

FROM THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER:

He is the living stone which has been rejected by men but is choice and precious in the sight of God ... (and) you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through JESUS CHRIST.

For this is contained in Scripture (ISAIAH 28:16): “Behold, I lay in ZION A CHOICE STONE, a precious CORNERSTONE, and he who believes in HIM will not be disappointed.”

This precious honor, then, is for you who believe – but for those who disbelieve, ‘THE STONE which the builders rejected – this became the very CORNERSTONE – a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense,’ for they stumble because they are disobedient to the Word, and to this doom they also were appointed (τίθημι) – 1 Peter 2:4-8.

PETER USES ‘STONE METAPHORS’ FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT¹ TO SHOW ‘THE DECISION POINT FOR ALL MEN IS JESUS CHRIST.’ TO EVERY HUMAN BEING JESUS EITHER IS THE MEANS OF SALVATION (to those who believe in Him), OR HE IS THE MEANS OF JUDGMENT (to those who reject the gospel).

THEN FROM THE FIRST CHAPTER OF EPHESIANS:

Blessed be THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places IN CHRIST, just as HE CHOSE US IN HIM before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

In love HE PREDESTINED US (προορίζω) to adoption as sons through JESUS CHRIST to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us IN THE BELOVED – Ephesians 1:3-6.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION IS PERVASIVE THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE² AND IT DOES NOT OPERATE OUTSIDE OF THE SOVEREIGN HAND OF GOD, NOR DOES IT ABROGATE OUR HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY TO BELIEVE THE GOSPEL³.

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Before we get into today’s lesson, I need to say a quick word about ROMANS CHAPTERS 9 – 11.

These three chapters form a theological unit that primarily addresses GOD’S DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL in light of THE COVENANTS, THE CRUCIFIXION, AND THE ADVENT OF THE CHURCH AGE. So *this section of ROMANS is somewhat complex.*

- One of the challenges posed by these chapters is how to apply what PAUL says about ISRAEL to CHRISTIANS living in the CHURCH AGE – assuming it is appropriate to do so.

After his exposition of THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION in CHAPTERS 1 – 8, THE APOSTLE turns to a crucial question his readers must have been asking (*especially those of Jewish descent*):

IF SALVATION IS ATTAINED BY GRACE AND NOT BY LAW-KEEPING, WHAT THEN HAS BECOME OF GOD’S PLAN FOR ISRAEL? ROMANS CHAPTERS 9 – 11 address this specific question:

IN CHAPTER 9 – PAUL deals with ISRAEL’S ELECTION AND GOD’S SOVEREIGN PURPOSE IN SALVATION.

HE CONCLUDES: *Not all physical descendants of ABRAHAM are TRUE ISRAEL – Only those who follow the faith-example of ABRAHAM and receive personal salvation by GRACE through FAITH in JESUS CHRIST – Only these are the ‘TRUE ISRAEL.’*

¹ 1st Peter 2:6 quotes Isaiah 28:16; 1st Peter 2:7 quotes Psalm, 118:22, and 1 Peter 2:8 cites Isaiah 8:14.

² Deuteronomy 7:6; Isaiah 45:4; John 6:44; Acts 13:48; Romans 8:29; 9:11; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, and 2 Timothy 2:10.

³ Matthew 3:1-2; 4:17; John 5:40.

IN CHAPTER 10 – PAUL deals with ISRAEL’S PRESENT REJECTION OF JESUS AS THE MESSIAH.

HE CONCLUDES: *Despite having a zeal for God, ISRAEL looked to establish her own righteousness through law-keeping; but ISRAEL stumbled over JESUS CHRIST — and her REJECTION OF HIM brought about the scattering of THE JEWISH PEOPLE and the formation of THE CHURCH.*

THEN IN CHAPTER 11 – PAUL looks forward to ISRAEL’S FUTURE RESTORATION.

HE CONCLUDES: *Though THE HEARTS OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE ARE TEMPORARILY HARDENED, GOD HAS NOT REJECTED HIS PEOPLE.*

- *THE CHURCH AGE forms a parenthesis in God’s plan for ISRAEL, but a future, national conversion, exemplified by the nation accepting JESUS CHRIST as MESSIAH, is promised.*

When taken together, ROMANS 9 – 11 demonstrate that GOD’S COVENANT FAITHFULNESS remains intact. In these three chapters, we will see:

- God is SOVEREIGN over SALVATION – *(the salvation both of Jews and Gentiles) – and ...*
- He is RIGHTEOUS and JUST in all His dealings with mankind.

After studying ROMANS 9 – 11, we will be left with NO DOUBT that *God is and always will be FAITHFUL to fulfill His promises*, both to THE CHURCH and to ISRAEL.

So let’s turn now to today’s passage and [READ ROMANS 9:1-5] –

So what about ISRAEL? Have God’s Promises to THAT CHOSEN NATION been revoked?

PAUL WILL DEAL WITH THIS QUESTION; BUT FIRST WE MUST DEAL WITH PAUL HIMSELF ...

Some parts of the Bible can sound as if the passage were written by A PHILOSOPHER or A SEMINARY PROFESSOR.

These five verses communicate some profound theological truths – and I am thankful for them and for other passages like them, for here PAUL addresses some very important issues, *for example:*

- We learn ISRAEL IS AN ELECT NATION and THE JEWISH PEOPLE are AN ELECT PEOPLE who have played – *and will play* – a significant role in THE ETERNAL PLAN OF GOD. FOR ...
 - TO THE JEWS was given THE COVENANTS.
 - THE JEWS were entrusted with THE MOSAIC LAW, TEMPLE SERVICE, and THE PROMISES.
 - And it is through THE JEWS that ALMOST ALL OF THE SCRIPTURES were transmitted to us.
 - But of utmost importance, it was through THE JEWS that THE MESSIAH – JESUS CHRIST – came into the world TO SEEK AND TO SAVE THOSE WHO WERE LOST.

These are not trivial points of theology ... *but ...* in the opening verses of this chapter, we also see ... THE HEART OF THE APOSTLE PAUL and THE LOVE HE HAD FOR THE JEWISH PEOPLE.

- And it would be a profound mistake to skip over this element of the text in order to cover the theological precepts that are mentioned in these opening verses.

Particularly take note of VERSE 3 – Do you understand what PAUL is saying there? He says, “*I could wish I myself were accursed from CHRIST for the sake of my kinsmen according to the flesh,*” i.e., *for the sake of THE JEWISH PEOPLE.*

The first thing we need to address is the nature of PAUL’S WISH. We have discussed GREEK CONDITIONAL SENTENCES before (*i.e., sentences based around the idea of ‘IF’*), but the conditional element of VERSE 3 does not fall into the normal categories for Greek conditional constructions. *There is NO ‘IF CLAUSE’ in the Greek text of this verse.*

Instead, PAUL uses THE IMPERFECT MIDDLE INDICATIVE of the verb *εὔχομαι* to express what he knows is a theological impossibility.

- THE IMPERFECT TENSE suggests PAUL'S WISH was continual and repeated, yet it was a *desire that under no circumstances could it be realized*.
- The word *εὔχομαι* typically means 'to pray' or 'to wish,' but IN THE MIDDLE VOICE it conveys A DEEP, INTENSE EMOTION. It expresses AN INNER ANGUISH and PERSONAL INVESTMENT to the point of SELF-SACRIFICE.

Though impossible – the language bespeaks of the Apostle's deepest desire for his brethren – THAT THE JEWISH PEOPLE – would come to FAITH in JESUS as PAUL himself had done.

And to express the degree to which this desire dominated PAUL'S concern for THE JEWS⁴, he uses the term *ἀνάθεμα* ('to be accursed, eternally separated from God'); in essence, PAUL is saying he would be willing to forego his own salvation if doing so would earn their salvation.

- PAUL expresses a willingness TO STEP INTO THEIR PLACE as accursed from God (and all that implies) if that would result in THEIR STEPPING INTO HIS PLACE as blessed by God — for-given, and eternally IN CHRIST ——— LET THAT SINK IN FOR A MOMENT ———.

The heart of CHAPTER NINE is found in VERSES 6-29 – and it is to this section we now turn – but we will begin by reading [READ ROMANS 9:6-13] –

The subject at hand is GOD'S ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY IN SALVATION – Both the SALVATION OF ISRAEL and OUR SALVATION IN THE CHURCH AGE. OBVIOUSLY, what we are delving into here is THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

THE FIRST POINT to understand is GOD HAS A PURPOSE IN ELECTION. As early as ABRAHAM'S CALL in GENESIS 12, we begin to see changes in how God deals with the human race.

- Prior to GENESIS 12, God dealt with the human race as a whole ... but when He called ABRAHAM out of MESOPOTAMIA and made specific promises to him ... that changed.
- Between ABRAHAM and MOSES, God dealt with the human race through the family of ABRAHAM.
- But after giving THE LAW through MOSES, God began dealing with the human race through THE NATION OF ISRAEL.

This demonstrates a progression in how God deals with mankind – and this progression can be seen in how God is rolling out human history.

- This is why interpreting the Scriptures through a dispensational framework is important.

And beyond this progression – *there also is a narrowing in how God is dealing with mankind*.

- God is making decisions – or perhaps more accurately – God is bringing to pass decisions He made IN ETERNITY PAST before He created the world – because ELECTION rests on GOD'S DIVINE DECREE.

It seems we are to view God's choice of ISRAEL as a pattern for understanding how THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION also applies to us.

The statement, "*not all who are descended from ISRAEL belong to ISRAEL*" is a clear declaration that distinctions are being made. *Being a physical descendant of ABRAHAM has its benefits, but it alone does not place a person into a spiritual relationship with God.*

⁴ See Philippians 3:1-7 and Acts 22:3 where Paul describes his own Jewish heritage, education under Gamaliel, and his zeal for the Mosaic Law.

In fact, the very phrase in question, “*not all who are descended from ISRAEL belong to ISRAEL*,” indicates something is lacking on a spiritual level; otherwise why would there be a distinction?

PAUL then asserts that the problem is not with God or His Word – *For he says: “It is not as if the Word of God has failed.”*

- In other words, the problem is not on God’s side of the equation. The problem lies with us – whether JEW or GENTILE – *the human race is the problem* – we are the problem.

To further emphasize this – *and hopefully to lighten things up a bit ...* Sometime during THE WAR OF 1812, a military meme that is attributed to COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY, came into use. He is said to have declared: “*We have met the enemy and they are ours.*”

But sometime around 1970, a cartoonist named WALT KELLY introduced a slight variation of PERRY’S declaration, and he put the altered statement into *the rather large mouth of a cartoon allegator named POGO*; the variant phrase being: “*We have met the enemy and he is us.*”

- Proper English grammar would have required the allegator to say, “*We have met the enemy and he is we*” or “*we are he*” – but Alas! allegators are not known for using proper English consistently.

After declaring the problem is NOT God’s problem but OURS, PAUL turns to an example from ISRAEL’S HISTORY to make his point. *THE APOSTLE MENTIONS ...*

- *THE ISHMAEL vs. ISAAC ISSUE* and he concludes that GOD’S PROMISES WILL BE FULFILLED THROUGH A SPECIFIC SON: ISAAC. *Notice once again, a divine choice is in play.*

Then both in VERSE 7 and in GENESIS 21:12: We read: “*THROUGH ISAAC YOUR SEED WILL BE NAMED.*”

Further explanation is given by PAUL in VERSE 8: “*It is not the physical descendants who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.*”

- This phrase, ‘*children of the promise*,’ is a way of referring to believers (whether Jew or Gentile) – *and more comprehensively – it refers to THE ELECT* (whether Jew or Gentile).
- *And as we will see, one becomes a ‘child of the promise,’ by following the faith-example of ABRAHAM, who trusted God in spite of his circumstances, and the result of his trust was the birth of the promised son: ISAAC.*

When in VERSES 10-13 PAUL turns from SARAH to REBEKAH, the stage is set — for there he points out the choice between REBEKAH’S twins, JACOB and ESAU, was made “*before either one of the boys was born,*” and therefore “*before either one did anything good or bad.*”

Then he gives the purpose behind ELECTION: “*SO THAT GOD’S PURPOSE ACCORDING TO HIS CHOICE WOULD STAND, NOT BECAUSE OF WORKS BUT BECAUSE OF HIM WHO CALLS.*”

Then, to make matters worse for ARMENIANS, PAUL quotes both GENESIS and MALACHI.

“*THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER*” (is Genesis 25:23), and “*JACOB HAVE I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HAVE HATED*⁵” (is Malachi 1:2-3⁴).

Let me make something clear that is easy to misunderstand. The contrasting terms LOVED and HATED should not be taken as comparative terms; *in other words*, it is not that God LOVED JACOB more and ESAU less ... and then made an elective decision based on whom He LOVED more.

JOHN MACARTHUR explains these terms this way:

⁵ For a perspective that looks back at the tension between ESAU (EDOM) and JACOB (ISRAEL) – instead of to the future – read the Book of OBADIAH.

“The context speaks of ‘LOVE’ as CHOOSING JACOB FOR AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP IN THE REALM OF REDEMPTION.” This is NOT an emotion-based decision; rather ...

- GOD CHOSE JACOB for DIVINE BLESSING and PROTECTION, but HE LEFT ESAU IN HIS STATE OF CONDEMNATION for DIVINE JUDGMENT. *ONE DIVINE ACT was ACTIVE; the other was PASSIVE.*

PAUL makes it clear that SALVATION, whether we are talking about THE SALVATION of NATIONAL ISRAEL as a THEOCRATIC ENTITY, THE SALVATION of THE JEWISH PEOPLE INDIVIDUALLY, or OUR SALVATION IN THE CHURCH AGE ...

★ SALVATION is the result of a divine choice made apart from merit or human effort, and it was made in eternity past before the Creation of the universe.

So now it is time to get into the heart of the doctrine by reading [READ ROMANS 9:14-29] –

When we think about ELECTION, unless we begin from the correct starting point, we will come to the wrong conclusions.

- So let me name up front one of the many wrong starting points: ★ HOW YOU OR I FEEL ... ABOUT THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION is an incorrect starting point.
- I don’t mean to be insensitive ... BUT THE WAY YOU OR I FEEL ... ABOUT ELECTION ... IS *IRRELEVANT*. What matters is WHAT THE WORD OF GOD ... SAYS ABOUT ELECTION.

★ The CORRECT STARTING POINT is to realize that from the instant ADAM TRANSGRESSED GOD’S COMMANDMENT IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN, *the entire human race has been and is under condemnation, and therefore stands guilty before our Righteous Creator* ———

- And had God not done something, the entire human race would be destined for HELL.

★ Understanding the human condition in the context of THE ORIGINAL SIN OF ADAM is the correct starting point for dissecting this doctrine.

- And when done correctly, you will find ELECTION IS THE PENULTIMATE EXPRESSION OF GOD’S GRACE TOWARD A LOST HUMAN RACE.

★ But we cannot begin this discussion, assuming MORALLY NEUTRALITY. To do so is to employ another of those incorrect starting points that will lead us to an incorrect conclusion.

★ So ——— *Do not think of ELECTION as God standing before A MORALLY NEUTRAL HUMAN RACE and arbitrarily condemning some to hell, while randomly electing others to salvation.*

ALL MEN are condemned already. This is what we must realize first in order to understand THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

Now I am going to address this subject from THREE PERSPECTIVES and I will state these in the form of THREE PROPOSITIONS:

PROPOSITION Number 1: ELECTION is LOGICAL.

PROPOSITION Number 2: ELECTION is BIBLICAL.

PROPOSITION Number 3: ELECTION is PRACTICAL.

[SO LET’S START WITH] PROPOSITION NUMBER 1 – ELECTION IS LOGICAL: ELECTION is *an activity* of the Divine Attribute of SOVEREIGNTY.

NOW WE CAN UNDERSTAND SOVEREIGNTY IN TERMS OF FOREORDINATION.

FOREORDINATION is the means by which God sustains the universe and governs everything that happens in it.

★ *FOREORDINATION governs both the animate and the inanimate elements of the universe. HE-BREWS 1:3 says: “HE UPHOLDS ALL THINGS BY THE WORD OF HIS POWER.”*

- There are ‘no accidents’ when the world is viewed from the perspective of DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.
- There is *no such thing as* ‘random chance.’ Everything that happens in the universe, happens by the will and design of God.
- God acts in accordance with THE COUNSEL OF HIS WILL and FOR HIS OWN GOOD PLEASURE ——— and nothing is excluded from HIS GOVERNANCE.

★ *FOREORDINATION refers to God’s control over all things that happen in the universe while ...*

★ *PREDESTINATION refers more specifically to man’s eternal destiny.*

★ *ELECTION is an aspect of PREDESTINATION and it deals specifically and solely with those who have been PREDESTINED TO ETERNAL LIFE with God⁶.*

- By specifically and solely I mean, ‘*WHEREAS THE ELECT ARE ‘PREDESTINED TO ADOPTION AS SONS THROUGH JESUS CHRIST’ (Ephesians 1:5), THE NON-ELECT ARE SIMPLY LEFT IN AN ALREADY EXISTING STATE OF CONDEMNATION.*

You probably have heard of JACOBUS ARMINIUS, THE DUTCH PROTESTANT whose followers became known as ARMINIANS.

- After his death, his followers penned a document called THE FIVE ARTICLES OF REMONSTRANCE (‘remonstrance’ means ‘protest’).

THE ARMINIANS protested, among other things, THE REFORMED DOCTRINE OF ELECTION, *i.e., the doctrine as defined by THE REFORMERS.*

According to THE ARMINIANS, ‘ELECTION is based on GOD’S FOREKNOWLEDGE OF WHAT MEN WILL DO.

- These held that God chose one man over another, ‘*based on God looking down through the corridor of time to see who would believe and who would not believe.*’
- God then CHOSE AS ELECT (*through foresight*) that man whom He knew would respond to the gospel in faith.

Today, most people in the broader realms of CHRISTENDOM, if they believe in ELECTION at all, hold AN ARMINIAN INTERPRETATION that is grounded in this belief *that ELECTION is the result of God’s foresight.* I was raised SOUTHERN BAPTIST and this is how THE SBC explained ELECTION.

If this is the correct explanation of ELECTION (*which it isn’t*) then you will not hear any objection to the doctrine – because the conflict between feelings and biblical truth has been removed.

Now at first glance, this seems reasonable because it places the initiative for our SALVATION IN our hands and OUT OF God’s hands – And in this context you will hear terms like ‘FREEWILL’ used as if it actually exists. *I should apologize; that sounded a tad sarcastic, didn’t it.*

[KEEP IN MIND] IN THIS PART OF THE LESSON WE ARE TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE DOCTRINE LOGICALLY. So there is an underlying question we must ask:

WHO MAKES THE DECISION ABOUT YOUR SALVATION? IS IT YOU OR IS IT GOD? WHO MAKES THE CHOICE, YOU OR GOD?

⁶ The Greek verb translated ‘to elect’ or ‘to choose’ is ἐκλέγομαι; the verb translated ‘to predestine’ is προορίζω.

THE ARMINIAN will say, '*MAN MAKES THE CHOICE.*' Or I guess A HALF-ARMENIAN might say, '*man somehow aids God in making the choice.*' In either case ... choice is taken from the hand of God and placed into the hand of man. The problem with this is — it isn't Biblical.

SO LET ME EXPLAIN A HARD TRUTH: If our SALVATION depends on God looking down through time to see who will exercise faith (*the foreknowledge theory*), WE ARE ALL DOOMED: BILLY GRAHAM IS DOOMED; CHUCK SWINDALL IS DOOMED; JOHN WALVOORD IS DOOMED; S.L. JOHNSON IS DOOMED; I'M DOOMED and YOU ARE DOOMED; and *CHIP over here – well, what can I say?*

(*EVERYONE IS DOOMED*) Because all God would see is TOTAL DEPRAVITY and TOTAL INABILITY.

- He would see a race of men and women, among whom not one of them would have the ability or the will to exercise faith in the gospel. WHY?
- Because to the natural mind, the gospel is foolishness and the cross is a stumbling block.

Every man (*not just some*) innately is in rebellion against God. [DO YOU RECALL ROMANS 3:10-12?] NO MAN SEEKS GOD. So if man does NOT seek God, then God must seek man if ANY are to be saved.

- Is this not EXACTLY the message of Scripture? How did JESUS describe His mission? "*For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10).

So we are left with the fundamental question: "*Who makes the decision regarding salvation?*" Let's see if the Bible will answer our question.

PROPOSITION NUMBER 2 – ELECTION IS BIBLICAL ... IN DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 7 – MOSES EXPLAINS ELECTION TO ISRAEL – (*HE SAYS*): ELECTION is not based on anything good or bad in the one chosen. This is consistent with the biblical record of JACOB and ESAU in GENESIS.

- ISRAEL was not chosen because the nation was greater than other nations; in fact, ISRAEL WAS INSIGNIFICANT.
- MOSES TOLD ISRAEL: YAHWEH HAS SET HIS LOVE UPON YOU ... *and the way He expressed that LOVE was through ELECTION.*
- GOD CHOSE ISRAEL BECAUSE HE LOVED ISRAEL. GOD'S CHOICE OF ISRAEL is synonymous with GOD'S LOVE FOR ISRAEL.
- In the same breath, MOSES described ISRAEL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH YAHWEH as *AN ELECTION OF LOVE*. Then he said, '*the sole reason for THE ELECTION OF ISRAEL is GOD'S LOVE FOR THE JEWISH PEOPLE.*' (*SO ELECTION IS ROOTED IN GOD'S LOVE.*)
- Furthermore, in a picture that MIRRORS PERSONAL SALVATION, ISRAEL is described as having been delivered from bondage by God's Mighty Hand in an act only God could perform: (*THE EXODUS*).

Since THE EXODUS could only be performed by God, and since THE EXODUS *mirrors* both OUR SALVATION and ISRAEL'S SALVATION, it must mean *SALVATION is something only God can bring about* – and He brings about SALVATION through ELECTION.

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT SOME RANDOM TEXTS THAT SPEAK OF ELECTION:

JOHN 15:16 – JESUS said: "*You did not choose me; I chose you (ἐκλέγομαι) and I appointed you (τίθημι) that you would go and bear fruit and that your fruit would remain*" – (*The context of this 'appointment' was discipleship, but nonetheless, it is an appointment by divine fiat.*)

ACTS 13:48 – In words that describe the results of the preaching of PAUL AND BARNABUS, the text reads: "*And as many as were appointed unto eternal life, believed.*"

- The word translated 'appointed' is τάσσω – a much stronger word than τίθημι. In the context of the universal presentation of the gospel, some believed and some did not.

★ NOTICE THE WORD ORDER. The text does NOT say, “And as many as believed were appointed unto eternal life.” It says, “And as many as were appointed unto eternal life believed.” Which came first? FAITH IN THE GOSPEL or THE DIVINE APPOINTMENT (ELECTION)?

- This is an important question because one is A CAUSE and the other is A RESULT.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:13 – Addressing the believers in THESSALONICA, PAUL says, “God has chosen you (αἰπέω) from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.”

[READ ROMANS 8:29] – There are several things we need to understand about this verse. Let’s start with the thing that is making some of you want to raise your hands.

(It is true) – VERSE 29 uses the phrase, ‘whom he did foreknow.’ Well, doesn’t that prove that ELECTION is based on GOD’S FOREKNOWLEDGE? No it doesn’t and here’s why:

In the 1987 movie, THE PRINCESS BRIDE, MONTROYA, the Noble-Spanish swordsman, says to VIZZINI, the arrogant, Sicilian criminal mastermind: “You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.”

- In the movie, the word-in-question is the word ‘inconceivable.’ But the same thing can be said about the word ‘foreknowledge.’ ARMINIANS KEEP USING THAT WORD. I DO NOT THINK THEY KNOW WHAT IT MEANS.

The Greek verb translated ‘to foreknow’ is the word προγινώσκω. And it doesn’t mean what you may think it means.

- The confusion begins when we assign to προγινώσκω the meaning we would assign to the English phrase, ‘to know beforehand,’ but the words do not mean the same thing.
- If you go to any Greek lexicon and look up προγινώσκω you will find the word means ‘to choose beforehand’ in this sense: ‘God knows what He foreordained.’ Does He know beforehand? Of course He does – but He knows because He foreordained it.

A paraphrase that conveys the true meaning of ROMANS 8:29 would be, ‘For whom he chose – having foreordained the choice beforehand – he also did predestine to be conformed to the image of his Son⁷.’

Now there are three observations that are important from one of our Opening Scriptures:

[READ EPHESIANS 1:3] – All spiritual blessings originate with God the Father, who is the only source of spiritual blessing. All spiritual blessings begin with God the Father.

- Note also, all of these blessings are positional; they are ours when and only when we are IN CHRIST, i.e., when we are in a relationship with JESUS CHRIST.

[NOW EPHESIANS 1:4^A] – I like the NIV translation of verse 4 over the NASB and KJV translations: For He chose us (ἐκλέγομαι) in Him before the creation of the world to be HOLY and BLAMELESS in His sight – Ephesians 1:4^A – NIV.

Our relationship with CHRIST is based on a choice – a choice made by God the Father before the foundation of the world.

★And since that choice was made before the foundation of the world — it is hard to see man as anything other than the object of that divine choice.

⁷ 1 Peter 1:1-2 says the same thing.

There is an infinitive in VERSE 4 of the verb, 'to be' (εἶναι) that is translated 'that' in the NASB but more correctly, 'to be' in the NIV – (*this is why I prefer the NIV translation*).

- It introduces A PURPOSE CLAUSE that keeps our attention on a divine, completed act in eternity past, NOT on something progressive or conditional in the present.

[AND NOW VERSE 4^B-5] – “*In love He predestined us for adoption to sonship through JESUS CHRIST, according to the kind intention of His will.*” This is the best answer to ‘THE WHY’ OF ELECTION to be found in the Bible.

- Its focus is on what God has declared believers to be: HOLY and BLAMELESS in His sight. *This is POSITIONAL — IN CHRIST.*

ELECTION is the result of a purposeful, divine choice, made in pure, unconditional love, for reasons that are simply explained as ‘the kind intention of God’s will.’

[READ EPHESIANS 1:6] – This verse gives the purposed-result of ELECTION from God’s perspective: *‘It is to the praise and glory of his GRACE.’*

There is much more we could say regarding EPHESIANS ONE but now we need to look at the definitive passage in ROMANS that links us to THE JACOB-ESAU NARRATIVES OF GENESIS 25.

In ROMANS 9: 14-26 – PAUL ANSWERS SOME OF THE QUESTIONS HE RAISED EARLIER – The big question being – HAVE THE PROMISES GOD MADE TO ISRAEL FAILED? *‘NO, but they will NOT be fulfilled on the basis of physical descent but on the basis of Sovereign Grace.*

Recall briefly ROMANS 9:6 – “*They are not all ISRAEL, who have descended from ISRAEL.*”

Of all those in ISRAEL who have benefited from ISRAEL’S NATIONAL BLESSINGS, there is AN ELECT REMNANT that has been CHOSEN TO RECEIVE SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS.

- To prove this, PAUL referenced ISAAC AND ISHMAEL to show *there is ‘a distinguishing grace, separating THE ELECT from THE NON-ELECT.’*

Then in VERSE 10 he moved to the next generation – to the twins, JACOB AND ESAU – and said in VERSE 11: “*For they, being not yet born, neither having done anything, good or evil, that the purposes of God according to ELECTION might stand, not of works but of Him Who Calls – for these reasons alone (verse 12) it was said, “THE OLDER SHALL SERVE THE YOUNGER.”*

Then in VERSES 12 – 13 PAUL quoted GENESIS and MALACHI: first asserting ... “*the older serve the younger,*” and then saying, “*I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau.*”

PAUL knew from what already was written that some in his audience would cringe a little – just as some of you are.

- He knew *the doctrine he was teaching would elicit specific objections because God’s thoughts and ways and man’s thoughts and ways are different.*
- PAUL’S audience – *and we ourselves* – probably are asking the same questions: And like the original readers of PAUL’S LETTER, our questions pertain to FAIRNESS and JUSTICE.

★ But it is in these very OBJECTIONS we find UNEQUIVOCAL VALIDATION OF THE DOCTRINE.

Look what PAUL does: HE RAISES OUR OBJECTIONS FOR US!

My first sales job was selling copy machines. It was a salary plus commission job and my salary was less than our house payment — LINDA was home with two babies so I had to sell a lot of copy machines if she and I were going to eat — and keep a roof over our heads.

No product is perfect and our ACHILLES HEEL was, ‘*Our copiers would not copy onto cotton-based letterhead.*’ They worked GREAT on other kinds of paper but letterhead was out.

- Our competitors knew this and they exploited that weakness constantly.
- So I spent a lot of time on defense, trying to overcome that objection ... until one day it dawned on me: *'I am the one who should be bringing this up to my prospects, not my competitors.'* *'If my potential customer has a need I can't meet, I'm not going to get the deal anyway, so why waste my time or his?'*
- So I began leading with my weakness, asking up front: *'How much copying do you do onto cotton-based letterhead?'* *That became my first question.*
- To my shock, almost no one made copies onto their letterhead. *Almost no one!*
- So when they answered, *'hardly ever;'* I would say, *'Good, because our copiers don't work worth a flip on letterhead.'* *More times than not they laughed and my sales doubled.*

PAUL would have been a good copier salesman because he understood this principle and he uses it effectively in this chapter. *He raises the very objections he knows his readers are going to ask.*

VERSE 14 – *What shall we say then, is there unrighteousness with God? Is God unjust?*

★ I want you to think about something: If PAUL were teaching ARMINIAN THEOLOGY – (*that 'looks down through time' thing*) – would this OBJECTION come up at all? NO!

- If PAUL had taught ELECTION rests on A FREEWILL-DECISION ABOUT CHRIST BY YOU, would anyone say, 'GOD IS UNRIGHTEOUS' – NO! They might say, *'you made a bad decision,'* but they would not say – 'GOD IS UNJUST.'

ONLY IF PAUL WERE TEACHING SOVEREIGN ELECTING GRACE (*THAT GOD HAS GIVEN TO SOME WHAT HE HAS WITHHELD FROM OTHERS*) ONLY THEN WOULD WE HEAR THIS OBJECTION.

So from THE OBJECTION PAUL RAISES FOR US, we can know we are interpreting PAUL correctly.

[READ VERSE 15] – This further supports PAUL'S position, for there he quotes MOSES (*Exodus 33:19*) and concludes in VERSE 16: *"So it does NOT depend ON THE MAN WHO WILLS, OR ON THE MAN WHO RUNS, BUT ON GOD WHO HAS MERCY."*

Then in VERSES 17-18, he turns to the example of PHARAOH and says: *'It is GOD who chooses the heart on which He will have MERCY and the heart He will HARDEN.'*

HOW DOES GOD HARDEN SOMEONE'S HEART? *He does it by allowing that person to act in perfect harmony with his own nature. In other words, HE DOES NOTHING. In that case ... man makes A VOLITIONAL CHOICE using what some call 'FREE-AGENCY.'*

- I would argue this so-called 'FREE-agency,' is not free at all; it is LIMITED-agency – limited by who man is: A LOST, SPIRITUALLY DEAD REBEL ... A HATER OF GOD. That is how man is described in the Bible.

Do you remember ROMANS 1:28-32? How about ROMANS 7:14-25?

Well, this too elicits an OBJECTION, which PAUL raises for us in VERSE 19: "You will say then, how can God hold me responsible if it is He who guides the hearts and minds of men"?

What about Human Responsibility? After all, the text says, 'NO ONE CAN RESIST HIS WILL.'

Again, if PAUL were teaching ELECTION BY FOREKNOWLEDGE, here is his chance to say so.

All he had to say was, *'God looked down through time and saw 'JACK-THE-RIPPER' – But he doesn't.*

In fact, he dives in even deeper: He uses the analogy of a potter and his clay (*verses 19-24*).

As a point of doctrine, what PAUL is teaching is NOT DOUBLE PREDESTINATION for this reason:

ELECTION is ACTIVE, REPROBATION is PASSIVE. This is PAUL'S POINT; God endures VESSELS OF WRATH but He prepares VESSELS OF MERCY.

These are not the words of JOHN CALVIN and they are not my words. They are God's words.

Let me paraphrase the words PAUL uses to silence his opponents: In VERSE 20, PAUL says:

"Just who do you think you are to talk back to God"? That is what these words mean.

It is fine, and I think good, to ask questions; PAUL affirms this by raising the really important questions for us.

- But at the end of the day, it is human arrogance PAUL silences in VERSE 20.

VERSES 25-26 – Cite the Old Testament to explain the inclusion of Gentiles in a category God calls, 'MY PEOPLE.'

- THE GENTILES becoming VESSELS OF MERCY alludes to THE CHURCH AGE, a time when God is calling out people from all nations. But God's Plan will not end with THE CHURCH AGE.

Both HOSEA and ISAIAH affirm that ISRAEL will NOT be permanently rejected – and remember, this is our original question: WHAT ABOUT ISRAEL?

- A definite restoration is implied that will be explained in detail by PAUL in ROMANS CHAPTER ELEVEN.

So let's sum up this part of the lesson with the words of JONAH: "*SALVATION IS OF THE LORD.*"
And this leads us to PROPOSITION NUMBER 3.

PROPOSITION NUMBER 3 – ELECTION IS PRACTICAL: We have dealt today with a difficult topic, concluding that ELECTION IS LOGICAL and ELECTION IS BIBLICAL. But if we leave with only a well worked-out theory, what have we gained?

There must be a practical side to this story – and there is. So let's ask some practical questions:

WHAT ABOUT THE GREAT COMMISSION? *Does THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION serve as an impediment to witnessing, to preaching, and to missions?* — NO IT DOES NOT; in fact, it is ELECTION that makes these ministries possible.

- Apart from ELECTION, no man would believe the gospel – We know from Scripture that the gospel is foolishness to the natural man and he will never believe it. *So it is ELECTION that makes evangelism possible.*
- ELECTION guarantees when the gospel is shared, there are some who will respond to it.

So we make our appeal to men on a UNIVERSAL BASIS, with the confidence that GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT will quicken the spirits of THE ELECT and bring them to a saving faith in JESUS CHRIST.

CHARLES SPURGEON once said:

If you desire to have salvation at the Cross of Christ, you may have it; you are among THE ELECT.

But if you do not desire it, then why do you grumble that God has chosen to give to someone else what you do not want – and in which you do not believe?

ELECTION is not an impediment to evangelism; anyone who wants salvation can have it through FAITH IN JESUS. Those who refuse the gospel do so because they do not want the gospel.

So how is it unjust to deny to a man that which he does not want?

- The way God has chosen to dispense SAVING GRACE is JUST and FAIR, even though there may be elements of God's Plan we cannot fully appreciate – but I am certain in GLORY we will see that it was A PERFECT PLAN.

The more fundamental issue is not a question of JUSTICE but a question of MERCY.

- It is the bestowing of MERCY on those who do not deserve MERCY that we should find perplexing.
- The question *never* should not be: 'HOW CAN GOD REJECT ESAU'? The question *always* should be, 'HOW CAN GOD POSSIBLY LOVE JACOB'?

IN CONCLUSION: There are three things I want you to remember about this lesson:

FIRST: You can be confident when you pray for your friends, or when you witness to them, that GOD WILL CALL OUT HIS ELECT. *Will your friend or loved one believe the Gospel; only God knows.*

- We are commissioned to take God's message to everyone. But it is GOD who saves, and it is THE HOLY SPIRIT who calls and quickens the human spirit to believe the gospel.

SECOND: ELECTION is the ultimate antidote to PRIDE.

- Because of ELECTION, we have nothing in which we can boast that does not bring GLORY TO GOD, for it is GOD who has done it all.

And if you are a believer in JESUS CHRIST, know this:

God would have been PERFECTLY JUST and PERFECTLY RIGHTEOUS and PERFECTLY FAIR to leave you in your former state: unforgiven, doomed and destined for perdition. But he did not leave you there.

Acknowledge that you understand this in your prayers, and daily give HONOR to THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF OUR FAITH. [Actually that phrase from Hebrews 12:1-2 sums up this lesson!]

THIRD: If you believe in THE DOCTRINE OF THE ETERNAL SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER, you have ELECTION to thank for it – *For the security of YOUR SALVATION rests firmly on THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.*

- The reason you stand secure in your faith is because GOD CHOSE YOU IN CHRIST BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD, and it is on that basis alone that we can have confidence we will never lose that standing before Him.

[READ ROMANS 9:30-33] – These verses conclude the chapter. THE GENTILES receive RIGHTEOUSNESS by FAITH, while ISRAEL stumbled over 'THE STUMBLING STONE,' JESUS CHRIST.'

ELECTION explains why some believe and others do not.

- It explains why some in ISRAEL pursued righteousness through law-keeping – and failed, while others believed in YAHWEH and RIGHTEOUSNESS was imputed to them.
- And it demonstrates man's total inability to come to faith apart from an act of DIVINE GRACE.

ISRAEL'S stumbling is PARTIAL (*for a remnant will be saved*) and it is TEMPORARY (*for the day will come when ISRAEL acknowledges JESUS as LORD and SAVIOR, and THE STUMBLING STONE will become THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE of ISRAEL'S FUTURE.*)

ELECTION IS LOGICAL; IT IS BIBLICAL, and IT IS PRACTICAL.

JOHN CALVIN wrote: *"We will never understand or appreciate THE DEPTH OF GOD'S GRACE until we come to understand that it itself flows from UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION."*