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Sermon Notes

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God's Purpose in Election Stands

Romans 9:11-12

I. The Magnitude of this Issue: Our Concept of God Himself

A. What's At Stake? The Weightiest Matter in the Universe

B. Only Safe Methodology: Stay Very Close to the Text

C. Life Experience only Carries Us So Far

D. More Important to Understand God's Word Than Anything in the Universe

Some say "Knowledge is power"... they apply that to the business world for inside information on stocks... the very thing that got Martha Stewart in trouble, illegally making money on powerful information

Scientists in research laboratories are seeking the secrets of the chemical universe, trying to unlock some new drug that could make their company millions of dollars, and win them personally accolades of praise

Military leaders, general will give almost anything to gain accurate information about the enemy... their whereabouts, their strength, their intentions, their tendencies, their weaponry

But of all these powerful forms of knowledge, none is more powerful than this:

Jeremiah 9:23-24 This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, ²⁴ but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

In this case the power of this knowledge is immense and mysterious... the unconditional election of God

II. Context: Paul's Argument to this Point

A. The Crisis of Confidence: Has God's Word Failed

B. Paul's Stunning Answer: Not All Israel Are Israel

1. God never intended or promised personal eternal salvation to every individual physical descendent of Abraham
2. Paul's point: There is a "spiritual Israel" within the "physical Israel" who are God's children
3. Two case studies: Showing that this concept should be well-familiar to the Jews
 - a. Abraham the father physically of many nations
 - b. Not all those nations are God's people... only one line
4. Case Study #1: Isaac and Ishmael
 - a. Those who are "reckoned" Abraham's children... they are also called God's children and the children of the promise; **they are represented by Isaac, the first child of the promise**
 - b. Those who are "natural children"... children only through the flesh, born biologically from Abraham but nothing more; **they are represented by Ishmael**
 - c. The key difference: God's direct and supernatural involvement in making His children His own

"At the appointed time, I will come and Sarah will have a son."

5. Case Study #2: Jacob and Esau
 - a. Closing a gaping loophole
 - b. Any Jew worth his salt would say, "Obviously, Paul, there's a difference between Isaac and Ishmael... Ishmael's mother was a Gentile, the Egyptian Hagar."
 - c. Paul closes the gaping loophole by the case of the twins, conceived inside one woman in one act of marital relations by one husband, the patriarch Isaac
 - d. What can they say now?

Romans 9:10-13 Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. ¹¹ Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad-- in order that God's purpose in election might stand: ¹² not by works but by him who calls-- she was told, "The older will serve the younger." ¹³ Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

- e. God rules out any possibility of a distinction between Jacob and Esau

f. Covered this in detail last time, except for the reason why God did this

C. Paul's Overall Point: God's Word Has Not Failed

1. Not every physical descendent of Abraham was intended by God in His promises
2. There is a spiritual Israel within the physical Israel
3. God never promised all Israel eternal salvation through faith in Christ
4. Mission accomplished; we can have confidence in God's word
5. But some serious questions remaining...
6. How does God distinguish between the physical descendents of Israel and the spiritual?
7. Even more poignantly: WHY?? Why does God choose Jacob and not Esau? Why does He tell Rebekah this mysterious message: "The older will serve the younger?"
8. God has more to say to us than merely that His word does not fail
9. Rather He wants us to understand some of His deepest mysteries... His eternal glory in electing some to eternal life and in passing over others resulting in eternal damnation
10. Ultimately the answer to why some Jews are believers and others are not is in the eternal purposes of God in **unconditional election**

III. "God's Purpose in Election"

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A. Understanding the Literal Construction

1. Literally: "the according to election purpose"
2. Rearranged: "God's electing purpose" or "God's purpose in election"
3. Therefore, God's purpose in all of this is in some way defined and accomplished by election

B. Understanding that God Has a Purpose: Supporting Scriptures

1. God is a purposeful being... everything He does is for a purpose
 - a. History itself has a purpose... and God is working things out for that purpose
 - b. This is one of the most encouraging things about the doctrine of God's sovereignty ... seemingly random events are not random at all; everything is being worked out according to God's eternal purpose

Illus. Mac's Flash Ipod ad "Life is random"... thus you can buy a miniature personal music system called an iPod shuffle which can play 240 songs of your choosing, but mix 'em up so thoroughly that you never know what song comes next... it says : "Enjoy uncertainty"

Welcome to a life less orderly. As official soundtrack to the random revolution, the iPod Shuffle Songs setting takes you on a unique journey through your music collection — you never know what's around the next tune. Meet your new ride. More roadster than Rolls, iPod shuffle rejects routine by serving up your favorite songs in a different order every time.

But life isn't random... it has a very clear and distinct purpose according to God

And when it comes to where I will spend eternity, neither Almighty God nor I **"Enjoy uncertainty"**

God has a purpose, and that purpose is a sure and certain one

Use of this exact same word "purpose" in other passages to understand it

2. Romans 8:28-30

Romans 8:28-30 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

- a. God's purpose rules over the entire process of salvation
- b. God's purpose stands over His foreknowledge of people, His predestination of the people He foreknew to be conformed to the image of His Son... His calling of them by the gospel, His justification of them by faith, His future glorification of them
- c. AMAZING!!! This "purpose" must be a huge thing if it results in all those steps

3. 2 Timothy 1:9

2 Timothy 1:9 who has saved us and called us to a holy life-- not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time

Key issues

- a. First and foremost: note when God's purpose was established: "before the beginning of time"

John Hanning Speke solved an ancient mystery... the origins of the Nile River

On July 21, 1862, Speke located the outflow from Lake Victoria of the Nile River.

Six days later, Speke reached and named the Rippon Falls, where the Nile actually flows out of Lake Victoria

If we trace our personal salvation back to its origin, we would go back to before the foundation of the world

This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus

God's purpose was set before the beginning of time

- b. Secondly, we see that God's purpose is totally centered in the person of Christ... Grace given us IN CHRIST; Christ was the center of God's purpose, not some afterthought or "Plan B"
- c. Third: we see an absolute harmony between purpose and grace... God's purpose is a gracious purpose, or a purpose to give us grace in Christ

who has saved us and called us to a holy life-- not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.

- d. Fourth: we see that God's call to us in Christ Jesus was part of this purpose

2 Timothy 1:9 who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,

4. Ephesians 1:4-6, 11

Ephesians 1:4-6 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Ephesians 1:11-12 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

- a. God's purpose is so big, it even includes predestination!! Our predestination itself was done for this purpose
- b. Also, Paul says that God's purpose is a "free and sovereign" purpose, in which He does everything after the counsel of His own will... it is not governed by anything outside of Himself
- c. God doesn't react, He acts
- d. Verse 12 tells us the overall purpose of it all

Ephesians 1:12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

C. Unconditional Election Makes God's Purpose Stand

1. "Stand" = stand firm, continue
2. Direct contrast to the issue Paul is addressing here

Romans 9:6 It is not as though God's word had failed.

3. Problem: God's words seems to have "failed"
4. Paul says here, "In order that God's purpose might STAND"
5. Unconditional Election ALONE makes God's purpose stand

D. What is God's Purpose?

1. Two great purposes which are really one
 - a. In salvation God desires His own glory above all things...
 - b. In salvation, God also desires that all His elect most certainly be saved, that none of them be lost
 - c. Only election can accomplish these purposes, which are really one purpose ultimately

Our salvation was done for God's glory:

Isaiah 43:6-7 I 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-- ⁷ everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

Ephesians 1:4-6 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Ephesians 1:11-12 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

God's glory is most clearly displayed in all the universe in one way: that all of the elect might be fully and finally saved, that not one of them would be lost, and that they would stand and proclaim forever that they were saved for the praise of HIS GLORY...

This saving work must be completely of God's own power and accomplishment, so that no one may boast before Him

Every aspect of it must be of His powerful working SO THAT

- 1) God alone might get the glory for it
- 2) Not one of them would be lost

2. Concerning the Glory of God

a. Piper's statement

John Piper: God's purpose is to be known and enjoyed and praised as infinitely glorious in His free and sovereign grace

b. Piper's Explanation

- i) By "infinitely glorious" I mean beautiful and immeasurably great
- ii) By "free" I mean the final reason for all events in the universe is in Himself and not another

"The decisive influence of all that happens in the world is God's. He works all things, not just some things, after the counsel of His own will. He alone in the universe has the freedom of ultimate self-determination

- iii) By "sovereign" I mean nothing can thwart what He wants most to do

c. Election accomplishes this purpose of God because it thwarts all human boasting

- i) Unconditional election humbles us forever
- ii) We were not chosen because of anything in us... not good works, not good character, not even because of foreseen faith
- iii) Simply because of something within God alone
- iv) BOASTING IS GONE FOREVER!!!

1 Corinthians 1:28-31 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things-- and the things that are not-- to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰ It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-- that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹ Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

Romans 3:27 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded.

3. Concerning the certainty of our salvation

- a. Unconditional election ALONE guarantees our final salvation
- b. If God is basing your standing on something IN YOU, you are essentially insecure
- c. You have NO GUARANTEE you will continue to display that trait, that good deed pattern, that character, that faith

D. James Kennedy illustration: Suppose you were XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX trying to get across a one hundred foot wide chasm, over a five thousand foot drop; you have a marvelous rope that's tested to hold over two tons... it'll definitely hold your weight; the only problem is you only have fifty feet of the rope. Suppose a friend says, "That's okay, I've got fifty feet of thread... all we have to do is attach it to the end, and we can make it the whole way across!"

BUT YOU HESITATE! "No way", you say. Your friend says, "Don't you trust that rope to hold you? It can handle two tons!" "Oh, I trust the rope... it's your thread I don't trust!" So also if you had ninety feet of rope and only used ten feet of thread... or ninety-nine feet of rope and only used one foot of thread

Charles Spurgeon: "If only one thread of my garment of salvation comes from me, I am ruined!"

- d. God intends that Christ lose NONE of all that He has given, and only unconditional election can guarantee that
- e. This same logic worked earlier in Romans 4

Romans 4:16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring

- f. BUT HERE, the issue is not faith but unconditional election... that is the ultimate ground of all God's saving work in and for us, and it makes our salvation guaranteed

4. Conditional election thwarts God's purpose

John Piper: If God did not elect unconditionally, then God would not be free, He would not be sovereign, and He would not be glorious

- a. Not free, because then men would determine their own election, not God; He would be bound, not free, and would have to conform to what they decided
- b. Not sovereign, because instead of doing successfully what He most wants to do, God would be thwarted again and again by self-determining man
- c. Not glorious, because God's absolute freedom and sovereignty are the essence of His glory

And, if God did not elect unconditionally, some attribute of man would be the final determiner of salvation, and there could be no guarantee whatsoever that we would, in the end, be saved... many self-determining people would be lost (like the unbelieving Jews Paul is dealing with here in Romans 9), and you might be one of them!!

Summary: "God's purpose in election" is that He alone may be glorified in the salvation of the elect, not one of whom will be lost, but all of whom will boast in His power and grace alone and not in ANYTHING in themselves

That is God's purpose in election

IV. "Not By Works"

A. Why Paul Repeats this Issue

1. Already told us Jacob was chosen over Esau before any works were done
2. It seems like the issue of works has already been dealt with by this statement
3. However... there is still something else that could be brought up
4. Jacob and Esau could have done FORESEEN WORKS, and on the basis of THOSE God elects or doesn't elect

- a. God could have FORESEEN that Esau would be a wicked, godless man who committed certain acts and who sold his birthright for a bowl of stew
- b. God could have FORESEEN that Jacob would be a man who esteemed God and His promises enough to love them and live accordingly

B. Not By Esau's Bad Works

1. Esau's bad works were not the ground of his non-election by God
2. It wasn't the case that the one act of despising his birthright was the reason God rejected him
3. Esau would do MANY evil deeds, but not one of them was the reason God did not choose him
4. Neither was it the case that Esau was not chosen because of the sheer quantity of bad works
5. In fact, Esau's works had NOTHING to do with God's unconditional choice in election

C. Not by Jacob's Good Works

1. Especially important to understand this
2. It was decidedly NOT because of good deeds or any single good deed done by Jacob that God DID choose him
3. Paul is forever ruling out foreseen deeds of ANY SORT, good or bad!!!
4. He is saying "My election is not based on deeds of any sort, good or bad, foreseen or already accomplished... my election is free and unconditional, and that is my glory as sovereign king of the universe!!"

Illus. Julie Andrews in "Sound of Music"... theology of works

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D. Devastating Consequences of Conditional Election

1. It breeds arrogance: "I did something good, so God picked me"
2. OR it breeds insecurity: "God saw something good in me, but I better keep doing it or He'll throw me away!"
3. Either way, God no longer gets the glory and you no longer get the joy

One last obstacle to remove... "foreseen faith"

V. “But Because of Him Who Calls”

A. Foreknowledge: Basis of Predestination in Romans 8

B. Already Rejected Foreknown Works

C. BUT Perhaps It is Foreknown FAITH

1. Maybe God looked down through the corridors of time
2. Maybe God in some mysterious way knew everything about every person He would ever create
3. Maybe He discovered in the free wills of many the faith they would need to believe
4. Maybe he elected them based on what He saw in them... NOT BY WORKS
BUT BY FAITH

Romans 9:32 Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works.

Romans 4:2-3 If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about-- but not before God. ³ What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

ESV Galatians 2:16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

Usual contrast: “Not by works but by faith”

John Wesley’s sermon on foreknowledge:

“In a word, God, looking on all ages, from the creation to the consummation, as a moment, and seeing at once whatever is in the hearts of all the children of men, knows everyone that does or does not believe, in every age or nation. Yet what he knows, whether faith or unbelief, is in nowise caused by his knowledge. Men are as free in believing or not believing as if he did not know it at all.” John Wesley, "Sermon LVIII, On Predestination," in *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 6, Second Series (54-86)

Wesley’s whole approach assumes that faith is something independent from God, as though He had nothing to do with it but to discover it and then reward it with justification

D. Paul’s Syntax Removes that Forever

1. Paul’s dichotomy is NOT this: “not by works but by faith”

2. RATHER: “not by works but by HIM”
3. We are not given faith as the alternative here for a simple reason
4. Justification is **CONDITIONAL** on faith, but election is **NOT**
 - a. God will not justify you until you believe in Christ
 - b. Your faith in Christ is a **CONDITION** for justification

Romans 4:3 What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

- c. **BUT** your faith is **NOT** a condition for election... God wasn't looking in you at all when He chose you... He was looking in Himself
5. Frankly, faith is **CONDITIONAL** upon election
 - a. Before we can be justified we must believe in Christ
 - b. **BUT** before we can believe in Christ, we must be elect
 - c. God does not choose us because we will believe
 - d. God chooses us **SO THAT** we **WILL** believe

E. Him Who Calls

1. The “Call” is that powerful call by which God creates what He calls
 - a. He calls forth into nothingness and says “Let there be light”
 - b. He calls into Lazarus’s tomb and says in effect “Let there be life”
 - c. He calls into Sarah’s dead womb and says “Let there be Isaac”
 - d. He calls into your dead soul and says “Let there be faith”
2. **BUT NOTICE:** the focus is not on the calling
 - a. It does not say “Not by works but by the calling of God”
 - b. The focus here really is **NOT** on the calling any more than it is on faith
3. The focus is on **GOD: NOT BY WORKS BUT BY HIM... by GOD ALMIGHTY!!!**

Romans 4:17 ...the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

4. Unconditional election is designed to put the focus eternally where it belongs:
on GOD ALONE

Summary: “God’s electing purpose will stand” because our election was based on nothing outside of God Himself... it is not based on foreseen works, neither is it based on foreseen faith, nor anything God foresees in us at all. Rather, it is based totally on Himself, and He NEVER changes

VI. Application

A. Total Humility in Salvation

1. The doctrine of unconditional election has a tremendously humbling effect on us
2. Julie Andrews cute little theology is gone forever
3. The ultimate ground of our standing before God is in GOD HIMSELF
4. We were chosen IN SPITE OF what we are and do, not BECAUSE OF it
5. Forever, then, we give all credit and glory to God for every aspect of our salvation, from election through faith right to the end

B. Total Security in Salvation

1. Because election is unconditional, it never has nor will it ever depend on our righteousness
2. Therefore salvation is totally dependent on the unchanging character of God
3. It is to HIS GLORY to see to it that not one of Christ’s sheep are ever lost
4. The fountain of energy and will and determination for your Christian life is NOT in yourself but in God
5. When you do sin, you have a solid ground of assurance to come to God and ask forgiveness, since your election was never based on works anyway
6. Neither is your faith dependent on your own effort

^{NAU} ***Romans 9:16 So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.***

C. Confidence in Evangelism: Sin Does Not Disqualify ANYONE

1. Sinners will feel that their sin disqualifies them forever from salvation

2. Sexually immoral people say, “You don’t know all the things I’ve done, all the wickedness I’ve subjected my mind and my body to”
3. Those addicted to alcohol and drugs will say, “You don’t know how much money I’ve wasted, how many people I’ve hurt, what happened to my wife and my children because of my drinking.”
4. The murderer will say “You don’t know the gory details of the crimes I’ve committed, sometimes for no reason at all... the cries of the innocent, the blood on my hands...”
5. Those who look righteous on the outside but have secret, hidden sins will also disqualify themselves from God’s mercy
6. BUT NO SIN IS EVER TOO GRIEVOUS for God’s mercy!!! Unconditional election forever removes sin as a block to faith in Christ
7. Never imagine any sinner is beyond the pale of God’s unconditional election... unconditional election was designed to shock and surprise the world at who is included!!

1 Timothy 1:13-16 Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. ¹⁴ The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the worst. ¹⁶ But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

D. Worship for God: Live for the Praise of His Glory

1. You were chosen for this very purpose... to praise the unconditional mercy of God
2. Do it today... say “Thank you God that you chose me, despite all of my wickedness... simply for the praise of your glory!!”