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Electing Love

Romans 9.9-13

Series: The Pure Gospel

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The Village Church

March 23, 2025

I. Introduction

- A. John Guest emigrated to the United States from England in the 1960's
 - 1. He had come to Christ through the 1954 Billy Graham crusade in London
 - 2. He came to the states as an ordained Anglican
 - a. And became pastor of St. Stephens Church in Sewickley, PA, and then later at Christ Church at Grove Farm, also in Sewickley
 - b. He founded a number of evangelical ministries, including Coalition for Christian Outreach, a ministry to college campuses in the Eastern US for which our daughter worked for a number of years
- B. When he came to the states, being the curious new immigrant, he was in Philadelphia
 - 1. And he was exploring some of the antique shops in the city
 - 2. He came across an old sign in one of the shops that got his attention
 - 3. **"We Serve No Sovereign Here"**
 - a. It dated from the late 18th Century – the Revolutionary War period
 - b. It was a slogan used by the upstart revolutionaries
 - c. A reaction to the overbearing rule of George III, King of England
 - 4. The revolution would bear fruit in producing a new nation, not burdened by the oppressive tyrannical reign of an unelected monarch
 - 5. We would be a government of the people, by the people, and for the people as Abraham Lincoln would summarize it
- C. The idea of serving no sovereign is, therefore, a particular American disposition
 - 1. We refuse to be beholden to any such despot
- D. Such an attitude or disposition is thoroughly American
 - 1. But it is not biblical
 - 2. For those of us who are Christians, who believe in the God of the Bible, we do, in fact, serve a sovereign here
- E. We are in our study of **Romans – The Pure Gospel**
 - 1. We're in Chapter 9
 - 2. In Chapter 9 we are presented with a God who is sovereign
 - 3. Sovereign is what we love to say about God
 - a. We apply that term to Him with great frequency
 - b. We recognize that He has the power and authority to reign and rule over every aspect of our lives
 - c. We sing about His sovereignty

4. But sometimes, when we run into issues that we like to reserve to our own authority
 - a. We call time out
 - b. We say, “God, you can have everything you want – except that.”
- F. One of the areas that often pushes our envelope is our own salvation
 1. And the doctrine that we most struggle with is the doctrine of election
 2. And our text this morning raises that very issue
- G. Text
 1. **Romans 9:9–13** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.”
 - b. 10 And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac,
 - c. 11 though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—
 - d. 12 she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”
 - e. 13 As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”
- H. My commitment to you – as it has always been – is to bring you the unadulterated Word of God
 1. The hard stuff as well as the easy stuff
 2. And I don’t skip the hard stuff
 3. I’m very well aware that this text, and the subsequent verses that we will consider in the next few messages, are the hard stuff
 - a. And that there will be those of you who will struggle – as I have struggled – with these texts
 4. Some of you will thrill with delight when you understand the doctrine of election
 - a. You will rejoice in it
 - b. It will be one of the doctrines that will fill your hearts with pleasure in the contemplations of the amazing grace of God
 5. Others may need some time to wrestle with God and His Word over the issue of election
 6. And some of you may say, “We serve no sovereign here”
 - a. Election is a bridge too far for me
- I. Jonathan Edwards – arguably America’s greatest theologian – struggled with the issue
 1. “From my childhood up, my mind had been full of objections against the doctrine of God’s sovereignty in choosing whom he would to eternal life... It used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me.
 2. “But I have often, since that first conviction, had quite another kind of sense of God’s sovereignty than I had then. I have often since had not only a conviction, but a delightful conviction. The doctrine has very often appeared exceedingly pleasant, bright and sweet. Absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God. But my [original] conviction was not so.”

J. Let's explore this chapter together, and be open to God's instruction

II. **Paul's Anguish**

- A. You'll remember in our previous studies that Paul has been laying out the glories of the gospel
1. That God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself
 2. That we humans are sinners by nature
 - a. That our basic disposition is to suppress the truth about God in unrighteousness
 - b. That we all are sinners, and that every human faculty – mind, will, emotions, body, soul – are all affected by sin
 - c. And that we deserve God's anger – His wrath – for having rejected the altogether holy and eternally righteous Being
 3. But God, in Jesus Christ, has provided for us the righteousness that we so much lack and so desperately need
 - a. And in the gospel, God justifies us – declares us not guilty – by faith in His Son Jesus Christ
 - b. Christ in His death takes upon Himself our sin
 - c. And God imputes Christ's righteousness to our account
 4. So that in the gospel of Jesus Christ, all who believe in Him have ...
 - a. Peace with God
 - b. Union with God through the indwelling Holy Spirit
 - c. No condemnation
 - d. Escape from the wrath of God
 - e. Access to the Father
 - f. Hope of an eternity of love in the presence of God
 - g. The certainty of nothing being able to separate us from His love
 5. What a glorious gospel!
- B. But you'll recall that Chapter 9 opens with Paul in anguish
1. His anguish is that his own kinsmen – the Jewish people – have largely rejected Messiah Jesus
 - a. With the exception of some Hebrews who have believed in Jesus – like the disciples and other followers – most Jews have dismissed the claims of Christ
 - b. Some with vehement rejection and violence
 - c. Some with caustic verbal denunciations
 - d. And some with disinterest and dismissiveness
 2. His anguish is heightened by the fact that his own kinsmen have many advantages
 - a. Advantages that have given them every opportunity imaginable to know and recognize the Messiah
 - b. And yet, all those advantages are null and void without the faith to believe
- C. He so distressed that he exclaims that he would, if he could, be willing to be condemned if it would mean their salvation

1. That, of course, is not possible
 2. But it reveals the nature and extent of his emotions
- D. Paul continues describing his concerns by addressing another issue
1. If the Jewish people have so easily dismissed Messiah Jesus, does this mean that the promises of God in the scriptures have failed?
 - a. Have the promises that God made to save a people Israel, a people for Himself, a people of His own possession
 - b. If most of those people have not been saved, does that mean God is not faithful to keep His Word?
 2. Of course the answer to that is No!
 - a. And the reason Paul gives is that not all Israel belong to Israel
 - b. In other words, it is not the natural, physical descendants of Israel to whom the promises of God apply
 - c. It is the spiritual children of Israel who are the objects of the promises of God
 3. Filling the OT are stories of the remnants of a believing Israel within the natural descendants of Jacob
 4. **Romans 9:8** (ESV) —
 - a. 8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.
 5. Sometimes that believing remnant was quite large; at other times, you began to wonder if there were any left!
 - a. Elijah wondered if he alone was left among all of Israel
 - b. But God assured him that there were 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal
 - c. There was always a believing Israel
 - d. And it was to believing Israel that the promises to Israel are applied
- E. Now we move into the next portion of that paragraph that we began last week
1. **Romans 9:8** (ESV) —
 - a. 8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.
 2. **Romans 9:9** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.”
 3. And so Paul begins to illustrate who the children of the promise are
 - a. And he begins with Abraham and Sarah and the promise of their son Isaac

III. **The Purpose of Election**

- A. But before we dive into Paul’s illustrations, let’s set the stage regarding election
 1. Because you see, I really believe that in spite of what I said earlier, most of you already believe in the doctrine of election
- B. First, I think you all resonate with the purpose of election

1. We find it mentioned in our text this morning
 - a. In the second of Paul's illustrations – that of Isaac and Rebekah's children
 2. **Romans 9:10–11** (ESV) —
 - a. 10 And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac,
 - b. 11 though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—
- C. The purpose of election is **a humbling doctrine**
1. It destroys self-righteousness
 2. Paul says – and we'll take it up in more detail later – that God's choice of Jacob over Esau was “in order that God purpose of election might continue”
 3. And then he says, “not because of works but because of him who calls”
 4. In other words, God purpose in election is that you and I would get no credit in our salvation
 - a. That the One who calls – God Himself – would get all the credit
 - b. He gets the glory
 5. Our response is to cast ourselves on His mercy
 - a. And recognize that our salvation is of God and not from us
 - b. That our salvation has nothing to do with what we do
 6. That's the purpose of election – that God would get glory and that we would be the recipients of His grace!
 7. And I think you already believe that

IV. **Election in the Bible**

- A. I also think you already believe in election because you believe the Bible
 1. And election is rooted in the biblical record – from the very beginning
- B. God elected Israel as the nation – the only nation – through whom He would communicate His grace, His Word, His worship
 1. And God's election of Israel was without regard to anything to Israel's credit
 2. **Deuteronomy 7:6–8** (ESV) —
 - a. 6 “For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.
 - b. 7 It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples,
 - c. 8 but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

3. In other words, Israel was chosen as a nation, not because they were any great shakes!
 - a. They were smaller than many other nations; weaker
4. But God chose them – because He loved them!
5. **Deuteronomy 9:6** (ESV) —
 - a. 6 “Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people.”
6. So not only did God not choose Israel because of their stature
 - a. But also He did not choose them because of their righteousness
 - b. Just like we lack righteousness – they lacked righteousness
7. Why did God choose Israel?
 - a. Because He loved them – period!
 - b. And that’s the essence of the doctrine of election
 - c. And I think you already know that
- C. But it doesn’t stoop there – election shows up frequently in the NT
 1. **Jesus called His first disciples**
 - a. Just twelve!
 - b. He could have called any number of people
 - c. Any number of other people who could have profited from three years with the master
 - d. But He only chose twelve!
 2. And then **He sent out preachers** in those early days
 - a. They went to some places and not others!
 - b. Philip went to Samaria
 - c. Barnabas went to Antioch
 - d. Paul and Barnabas went to Asia Minor
 - e. Paul and others went to Greece, Italy and farther west
 - f. But God wouldn’t let them go into certain places
 - g. And many other places had people who could have profited by hearing the gospel – but they didn’t go there in those days to those people
 - h. And it would be up to the church to complete the Great Commission
 - i. But the mere fact that God sent some to certain places and not others is election
 - j. Some people who lived in those days heard the gospel; and others in those days did not
 - k. That’s the essence of election
 - l. And you already believe that!
- D. And the epistles promote the doctrine of election
 1. **Ephesians 1:3–10** (ESV) —
 - a. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

- b. 4 even as **he chose us** in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. **In love**
 - c. **5 he predestined us for adoption to himself** as sons through Jesus Christ, **according to the purpose of his will,**
 - d. 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.
 - e. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, **according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us,** in all wisdom and insight
 - f. 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, **according to his purpose,** which he set forth in Christ
 - g. 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.
2. **Ephesians 1:11–14** (ESV) —
- a. 11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, **having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,**
 - b. 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.
 - c. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,
 - d. 14 who is **the guarantee of our inheritance** until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.
3. What a glorious display of the sovereignty of God in salvation!
- a. Paul is not shy about election!

V. **Election in Romans**

- A. And we've also seen the elements of election in Romans
- B. Paul speaks of the advantages of the Jewish people
 - 1. So he echoes all of the OT affirmations about the election of Israel as a nation
- C. But we've also seen election in Romans 8
 - 1. **Romans 8:28–30** (ESV) —
 - a. 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.
 - b. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.
 - c. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.
- D. Paul's glorious display of the gospel in Romans is filled with a sense of God's sovereignty in salvation!

1. And you know why that's important
 - a. It's important because of why the gospel itself is important
2. Remember...
3. **Romans 3:10–12** (ESV) —
 - a. 10 as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one;
 - b. 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God.
 - c. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”
4. Remember...
5. **Romans 3:23** (ESV) —
 - a. 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..
6. Remember...
7. **Romans 8:7–8** (ESV) —
 - a. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.
 - b. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.
- E. Election is necessary because you've no spiritual resources to use to bring yourself to God!
 1. If God doesn't do a miracle in your life – your flesh, which is your default operating system – profits nothing
 - a. Your flesh is hostile to God
 2. Your choosing God using your old operating system is figment of your imagination
 3. Like John said, “We love because He first loved us” (**1 John 4.19**)
 - a. That's election – He loved us first
 - b. Even when we were unlovely; even when we were sinners
 - c. Even when we were dead in sins and transgressions (**Ephesians 2.5**)
- F. You already know, through your study of Romans, that election is true
 1. And that you depend on it for your salvation

VI. **Election in Our Experience**

- A. And when we're honest, that's reflected in our experience
- B. When did you come to faith in Jesus?
 1. How did that happen?
 - a. Who shared the gospel with you?
 2. Why was it shared with you?
 - a. There were plenty of others who might have received the gospel too, but did not
 - b. But you did!
- C. I came to Christ because my brother harassed me to go to a Youth For Christ meeting – at 6:30 on a Monday morning
 1. A ridiculous time for a lazy teenager
 - a. But I went to get him off my back
 2. And I heard the gospel

- a. Don't remember who the speaker was
 - b. But I knew God was speaking directly to me
 - 3. And I went home that evening and gave my life to Christ
 - a. But I had no intention when that day started of doing anything with Christ!
 - 4. What were the circumstances that led to you hearing the gospel?
 - a. Did you arrange them all?
 - 5. Maybe you are one of those – praise God for these folks – who grew up in a Bible-believing home with godly Christian parents
 - a. And you can't remember when you didn't believe
 - b. Great!
 - c. But who put you with those parents in that household?
 - d. Did you decide that?
- D. And when you think of your salvation, whom do you thank?
 - 1. Do you pat yourself on the back for deciding to come to Christ?
 - a. Do you thank yourself?
 - 2. Or do you thank God for your salvation?
 - 3. If you say you thank God for your salvation, do you reserve even just a little bit of the credit for your decision?
 - a. Or do you thank Him wholly and completely for your salvation?
 - 4. Because, honestly, dear friends, unless God put it in my heart to want Christ, I would never have come to Him
- E. So in all these things, we, in our experience, truly understand election
 - 1. And none of that means that we weren't involved
 - a. None of that detracts from our wills
 - 2. We believed; we trusted Christ
 - 3. But we did so in response to the impulses He put into our hearts
 - a. Through the circumstances that He arranged
 - b. He made us willing
 - 4. Because we do serve a sovereign here

VII. Election of Abraham

- A. To explain to us the doctrine of election Paul gives us three generations of examples
 - 1. And then in the next section he deals with arguments of those who would object to this doctrine
 - 2. But this week he shows us how election worked in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
- B. First is Abraham
 - 1. Remember v. 8
 - 2. Romans 9:8 (ESV) —
 - a. 8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

3. And then he gets specific with the quintessential child of the promise:
Isaac
- C. **Romans 9:9** (ESV) —
 1. 9 For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.”
- D. Now before we get into the birth of Isaac as God’s choice, let’s remember that Abraham himself is an example of election
 1. Remember, God called him from Ur of the Chaldees to go to a land which he did not know
 2. And Abraham was a pagan, in a family of pagan sun-worshippers
 3. **Joshua 24:2** (ESV) —
 - a. 2 And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods.’”
 4. Abraham did not seek God – he had no idea about God
 - a. God sought him!
 - b. And that’s election

VIII. **Election of Isaac**

- A. And so Abraham and Sarah were to be the means by which nations would come into being
 1. But they were barren and up in years – beyond child-bearing years
 2. Sarah, frustrated in her barrenness, had arranged to have children through her servant Hagar and Abraham
 - a. And they had a son named Ishmael
 3. But that wasn’t God’s intention
 - a. God promised that Sarah would have a son herself with Abraham
 - b. Miraculously, when she was 90 years old!
 4. So Isaac was the child of the promise
 - a. The one through whom God would fulfill His covenant promise to Abraham
 5. But it was Isaac, and not Ishmael!
 - a. One and not the other
 6. Ishmael was just as much Abraham’s son as Isaac
 - a. But Isaac was chosen
 - b. And that’s election
 7. You could look at it this way, also
 - a. Ishmael was Abraham’s natural offspring
 - b. But Isaac was miraculous!
 8. That’s the way it is with those who are truly children of God
 - a. It is not the natural descendants of Israel who are true Israel
 - b. It is the spiritual offspring
 9. And that’s the way it is with us who are believers
 - a. We are children of God through the miracle of the new birth!

IX. **Election of Jacob**

- A. Then we have the election of Jacob
- B. **Romans 9:10–12** (ESV) —
 - 1. 10 And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac,
 - 2. 11 though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—
 - 3. 12 she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”
- C. The election of Jacob over Esau makes it even more clear
 - 1. One could say that Ishmael was not a true, full-blooded Hebrew
 - a. He was Abraham’s son
 - b. But the son of an Egyptian servant
 - 2. So in the case of Jacob, those issues disappear
- D. Jacob and Esau were born of the same Jewish parents
 - 1. Neither had any better ancestry than the other
- E. In addition, the choice of Jacob over Esau reversed the tradition of primogeniture
 - 1. That is, the oldest would receive the greater blessing
 - 2. Esau was born first (though they were twins), but God chose Jacob
 - 3. God reserved the right to make the choice regardless of ancestry
- F. And of course, Jacob and Esau were twins
 - 1. And they were chosen – one over the other – while still in the womb
 - 2. “They were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad”
 - 3. So their election had nothing to do with anything either son had or could or would do
 - a. It had nothing to do with their works
 - 4. We often hear that God makes choices based on what He knew someone might do
 - a. But His choice of Jacob, as Paul describes it here, dismisses that explanation
 - b. God made His choice of Jacob without regard to anything they would do
- G. Why?
 - 1. “... in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls”
 - 2. In other words, God did it so it would be recognized that, well, God did it!
- H. Those are Paul’s three generations of election
 - 1. And I think you can all see that God’s choice of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob is all of God
 - a. It’s all about Him!
 - b. To God be the glory!

X. **Election – Hated or Loved?**

- A. But then, what are we to make of this last statement in this paragraph?

- B. **Romans 9:13** (ESV) —
 - 1. 13 As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”
- C. Wow!
 - 1. Not that’s hard
 - 2. Paul quotes Malachi: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” (**Malachi 1.2-3**)
- D. This raises the issue which casts the darkest shadow on the doctrine of election
 - 1. What happens to those who are not chosen for salvation?
 - 2. Are they lost?
 - a. And on what basis are they lost?
 - 3. The problem centers on the biblical doctrine of reprobation
- E. We will address that issue
 - 1. But not today!
 - a. It’s included in our text, so I included it here
 - 2. But it needs to be addressed patiently and humbly and more thoroughly than we can do this morning
- F. But here’s the issue for you this morning
 - 1. Are you willing to trust God and His Word about this matter of the “other side” of election?
 - 2. Are you willing to submit your own thoughts and desires to God’s design and surrender your mind, will and emotions to Him?
 - 3. Or – and I hesitate to say it – are you more inclined to say, “We serve no sovereign here”?

XI. Conclusion

- A. Dear friends, don’t miss the significance of election
 - 1. Without God’s choice, we are lost!
 - 2. Without God’s grace, our destiny is eternal destruction!
 - 3. Without God’s mercy, our eternity is distress!
- B. I struggled for probably the better part of 10 years as a young Christian trying to understand this doctrine
 - 1. I’d work on it for a while; then set it aside
 - 2. Then come back to it; mull it over
 - 3. Read the scriptures; considered the alternatives
- C. In the final analysis, I said with Peter and the disciples when they encountered a hard saying of Jesus,
 - 1. “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” (**John 6.68-69**)
 - 2. I became willing to submit to God – even when my natural impulses said otherwise
- D. Will you also submit to His will in this matter?
- E. Jack – Morgantown
 - 1. Always began his testimony: “I can’t believe God saved me!”
 - a. “I can’t believe God loved me!”
 - b. “I can’t believe God chose me!”

2. That's a man who understood election
 - a. It humbled him
3. Does it humble you?