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Objection!

Romans 9.13-18

Series: The Pure Gospel

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The Village Church

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I. Introduction

- A. Romans Chapter 9 may be the iconoclast of American ideals
- B. Remember last message
 - 1. We began with the Revolutionary War era slogan that John Guest discovered in an antique store in Philadelphia when he first came to America from Great Britain
 - a. **“We serve no sovereign here”**
 - b. It represented that disposition of the colonies that we would refuse to be ruled by a despot, a king, who would rule without our representative voice
 - c. That, as Abraham Lincoln would later say, we would have a government of the people, by the people, for the people
 - 2. But Romans 9 says, that in God’s economy, we do serve a Sovereign here
 - a. That God is sovereign over all things
 - b. That as one theologian put it, there is not one maverick molecule which is not under the control of Almighty God
 - c. And if there were, there would be no assurance that God’s purposes would ever be fulfilled
 - 3. And Romans 9 teaches the doctrine of **Election**
 - 4. **Romans 9:10–12** (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. 12 she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”
 - 5. Jacob was chosen over Esau so that God’s purpose in election might continue
 - a. Not because of anything Jacob or Esau would do or wouldn’t do
 - b. But because of God who calls
 - 6. So Romans 9 says that God is sovereign even over salvation
 - a. For Jacob was a believer because of the call of God
 - b. And Esau was not
 - 7. It’s un-American!
 - a. But sovereignty is what the Bible teaches

- b. Even in salvation
 - 8. Now recall how hard that is to hear!
 - a. I quoted Jonathan Edwards, America's greatest theologian, who himself related how much of a struggle it was to come to grips with election
 - b. I expressed my own years-long wrestling with it as well
 - c. I know how hard it is for our finite, earth-bound, human-centered minds to get a grasp on such a doctrine which emanates from the infinite, omniscient, all-wise mind of God
 - 9. But as I told you last week, my commitment is to be faithful to what the scriptures plainly teach
 - a. Even if it's hard to hear
- C. Today another American ideal seems to bite the dust in Romans 9
 - 1. And that's the idea of **Justice**
 - 2. Justice appears to be the universal aspiration of all Americans
 - a. We are constantly bombarded with calls for justice to be done
 - b. Justice in the ethical issues of our day
 - c. Justice in the law
 - d. Justice in streets
 - e. Justice in the courtroom
 - f. Justice in the environment
 - 3. And some of America's most eloquent spokespersons have weighed in on our commitment to justice
 - a. Martin Luther King: Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.
 - b. Theodore Parker (19th Century abolitionist and minister): The moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice.
 - c. Benjamin Franklin: Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are.
 - d. Theodore Roosevelt: Justice consists not in being neutral between right and wrong, but in finding out the right and upholding it, wherever found, against the wrong.
 - e. Eleanor Roosevelt: Justice cannot be for one side alone, but must be for both.
 - f. Alexander Hamilton: The first duty of society is justice.
 - g. And here's a headline hot off the press: NCAA officials hit rock bottom as college basketball community calls out injustice suffered by... [fill in the teams who got jilted during the tournament – so far!]
 - 4. Now, don't misunderstand me
 - a. There is a legitimate call for justice in our nation at every domain of society
 - b. And those who are fighting for genuine justice in our world are doing the work of angels
 - c. And the Bible supports such calls for justice

- d. **Proverbs 21:15** (ESV) — 15 When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers.
- D. **But be careful what you wish for**
 - 1. For in God’s economy, as it applies to you, the last thing you may want is justice
 - 2. And that’s where Romans 9 completely changes the conversation
- E. Text
 - 1. **Romans 9:13–18** (ESV) —
 - a. 13 As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”
 - b. 14 What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means!
 - c. 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.”
 - d. 16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.
 - e. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”
 - f. 18 So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.
- F. But before we get into it, let’s rewind

II. **Anguish**

- A. Romans 9 started with Paul surprising us all by expressing anguish
 - 1. **Romans 9:2** (ESV) —
 - a. 2 ... I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.
- B. After expounding this glorious gospel for 8 solid chapters
 - 1. Showing us how we are all sinners by nature
 - a. Desperately in need of righteousness
 - 2. But God, in Jesus Christ, provided His righteousness
 - a. That by believing in Jesus Christ we would receive the righteousness of Christ
 - b. While He took upon Himself our sin and our just penalty – the very wrath of God
 - 3. And Paul recounts the glorious blessings of this gospel for all those who believe
 - 4. Climaxing in Romans 8 with such amazing assurances
 - a. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus
 - b. That since the Spirit of God dwells in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life
 - c. That since the Spirit of God lives in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies
 - d. That by our adoption into the family of God we are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ

- e. That the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory to be revealed to us
 - f. That the Spirit helps us in our weakness, interceding for us in prayer, praying for the saints in the will of God
 - g. That those whom He foreknew He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son
 - h. That those He predestined He called; that those He called He justified; that those He justified He glorified
 - i. That if God is for us, who shall be against us?
 - j. That no one shall separate us from the love of God
 - k. That we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us
5. **Romans 8:38–39** (ESV) —
- a. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,
 - b. 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- C. So what's there to be in anguish about?
- 1. Well, it's that Paul's kinsmen, the Jews, have by and large rejected this glorious gospel
 - a. And that, in spite of all the advantages they had in being Hebrews
 - b. The Law, the adoption, the glorious presence of God, the covenants, the sanctuary worship, and the promises
 - c. Promises even of the Messiah
 - d. Who, in fact, came from their very race – Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever!
 - 2. He is in such anguish that he would, if he could, be willing to himself be cursed – sent to hell – if it would mean their salvation

III. **Children of the Promise**

- A. That leads Paul to his own theological struggle
 - 1. How does he make sense of it all
- B. His answer is that not all of the natural descendants of Israel belong to Israel
 - 1. He makes a distinction between the natural nation of Israel – chosen as a nation in their own right
 - a. Between that Israel, and the true Israel
 - b. Those who genuine believed the promises of God
 - 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.
- C. There have always been a remnant of a believing Israel in the OT
 - 1. Sometimes larger, sometimes smaller
 - 2. Who were true believers in the God of the Bible, the God of OT, the Hebrew Bible

- a. Even when the larger body of natural Israel had walked away from faith in disobedience

IV. **Election**

- A. Well, how did that happen?
 - 1. That's when Paul raises the issue of election
- B. He uses three generations of elect Hebrews
 - 1. **Abraham**
 - a. Who was called out of paganism in Ur of the Chaldees to go to a land he did not know
 - b. And he believed God
 - c. And became the father of all who believe
 - 2. **Isaac**
 - a. The child of the promise
 - b. Miraculously conceived in Sarah when Abraham and Sarah were well past child-bearing years – Sarah was 90 at the time
 - c. Chosen over Abraham's other child – Ishmael – the child of Abraham through Sarah's servant Hagar
 - 3. **Jacob**
 - a. Chosen over his twin Esau
 - b. Both from the same father and mother – Isaac and Rebekah
 - c. Jacob the younger chosen over the older, breaking that tradition of primogeniture, where the oldest receives the greater blessing
 - d. Chosen in the womb before they had done anything good or bad
 - 4. Why?
 - a. In order that God's purpose in election might stand
 - b. Not because of works – but because of Him who calls!
- C. So the reason why there are some, but not all, who are in Israel who are believers
 - 1. Is because of God's choice
 - a. And by implication – not by the choice of either Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob
 - b. Or by the choice of any other believer
 - 2. That's the essence of election

V. **Objection!**

- A. Now here's where you say, "Stop!" "No!"
 - 1. John McEnroe: "You can't be serious!"
 - 2. If you're Jack McCoy on Law and Order you stand up and cry "Objection!"
- B. Here's where you say, "That's not just!"
 - 1. If God is like that, God is not just; He is unjust
 - a. How can He choose one and not the other
 - b. Not based on anything they would do?
- C. Well, Paul got there before you
 - 1. And he's anticipated your objection

2. Your American-as-apple-pie objection
 - a. Your objection about justice
3. And his response will change the way you think about justice
 - a. And how you think about God
- D. **Romans 9:14** (ESV) —
 1. 14 What shall we say then?
 2. Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means!
- E. And what he says in response is mind-blowing

VI. **Justice v. Mercy**

- A. **Romans 9:15** (ESV) —
 1. 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.”
- B. “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”
 1. Wow!
 2. That’s a quote
 3. Who does he quote?
 - a. He quotes God
- C. He quotes from Exodus 33
 1. That’s a really significant passage
 2. That’s the time when Moses asks God to show him His glory
 - a. And this is what God says in response
- D. **Exodus 33:18–23** (ESV) —
 1. 18 Moses said, “Please show me your glory.”
 2. 19 And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD.’
 3. And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.
 4. 20 But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.”
 5. 21 And the LORD said, “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock,
 6. 22 and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.
 7. 23 Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.”
- E. This is really important
 1. And you’ll need to remember this all the way through Romans 9
 - a. Which we won’t finish until after Easter – May in fact
 - b. (Don’t worry – I’ll remind you)
- F. When Moses asks for God to show him His glory, He’s asking God to reveal His nature and character
 1. The glory of God is the visible manifestation of God’s nature

2. And God says, “There’s a limit to what I can show you; if I show you too much, it will kill you.”
 3. I run into some people who work in various capacities for the government, and I ask, “What do you do?”
 - a. Sometimes they say, “If I told you, I’d have to kill you”
 4. If you ask God, show me who You really are
 - a. He would say, “If I did, you would be killed”
 - b. You wouldn’t be able to stand my glory
- G. But God makes a deal with Moses
1. He will pass by in all of His glory, but He will shield Moses from the full-faced blast of His holiness
 2. But He will reveal some of who He is
- H. The first thing God says that He will reveal will be His goodness and His name
1. “I will make all my goodness pass before you...
 2. “... and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD.’”
- I. “The LORD” = Yahweh
1. “I am”
 2. The name God told Moses at the burning bush
 3. Because it means “I am who I am”
 4. And it speaks, guess what – of God’s sovereignty
 - a. His independence – He depends on no one or on nothing else
 - b. His self-existence
 - c. His right to do what He wants
- J. So He will show Moses that He’s good – He makes all His goodness pass before him
1. And He will show Moses His sovereignty
- K. And the next thing He reveals to Moses
1. Exodus 33:19 (ESV) — 19 ... And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.
 2. Sound familiar?
 - a. That’s the text Paul quotes
- L. So God will reveal to Moses that He is sovereign and has the right to do what He wants
1. And that will apply so that He decides to whom He will be gracious and to whom He will be merciful
- M. Does that grip you like it did Moses?
1. That is the mind-blowing truth of Romans 9
 - a. That God has the right to decide on whom to show grace, on whom to show mercy
 2. And if you complain that that’s not just, you have completely misunderstood mercy
 - a. Mercy is not justice
 - b. Justice is what we deserve
 - c. Mercy is what we receive that we don’t deserve
 - d. In fact, mercy is receiving the opposite of what we deserve

3. Do you still want justice?
 - a. God has the right to decide on whom to show grace, and on whom to show mercy
4. I have heard too many preachers do everything they can to soften the blow
 - a. To try to argue that that's not what Paul is saying or what God is saying
 - b. Because it is God who is saying it
5. I'm not going to soften it
 - a. I can't soften it
6. If you're stunned by this revelation
 - a. It's because God wants you to be stunned

VII. **Salvation is of God**

- A. What does this mean for us and for our salvation?
- B. **Romans 9:16** (ESV) —
 1. 16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.
 2. Literally: It does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.
- C. Salvation does not depend on you
 1. Not just not on what you do
 - a. But not even on your will!
- D. No, salvation depends on God
 1. That's what the text says
 2. That's the word of God for the people of God
- E. You know the story of Jonah
 1. How God told him to go east to Nineveh to preach to the wicked Assyrians
 - a. How he did the opposite; went west
 2. West – down to Joppa
 - a. Down to the dock
 - b. Down to the boat
 - c. Down into the hold of the boat
 3. And eventually, in the storm, they threw him down into the depth of the sea
 - a. And finally down into the belly of the fish
 4. That's how it goes, by the way, when you run away from God
 - a. Down, down, down, down
- F. But you can't escape God
 1. And God shows up in the belly of the fish
 - a. And Jonah finds God!
 2. Jonah's not looking for God
 - a. Jonah's running away from God
 - b. But God finds Jonah
 3. And Jonah is so low, he believes; he's saved
- G. And this is what he says

1. **Jonah 2:9** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay.
 - b. **Salvation belongs to the LORD!**”
- H. Jonah is you and me
 1. And our salvation is of the Lord
- I. “It does not depend on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy”

VIII. **The Other Side of Election**

- A. But now, Paul is not finished
 1. He’s not finished with the OT
 - a. And he’s not finished blowing our minds, either
- B. He brings up the elephant in the room
 1. If God chooses to have grace on some, to have mercy on some – but not on all
 - a. What about the others?
 - b. What happens to them?
 2. That’s the **doctrine of reprobation**
 - a. If God is sovereign over our salvation
 - b. Is He not also sovereign over the judgment of those who pass by?
- C. We’ve already seen it briefly in the last message
 1. **Romans 9:13** (ESV) —
 - a. 13 As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”
- D. Now he puts it this way
 1. **Romans 9:17–18** (ESV) —
 - a. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”
 - b. 18 So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.
- E. But remember what we’ve learned in Romans – from the very beginning
 1. We are all sinners; we all fall short of the glory of God
 - a. We are by nature sinners who suppress the truth about God and fail to give Him thanks
 2. None is righteous, no not one;
 - a. No one understands;
 - b. No one seeks for God...
 - c. No one does good,
 - d. Not even one
- F. So in God passing over Esau
 1. He simply lets Esau do what Esau wants
 - a. Because Esau is an unrepentant sinner
 2. And in God hardening Pharaoh’s heart, he simply let’s Pharaoh be Pharaoh

- a. Because Pharaoh, the most powerful man on the planet in his day, is sinful to the core
 - 3. God does not create fresh evil in either Esau or Pharaoh
 - a. Or in anyone else who is unrepentant
 - b. They are perfectly capable of making a mess of their lives and lots of other lives
 - 4. So when God judges them, that is justice
- G. But, dear friends
 - 1. If you are a believer in Jesus, and are saved
 - a. You have received mercy
 - b. And the last thing you want for your own life is justice
 - c. Because that's what Esau and Pharaoh got
 - 2. And unless you repent, you too will receive justice
 - a. Be careful what you wish for!

IX. Name and Fame

- A. One more thing
 - 1. Remember, Paul quotes God in Exodus 33 – “Show me Your glory”
 - 2. And God says, “I will proclaim before you my name, ‘The LORD’”
- B. What is God up to in giving Pharaoh justice?
 - 1. **Romans 9:17** (ESV) —
 - a. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that **I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.**”
 - 2. There it is again!
 - a. “That my name might be proclaimed in all the earth”
- C. God is revealing Himself in reprobation just as He is in His merciful election
 - 1. He shows His power
 - a. And He proclaims His name
 - 2. Yahweh
 - a. “I am who I am”
 - 3. His power
 - a. His sovereignty

X. Conclusion

- A. Do you still have objections?
 - 1. Will you lay your objections at the foot of the cross?
 - a. And cast yourself on His mercy?
 - b. So that you won't experience His justice?
- B. Spurgeon: While others are congratulating themselves, I have to sit humbly at the foot of the cross and marvel that I'm saved at all.