

Choosing Jesus:
The Role of Free Will in Salvation
(Romans 9:30-33 and 10:1-13)

Sermon Overview

(Bulletin: Inside right-side)

- Last week, we studied Romans 9:1-24, which included references to the doctrine of “election” (predestination) with an emphasis on God’s sovereignty. The Apostle Paul’s very next passage, however, flips the focus around by emphasizing human faith and free will in the act of salvation. Today’s passage is also one of the most straightforward declarations of the “gospel”—the Good News of Jesus Christ—in all of the New Testament!

Today's Passage

Romans 9:30-33 and 10:1-13

Romans 9:30-33

- ³⁰ What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith;
- ³¹ but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law.
- ³² Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone,
- ³³ as it is written,
• “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense;
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” (Isaiah 28:16)

Romans 10:1-4

- **10** Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.
- ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.
- ³ For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.
- ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.
(Alternative: For Christ is the end of the law, that everyone who believes may be justified.)

Romans 10:5-7

- ⁵ For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.
- ⁶ But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down)
- ⁷ "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

Romans 10:8-10

- ⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);
- ⁹ **because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**
- ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Romans 10:11-13

- ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame."
- ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.
- ¹³ **For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."**

I. Righteousness is by Faith, not by the Law

- **A. Righteousness Does Not Come by the Law (Romans 9:30-33; 10:5-7)**
- ³¹ but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. ³² Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were **based on works**. (Romans 9:31-32)
- ⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin . . . ²⁰ **For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight**, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:9, 20)
- No one is righteous before God based on their own efforts: not the immoral, not the moral, and not the religious (Romans chapters 1-3)

I. Righteousness is by Faith, not by the Law

- **B. Faith is Counted as Righteousness (Romans 10:4b)**
- ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness **to everyone who believes.**
(Alternative: For Christ is the end of the law, that **everyone who believes may be justified.**)
- ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.** For there is no distinction: ²³ **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,** ²⁴ **and are justified by his grace as a gift,** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, **to be received by faith.** (Romans 3:21-25)

II. The Law and the Prophets Point to Jesus

- **A. Jesus as “The End of the Law” (Romans 10:4a)**
- Does Jesus abolish the Law?
- No, Jesus **fulfills** the Law.
- **⁴ For Christ is the end of the law** for righteousness to everyone who believes.
(Romans 10:4a)
- “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matthew 5:17).

II. The Law and the Prophets Point to Jesus

- **B. The Way of Salvation is Near (Romans 10:8)**
- ⁸ But what does it say? “**The word is near you**, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);
- “Surely his **salvation is near to those who fear him**, that glory may dwell in our land” (Psalm 85:9).
- ¹³ You will **seek me** and find me, when you seek me with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:13)

III. The Role of Free Will in Salvation

- **A. Confession of Faith (Romans 10:9; 10:13)**
- ⁹ because, if you **confess** with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and **believe** in your heart that God raised him from the dead, **you will be saved**. (Romans 10:9)
- ¹³ For everyone who **calls** on the name of the Lord **will be saved** (Romans 10:13)

B. What is “Arminianism”?

- “A system of theology founded on the thought of Jacobus (James) Arminius (1560-1609), a Dutch theologian and pastor. Arminianism as a theological system developed mainly as a response to Lutheran and especially Calvinist views on the doctrine of predestination. Unlike Calvinists (and Lutherans), who saw predestination as an unconditional action of God in electing individuals to salvation, Arminius taught that predestination was based on **God’s foreknowledge** in seeing whether an individual would freely accept or reject Christ.”

--Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms

What are some “Arminian” Christian Denominations?

- United Methodist
- The Wesleyan Church
- Assemblies of God
- Pentecostal churches
- Many “Community” churches
- Many independent evangelical churches (e.g. Elmbrook Church)
- Many Baptist churches
- Many Evangelical Free churches (although officially neutral)

What is the Doctrine of “Unlimited Atonement”?

- The view that Jesus’ death on the cross is intended for all humankind; thus, all have the opportunity/possibility for salvation. This contrasts with the doctrine of “election” and “limited atonement” in Calvinist doctrine, where Jesus’ death secured salvation for a limited number of persons (i.e., the “elect”).
- [Calvinism: You are saved first, and then you receive faith.]
- [Arminianism: First you have faith and then you are saved.]
- ¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that **whoever believes** in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16)

V. Significance of “Arminian” Theology

- A. Overflowing joy after accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord
- B. Greater human responsibility to seek the Lord
- C. God gives everyone the opportunity to be saved

Wait a minute . . .
Did I choose God or did God choose me?

Yes!

“No one can **come to me** unless the Father
who sent me **draws him**” (John 6:44).

John Wesley: “Prevenient Grace”

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

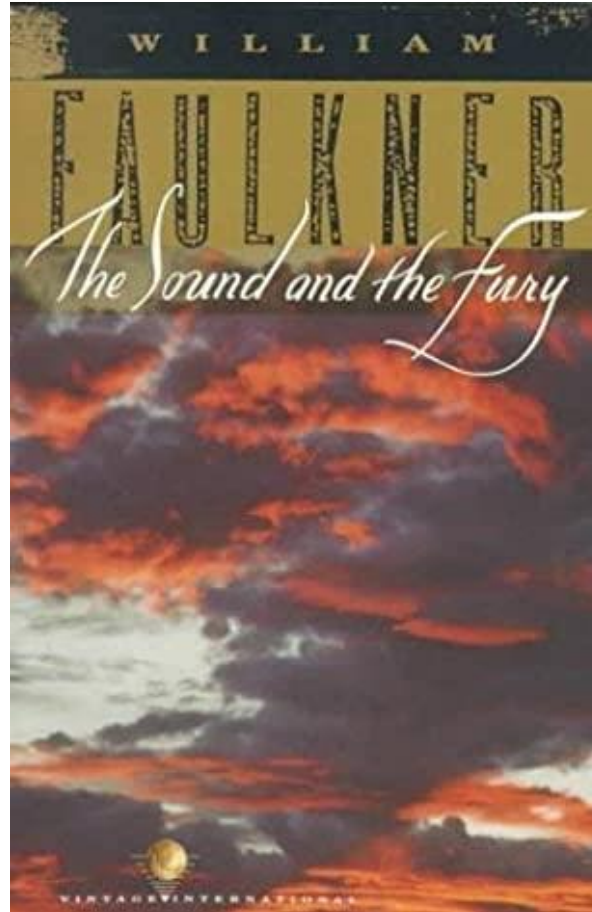
- **“Compatibilism”:**

God is perfectly sovereign AND humans have free will at the same time.

[But I don't really know how that works!]

C. Theological Systems as Tools to Interpret Scripture

(How do we use theology?)



IV. The End of the Matter

- **A. We Want Others to Have What We Have**
- **9** 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, my kinsmen according to the flesh. (Romans 9:1-3)
- **10** Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. (Romans 10:1)
- “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! (Matthew 23:37)

IV. The End of the Matter

- **B. Salvation is Beyond Our Control: “Not by Works”**
- “For **by grace** you have been **saved through faith**. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **not a result of works**, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- “Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,
but **the righteous shall live by his faith**.” (Habakkuk 2:4)
- “All of us have become like one who is unclean,
and **all our righteous acts are like filthy rags**” (Isaiah 64:6)

IV. The End of the Matter

- **C. Salvation is Beyond Our Understanding (Romans 10:2-3)**
- ²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? **Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?** ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ **but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,** ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ **For the foolishness of God is wiser than men,** and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (1 Corinthians 1:20-25)

IV. The End of the Matter

- **C. Salvation is Beyond Our Understanding (Romans 10:2-3)**
- 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)
- *"Credo ut intelligam"* ("I believe in order that I might understand")
--Anselm of Canterbury (11th century A.D.)

IV. The End of the Matter

D. We are Called To:

1. Share the Gospel (The Good News of Jesus Christ)

¹⁵ And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.
(Mark 16:15 NLT)

2. Pray for Spiritual Awakening and Revival (in us and others)

¹⁴ Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

3. Grow in Our Walk with the Lord (Discipleship)

⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.
(Colossians 2:6-7)



Let Us Pray

A photograph of two hands raised in prayer, holding a glowing white cross. The hands are silhouetted against a bright, golden sunset sky with clouds. The sun is visible through the cross, creating a lens flare effect. The background shows a horizon line over water.