

# A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

## An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 10- Luke 10:1-24**

### 198- The Five Portraits of a Kingdom Ministry- Part 7

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April 21, 2013

#### **Luke 10:1-24**

**1** Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.

**2** And He was saying to them, "**The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.**

**3** Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

**4** Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way.

**5** Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace *be* to this house.'

**6** If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.

**7** Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.

**8** Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you;

**9** and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

**10** But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say,

**11** 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off *in protest* against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'

**12** I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city.

**13** "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

**14 But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you.**

**15 And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades!**

**16 "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."**

**17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."**

**18 And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.**

**19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you.**

**20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."**

**21 At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.**

**22 All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*."**

**23 Turning to the disciples, He said privately, "Blessed *are* the eyes which see the things you see,**

**24 for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see *them*, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear *them*."**

To the Glory of God

Now as I said when I began this small mini-series six weeks ago- this Passage is somewhat lengthy- but I wanted to take it as a whole in order to get the flavor of what Jesus was teaching here and then divide it up into about five parts.

1. The Characteristics of Biblical Evangelism (Luke 10:1-4)
2. The Message of a Biblical Ministry (Luke 10:5-11)
3. The Divine Warning of Rejecting the Gospel (Luke 10:12-16)
4. The Danger of Pride in Biblical Ministry (Luke 10:17-20)

## 5. The Delight of God in Biblical Ministry (Luke 10:21-24)

Now we have already looked at the first four of these and today if God is pleased- I want to examine the fifth and final Characteristic and that is:

### 5. The Delight of God in Biblical Ministry

#### Luke 10:21-24

**21** At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "**I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.**

**22** "**All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*.**"

**23** Turning to the disciples, He said privately, "**Blessed *are* the eyes which see the things you see,**

**24** **for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see *them*, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear *them*.**"

Now there has been said and written a lot about the Freedom that Man supposedly has and the rights that go along with that freedom. But here in this Passage- we see a different kind of Freedom that really isn't talked about very much anymore and that is the absolute Freedom of God. Here in **Luke 10:21-24**- we see several very deep and profound Biblical Truths that pop out of this Passage- immediately as you read it:

- ✓ Jesus says that it pleased God to purposefully hide certain things from certain people and to purposefully reveal them to other people (**Luke 10:21**)
- ✓ Jesus says that no human being knows Him except the ones whom God wills to reveal Him (**Luke 10:21**)
- ✓ Jesus says that prophets and kings desired to see and hear what He was revealing to the 70- but they never did (**Luke 10:24**)

Now on the surface- these things seem to be out of Character with what we have come to know and love about Jesus. And yet as we read this portion of God's Holy and Inspired and Infallible Word- we see that this is exactly what Jesus said. So that leaves us with the task of trying to make sense of this and to put this into a Biblical frame work so we can not only understand it – but also delight in it.

What Jesus is talking about here is the absolute Freedom that the one true living God of the Bible has to do what He chooses to do and to save whom He chooses to save. And this Freedom that God has far outstrips any freedom that Man has and supersedes it.

And it is this absolute Freedom of God that allows for God to act in a way that is not always “fair” in human terms; it doesn't go along with the sensibilities that we have- because we see God blessing one while cursing another; we see God extending Mercy to one while giving Justice to another; we see God blinding one while giving sight to another; we see God revealing Truth to one while hiding it from another.

What we have to understand dear friends is that the absolute Freedom of God is a Biblical Truth that is rarely talked about; rarely preached or taught; and therefore rarely understood because it is very profound and it is deep. But aside from its depth and profundity- the biggest reason why the absolute Freedom of God is rarely discussed or learned any more is because it is patently offensive to Man- especially 21<sup>st</sup> Century Man- who has grown increasingly accustomed to being the center of attention.

But here we are in our Journey through Luke and this Truth has now presented itself to us as the next issue of the next passage and so we have the duty to read and study God's Word to determine three things:

1. What did God actually say in this Passage?
2. What did God mean by what he said?
3. How can we apply this Truth to our lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century so that we may live in humble and joyful submission to the Authority of Scripture to the Glory of God

And in order to understand the Truth about the absolute Freedom of God- we need to analyze three words:

- Absolute
- Freedom
- God

The word, “Absolute” comes from the Latin, “absolutus” which means: *Something that is free from any restrictions, limitations, or conditions; Something that is entirely independent of some or all relations; and something that is perfect and complete.*

The word, “Freedom” means: *the state of being free or at liberty; exemption from any external control, interference, or regulation; the power to determine action without restraint; the right of unrestricted use or access; complete autonomy, self-government, and independence*

And “God” refers to: *The one, true, living Deity Who is revealed all throughout Creation and in the pages of the Holy Bible- Who is the Owner and the Creator of the Universe; the only Deity to Whom we must worship, adore, enjoy, fear, and obey and the One to Whom we will all be held accountable.*

This one, true, living God is single in His Essence and is eternally manifested in three distinct Persons of God the Father; God the Son; and God the Holy Spirit. So here in **Luke 10**- we see God the Son- the incarnate God- Who took on human flesh- describing the absolute Freedom of God in ways that just stagger our minds.

Now there are a few other theological ways that are used to describe God’s absolute Freedom:

- ✓ The Omnipotence of God
- ✓ The Absolute Sovereignty of God
- ✓ Sovereign Election

But regardless of what you call it- the result is always the same- God is absolutely free to do and to say; absolutely free to create and to destroy; absolutely free to start and to stop; absolutely free to reveal and to hide; absolutely free to open and to close; absolutely free to extend Mercy and to withhold Mercy to whomever and whatever He chooses in the furtherance of His Own Will and His Own Plan and to His Own Good Pleasure and to His Own Glory.

We have to understand that the one true living God of the Bible is the most beautiful; the most glorious; the most important; the happiest;

and the most valuable Being in the Universe. And nobody knows and understands that more than God does. Therefore God knows God better and more deeply and more fully than anyone else knows God. And because God knows God fully- God loves God fully- because true lasting and deep love flows out from knowledge. You cannot love what you do not know and understand- which is why it is so wrong for people to say that they “fall *out of* love” over time. True love; deep and abiding love grows and become more full and far deeper and infinitely more rewarding over time- based on three elements:

- A. Respect
- B. Admiration
- C. Awe

So the longer you are around a person- the more you understand them. And the more you understand and know someone- the more respect you have for them; the more admiration you have for them; and the more in awe you are of that other person. So over time- as the years progress- we should all be in far *more* love with our spouses and our families and our friends and our brothers and sisters in Christ than we were before.

And the same is true with God. The more you study God; the more you ponder God; the more you meditate on God; the more you behold God- either in Creation or as you read and study about God in the pages of the Bible- the more you come to rightly and correctly and accurately know God- the bigger He gets; the more beautiful He gets; the more important He becomes; the more valuable He is in your eyes and the result is- your respect for God rises higher than a mountain; your admiration of God reaches to the heavens; and the awe that you have for God is more profound than for anything or anyone else.

And the result of that is that your love for God grows. And as your love for God grows- your desire to be with God grows; your desire to please God grows; your desire to honor God and to obey God grows as well. And the result of that is that your walk with God becomes stronger and your holiness is developed and your hatred of sin grows and your ability to serve God despite vicious obstacles and setbacks increases.

Now even though that is true and our love for God does indeed grow and get stronger over time- we must know two very important Truths:

- i. God's Love for us does *not* grow or change
- ii. God's Love for Himself does *not* grow or change

And that is true because God's knowledge of us and His knowledge of Himself does not grow- it was full and perfect from the beginning. God loved us perfectly and entirely from the very beginning. And that doesn't mean from the moment we started loving God- but from the beginning of time- before God ever made the world- before we were born or did anything good or bad- God chose to set His Love upon us. So God loved us perfectly and completely and entirely from way before we were ever born. So whereas our love for God does grow and get stronger- God's Love for us never grows and it never changes.

Likewise- God's Love for Himself never grows and it never changes either. So whereas our knowledge of God *does* grow and it gets better over time- God's knowledge of Himself never grows- because God knows Himself perfectly and entirely from the beginning. God even knows things about Himself that He has not chosen to reveal to us. So there is a depth to God's Love for Himself that we can never and will never understand or appreciate.

So even though our love for God grows based upon our Respect, Admiration, and Awe of God growing- which in turn is based upon our knowledge of God growing- God's Love for Himself is perfect and complete from the very beginning because His Respect and Admiration and Awe of Himself is perfect and complete and that is because His knowledge of Himself is complete.

And because all of that is true- because God knows better than anyone else that he is the most glorious and valuable and beautiful and joyful Being in the Universe- God is passionate about Himself being known and admired and glorified and feared and worshipped and obeyed and enjoyed. What better Gift could a kind and loving God give to the mass of unworthy sinners but the Gift of Himself? What better Possession could God grace us with than Himself? What more beautiful and more lovely and more valuable Kindness could God bestow on any

frail human other than the Mercy and the Grace and the Kindness of knowing and loving God?

So what we must try to understand is that the Love of God towards us is wrapped up in the Glory of God. Since it is true that God's best and greatest Gift to us is Himself- and since God knows and understands that better than anyone else- the greatest demonstration of that Love towards us is for God to allow sinful and weak humans to know Him and to love Him and to enjoy Him forever. And because we are fallen and sinful and entirely separated from God because of the Fall- it took nothing less than the sinless Life; the horrific death; and the glorious Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ in order for you and me to have the honor and the privilege of knowing and loving and enjoying God forever.

So because of all that- God is passionate about His Own Glory. God is passionate about His Own Name's Sake; and God is passionate that we know that there is no one else like God. So it is the Glory of God- which is the summation of all of His Personal Characteristics and Attributes; the Glory of God- which is the Radiance of all His Perfections and Qualities; the Glory of God- which is the accumulation of all that God is and all that God has done- that motivates *everything* that God does and *everything* that God says and *everything* that God is.

In other words- the reason why God made a mountain and put it over there and not over here is for His Own Glory. The reason why God forgives sin was for His Own name's Sake. And the reason why God chose to have Mercy and whom He will have Mercy and to harden whoever He wills to harden was so that we will know that there is no one like God.

So it is the furtherance of God's Will to God's Glory that is the most important thing in all the Universe; it is whatever glorifies God that is the most vital element in all of existence; and it is the accomplishment of God's Good Pleasure that is the only thing that matters. And God knows that and God is all about that- 24 hours every day and 7 days every week.

And so Salvation is the wondrous and miraculous event that allows wicked and unworthy sinners to be so transformed that we are all about that as well. Salvation is what changes us so completely that we join in with God in the fulfillment of His Will and not our own and that we do what we do and we refrain from doing what we refrain from



doing to the Glory of God alone and for the honor of His great Name and so that everybody who sees us will know that there is none like Him in all the earth.

So Salvation is all about God drawing us to the Cross of Jesus and forgiving us and causing us to die to ourselves and changing us to the degree that God's Agenda to be known and loved and enjoyed forever becomes our own agenda and the only cause for which we live.

And so everything that God actively causes and everything that God passively allows to come into our lives is carried out in just the right amount so that it all works together in us and through us and for us to make that happen.

And God's ability and right to actively cause those things and God's ability and right to passively allow those other things in the fulfillment of His goal of us knowing and loving and enjoying God forever and His ability and right to cause and allow those things without consulting with us or without gaining our approval and without us cooperating with God in those things is called, "The Absolute Freedom of God."

Now a few weeks ago – I told you that you don't have to be saved to want to go to Heaven. People who are completely deceived by false religions and doctrines of demons want to go to Heaven. You don't have to be saved to want to be healed and blessed and to have a nicer house or a better wife. Your heart can remain dark and separated from God and you can want every bit of that. You don't have to be saved to want to spend eternity in pure joy and pure happiness with no injustice and no crime and no disease and no limitations, re-united with loved ones who have gone on before you. Most anybody would want that.

Likewise- you don't have to be saved to want a new body that is immortal and that has never known sin and that has never suffered an injury or tasted of a disease. You don't have to be saved to want to walk on streets of gold or to live forever. You can want and desire and look forward to every single one of those things and still be lost and in your sins and headed for hell.

But you *do* have to be saved to love Jesus. You have to be completely regenerate by God the Holy Spirit to know God rightly and you have to be justified by Sovereign Grace to love God; you do have to be supernaturally empowered by God the Holy Spirit to call Jesus, "Lord" with any degree of honesty; and you have to be utterly born

again to want to enjoy God forever. And if you are satisfied with anything else besides Jesus- if anything else- up to and including Heaven itself is pleasing you and is the fulfillment of your joy and hearts' desire besides Jesus and knowing Him and loving Him and enjoying Him forever- then you are deceived.

People think that God loves them and so based on that Love- He will save them. But that is only half the story. God loves you so He will save you- but only so that you will know Him and love Him and enjoy Him forever. So the goal of God in saving you- is God- not you. The goal of God is that by being saved- you will come to know God and not yourself and the goal of God is so that by being saved- you will come to love God- more than you love yourself and the goal of God is that by being saved- you will come to enjoy God forever- not yourself.

So the goal of Salvation is not just so that you will be saved and rescued from God's Wrath and miss hell- but that by being saved- you will have such a radical and miraculous and supernatural change of heart that you will have both the desire and the power to know God and the desire and power to love God and the desire and power to enjoy God forever- infinitely more than you know and love and enjoy anything or anyone else.

And that is why Salvation is not possible to obtain by anything that Man does or anything that Man stops doing. Salvation is not something that we "obtain" or that we "get" or that we "earn" or that we "achieve"- it is something that is graciously and mercifully "given".

And The Absolute Freedom of God says that God has operated in His Universe- entirely unencumbered by any arbitrary sense of "fairness" as Man knows fairness and without any burden as to what Man sees as being "just" and "proper" and without any obligation to measure up to any standard of duty as Man has assigned it and without consulting with anyone and without gaining anyone's approval or permission and without having to answer to or give account to any Man.

But acting solely on His Own Divine Prerogative as the Sovereign of the Universe and in the totality of His absolute Freedom and seeking to please no one but Himself and desiring to measure up to no standard but His Own and by counseling with no one but Himself and carrying it out for no other reason other than His Own Glory- God has willfully and joyfully chosen to graciously and mercifully give or grant eternal Salvation to unworthy sinners based on nothing that they did or did not

do and based on nothing that they labored to achieve or that they worked to earn or that they strove to obtain or that they tried to get; and based on no family connections or bloodline or genealogy or financial credibility or political or social considerations.

God has chosen to choose and call and draw and justify and sanctify and glorify and save to the uttermost- wicked and despicable human beings for no other reason than it pleased Him to do so and the result of doing it this way and for this reason is that 100% of these people will know and love and enjoy God forever.

And I tell you that this is why Jesus says what He says in these verses; and that is why Jesus is praising God with great Joy in the Holy Spirit that some see and others do not and that some are saved and others are not and that some know the Father and others do not. And I am also telling you that this is not only what Jesus is talking about here but that this is right and this is Good and this is correct and proper and that this magnifies and glorifies God and shows us the absolute majesty of Grace.

Charles Spurgeon was an overweight Baptist preacher in London 100 years ago. The more I read about him- the more I read of his sermons- the more I stand in awe of his gifts. He preached to 4,000 people at each service on Sunday for 38 years at the Metropolitan Tabernacle before he was unceremoniously fired. His sermons lasted up to two hours at times in a building with no air conditioning packed with beggars and European Kings in attendance. Several US Presidents crossed the Atlantic in steam ships to hear him preach the Gospel.

Spurgeon is known today as the greatest soul-winner of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. But what is not so well known and what has been desired to keep secret is the theology behind his power. It was the theology of the Sovereign Grace and the Absolute Freedom of God to blind some while opening the eyes of others that Spurgeon found in places like **Romans 8:28-30**. He recounts the decisive day when he was gloriously saved at sixteen:

“I can recall the very day and hour when I first received those truths (of election and effectual calling) in my own soul—when they were, as John Bunyan says, burnt into my heart as with a hot iron, and I can recollect how I felt that I had grown on a sudden from a babe into a man—that I had made

progress in Scriptural knowledge, through having found, once for all, the clue to the truth of God.

One week-night when I was sitting in the house of God, I was not thinking much about the preacher's sermon, for I did not believe it. The thought struck me, "How did you come to be a Christian?" I sought the Lord. "But how did you come to seek the Lord?" The truth flashed across my mind in a moment—I should not have sought him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to *make me* seek him. I prayed, thought I, but then I asked myself, How came I to pray? I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. How came I to read the Scriptures? I did read them, but what led me to do so? Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that he was the Author of my faith, and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me, and from that doctrine I have not departed to this day, and I desire to make this my constant confession, 'I ascribe my change wholly to God.'"

Spurgeon clearly understood in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century is the same thing that we need to try to grasp in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as we earnestly struggle to contend for the Biblical Christian Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints. And it is the very same thing that Jesus says right here in **Luke 10:22**:

**... no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."**

This the Absolute Freedom of God in choosing to reveal the Son- not to the rich or the smart or the wise or the financially or politically connected or those who have the right pedigree- but God has chosen to reveal the Son to those whom God has "willed" to reveal Him.

Now I realize that if you have never really studied the Bible- the Doctrine of the Absolute Freedom of God is very different from what most of you grew up with. And it is so different that you not only have a hard time believing it is actually in the Bible but also a hard time feeling that it could ever be loving or good news. So I realize that I am swimming against a doubly difficult current in these messages. But here are three things we need to keep in mind as we honestly examine the Words of our Lord Jesus here in **Luke 10**:

1. **Luke 10:22** is in the Bible. I didn't write this and Dr. Luke says here that Jesus actually said these words.
2. **Luke 10:22** means *something*. It doesn't mean nothing. It is in the Bible on purpose.
3. Whatever it means is right and good

And if this is really what Jesus is talking about- then I suggest that He was not the only One Who talked about it and we will be able to go to several other places in God's Inerrant Word and find the very same Truth recorded there. And so to test that out- I invite you to turn with me to read what the Apostle Paul taught about this very issue in **Romans 9:10-18**:

**10** And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac;

**11** for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,

**12** it was said to her, "***THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.***"

**13** Just as it is written, "***JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.***"

**14** What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!

**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 *does* not *depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

**17** For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "***FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH.***"

**18** So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

Now what Jesus was talking about in **Luke 10:22** is the very same thing that the Apostle Paul is talking about here in **Romans 9**. And even though these verses may bring up 10,000 questions in your mind- what

I want you to try to grasp this morning is that what both Jesus and Paul are talking about is very Good News for us today.

So I will try to do my best to do two things right now:

- ✓ I want to show you that this The Absolute Freedom of God is exactly what the Holy Bible teaches
- ✓ I want to show you that The Absolute Freedom of God brings great Joy to Jesus
- ✓ I want to show you that The Absolute Freedom of God is very Good News for us

And the main point of the message this morning is to show that God is Just and Righteous in His Absolute Freedom to reveal the Son to whomever He wills or in other words to save or show mercy to whomever He chooses to. And the structure of the message will go like this:

- A. Where did the objection in **Romans 9:14** comes from? Why did anyone raise the question about the Justice or the Righteousness of God?
- B. I will give three reasons why the doctrine of God's Absolute Freedom is Good News for us.
- C. We will see how Paul reasserts the Doctrine of God's Absolute Freedom in **Romans 9:16**
- D. We will try to understand Paul's argument in **Romans 9:15** for the Righteousness of God in His Absolute Freedom to reveal the Son or to show Mercy to whomever He chooses which is what Jesus was talking about in **Luke 10:22**.

### **Romans 9:14**

**What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!**

Now where did the objection in **Romans 9:14** come from? Paul knew the kind of objections that were typically raised against his teachings. He had preached and taught publicly for years in synagogues and churches and market places. He knew that people had pondered this issue for a very long time- even before Jesus spoke it in Luke 10.

So Paul raises the questions that people typically raise about this issue and then he answered them.

Now what did Paul and Jesus say that could cause this objection that God is unjust or unrighteous?

- ✓ Jesus said in **Luke 10:22** that God revealed the Son- not to the wise or the connected but to whomever God willed to reveal Him
- ✓ Paul taught that God shows Mercy to whomever God chooses to show Mercy

And Jesus just said this- as God- without any attempt at justifying it while Paul- as a man- used the OT to prove that this is the way God has always operated. And the main thing that Paul had said was that God chose Isaac not Ishmael, and He chose Jacob not Esau before they had been born and before they had done anything good or evil. And that was the point of verses 7-13. Look again at verses 11-13:

**11 for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,**

**12 it was said to her, "*THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.*"**

**13 Just as it is written, "*JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.*"**

Now the point here is that God's Favor in revealing the Son or in choosing someone for Salvation is not based on what we do or what we think or what we feel or what we choose- but it is based solely on God and in His Absolute Freedom as the One Who calls.

And we need to stress – because it is so often denied – that the issue Paul is dealing with in this chapter is election for our own personal and eternal destinies as individual Jews and Gentiles and not just the Jewish and Gentile nations as a whole. The problem Paul is wrestling with is stated back up in verse 3: that many of his Jewish kinsmen are accursed and cut off from Christ. That is what creates the crisis – not the historical role of a nation- but the eternal destiny of individual Jewish people who rejected the Gospel as he preached from synagogue to synagogue.

So the answer to our first question is that the objection in verse 14 rose from Jesus and Paul's teaching of God's Absolute Freedom in

choosing whom He will graciously save before we are born or have done anything good or evil. Our election to eternal life therefore is not based on what we choose or what we do. It is based on God and His Absolute Freedom alone. Which person chooses to trust Christ and be saved, and which one chooses to reject Christ and be lost, is ultimately wrapped up in God's Choice and God's Freedom.

And so some of Paul's listeners objected to this just as they had when Jesus said it and they had cried out:

*"God is unjust to choose some but not all and God is unrighteous to base His election on His Own Absolute Freedom and not in what we do. It is patently unrighteous in God to choose who will believe and be saved or who will rebel and be lost."*

And that is the very same objection that people have today- only they summarize this objection by crying out, *"That isn't fair!"* But how does Paul answer this objection at the end of verse 14?

**May it never be! Or "God forbid!" Or "Certainly not!"**

There is no unrighteousness with God when He operates in His Absolute Freedom and chooses whom He will.

Now before we look at Paul's reassertion of the doctrine in verse 16 and his argument for it in verse 15- I want to give you three reasons that this doctrine of God's Absolute Freedom is very Good News for us today.

God's Absolute Freedom to choose whom He will is Good News because it means no sinner is too bad to be saved. No human is so bad that they can say in response to our gospel pleading, *"I can't be elect; I am too evil. I have sinned too long and too deeply."* God's Freedom to reveal Jesus and to save whomever He chooses is not based on how much we do or don't sin. It is not based on anything we do or think or feel or choose. Therefore, the proper response to that kind of despair is to say, *"Who do you think you are to exalt your sin to the level of God? Who do you think you are to wallow in your despair and make your sinful will the sovereign of the universe, as if you could decide who is elect and who is not by the quantity of your sinning?"* No! no one has the right or the



power to declare themselves beyond God's Choice. It is God and God alone Who decides who can see Jesus and be saved. And God never decides that on the basis of your sin or your righteousness- but solely on His Own Freedom to willfully choose to reveal Jesus. Therefore the Command is the same for all- Repent and call on the Name of the Lord through Jesus Christ Who has died for sinners. For he has said, "Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." So to the despairing soul who feels he has sinned himself out of the possibility of ever being saved- God's Absolute Freedom to choose to reveal Jesus to whomever He desires is very good news.

The doctrine of God's Absolute Freedom is good news because it preserves the praise of God's glorious Grace at every point in our Salvation. There was not, and is not, nor will there ever be a point where we become the decisive cause of our own Salvation. God has chosen us freely so that we may not boast in ourselves but in God. And I say this is very good news because we were made to find greatest joy in praising God and not in being praised ourselves. Probably the deepest corruption that we have all inherited from the Fall – and it is especially and blatantly prevalent in the last 50 years – is that we believe and feel that happiness and health come from being praised, and made much of rather than from praising God and dying to self. We think that psychological health comes from developing self- worth rather than from being freed from that need to enjoy the infinite Worth of God and enjoying Him forever. And that is why we were made, and that is where the greatest and deepest and longest joys are found – not in being made much of, but in forgetting ourselves in the joy of making much of God's Glory, which consists very much in His free and sovereign grace. God's Absolute Freedom is designed for that great and happy end. Therefore it is very good news.

The doctrine of God's Absolute Freedom is good news because when, by grace and through faith, you come to know that you are loved by God, and forgiven, and justified, and accepted- this doctrine of God's Freedom assures you that the roots of your Salvation – the roots of God Almighty's Commitment to save you – are not shallow and frivolous- but it goes down deep into the counsels of all eternity. It is good news to know that the root of our Salvation goes down forever and ever into

eternal grace and never gets to a point where it is contingent and fragile and dependent on your foreseen faith or your foreseen good works.

Now there are hundreds of other reasons for feeling that the doctrine of God's Absolute Freedom in revealing Jesus to whomever he wills is very good news, but that is what we have time for this morning.

Now notice how Paul reasserts the doctrine in Romans 9:16:

### **Romans 9:16**

**So then it** (the showing of Mercy and the revealing of Jesus) *does not depend* **on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.**

Perhaps the shortest answer would be from verse 11:

**... God's purpose according to *His* choice...**

So God's Purpose in saving unworthy sinners does not depend on human will or exertion- but only on God's Divine Prerogative to show Mercy to whomever God freely chooses to show Mercy.

And this is important because it touches the very thing that some people find so controversial: the false concept of "human free- will". Paul states as clearly as Jesus did that the human will is *not* and never has been the final and decisive condition of God's Choosing- God is. It is God and God alone. God chooses His Own people before we have willed anything like faith, or done anything like love. And that's the point of verse 16- reasserting what Paul already taught in verses 11-14. And that is what Jesus said in **Luke 10:22**.

Now finally, what is Paul's argument in Romans 9:15 for the Righteousness of God in God's Freedom to choose? Paul has said, No, there is no unrighteousness with God. That's the point of verse 14. Then verse 15 starts with that key word "for" to show that he is giving a reason or a basis or a ground for what he just said,

**"For he [God] says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."**

Now on the surface- this is a very puzzling argument for the Righteousness of God in Absolute Freedom. Paul says, *"No, God is not unrighteous in having mercy on people without respect to their will or work, because God said to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.'"* It almost sounds like just a restatement of unconditional election itself, rather than an argument that unconditionality is in itself- Righteous.

At this point I resolved in early 2004 to devote nine months to figuring out Paul's argument here. So I spent from May – January working on it. The result of this effort is found in the Doctrines of Grace Class that I taught on Monday Evenings a few years ago and that you can download from the Church's Website.

Everything centers on the meaning of one single word- the word "for" at the beginning of verse 15.

**There is no unrighteousness with God, "FOR, God says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."**

Now there are two keys to understanding this argument. First is the context of this Old Testament quotation in **Exodus 33:19**; and the second is Paul's understanding of the Righteousness of God. So let's take these one at a time to see if we can follow Paul's argument and how verse 15 is a defense of God's Righteousness in God's Freedom to choose whom He will reveal Jesus to and whom He will show Mercy to.

Consider the quote from **Exodus 33:19**. Moses is talking to God and seeking God's Promise to go up to the promised land with the people. Then Moses asks to see God's Glory in verse 18, and that sets up the statement which Paul quotes in **Romans 9:15**.

#### **Exodus 33:18&19**

**18 Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!"**

**19 And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."**

So here Moses asks to see God's Glory. And God obliges by saying: Here's my Goodness- My Name. And to His Name- God attaches this sentence:

**I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."**

In other words, God is saying to Moses and to us- *"My Glory is expressed in My Name, Yahweh (Lord), and My Name is expressed in My Absolute Freedom to have Mercy on whom I will have Mercy. This is Who I am. This is My Name. This is My Glory. My Essence as God consists essentially in being totally free from any constraint originating outside My Own Will and Good Pleasure."* So this is the essence of what it means to be God. This is God's Name and His Glory.

Now one confirmation of this is that back in Exodus 3- Moses asks God what His Name is so that he can tell the Israelites who sent him. And God answers in verse 14:

#### **Exodus 3:14**

**God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"**

In other words, God explained His Name here as "I am who I am." And then in **Exodus 33:19** He explains His Name as **"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy."** The structure is the same, and so the meaning is simply expanded. So we are right to say that God's Name- the Essence of His Glory, is that He IS absolutely and without cause or constraint from outside Himself. He is Who He is. And, expanding on that in chapter 33, He says His Name- and the Essence of Who God is, is,

**"I have mercy on whom I have mercy"**

– that is, I am absolutely Self-Existent and absolutely Self-Determining. I exist in absolute freedom- without cause or control from anything else. And I have Mercy freely. At the deepest decision of My Mercy there is no cause or control or constraint by anything outside My Own Will. And that is what it means to be God, Yahweh. That is My Name and the Essence of My Glory.

So that is the first key to understanding the argument of **Romans 9:15** – the context of the quote from **Exodus 33:19**. Now the second key is the meaning of God's Righteousness. What does Paul mean by Righteousness, when he says in **Romans 9:14**,

**"There is no injustice (unrighteousness) with God, is there?"**

If I had time I would love to develop a long argument from the Old Testament, and from Paul's use of the "Righteousness of God," to show you where I get the answer to that question. But all I have time for today is to give you my conclusion and say that we will visit this issue no doubt, again in the future.

So God's Righteousness is essentially His Own unswerving Allegiance to His Own Name and His Own Glory. God is Righteous to the degree that He upholds and displays the Honor of His Name. He is Righteous when He values most what is the most valuable, and what is the single most valuable commodity in all the Universe is God's Own Glory. Therefore God's Justice or His Righteousness consists most fundamentally in doing what is consistent with the esteem and demonstration of His Name or His Glory. Therefore God would be unrighteous if He did not uphold and display His Glory as infinitely Valuable.

So now the two keys are in place for understanding the argument of **Romans 9:15**. Paul is arguing that there is no unrighteousness with God when He elects unconditionally. Why? Using our two keys, the answer is: because God's Name or the Essence of His Glory, consists in His Absolute Freedom to have Mercy on Whom He chooses to have Mercy. That is Who God is. And His Righteousness is God's unswerving Allegiance always to uphold and display that Glory. Therefore, God must uphold and display His Absolute Freedom, if He is to be Righteous.

Let me say this one more time: If God's Righteousness consists in His unswerving Commitment to uphold His Name and His Glory, and if His Name and His Glory consist in His Absolute Freedom in showing Mercy to whomever He chooses- then to be Righteous- God must choose the beneficiaries of His electing Mercy before they are ever born or have done anything good or evil. Therefore the Doctrine of God's Absolute Freedom in Salvation stands and God is Righteous in it.

Now I close with the reminder of how good this news really is:

No amount of sin that you have ever done can keep you from being saved. God was, is, and always will be absolutely Free in Salvation and so your past record of sin was and is no hindrance to your being saved. So dear friends- call on the Name of the Lord Jesus today and forsake your sins and you will be saved.

And let all the praise for your Salvation go to God and not yourself. You were made for this. Find your joy in making much of God and His Grace, not making much of yourself. And when you find your rest in Christ through faith, glory in this: the roots of your security go down forever in the eternal Grace of God. Amen.

Let's pray.