

That Which Pleases God

An Examination of What God Delights In

5 God Takes Pleasure in Sovereign Election- Part 2

February 2, 2014

Romans 9

1 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit,

2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.

3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, *separated* from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,

4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises,

5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

6 But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel;

7 nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED."

8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

9 For this is the word of promise: "AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON."

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.

19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"

20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

23 And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

24 *even* us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

25 As He says also in Hosea, "I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,' AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'"

26 "AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,' THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD."

27 Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED;

28 FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY."

29 And just as Isaiah foretold, "UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOth HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH."

30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;

31 but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at *that* law.

32 Why? Because *they did not pursue it* by faith, but as though *it were* by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,

33 just as it is written, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

To the Glory of God

Now look closely again at verses 10-13:

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."

So the Apostle Paul stresses here in **Romans 9:10–13** that the reason for the Sovereign Election of Jacob and not Esau, and the Sovereign Choosing of Isaac and not Ishmael- was to show that God's Election as recorded in the Bible is two things:

A. Absolutely Free

B. Absolutely Unconditional

Now, when we say that Sovereign Election is "Absolutely Free"- we mean to say that God Almighty is the only truly "free" Being in the Universe- Who does everything He does based solely on His Own Good Pleasure and the fulfillment of His Own Will, and God chose these two men because it pleased Him to do so- not because He was under any

constraint or obligation to choose them, and not because they possessed some inherent quality that made them attractive to God in any way. God decided before the foundation of the world to save who will be saved because it delighted Him to do so.

And we say that Election is “Absolutely Unconditional” in that it doesn’t matter how sinful a person has been or long they have been sinful, and it doesn’t matter what family they were born into or what culture or what nationality they came from. God didn’t see some noble or good quality in the people that He saves- He saves them unconditionally- without any conditions that they must meet in order to be acceptable to Him.

Now regardless of much or how little you and I may struggle with the concept- that is *exactly* what those four verses are in the Bible to say to us. So Sovereign Election is *entirely* “free” and it is *entirely* “unconditional” and therefore- it is completely Merciful and Gracious.

Now what this text says is that God chooses the “**children of promise**” (**Romans 9:8**) in a way that will free His choosing from human works and make it totally dependent on His Own Calling. And this is why Election is called “unconditional”. And Paul brings this out in three ways:

1. **Romans 9:10**- we see that Jacob and Esau had the same parents unlike Isaac and Ishmael- therefore *parentage* is not something that made Jacob a better candidate for Election
2. **Romans 9:11a** tells us that God’s Choice was made before they were born so that the Choice was not based on any birth order. In fact, God turned the tables and chose the younger.
3. **Romans 9:11b** God’s Choice for Jacob was made before they had done anything good or evil. And the point is clear: Election is not based on what someone does after birth- It is both free and unconditional.

Another place that God talks about this is found in **Deuteronomy 7:6-8** that says:

6 “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

7 “The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples,

8 but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

This Passage teaches again the Freedom of God’s Grace in loving and choosing Israel. Notice the question that verse 7 raises:

Why did God “set his love upon you and choose you”?

... and Moses answers that it was *not* because of their greatness. They were very small, unlikely candidates for being chosen by God. So why then *did* God delight in them and choose them? Verse 8 gives two answers.

- 1) “It is “**because the LORD loved you.**” Now before you just pass this up- remember what the question was from verse 7. The question was: *Why did God set His Love upon you?* So the first answer Moses gives is: “Because God loved you.” So the answer is:

God loves you because He loves you.

... and this is what I mean by the Freedom of God and the Freedom of Electing Love. God does not set His Love upon them because they do something to qualify for His Love. God says here that He loves them simply because He loves them.

- 2) It is because God was keeping “the oath” which He swore to their fathers.”

... so does this mean that God’s Choice to love and save really wasn’t free after all? Was God *obligated* to save them? No.

The Oath of Blessing (referred to in verse 8) was originally given to Abraham in *Divine Freedom*. And that Oath that was originally *given* in Absolute Freedom was also *confirmed in Absolute Freedom* to

Isaac and not Ishmael, and it was confirmed *in Absolute Freedom* to Jacob and not Esau.

And Paul goes on to say in verse 8 that in the very same way that God was free at the Red Sea to save that rebellious generation (**Psalm 106:7&8**) or to let them justly be destroyed by Pharaoh and then raise up children to Abraham from stones if necessary. So God's Choice to rescue Israel at the Red Sea and make them into an earthly people for His Name was absolutely Free and Merciful and Gracious! It was simply an extension and partial fulfillment of that first free Oath that God made to Abraham and then to Isaac and Jacob.

So we should conclude from **Deuteronomy 10:14&15** and **7:6-8** that the Way in which God decided to make a Name for His Glorious Grace in the Old Testament was to choose a people for Himself from all the peoples of the earth and to make that people the showcase of His Redeeming Work.

And so, for example- you read in Isaiah that God created Israel **"for his glory"** (**43:7**), and that he formed them **"that they might declare [his] praise"** (**43:21**). In other words- in order to extend the Pleasure that God has in His Own Name- He chooses a people to enjoy and praise and proclaim that Name to all the peoples of the earth. And so I tell you that God has great Pleasure in Election.

Okay now that is the Old Testament. But what happens in the New Testament with the coming of Christ? The New Testament reveals that God *continues* to rejoice in Election- the only difference is that we move into a period when Israel as a people is no longer the focus of God's Dealings. He turns for now to the Gentiles and begins to assemble a people for Himself called the "Church". And this is what Jesus meant in **Matthew 21:43** when He said,

"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you [Israel] and given to a people, producing the fruit of it [The Church]."

And Jesus called these days- when the Focus of His Saving Work is on the nations of the world and not Israel: "the times of the Gentiles."

And during this time Paul says in **Romans 11:25** that **"... a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in"**. So God is now at work gathering this **"full number of Gentiles"** (the elect) from all the peoples of the world. So prior to the coming of Jesus-

the Focus of God's saving Reign was on Israel. Dr. Luke quotes Barnabas and Paul as saying in **The Acts 14:16&17:**

16 In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways;

17 and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."

And these past centuries were the “**times of ignorance**” among the nations of the world as **The Acts 17:30** says. But now the Great Commission is pressing the Gospel outwards to every people, tribe, language, and nation.

Now since the Church is not an ethnic group like Israel was- God does not elect an entire nation for earthly purposes like He did Israel. Instead, the New Testament speaks of Election as God's Choice of *individual unworthy sinners* to believe and become part of the redeemed people of God.

Now keep in mind God's Pleasure in Election and turn with me to **Luke 10:21**. Now the reason I choose this verse is because it is one of the only two places in the four Gospel Records where Jesus is said to rejoice. Now here the seventy disciples have just returned from their preaching tours and reported their success to Jesus. And Luke writes in verse 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.

Now notice first of all that all three Persons of the Trinity are rejoicing here: Jesus is rejoicing, but it says that He is rejoicing *in the Holy Spirit*. And that means that the Holy Spirit is filling Him and moving Him to rejoice. And then at the end of the verse it describes the Pleasure of God the Father:

Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.

So what was “well- pleasing” to the Father here? What is it that has the whole Trinity rejoicing together in this place? The generic saving of souls? No. It is the free electing Love of God to hide things from the intellectual self-righteous and revealing them to spiritual babes.

"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.

... and just what is it that the Father hides from some and reveals to others? **Luke 10:22** gives the answer:

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*."

Now you may not like this. And this may not sit well with you. This may shatter the image that you have manufactured about Jesus in your mind- but I am telling you that this is *exactly* what the Holy Bible says, and this is what the Holy Bible has *always* said, and we are trying with all our might to be Biblical in this Church, and so I am preaching the Word of God this morning- not some 16th Century Theology.

So when the seventy disciples return from their evangelistic mission and give their report to Jesus- He and the Holy Spirit rejoice that God the Father has delighted in choosing, according to His Own Good Pleasure- to reveal the Son to humble, spiritual babes, and to also hide Him from those who are arrogant in their own minds.

And the point of this is not that there are only certain classes of people who are chosen by God. Poor people and ignorant people and uncultured people are not any more attractive to God than rich and educated people are. Every human- regardless of status- is a wicked sinner who is wholly undeserving of Salvation. So the point here is that God is free to choose the *least likely* candidates for His Grace. Just as with the election of Abraham (the unlikely idolater from Ur) and Isaac (the miracle-born son of old age) and Jacob (the younger of twins), God contradicts what human merit might dictate. So He hides from the wise and reveals to the most helpless and unaccomplished. And when Jesus sees the Father freely enlightening and saving people whose only hope

is Free Grace- He exults in the Holy Spirit and takes Pleasure in His Father's Election.

You see, dear friends- God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are so devoted to exalting God the Father that They rejoice when He exerts His Wisdom and Power and Grace to choose a people for Himself in a Way that will confound all the Man-centered expectations of the world. So the wise are passed over in their pride, and the babes- the unlikely, the helpless- are surprised with the Sovereign Freedom of Divine Favor. So God delights in turning the tables from what the fallen world expects and demands. And by doing it this way- the arrogant self-righteous wisdom of Man is put down and Gods alone is exalted. And the Freedom of God's Grace is magnified when the prime candidates of the world are passed over, and God surprises everyone with His Choice of the nobodies. And this is what make Jesus and the Holy Spirit rejoice—the humbling of human pride and the exaltation of God's Freedom and Grace.

And this is exactly what Paul focuses on when he describes God's Election in forming the church in **1Corinthians 1:26–31**. And as you read this Passage with me- look for just what is being *opposed* and what is being *promoted* in the Election described in these verses.

26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;
27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,
28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,
29 so that no man may boast before God.
30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,
31 so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

Now the thought here is similar to that in **Luke 10:21**. God chooses freely who will belong to Him as His people. So God does not simply elect Christ and then wait on human self-determination, to govern who will be "in Christ." Paul says very explicitly in verse 30:

... by His doing you are in Christ Jesus...

... so your union with Christ is the Choice and Work of God. Election is not God's Choice of an unknown group of people who come to Christ by virtue of their self-determining power. Election is the Sovereign Act of God by which He determines who will be in Christ.

The main point of this Passage would be completely undermined if Election were not the Election of individuals to belong to Christ. For the point of the passage is: *"Look at what sort of individuals are in Christ: the foolish, the weak, the despised. How is it that such unimpressive kinds of people are 'in Christ'? It's because God chose them. 'God chose what is foolish.... God chose what is weak.... God chose what is low and despised.... From God are you in Christ.' "* So this is *not* the Election of Jesus Christ. This is the Election of who belongs to Jesus Christ. And there is a very powerful and glorious Reason for this kind of Election- an utterly crucial Reason. God is not acting willy-nilly here. He is not just pushing His Weight around. God Almighty has a very definite Goal in mind to accomplish in Election. And this Goal is accomplished by choosing who will be in Christ- not just by choosing Christ. And His Goal has two parts- one wondrously positive and one horribly negative.

Negatively, God's Goal is:

1Corinthians 1:29

so that no man may boast before God.

... so one of the main Goals of Sovereign Election is the complete elimination of all human pride and all self-reliance and all boasting in Man. And *positively*- His Goal is that all boasting would be in the Lord:

1Corinthians 1:31b

... "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

... in other words- the Goal of Sovereign Election is to take all the boasting away from Man and all that he does and place all the boasting on God and all that He does. So two eternal Goals:

1. To Humble the Pride of Man
2. To Exalt Jesus Christ Alone

You see, only humble people exalt Jesus Christ. By definition human pride and arrogance and self-righteousness war against God and give Him no Glory at all. Pride robs God of His Glory and is the enemy of God- which is why God and the Bible and Biblical Christianity fight against human pride. And true Biblical humility- not the pseudo-humility that is so popular in our day- but true humility forces Man to see his utter dependence on God's Mercy and that magnifies the Glory of God's Free Grace like nothing else could- and that is why God has great Delight and Pleasure in Sovereign Election—it magnifies His Name!

Therefore, all true Gospel Preaching, all true Bible Teaching must include the offensive and insulting “bad news” of Man's Radical Ruination from the Fall which makes the Good News of Jesus and His finished Work very good indeed.

Three times in **Ephesians 1**- Paul shouts this great Purpose of God in His Electing Work. It is all done “to the praise of the Glory of His Grace.”

Ephesians 1:4-6

4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Ephesians 1:11&12

11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 1:14

who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

In each of these instances what is being expressed is *God's Goal*. God elects, God predestines, and God secures for one great ultimate Purpose—that the Glory of His magnificent Grace might be praised forever and ever with white-hot affection. And this is why God delights in Election. It is the great first Work of Free Grace that takes away the final refuge of human self-reliance and casts Man on the unshakable Rock of Covenant Love.

For many people today, it is nothing short of shocking that Jesus had the audacity to put such a high value on the Sovereign Rights of God's Electing Freedom and that He would speak the way He does to those who refuse Him. Jesus speaks in such a way as to prevent them from boasting that they can overrule the ultimate Purposes of God. For example, in **John 10:25&26**, Jesus responded to the skeptics who demanded more and more proof:

25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me.

26 But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep.

Think about that for a moment. Think about what it *means* and think about the fact that Jesus would dare to say it to unbelievers. Jesus did *not* say, "*You are not my sheep because you do not believe.*" So belonging to the sheep, in this text, is not dependent on believing. It's the other way around. Believing is dependent on being a sheep. Being the sheep enables a person to believe. So Jesus says, "**you do not believe because you are not of My sheep**".

And what Jesus means by "*my sheep*" is that the Father has given these sheep to Him. And that is what makes them His- what *God* Sovereignly did- not what the people *themselves* do. We see this again in **John 10:27–29** when Jesus said,

27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

29 My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand.

The Father has given these sheep to the Son. So they are "His." And this is Jesus' way of talking about *Election* in the Gospel of John. God has chosen a people for His Own. They are His elected sheep. And the Father then gives them to His Son so that they can be forever saved by trusting in what Jesus did for them. And you can see this clearly in **John 17:6** where Jesus says to his Father,

"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

So Jesus can speak with this Confidence about His sheep among the goats of Israel *precisely* because they first belonged to the Father by Election: **"they were Yours and You gave them to Me"**. So what we must conclude is that belonging to the Father precedes coming to Jesus. So what we have to know is that:

We were God's by Election *before* we were Christ's by gift

And that's what Jesus says again in **John 6:37–39**:

37 All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

39 This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

Now just picture yourself as a Pharisee hearing this Message of Jesus and thinking to yourself, *"If this clown thinks that I am going to be sucked into this movement along with the tax collectors and sinners- he's crazy. I have a will of my own and the power to determine my own destiny."* And then picture Jesus- knowing exactly what is in your heart, looking you square in the eye and telling you, *"You can boast in your heart that you are in control of your life. And you can think that you have the power to frustrate the ultimate Plan of My Ministry. And you can think that the great Purposes of God in Salvation are*

dependent on your frail, wavering will. But truly, truly I say to you- the ultimate reason that you do not believe is because the Father has not chosen you to be among My sheep."

In other words, Jesus is saying, *"The final boast of unbelief is destroyed by The Doctrine of Sovereign Election."* Those whom God chose- He also gave to the Son. And those whom the Father gave to the Son- the Spirit called and drew. And those whom the Spirit called- came. And those who came- no matter how filthy or wicked- the Son received because it was for them that He laid down His Life. And to these elected unworthy sinners- Jesus gives to them infinite Joy in His Presence forever. And these will sing the praises of the Glory of God's Grace throughout all eternity. And this is the Father's Pleasure.

Now I am often asked by people, *"Does it really matter what we believe about Election? Is Election really relevant to how we live and minister?"* And my answer is always, *"Absolutely!"* And I think it will be helpful if I close this part of **That Which Pleases God** with seven reasons why this Teaching of Sovereign Election is so precious to me, and why I believe God takes enormous Pleasure in it.

1. Sovereign Election is Biblical. It is in the Bible. And it is not found only in one vague reference- but it is heralded in the totality of all of Scripture. Recall the experience of George Mueller that I gave you last week, "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." And George Whitefield, the great eighteenth-century evangelist spoke for many saints when he wrote to John Wesley to explain why he believed in the Truth of Election: "Alas, I never read anything that Calvin wrote; my doctrines I had from Christ and His Apostles; I was taught them of God." God has Pleasure in Election because He exalts His Word (Psalm 138:2) and His Word teaches that these things are so."

2. Sovereign Election humbles sinners and exalts the Glory of God. This was the point of **1Corinthians 1:26–31**. **"God chose ... so that no human being might boast in the Presence of God ... [but] let him who boasts boast in the Lord."** The great Design of God's Way of Salvation is to magnify His Glory and bring down human pride. George Whitefield wrote to John

Wesley urging that they seek the Truth “that shall most debase man and exalt the Lord Jesus.” Nothing can do this like the great Doctrines of the Bible. All Man-made teachings leave “human free will” intact and make Man- at least in part- a savior to himself. George Whitfield said,

“My soul, come not thou near the secret of those who teach such things.... I know Christ is all in all. Man is nothing: he hath a free will to go to hell, but none to go to heaven, till God worketh in him to will and to do his good pleasure. Oh, the excellency of the doctrine of election and of the saints’ final perseverance! I am persuaded, till a man comes to believe and feel these important truths, he cannot come out of himself, but when convinced of these and assured of their application to his own heart, he then walks by faith indeed.”

3. Sovereign Election tends to preserve the Church from slipping toward false philosophies of life. History seems to show that this is so. For example, toward the end of the eighteenth century- the New York Times, of all places, reported,

“Calvinistic convictions waned in North America. In the progress of a decline which [Jonathan] Edwards had rightly anticipated, those Congregational churches of New England which had embraced Arminianism after the Great Awakening gradually moved into Unitarianism and universalism, led by Charles Chauncy.”

It seems that there is something about the Truth of God’s Free and Sovereign Election that stands guard over the mind and heart of the Church and keeps her alert to tendencies and shifts that swing wide from the plumb line of God’s Word.

4. Sovereign Election is the “Good News” of a Salvation that is not just *offered* but actually *achieved*. Election is the Divine Guarantee that God not only *invites* people to be delivered- but also actually powerfully and effectually *delivers* them. **“You shall call his name Jesus because *he shall save his people from their sins*” (Matthew 1:21).** God undertakes with undefeatable Omnipotence to save His people. He plans it in Election and then He achieves it through the Work of His Son, and He applies it infallibly by His Holy Spirit through faith. **The predestined are called; the called are justified, the justified are glorified**

(**Romans 8:30**). So the destiny of God's true people- rooted in Election- is unshakably sure. And that is Good News.

5. Sovereign Election enables us to own up to the demands for Holiness in the Scripture and yet have Assurance of Salvation. The Bible teaches that there is a Holiness without which **“no one will see the Lord”** (**Hebrews 12:14**). Literally dozens of Passages in the Bible speak of our final Salvation (though not our Election) as being *totally* conditional upon a changed heart and life. So the question arises then, “How can I have the Assurance that I will persevere in Faith and in the Holiness necessary for inheriting Eternal Life?”

The answer is that Assurance is rooted in our Election (**2Peter 1:10**). Divine Election is the Guarantee that God will undertake to complete by “Sanctifying Grace” what His “Electing Grace” has begun. This is why the New Covenant is infinitely superior to the Old: God does not merely command Obedience- He also gives it Himself. **“The LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live”** (**Deuteronomy 30:6**). **“I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes”** (**Ezekiel 36:27; 11:20**; see also **Hebrews 13:20; Philippians 2:13**). Election is the final Ground of Assurance because, since it is God's Determination to save- it is also God's Determination to enable all that is necessary for Salvation. 1700 years ago- Augustine put it like this:

“I have no hope at all but in thy great mercy. Grant what thou commandest and command what thou wilt. Thou dost enjoin on us continence.... Truly by continence are we bound together and brought back into that unity from which we were dissipated into a plurality. For he loves thee too little who loves anything together with thee, which he loves not for thy sake. O love that ever burnest and art never quenched! O Charity, my God, enkindle me! Thou commandest continence. Grant what thou commandest and command what thou wilt.”

The Assurance that God will answer this prayer in accordance with the Oath of the New Covenant is that Election secures that **“those who are justified will be glorified”** (**Romans 8:30**), so that all the conditions laid down for glorification will be met by the Power of God's Grace. **“God**

chose you from the beginning to be saved *through sanctification by the Spirit* (2Thessalonians 2:13).

Election guards us from falling off the horse on either side. It guards against the error of thinking that we can earn our way into God's Favor through "works of the law," since God's Favor toward us is rooted in the Free Act of Love before the foundation of the world. We cannot earn what God has chosen to bestow freely **"before we had done anything good or evil"** (Romans 9:11). So Election also guards us from the error of thinking that, in order for us to be loved freely and to be saved eternally- then obedience to Truth after we are saved must then be *optional* and not *mandatory*. So the incentive for Biblical Holiness retains its urgency- since Holiness is necessary (Hebrews 12:14). However that obedience never becomes a legalistic burden- because we serve in the Strength which God supplies (1Peter 4:11; see also 1Corinthians 15:10; Romans 15:18) and we realize that obedience is the pathway to infinite Joy.

So both of these statements are true- **"the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life"** (Matthew 7:14), *and* that **"my yoke is easy and my burden is light"** (Matthew 11:30). So the Truth of Sovereign Election preserves both the "urgency" and the "freedom" of Biblical obedience.

6. This Truth opens us to the overwhelming experience of being loved personally with the unbreakable electing Love of God. Many people have no personal experience of knowing that they were loved by God eternally and will be cared for by Him with Omnipotent, all-supplying Love forever and ever. Many people think of God's Love only in terms of a Love that offers and then waits and hopes- but does not effectually take us for Himself and work with infinite Enthusiasm to keep us and glorify us forever. Yet this is the experience available for any who will come and drink the Water of Life freely (The Revelation 22:17).

So there is a "General Love" of God that He bestows on all His creatures. This is plain from Matthew 5:44&45, **"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."** (See also The Acts 14:17; 1Timothy 4:10.) But this General Love- which is extended to all people in some way- is not the Comfort and Strength of the Christian heart. Our Comfort and Strength is found in the Assurance that we belong to God's

Covenant Community and are loved with an "Electing and Effectual Love" that not only *offers* good things, but actually *accomplishes* everything necessary for our individual Salvation. One beautiful expression (among many) of this kind of Effectual Love in the Old Testament is found in **Jeremiah 31:2&3** that says,

2 Thus says the LORD, "The people who survived the sword Found grace in the wilderness— Israel, when it went to find its rest."

3 The LORD appeared to him from afar, *saying*, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness."

Here is the preciousness of an Everlasting and Electing Love that secures not just the offer of help- but the commitment of Covenant Faithfulness. And to know and enjoy this kind of Love is God's Will for His people. But it is not likely to be known where the Truth of Election is neither taught nor known.

The expressions of this Love in the New Testament are too many to quote, but too precious not to mention in part. **"For we know, brothers, loved by God, that he has chosen you"** (1Thessalonians 1:4). **"We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, loved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved"** (2Thessalonians 2:13). Election is the first gift and a continuing Channel, of Covenant Love to God's people. **"Put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and loved, compassion, kindness...."** (Colossians 3:12). So to be a "chosen one" is to be uniquely "loved," as one of Christ's "own." **"Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end"** (John 13:1; see also 15:13–14; 17:22–23). **"But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ [by grace you have been saved]"** (Ephesians 2:4–5). The Covenant Love of God is a resurrecting Power of Grace that made us alive when we were dead and could not yet exert faith (see also **Romans 8:7; 1Corinthians 2:14; John 10:27**).

There is a desperate need in the world for a sense of being loved that only this Truth about Election can satisfy. And God means for us to completely enjoy this experience. And seeing His people strengthened and emboldened by it- is another Reason why God has pleasure in Election.

7. Sovereign Election gives hope for effective Evangelism and guarantees the Triumph of Christ's Mission in the end. There is nothing that I have said today that should be taken to imply that the urgency of Evangelism is lessened by the Truth of Sovereign Election. Evangelism and missions are never imperiled or hindered by the Biblical Truth of Election- they are *empowered* by it- and their triumph is secured by it. Jesus said, **“I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice” (John 10:16).** This means that there are elect sheep scattered throughout the world (**John 11:52**). And these people will be among **“every people, language, tribe and nation”** when the missionary arrives to issue God's absolutely Essential Call through the Gospel (**The Revelation 5:9**). Therefore, Jesus says He *must* bring them in. And He says they *will* heed His Voice. In other words, the Triumph of the ingathering of world missions is a *certainty* because of the Truth of Sovereign Election: Jesus does have other sheep.

David Livingstone of the “Dr. Livingstone I presume” fame had great exploits in Africa for God in the 19th Century and in 1852- Livingstone wrote:

“Viewed in relation to my Calling, the end of the geographical feat is only the beginning of the enterprise. The great object was to bring unknown nations into the sympathies of the Christian world and thus introduce them to the Gospel. O Jesus, fill me with Thy Love now, and I beseech Thee, accept me, and use me a little for Thy Glory.”

To his wife he wrote,

“I will go no matter who opposes: I know you wish as ardently as I can that all the world may be filled with the Glory of the Lord.”

Livingstone died so far from civilization that eleven months passed before his body was buried in Westminster Abbey. And the text chosen to be inscribed on his grave was not only a driving power in his *own* life but later would prove to be the same in the life of another young man as well- Peter Cameron Scott.

Scott was born in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1867 and founded the African Inland Mission. His efforts to take the Gospel to Africa met with

tragedy and discouragement. His brother John had joined him in the mission, but within months John fell victim to fever. Alone in the jungle- Scott buried him, and at the grave rededicated himself to preach the Gospel. But, to compound his heartache- his health broke and, utterly discouraged- he had to return to England.

But in London something wonderful happened. Scott needed a fresh source of inspiration and he found it at a tomb in Westminster Abbey that held the remains of a man who had inspired so many others in their missionary service to Africa. The testimony of David Livingstone's faithfulness seemed to be prodding Scott onward as he knelt reverently and read the inscription:

OTHER SHEEP I HAVE WHICH ARE NOT OF THIS FOLD;
THEM ALSO I MUST BRING.

So Scott returned to Africa and laid down his life for the Cause for which Livingstone had lived and died. And before he died- Scott said,

“It is the truth of Sovereign Election (“I have other sheep”)—the Sovereign Freedom of God in saving a people for Himself—that guarantees the triumph of the Gospel and the universal Fame of God’s Grace.”

Dear friends- I say to you this morning that this Triumph and this Fame brought about by Sovereign Election brings overflowing Pleasure to the Heart of our great God.

Amen. Let's pray.