

That Which Pleases God

An Examination of What God Delights In

4 God Takes Pleasure in Sovereign Election

January 26, 2014

Ezekiel 36:22-28

22 “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went.

23 “I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,” declares the Lord God, “when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.

24 “For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land.

25 “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

26 “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27 “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

28 “You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

Romans 8:28-31

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?

To the Glory of God

Now the first thing out of the block this morning needs to be a statement that we all must agree with:

What makes a subject to be true is not how that subject sits with us

Because we are fallen- we have an enormous capacity to believe things that are simply not true and still be very happy and content and we have that same capacity to categorically reject and despise things that are true. So since we are like that- we need an objective; external Source of Propositional Absolute Truth that transcends our human passions and our prejudices and our biases and our emotions. We need something that is true today and that was true yesterday and that will be true tomorrow. And the Source of that Objective, Propositional, Absolute Truth is the Holy Scriptures- which were given to 40 different writers over a 1400 year time frame by God by way of a mysterious process called "Inspiration", which is God moving upon these holy men in the same way that the wind moves a boat across the water, and by Him exhaling or "breathing out" words that these human writers penned down that hold several unique characteristics. The Words of Scripture are:

- **Inerrant** (*Does not* contain any Error)
- **Infallible** (*Cannot* contain Error)
- **Authoritative** (Has the Power to bring conviction to an individual and bind the conscience)
- **Relevant** (Never Superseded)
- **Sufficient** (All we Need for both Life and Godliness)
- **Eternal** (Eternally True)

What the Pastor or even the Church says that is true is only where the Church and the Pastor agrees with Scripture, and where we differ- we are wrong and the Bible is right. So the goal of any Pastor and any Church worth their salt is not to try to take on more of the world in order to appeal to backslid or lukewarm or unsaved tares, but it is to study and to learn and to understand and to teach and to Preach this Word. So the summary

statement of the Mission of the Church is found in **Jude 3** that says we are to:

... contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

Now, no other book written by any other person in all of human history can make this claim. So the Bible stands alone as being the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of the living God. So if you want to hear from God- read the Bible, and if you want to hear from God audibly- read it out loud.

And that means that we can trust the Scriptures, they are reliable, they are trustworthy, they are true. And the Bible is true if everybody agrees with it, and the Bible is true if nobody agrees with it. God doesn't need our approval of His Word to make it true.

Now there is an old saying that you may be familiar with that goes something like this,

"God said it; I believe it; and that settles it"

... and this has received a lot of attention over the years and I understand what those who say it mean. But nevertheless I find this statement to be very odd because it really doesn't matter whether I agree with God or not. God is true, and if God said something- then that settles it- regardless of how many or how few agree with it or believe it. I would suggest to you that it is to *our* advantage to agree with God because to be found at odds with the Owner and Maker of the Universe makes us to be the loser- every single time.

So our agreement doesn't validate God and our rejection does not invalidate God or what He said in the least. And never is that more true than with the subject of Sovereign Election.

I suppose that it is hard to find a more controversial subject than "Sovereign Election"- the Biblical Truth that proclaims that out of the vast sea of lost and fallen humanity- God freely chooses to set His Love upon *some* of the unworthy sinners to save them- *before* they were ever born and *before* they did anything good or evil. This Truth is probably more despised than any other with the possible exception of Radical Ruination or the Complete Depravity of Fallen Man.

And there are a number of things we can say about this issue that needs to be said. Such as this:

- As much trouble as Sovereign Election may bring upon your soul as you struggle to comprehend it- you would have even *more* trouble if it were *not* true
- It really doesn't matter if you like this Truth or if you agree with it or if it sits well with your concept of God. All that really matters is if the Holy Bible teaches it- and it does- repeatedly and very clearly.
- The only way that Salvation can be wholly by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone is if Sovereign Election is true. Every other means would allow the human work of lost Man to be exalted.

But even though those are very good things to ponder about Sovereign Election- this Sermon will attempt to focus on two threads:

- Does God Enjoy Sovereign Election?
- Can a Controversial Teaching Like This Nurture Christlikeness in Us?

And before you answer the second question- let me ask another one:

Are There any Significant Biblical Teachings
That Have Not Been Controversial?

... because I cannot think of a single one. And one of the biggest would be the concept that God saves unworthy Gentile sinners by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Jesus Christ alone and not because we have obeyed the Law. This glorious Gospel- that we so treasure- nearly tore the Church in two during its early formative years and is the single source as to why most of the Jews of today reject Christianity.

So if this is true- then we have no choice but to seek our food in the arena of controversy. So as much as we would like it- we do not have the luxury of living in a world where the most nourishing Truths are unopposed. So if you think we can suspend judgment on all that is controversial and feed our souls only on what is left- then you are living in a fantasy. Because as far as God is concerned- nothing exists outside of deep and profound and earthshaking Truths that disturb us greatly and create controversy that lasts for centuries.

The only reason any of us thinks that we can stand alone on Truths that are noncontroversial is because we do not know our history very well or the diversity of the professing Church. But aside from that- do we really

want to give to the devil the right to determine our spiritual menu by us refusing to taste any teaching over which he can cause controversy?

The teaching of Scripture on Election has been unbelievably controversial. But I believe with all my heart that it is precious beyond words and therefore- I also believe that Sovereign Election- with all its baggage- should be shouted from the rooftops and celebrated precisely because it is a natural and glorious Delight of God and a source of great nourishment for the Christlikeness of true faith.

So I want to proclaim this morning that God has infinite pleasure in Election. And to know that this is absolutely true and to know *why* it is absolutely true is to see another facet of the Glory of God. And that sight is the Power to make us a holy and a happy people.

George Mueller is famous for the orphanages he founded and for the amazing faith he had- to pray for God's provision back in the 19th Century. But even though much has been written about Mueller's great faith- very few know about or even care about the theology that undergirded that great ministry. In 1829 when he was twenty-four years old, Mueller had an experience which he later recorded in his autobiography. He describes the period when he "came to prize the Bible alone as [his] standard of judgment." And Mueller went on to say,

"Before this period I had been much opposed to the Doctrines of "Sovereign Election"; "Particular Redemption"; and "Final Persevering Grace". But now I was brought to examine these precious Truths by the Word of God. Being made willing to have no glory of my own in the conversion of sinners, but to consider myself merely an instrument; and being made willing to receive what the Scriptures said, I went to the Word, reading the New Testament from the beginning, with a particular reference to these Truths.

To my great astonishment I found that the passages which speak decidedly for Election and Persevering Grace, were about four times as many as those which speak apparently against these Truths; and even those few, shortly after, when I had examined and understood them, served to confirm me in the above Doctrines.

As to the effect which my belief in these Doctrines had on me, I am constrained to state for God's Glory, that though I am still exceedingly weak, and by no means so dead to the lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, as I might be, and as I ought to be,

yet, by the grace of God, I have walked more closely with Him since that period. My life has not been so variable, and I may say that I have lived much more for God than before.”

So George Mueller began with controversy and ended with a long life of faith and holiness and stable Christlikeness. So God can use hard and difficult and deep and complicated Doctrines to develop both humility and holiness in the believer’s life. It has happened for hundreds of thousands of people over the last 2,000 years.

The experience of Charles Spurgeon is not beyond the ability of any ordinary Christian. Spurgeon (1834–1892) was a contemporary of George Mueller. He served the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London for over thirty years as the most famous Pastor of his day. His preaching was so powerful that people were converted to Christ practically every week. His sermons are still in print today and he is held up by many as a model soul-winner. And this man recalls an experience when he was sixteen that shaped his life and ministry for the rest of his days.

“When I was coming to Christ, I thought I was doing it all myself, and though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me. I do not think the young convert is at first aware of this. I can recall the very day and hour when first I received those truths [the doctrine of election] 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, that 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.”

This is not a sequence of thought beyond anyone’s ability. If it happened this way to Spurgeon it can happen to anyone. There had been influences in Spurgeon’s life to prepare him for this discovery. But the main ones were not theological scholars—one was the cook at the school in Newmarket that Spurgeon attended when he was fifteen.

“The first lessons I ever had in theology were from an old cook in the school at Newmarket.... She was a good old soul, and used to read *The Gospel Standard*. She liked something very sweet indeed, good strong Calvinistic doctrine, but she lived strongly as well as fed strongly. Many a time we have gone over the covenant of grace together, and talked of the personal election of the saints, their union to Christ, their final perseverance, and what vital godliness meant; and I do believe that I learnt more from her than I should have learned from any six doctors of divinity of the sort we have nowadays.”

So this woman liked something very sweet—the Truth of God’s Personal Election. And Election is sweet to the saints because it is sweet to God. It is His Pleasure to magnify the Glory of His Own Free and Sovereign Grace in choosing a people that they might be for Him- in the words of Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 13:11b
... for renown, for praise and for glory...

In other words- to extend the Pleasure that God has in His Own Name or His Own Reputation or His Own Renown- He calls out a people to enjoy and praise and proclaim that great Name. And the Bible calls these people “the elect,” or “the chosen.” And that is what I want to examine this morning:

God’s Delight in Sovereign Election

... and the point that I want to make is that the Bible doesn’t say that God simply does this- He doesn’t just push His Weight around and predestinates some unworthy sinners for Salvation- but the Bible says that

God *enjoys* this. So God doesn't simply choose people for Salvation- but He completely and utterly delights in doing so. So Election or Predestination gives God great Pleasure; He loves it and He puts His entire Being into it.

I think it is amazing and utterly inconsistent for people to admire and even seek to emulate the faith and works of men like Spurgeon and Mueller and Carey and Edwards and yet reject the Doctrines of Grace- especially Sovereign Election because it was precisely these controversial Doctrines that made these men what they were and will no doubt raise up more just like them in the future because they are the timeless Truths of the Bible.

And it has always been fascinating to me that those who seem to be offended the most at the notion that God chooses some people for Salvation in the New Testament don't ever seem to have that same problem with God doing the very same thing in the Old- and I find that completely inconsistent. And I will repeat this morning what I have told you over and over- that the single biggest reason why anyone has a problem with Predestination or Sovereign Election is not because it isn't found in the Bible over and over again- because manifestly it is- but the biggest reason that people object to Sovereign Election is two- fold:

- They really do not have a Biblical understanding of Who God is
- They really do not have a Biblical understanding of who Man is

If we understand God to the extent that He has revealed Himself in Scripture in all His glorious Attributes and if we comprehend the depth of our own fallen condition- then Sovereign Election would not only seem proper and correct to us in the sense that God has the Right and the Prerogative to choose whoever He wills- but if God is as Sovereign as the Bible declares Him to be and if we are as fallen as the Bible says that we are- then God choosing or electing people to be saved is the only way in which anyone could ever begin to love and serve God gladly. So to disbelieve in Election requires that you reduce God in some way and that you elevate Man in some way that Bible simply does not do.

The Old Testament teaches clearly and repeatedly that Israel became God's people for one single reason- because God chose them freely from all the peoples of the world. It was not because they were easy to work with; or because they were more moral or more educated or superior than the other nations of the world or that they possessed some inherent quality about themselves that made them attractive to God in some way- no- Israel did not compete with other nations and win. God

Sovereignly chose her unconditionally and made her His Own special Possession- based on nothing more than that it pleased Him to do so. That is what the Holy Bible declares.

Now Abraham was the original Patriarch of the people of Israel, and God says in **Joshua 24:2&3** that Abraham was part of an idolatrous family at the time that God called him:

2 ... “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, *namely*, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.

3 ‘Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.

Now notice very carefully that Joshua used the word, “**took**” in verse 3:

... I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.

And this word “**took**” comes from the Hebrew word that has to do with violently; purposefully; forcefully; or determinedly *interrupting* someone life and then *imposing* your will on them. And this “**taking**” of Abraham out of idolatry is called in **Nehemiah 9:7** “choosing” or “election.” Ezra prayed:

“You are the Lord God, Who chose Abram And brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees, And gave him the name Abraham.

Another way of talking about this “choosing” is to say that God “knew” Abraham in the sense of setting His Special Attention on Abraham or setting His Love upon Abraham and *acknowledging* him as God’s Own Personal Possession. This is what God said about Abraham just before he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. He pondered in **Genesis 18:17&18**:

**17 ... “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do,
18 since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed?”**

... and then in verse 19- God answered His Own Question by saying, "No!" And then He gives the reason why:

"For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."

Now this special way of "knowing" is used again in **Amos 3:2** when God declares His unique relation to the people of Israel:

"You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

... where the English word "chosen" is used interchangeably with the word "knowing" because it comes from the very same Hebrew word. Now this does not mean that God is ignorant about all the other families of the earth. It simply means that He has set His Special Attention on Israel; His Special saving Love on them and based on that- He *acknowledged* them to be His unique possession out of all the other peoples of the earth.

And this also does not mean that God does not love other people. But we have to know that God loves the non-elect *differently* than He loves the elect. The Love of God is manifested to everyone in the sense that even though we sin and we sin repeatedly and even though we dishonor God and even though we shake our fist into the Face of God and even though we live to our own glory and even though we do what is right in our own eyes- God does not totally and immediately annihilate the entire human race right at this moment. That is an expression of God's Love to unbelievers.

And lost people who do not love or serve God and have no intention of doing so- benefit from this kind of "General Love" or "Common Grace" from God in that they live long and full lives, and they laugh and enjoy things, and see the myriad of colors and experience the fantastic kaleidoscope of good and wonderful and thoughtful and kind things in this life- everything from the spectacular visage of mountains smoking in the morning and majestic waterfalls to the laughter in a child's eyes and antibiotics and bi-focals and the kindness from a neighbor which only came about as a result of God's Love toward Mankind.

But to the elect- God has determined to go way beyond the Common Grace and the General Love, and He has ordained to manifest His Love to

them by Sovereignly *interfering* in their lives and by *inserting* Himself into their minds and hearts and to *forcefully* and *effectually* transform their natures and to *cause* them to love and to serve Him gladly. As **Ezekiel 36:27** says:

“I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

Now on the basis of this initial election of Abraham from all the people of the earth- the Old Testament most often speaks of the *entire people* of Israel as God’s elect or chosen. For example, Moses says in **Deuteronomy 14:2**:

“For you are a holy people [set apart] to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

The reaffirmation of God’s possession of Israel at the deliverance from Egypt is sometimes spoken of as Israel’s election, as in **Ezekiel 20:5**,

and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God , “On the day when I chose Israel and swore to the descendants of the house of Jacob and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, when I swore to them, saying, I am the Lord your God,

Moses connects the Exodus with God’s “taking possession” of Israel in these words from **Deuteronomy 4:20**:

“But the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today.

And **Exodus 19:4**:

‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself.

God’s Work in choosing Israel for Himself was “free” like the flight of an eagle carrying helpless little eaglets to safety where God could help them become what He wanted them to be.

Now sometimes the “choosing” of the people at the time of the Exodus is shown to be an extension of the Electing Love that had been shown to Abraham- the Patriarch. For example, in **Deuteronomy 4:37–39** Moses says,

37 “Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power,
38 driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in *and* to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is today.
39 “Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the Lord, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other.

Thus the Scripture can speak of God’s electing the people of Israel by freely loving and choosing Abraham at the beginning, or by freely choosing to take the entire people from Egypt in fulfillment of the Promises made to elect Abraham. In either case- the people should “lay it to heart” and stand in awe that the Lord alone is God.

Now there is a lot spoken and written today about Man’s so called “free will”. And as I have told you numerous times before- phrases like, “Man is a free moral agent” and “God will never violate the free will of Man” are not Biblical terms- the Bible does not record them- never has. These phrases and others like them came from the fifth century heretic, Pelagius- the father of Secular Humanism- the man who was excommunicated from the Christian Church because he rejected the Doctrine of Original Sin and denied that the Fall of Adam had any effect whatsoever to those who followed him.

So my question is why would genuine believers get what they believe and teach about human free will from a heretic who espoused patently unbiblical themes that trouble the Church to this day? Should we not get what we believe and what we teach from Scripture? Do not the Scriptures give us everything we need to develop a sound understanding of how this all works out?

The Truth of the matter is that yes, human beings do make choices- all day long. So the problem with that phrase is not with the word “will”, but with the word “free”. Our wills are not “free”- in the sense that our wills and the capacity that we have to make choices – does not operate alone in a vacuum- but it is totally and utterly linked and aligned to the nature of the individual.

So if the nature of the person is lost and fallen- then the will is also depraved. And this fallen will warps the loves and the desires and the wants of that person and that affects the choices that are made. So a lost person will choose- but he will only choose in concert with his fallen sinful nature and thus his choices will never include loving or serving God. The Bible says that a lost person loves sin and self and does not naturally or normally love God or the things of God- in fact the Bible says that those things are utter foolishness. **1Corinthians 2:14** says:

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

Now notice the three underlined words here. The Apostle Paul taught that a natural or a lost person “does not”. He does not *desire*, he does not *love*, he does not *wish*, he has no inclination and no disposition whatsoever that would make him “want” to do something. Well, what is the thing that a lost person has no “desire” or “want” to do?

... accept the things of the Spirit of God

Now this means that left to himself- in his natural fallen condition- a lost person would never voluntarily choose to accept the things of the Spirit of God. Well, why not? Look at the next part of this same verse:

... for they are foolishness to him...

Now this kind of “foolishness” does not mean “funny” or “silly”, but this Greek word has to do with something that is “absurd to the point of holding it in utter contempt”. So what is so utterly absurd that the lost person naturally and normally holds it in utter contempt?

... the things of the Spirit of God

Now this complete rejection of the things of the Spirit of God is not based on intellect or the lack of information- but is based on a preconceived hatred of God and the things of God that all human beings have by reason of Original Sin being passed onto them from the seed of Adam. And this prejudice is so powerful that it causes what is called a

“moral inability”- a loss of ability to love and serve God joyfully. Look at the next phrase of this verse:

... and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

The lost person, “cannot” he does not have the power or the ability to accept the things of the Spirit of God precisely because he has no desire or will to do so. So the fact that lost people do not want to accept the things of the Spirit of God renders them unable to do so.

This shows us the connection between the “will” and the “nature”. The lost person can choose all day long- but only on a *horizontal* level. He can choose who to marry and where to live and what job to hold and what color socks to put on. But he is entirely *unable* to voluntarily choose on a *vertical* level. Lost people *cannot* choose to love and serve God joyfully because he does not *want* to. So a lost person is completely helpless to choose to accept the things of the Spirit of God- absent a Sovereign intervening by God the Holy Spirit which will Sovereignly and effectually change his nature- which in turn will change his will and his choices. And he is like this precisely because He is fallen. In fact this is what it means to be fallen.

And God would be perfectly Just to leave fallen Man in this state- because even though we find this repulsive- God is not obligated to save anyone. Nobody deserves to be saved; nobody has earned it; and nobody can do anything that would make himself to be more attractive to God. So if God chose to save no one- His pristine Holiness would not be affected in any negative way.

So the fact that a Good and Glorious God chose to save anyone who is utterly fallen and who is utterly corrupt and who possess no good or righteous thing in him is one of the most amazing things in all the world. So the real issue is not that God chose to save *some* but not all- the real issue is that God chose to save *anyone*.

Now we rejoice that Salvation is wholly by Grace and completely through Faith and is absent any human deeds or human works or religious requirements at all such as partaking of the Sacraments or being baptized or speaking in tongues. And Salvation has nothing to do with other human works or deeds such as us walking down an aisle or raising our hands or shaking hands with the preacher or praying a particular prayer. So we are correct to say that salvation is not the result of:

- **Sacerdotal Regeneration** (Being Born Again through the Sacraments)
- **Baptismal Regeneration** (Being Born Again through Baptism)
- **Decisional Regeneration** (Being Born Again through Making a Decision)

No, the Bible teaches that we are Born Again- by “Sovereign Regeneration” God the Holy Spirit comes and gives us eyes to see; and ears to hear; and a heart to believe Sovereignly- without us doing anything and without us even cooperating with Him and without us even asking Him.

God chose to “set His Love” upon us before the foundation of the world and before we were born and before we did anything good or bad based on God’s Own Sovereign Predetermination and he did so for only one reason:

For the Glory of God Alone (Soli Deo- Gloria)

But if Salvation is wholly by Grace and solely through Faith and not of any human works at all- then who is saved and by means they are saved is determined by God and by God alone because you can’t have it both ways. If Salvation is not by human works and only by Grace through Faith- then God alone is the Determiner of who is and who can be saved. And if God is as Sovereign as the Bible says that He is- then He alone is the only One Who can save anyone and if we are as fallen as the Bible says that we are- then we are completely incapable of facilitating Salvation or contributing to Salvation based on anything we that we do or not do.

The sovereign freedom of God in Election is also suggested by the way the Prophet Isaiah compares God’s choosing to God’s creating or God’s begetting in **Isaiah 44:1&2:**

1 “But now listen, O Jacob, My servant, And Israel, whom I have chosen:

2 Thus says the Lord who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you, ‘Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen.

God “chose” Israel and He “made” Israel. These are both true because the choosing was such a unique, sovereign Work of God that it was in a real sense a “creating” or a “making” of Israel. Again Isaiah writes:

Isaiah 43:1

But now, thus says the Lord, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine!

Isaiah 45:11

Thus says the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: “Ask Me about the things to come concerning My sons, And you shall commit to Me the work of My hands.

... in other words- God's *electing* Israel is virtually the same as His *fathering* her or *creating* her. Moses says essentially the same thing:

Deuteronomy 32:6

“Do you thus repay the Lord, O foolish and unwise people? Is not He your Father who has bought you? He has made you and established you.

Exodus 4:22-23

22 “Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, “Israel is My son, My firstborn.

23 “So I said to you, ‘Let My son go that he may serve Me’; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn.’””

The Prophet Malachi describes God's choosing Israel as what a Father or a Creator does:

Malachi 2:10

“Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother so as to profane the covenant of our fathers?

And Isaiah again makes the strongest statement of all in saying that Israel's relation to God is like the relationship between a pot and a Potter:

Isaiah 64:8

But now, O Lord, You are our Father, We are the clay, and You our potter; And all of us are the work of Your hand.

This shows just how free God was in Election. He was *not* influenced by some moral fitness of Abraham or of the people of Israel, any more than a father is moved by the moral fitness of the nonexistent child that he sows seed to birth or than a potter is influenced by the beauty of his nonexistent pot to make it. This is what we mean by the term “Unconditional Election” or “Sovereign Election”.

You see, if God’s choice of Israel out from all the peoples on the earth was not motivated by some distinctive in Abraham and his posterity- by what then was it motivated? And the Biblical answer is that it came from God’s Own Good Pleasure. God’s electing Love is absolutely free- in every sense of that word. It is the gracious overflow of His boundless Happiness guided by His infinite Wisdom. **Deuteronomy 10:14&15** describes the delight God had in choosing Israel from all the peoples of the earth.

14 “Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it.

15 “Yet on your fathers did the Lord set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, *even* you above all peoples, as *it is* this day.

Now notice two things here:

1) Notice the contrast between verses 14 and 15. Why does Moses describe the Election of Israel against the backdrop of God’s Ownership of the whole universe? Why does he say in verse 14,

to the Lord your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it.

... and then say in verse 15,

Yet... He chose their descendants after them... *even* you above all peoples?

The reason was to get rid of any notion that God was somehow hedged in to choose this people. The point is to explode the myth that each people has its own god and *this* god has a right to His Own people but no more. The Truth is that this is the only true God. He owns everything in the universe and can take any people He wants for His Own special possession.

Thus the unspeakably wonderful Truth for Israel is that God chose them. He did not have to. He had rights and privileges to choose absolutely any people on the face of the earth for His Redeeming Purposes. Therefore, when He calls himself “their God” He does not mean that He is on a par with the “gods” of Egypt or the “gods” of Canaan. He owns those gods and their peoples. If it had pleased Him, God could have chosen a totally different people to accomplish His Purposes. So the point of putting verses 14 and 15 together in this way is to stress the absolute Freedom and the universal Rights and Authority of God.

2) The second thing to notice (in verse 15) is the way God exercises His Sovereign Freedom to “Love” the fathers. Moses said that God:

... set His affection to love them

... which is a strange way to put that. This phrase means that God *delighted in* your fathers to love them.” He freely chose to take Pleasure in loving the fathers. So God’s Love for the fathers of Israel was free and merciful and wasn’t constrained by anything that the fathers were in their Jewishness or in their virtue.

One of the ways God makes this clear is that when Abraham fathered two sons- God chose only one of them- Isaac- and not Ishmael- to be the son of Promise. And when Isaac had two sons- even before they were born or did anything good or evil- God chose only Jacob and not Esau to continue the line of His chosen people. So in each case- God acted in a way that highlights His Sovereign Freedom in Election. In Isaac’s case the child is born by miraculous, divine intervention when Abraham and Sarah are too old to have children. And the point of this is to unmistakably show that God’s Purposes in Election are not limited by human abilities or inabilities. God is free to choose whomever He pleases- even if He has to create a child by a miraculous birth.

And this is the very same Truth that John Baptist had in mind when he warned the Pharisees and Sadducees,

Matthew 3:9

and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.

In other words, don't ever think that God is obliged to choose you because of some human distinctive like your physical descent from Abraham. If God needs descendants from Abraham to fulfill the Promises of Election- He is well able to create them out of stones. God is never beholding to Man and He is never boxed in. God is the only Being in the Universe that is completely free and God is completely free all the time- even in Salvation. God is not limited to you. So beware of presuming on His electing Grace. It is absolutely free and that means that while it is true that you can't earn it- it is also true that God doesn't owe it. So walk softly before your God.

Now God makes the very same point in the way He chooses Jacob and not Esau. In their case- God chooses the son who- according to all ordinary custom and human expectation- should not have been chosen, namely, the younger one. Thus He shows that His Goal in doing that was to sabotage any attempt by anyone for any reason to limit His Freedom in Election. So God is never bound or constrained by any human distinctives. And that is fantastic news- if you are a wicked sinner who is wholly underserving of anything from God but damnation.

Now surprisingly enough- there is a Chapter in a Book in the Bible that goes into great detail about Sovereign Election. And in that Chapter- God the Holy Spirit moved upon the Apostle Paul to deal with this subject very clearly and very precisely. There is nothing vague or unclear about the way in which Paul handles Sovereign Election and yet, tragically, most people have never even read that Chapter- much less understood it. It is the 9th Chapter of **the Book of Romans** and there are probably fewer sermons on this Chapter than anything else in the entire Bible. In fact I often find it necessary to remind people that **Romans** contains an inspired 9th Chapter- there is such scant attention given to this subject.

So why is it that so many today either don't understand Sovereign Election or so grossly misunderstand it? First of all we are forced to say that it is not because it isn't in the Bible- because it is- and it is in the Bible repeatedly. And it also is not because the Bible treats Sovereign Election in a mysterious way- because it does not. Sovereign Election is laid out in a forthright and crystal clear manner in the Holy Bible.

So why is it that this issue is hated and twisted by so many? We are left with only one answer- because they do not like what the Bible manifestly says about it. Because if Sovereign Election is what the Holy Bible says that it is- then the overwhelming majority of all the evangelistic methods that are used in the modern Church are just flat out wrong and

much of what is commonly taught about how lost sinners are saved is also manifestly unbiblical.

And that is so sad because I would suggest that nothing exalts the majesty of God's Grace more than the fact that God saves unworthy sinners by no other method other than His Own Sovereign Act and nothing shows us the infinite magnificence of God's Mercy than the fact that who is saved is left entirely up to God and His completely free Ordination to show that Mercy to whom He will and withhold Mercy from whom He will.

So stay tuned for the sermon next week as we explore more deeply God's great Delight in Sovereign Election.

Let's pray.