are* poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹Blessed *are you* who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed *are you* who weep now, for you will laugh. ²²Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, hurl insults at you, and banish your name as *though it were* evil, all because of the Son of Man. ²³At such times be exceedingly glad, and leap *for joy*, for behold, your reward in heaven will be great; for their fathers did the very same things to the prophets. // ²⁴“But woe to you who are rich, for you have *already* received your comfort in full. ²⁵Woe to you who are satisfied, for you will hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. ²⁶Woe *to you* when all men speak well of you, for their fathers did the very same things to the false prophets. – Luke 6

²⁶For think back to when you were called,³ *my* brothers: Not many *of you were* wise according to the flesh, not many were powerful, *and* not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things that are strong; ²⁸and God has chosen the lowly things of the world, and the things that are despised, and the things that have no standing at all,⁴ to bring to nothing the things that do, ²⁹so that no flesh will boast in his presence. ³⁰Yes, he is the reason⁵ you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—³¹so that, just as it is written, “He who boasts, let him boast in the LORD.”⁶ – 1 Cor. 2