



**A Difficult Doctrine: “Election”
(Romans 9:1-24)**

I. Privileged Beginnings that Lead to Nothing

A. Paul as Kinsman-Redeemer (9:1-3)

- I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—
- ² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.
- ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ **for the sake of my brothers and sisters, my kinsmen** according to the flesh.

Paul as Kinsman-Redeemer (Romans 9:1-3)

- I. Naomi, Ruth, Boaz, and the Law of Redemption
C. The role of a *goel* (“kinsman-redeemer”)
- “The guardian-redeemer was **responsible for protecting the interests of needy members of the extended family**—for example . . . To redeem land that a poor relative had sold outside the family

--NIV First-Century Study Bible

I. Privileged Beginnings that Lead to Nothing

B. Born with eight silver spoons (9:4-5)

- ⁴ They are Israelites, and to them belong the **adoption**, the **glory**, the **covenants**, the giving of the **law**, the **worship**, and the **promises**. ⁵ To them belong the **patriarchs**, and from their race, according to the flesh, is **the Christ**, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.
- **Adoption:** “Israel is my firstborn son” (Exodus 4:22)
- **Glory:** The visible splendor of God, filling the tabernacle then the temple (1 Kings 8:10)
- **Covenants:** God’s promises especially to Abraham (Genesis 17); also with Jacob & David
- **The Law:** Revelation of God spoken with His voice and written with His finger (Deut. 4:7)
- **(Temple) Worship:** Prescribed regulations for priesthood and sacrifices
- **Promises:** The coming Messiah as God’s prophet, priest, and king (Zechariah 9:9)
- **Patriarchs:** Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, etc.
- **The Christ:** The human ancestry of the Messiah through the line of David

I. Privileged Beginnings that Lead to Nothing

C. Privilege does not guarantee results

- “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!” (Luke 13:34)
- ⁷ And the LORD said to Moses, “Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. ⁸ They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’” (Exodus 32:7-8)

I. Privileged Beginnings that Lead to Nothing

D. But God still selects a remnant (of Jews) for Himself

- ²⁷ And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only **a remnant of them will be saved,**
- ²⁸ for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay."
- ²⁹ And as Isaiah predicted,
- "If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring,
we would have been like Sodom
and become like Gomorrah." (Romans 9:27-29)

- ¹³ And when **Elijah** heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁴ He said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." ¹⁵ And the LORD said to him . . . ¹⁸ **Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.**" (I Kings 19:13-15, 18)

II. God Fulfills His Promise to Israel (9:6-13)

- **A. The Covenant with Abraham never included all his offspring (9:6b-9:9)**
 1. Isaac and Jacob: children of the promise
 2. Ishmael and Esau: children of the flesh
- ⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."
- ⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. ⁹ For this is what the promise said: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son."

II. God Fulfills His Promise to Israel (9:6-13)

- **B. Election is based on God's sovereignty, not on human works (9:10-13)**
- ¹⁰ And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, ¹¹ though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that **God's purpose of election** might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—
- ¹² she was told, "The older will serve the younger." ¹³ As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

III. God is Just (9:14-18)

- **A. God's sovereignty leads to God's mercy for some (9:14-16)**
- **C. God is free to redeem whom He will (Moses/Israelites)**
- ¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!
- ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."
- ¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion,^[b] but on God, who has mercy.

III. God is Just (9:14-18)

- **B. God's sovereignty leads to God's justice for others (9:17-18)**
- **D. God is free to allow others to remain in their sins (Pharoah/Egyptians)**
- ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."
- ¹⁸ So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

III. God is Just (9:14-18)

- **E. The Human Condition: All deserve God's wrath**
- ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)
- And **you were dead in the trespasses and sins** ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ **even when we were dead in our trespasses**, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— (Ephesians 2:1-5)

IV. Spiritual Humility: Who are We to Question God? (9:19-24)

- A. The Potter (God) is sovereign over the pottery (us) (verses 20-21)
 - B. God selects whom He will from both Gentiles and Jews (verse 24)
 - C. God's judgment and patience amplifies his mercy (verses 22-23)
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- ¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?"
 - ²⁰ **But who are you, O man, to answer back to God?** Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?
 - ²² What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—
²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

The background of the entire image is a scenic landscape. It features a calm, dark blue lake in the foreground. In the middle ground, there are rugged, dark mountains with patches of snow. A vibrant rainbow arches across the sky above the mountains. The sky is filled with soft, grey clouds, suggesting a recent rain. The overall mood is serene and majestic.

THE LORD IS

**SLOW TO ANGER
BUT GREAT IN POWER;**

THE LORD WILL NOT LEAVE
THE GUILTY UNPUNISHED.

NAHUM 1:3



IV. Spiritual Humility: Who are We to Question God? (Job)

- Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? (Job 38:1-2) . . . Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? (38:4) . . . Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty?” (40:2).
- Then Job answered the Lord and said: “Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth” (40:3-4) . . . I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted . . . I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know” (42:2-3).
- **“I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes” (42:5-6) [Job’s last words].**

IV. Spiritual Humility: Who are We to Question God?

- During these final years [Thomas Aquinas] nearly, but not quite, finished both the *Summa theologiae* and his commentary series. Instead, after a year and a half in Naples, he stopped writing, famously explaining that **“All that I have written seems to me like straw compared with what has now been revealed to me.”** A few months after that he died, in the Cistercian abbey of Fossanova, on March 7, 1274.
- ⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.
- ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9)

V. Significance of “Calvinist” (“Reformed”) Theology

- A. Overflowing joy and gratitude of having done nothing to be saved
- B. Greater appreciation of God’s Sovereignty
- C. God does not create anyone just to condemn them
- D. The doctrine of “limited atonement”

D. The doctrine of “limited atonement” R.C. Sproul (1939-2017)



D. The doctrine of “limited atonement”

- R.C. Sproul, *Grace Unknown: The Heart of Reformed Theology*
- “If faith is necessary to the atonement, then Christ’s work was indeed a mere potentiality. In itself it saves no one. It merely makes salvation possible” (p. 167).
- [Calvinism: You are saved first, and then you receive faith.]
- [Arminianism: First you have faith and then you are saved.]
- “God sovereignly decrees that none of his elect shall perish. As a result, the goal of election is assured. All of the elect come to repentance. All of the elect come to faith. **All of the elect are saved. None of the elect perish.** This is indeed the very purpose of election, and this purpose is not frustrated” (p. 171).

All of the elect are saved; None of the elect perish

- **Jesus:**
- ²⁸ I give them eternal life, **and they will never perish**, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.” (John 10:28-29)

D. The doctrine of “limited atonement”

- R.C. Sproul, *Grace Unknown: The Heart of Reformed Theology*
- “The issue is this: Was God’s purpose to make salvation for all possible, or to make salvation for the elect certain? The ultimate aim of God’s plan of redemption was to redeem his elect. To accomplish this end, he ordained the means. One was the atonement made by his Son. Another was the Holy Spirit’s application of this atonement to the elect. God provides for his elect all that is necessary for their salvation, **including the gift of faith**” (174-75).
- “This purpose or design does not include the entire human race. If it did, the entire human race would surely be redeemed” (177).

VI. A Wheel in a Wheel: Individual Free-Will within God's Chosen Group

- “One must discern whether God is referring to individual election and salvation or to nations through whom God works. We believe that Paul is addressing the nation of Israel and expressing his regret that the nation has rejected the Messiah.
- One cannot underestimate the ramifications of this understanding. If Paul is addressing individuals, then all references to election, predestination, and salvation must be applied to individuals.
- However, if Paul is writing about God's outworking of His redemptive plan through a specific nation, which He elects and predestinated, then an individual's choices are made in the context of God's redemptive work among the nations.
- God's choice of a redemptive nation does not nullify an individual's freedom to respond to grace.”

--David Seemuth, *Romans*, p. 158

VII. It's a Mystery!

- “When I come to a text which speaks of election . . . I delight myself in the doctrine of election. When the apostles exhort me to repentance and obedience, and indicate my freedom of choice and action, I give myself up to that side of the question.” (Nineteenth-century minister, Charles Simeon, who warned his congregation of forsaking Scripture for a theological system.)

--Quoted in *The Message of Romans* by John Stott, p. 278

- **“Compatibilism”:**

God is perfectly sovereign AND humans have free will at the same time. [But I don't really know how that works!]

Isaiah 55:8-9

- ⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
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Let Us Pray

