

Romans 9A (2017)

- Our previous lesson ended in Romans 8 at v.30 and the end of that glorious chain of events which Paul declared was the future of every believer
 - The ultimate consequence of our salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ is that we are assured a future of glory with Christ
 - And that assurance isn't based in anything of ourselves
 - Paul's chain of events is entirely a work of God on our behalf
 - Beginning with God's choice of us before the foundations of the earth
 - The chain was unbreakable and inevitable, as Paul describes each link connected with the prior link without doubt
 - So for everyone God includes in the plan of salvation, He will not fail to finish the work He begins
 - And as I ended the last lesson, I explained that every believer in the church, past, present or future, sits at the fifth link together
 - We all were foreknown by God, predestined to become His child, called on a day into faith, and justified in God's sight by our faith
 - So now we are all waiting for that final link in the chain, our glorification
 - And that's the main thrust of Paul's argument and why he laid out each step in the chain so carefully
 - There were five links for everyone, and five of the six have already come to pass for all of us
 - So Paul draws our attention to where we sit on the chain today, and he leads us to the inevitable conclusion
 - If God has taken us this far, by His power and not because of anything we've done, then how can we doubt He will bring us to the final link
 - To assume otherwise is both illogical and unbiblical
 - The only conclusion we can make from what God has already done for us is that our future of glory with Him is equally assured
 - And that's the conclusion Paul makes as well

[Rom. 8:31](#) What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

[Rom. 8:32](#) He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

- Paul asks the question raised by his unbreakable chain...if God is working so hard to bring us to Himself in a day to come, then what can stop it?
 - Who is more powerful than God? Who could change His mind or thwart His desires?
 - Obviously, we know the answer is “no one”
 - But let the implications of that answer sink in for a moment
 - The highest power in the universe has determined you will be glorified in a day to come
 - No other actor or power has the capability to change that plan, so it puts to an end any concerns for your eternal security
 - There may be moments of despair or frustration when we let our minds wander to think we are in jeopardy
 - Or our lack of commitment to the faith leads us to wander away and question whether we are at an end with God
 - But if God determined to bring you to glory, then who are you to stop Him? before the devil even existed
 - Paul says the ultimate proof that God will not be swayed in His support for us is seen in His willingness to put Christ on a cross for our sake
 - Once again, Paul is asking us to consider the implications of what we already know to be true
 - The Father took the thing most precious to Him, His only begotten Son, and delivered Him over to die a horrible death
 - He did this to bring you and me to Himself, having already foreknown us and predestined us to receive His grace
 - So how ridiculous would it be to consider that after God had done such extreme things for our sake that He would then allow the plan short to fail in the end
 - That’s why Jesus said this:

[John 6:37](#) "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

[John 6:38](#) "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

[John 6:39](#) "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.

- Notice Jesus' choice of verbs and you'll find the links in Paul's chain
 - The Father "gives" Jesus the people that Jesus will save (**foreknown** and **predestined**)
 - Those He gives "will" come to Jesus (**called**)
 - Those who come will not be rejected by God (**justified**)
 - And in v.39 Jesus concludes that all the Father gives Him in this way, Jesus will lose none (all will be **glorified**)
- We can sum up Paul's analysis with a simple but profound statement
 - God only calls and justifies those He intends to glorify in Christ
 - The Bible calls these people "the elect" because God selects them from among all fallen humanity to receive glory
 - So you aren't standing on the fifth link of Paul's chain because of your merits or effort or even because of your desire to be saved
 - You're there because God put you there
 - As John wrote

[John 1:12](#) But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

[John 1:13](#) who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

- We were given the right to be children of God
 - And John says God didn't give us that blessing because of our family connections (blood) or our good works (will of flesh)
 - Nor even because of our own desire (will of man)
 - But solely because God elected us to be His

- As Paul says in 1 Corinthians, you are in Christ by His doing

[1Cor. 1:30](#) But by **His doing** you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

- And if God has elected you to be with Him in glory, can we imagine anything that could stop God from getting what He wants?
 - Paul explores some possibilities next

[Rom. 8:33](#) Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;

[Rom. 8:34](#) who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

[Rom. 8:35](#) Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

[Rom. 8:36](#) Just as it is written,

“For Your sake we are being put to death all day long;
We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

[Rom. 8:37](#) But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

[Rom. 8:38](#) For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

[Rom. 8:39](#) nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Paul begins in v.33, could our enemy stop God's plan?
 - The Bible says Satan is the accuser of the brethren
 - So perhaps we might imagine him coming before the throne with a damning accusation against us
 - Telling God of some terrible secret sin in our life
 - Would this cause God to change His mind concerning our glory?
 - Paul says remember, God is the one who has declared you justified
 - His is the judge and if the judge has already acquitted you of sin, then he will not entertain any new arguments from the prosecutor

- How can you be condemned for sin when the One with the power to condemn has already taken that condemnation for you
- And now He sits at the right hand of God as your advocate
- Therefore no sin you commit, no matter how grievous, can separate you from the love of God
- Then Paul asks in v.35, who else might separate us from the love of God?
 - If not Satan, can some tribulation or distress separate you?
 - A tribulation is an external threat to our peace, while distress is a personal difficulty
 - What about persecution perhaps leading us to deny Christ like Peter did?
 - Or perhaps a famine causes us to steal or turn our back on God in anger
 - Or nakedness (which is a reference to public shame)
 - Or peril, meaning physical violence, or sword, referring to execution?
- Before we give the obvious answer, did you notice something about that list?
 - The seven things Paul lists are an inventory of what the Lord experienced on the way to cross
 - He endured all these things for our sake
 - Paul's subtle point is that whatever has potential to cause us to act in unfaithful ways, Christ already walked those steps for us
 - And He was faithful all the way to death
 - And since we have been credited with Christ's perfect life by our faith, it matters not what we are able to endure in the face of such things
 - Paul explains this in v.37 when he says in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Christ
 - Paul's not promising that because we are Christians we will always be victorious over the troubles in our life

- He's saying that Christ conquered them during His life, and since we have been credited with His success, we can't be defeated by them now
- So even if we should fail at some step along the way, Christ's success will stand in place of our failure
 - We have been credited with that faithfulness
 - So we can never be separated from the love of God
- This leads Paul in vs.38-39 to give perhaps his most sweeping and powerful statement of the assurance of eternal security for every believer
 - Given all that he's argued throughout this chapter, Paul says He has full conviction and confidence that we cannot be separated from God for any reason
 - To ensure we understand how sure Paul is in his convictions, he adds a series of ten forces that represent the extremities of this life and the next
 - Which he introduces with the first pair of death or life
 - Nothing on this side of the grave or on the other side of the grave holds the power to separate us from the love of God
 - And more specifically, no spiritual power or earthly power, no present existence or future existence
 - No power is greater than God
 - We can't go high enough to be out of His reach (so even Christian astronauts remain in God's love)
 - We can't go deep enough to hide from God's love (so Christian divers are still secure in Christ)
 - Simply put, nothing in Creation is capable of coming between us and the Lord Who has saved us and promised us glory in a day to come
- With that statement, the first Act in Paul's thesis on righteousness comes to a dramatic close
 - Looking down the left side of our [Structure of Romans](#) chart, we see Paul's logical development of his thesis clearly

- He's walked us through a series of ideas carefully and methodically
- He explained what righteousness is and why we need it
- He explained how mankind errs in trying to find it in wrong ways
- Then Paul explained the one and only way God grants it to us
 - He proved the plan has never changed since times of old
 - And he reflected on the implications of God's plan in the life of everyone who is saved by it
 - Ending here with the most important implication: we are His forever, without any doubt
 - God is faithful to do for us just as He promised
- Now before we move into Paul's second act, you may have noticed that I skipped over v.36
 - In that verse, Paul punctuated his argument by quoting from Psalm 44
 - The psalmist declared, speaking as Israel, that God has allowed His children to be killed by their enemies "all day long"
- The psalmist was lamenting Israel's difficult circumstances suffering under God's judgment
 - The phrase "killed all day long" is a euphemism
 - As Calvin explains, "the psalmist intimated that death was so suspended over them, that their life differed but little from death"
 - Israel has known many generations of such suffering as consequence for having violated the Old Covenant
 - They have been overrun by their enemies, exiled, persecuted and killed
 - And as the psalmist remarks, these things come at the hand of God, as a result of His will for His people
 - Paul's point in quoting this psalm was to demonstrate that throughout history God's people have been made to suffer at times

- We are considered by God as sheep to be slaughtered, the psalmist says
 - So if necessary, God may bring us to death to achieve an eternal good purpose in us
 - Therefore, nothing that happens to us in this life – not even death itself – is a threat to God’s plan for us
 - After all, He’s the One Who gives life and takes it away
- But even with that explanation, Paul picked an odd verse to quote as proof for his argument, didn’t he?
 - In fact, if we look at more of that psalm, Paul’s choice becomes even more interesting and perplexing

Psa. 44:9 Yet You have rejected us and brought us to dishonor,
And do not go out with our armies.

Psa. 44:10 You cause us to turn back from the adversary;
And those who hate us have taken spoil for themselves.

Psa. 44:11 You give us as sheep to be eaten
And have scattered us among the nations.

Psa. 44:12 You sell Your people cheaply,
And have not profited by their sale.

Psa. 44:13 You make us a reproach to our neighbors,
A scoffing and a derision to those around us.

Psa. 44:14 You make us a byword among the nations,
A laughingstock among the peoples.

Psa. 44:15 All day long my dishonor is before me
And my humiliation has overwhelmed me,

Psa. 44:16 Because of the voice of him who reproaches and reviles,
Because of the presence of the enemy and the avenger.

Psa. 44:17 All this has come upon us, but we have not forgotten You,
And we have not dealt falsely with Your covenant.

Psa. 44:18 Our heart has not turned back,
And our steps have not deviated from Your way,

Psa. 44:19 Yet You have crushed us in a place of jackals
And covered us with the shadow of death.

[Psa. 44:20](#) If we had forgotten the name of our God

Or extended our hands to a strange god,

[Psa. 44:21](#) Would not God find this out?

For He knows the secrets of the heart.

[Psa. 44:22](#) But for Your sake we are killed all day long;

We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.

[Psa. 44:23](#) Arouse Yourself, why do You sleep, O Lord?

Awake, do not reject us forever.

[Psa. 44:24](#) Why do You hide Your face

And forget our affliction and our oppression?

[Psa. 44:25](#) For our soul has sunk down into the dust;

Our body cleaves to the earth.

[Psa. 44:26](#) Rise up, be our help,

And redeem us for the sake of Your lovingkindness.

- From reading more of the psalm, we come to see it's a lamentation for Israel
 - The psalmist says the nation feels rejected by their God
 - He seems to have forsaken His people
 - Rejecting them and leaving them to the mercy of their adversaries who desire to destroy them
 - They are a derision, are a reproach, reviled
 - God allows them to be sold cheaply as slaves, scattered like sheep
 - Now this hardly seems like the psalm to choose if your point was to demonstrate that we can have confidence in God to protect us
 - Paul was arguing that nothing can separate us from the love of God
 - And in the midst of that argument, Paul cites a psalm that has as its major theme the lamentation of a seemingly rejected Israel
 - If anything, the psalm seems to make the opposite argument
 - But if we look at the psalm again, we find an interesting detail

- At the end of the psalm, just after the part Paul quoted, the psalmist suddenly turns optimistic
- In v.23 the psalmist describes God's rejection of His people as a "sleep" from which God may at some point awaken from
- And then He may cease His rejection of His people and return to them
- And so he asks the Lord to "rise up" and to be Israel's help in their affliction
 - He asks the Lord to redeem His people Israel for the sake of God's lovingkindness
 - That word is a reference to God's covenants
 - Lovingkindness is a covenant word that describes the Lord's willingness to make covenants with men unconditionally
 - And to keep them faithfully as a measure of His love for us
 - So the psalmist is referring to the Lord's covenants with Israel, asking the Lord to keep them faithfully
- So why did Paul quote this psalm to argue his point of eternal security? Why pick a passage that seems to argue for an opposite conclusion?
 - He picked it because of what the psalmist says at the end
 - Despite the Lord's hard treatment of His people at various times in history, the end ultimately determines God's faithfulness
 - Just as our own life has many twists and turns, trials and disappointments, we can't judge God's faithfulness to us until we see how it ends
 - The psalmist declares confidently that the Lord's lovingkindness would prevail in the end
 - But Paul used this passage for another reason, one that sets up the next three chapters of the book
 - Paul wanted to draw his readers' attention to the question of Israel
 - Israel's relationship to the Lord was a complicated situation, one that seemed to argue against Paul's teaching on eternal security

- At the time Paul wrote this letter to Rome, the church was quickly becoming a Gentile organization
 - What had started as a Jewish movement in Jerusalem was now largely centered in Asia Minor among Gentiles
 - What's more, the vast majority of Jews had rejected Christ as their Messiah
 - In fact, Jews were frequently persecuting those who declared Jesus as Messiah
- So it was becoming increasingly apparent that the Jewish people were not going to embrace Christ
 - And if they do not acknowledge Jesus as Messiah, then the people of Israel cannot be saved
 - And if they are not saved, then what does this say about the faithfulness of God?
 - Didn't God promise that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would have innumerable descendants who would receive the promises of the Kingdom?
- So one could ask, is God rejecting His people after all?
 - That's the conclusion some come to at the point of Chapter 8
 - Paul has proven that righteousness comes only through faith in Christ...not by birth to Abraham but only by the faith of Abraham
 - So if the Jewish nation is to receive the promises God gave to their forefathers, the nation must come to accept Jesus
 - But in Paul's day it was becoming increasingly obvious that this wasn't happening, and in fact the church was becoming less and less Jewish
 - Yet Paul said that God is in control of the saving process, including predestining the elect from before time
 - If so, then Israel's rejection of Jesus would seem to suggest God has purposely rejected them
 - And if God has rejected Israel after having made promises to them, how can we be sure God will keep His promises to us too?

- In other words, Israel's rejection of Christ calls into question everything Paul has argued for the Church
 - How can we feel secure in our salvation when we see God's people, Israel, rejected?
 - What's to stop God from rejecting us too?
- Remember, the leadership of the church in Rome were Jews who received the Gospel at Pentecost
 - Many of those Jewish founders were still leading the church in Rome in Paul's day
 - And Paul knew they would be sensitive to the question of Israel's state of unbelief
 - So Paul knew he needed to address that question
- So for the next three chapters, Paul focuses on answering the question "What about Israel?"
 - More specifically, why didn't God elect Israel to receive their Messiah, which God promised to send them?
 - What does Israel's situation say about God's faithfulness?
 - Has God forsaken His people as the psalmist feared?
 - Or will God one day fulfill His promises to His people as the psalmist pleaded at the end of Psalm 44?
 - Paul spends three chapters addressing the question "What about Israel?"
 - In Chapter 9 Paul reviews Israel's past relationship with God
 - The history of Israel is important to understanding what God is working to achieve in that nation
 - In Chapter 10, Paul moves to explaining Israel's present circumstances of having rejected their Messiah
 - Paul's dividing point between past and present is the Messiah's first coming
 - So Chapter 10 examines God's plan for Israel during the time following Christ's appearing
 - Finally in Chapter 11 Paul reveals God's future plan for His people Israel

- He'll explain how God remains faithful to Israel just as the psalmist hoped
- And he explains why Israel's temporary rejection was necessary to achieve the good things God promised to them and to us
- So Chapters 9, 10 and 11 are Israel's past, present and future
 - And together, these chapters address the question of what about Israel?
 - Altogether, they put to rest any concerns that Israel's unbelief casts doubt on God's faithfulness to His children
- Before we dive into the start of Chapter 9, take a brief look at the opening of Chapter 12
 - Compare the opening line of that chapter with the ending of Chapter 8
 - You'll notice that the two chapters flow together almost seamlessly
 - In fact, if I removed Chapters 9-11 from your Bible, you would never have noticed they were missing
 - Paul's discussion of righteousness flows easily from the end of 8 into 12
 - This affirms for us that these next three chapters are a sidebar in Paul's main discussion
 - His thesis on righteousness is essentially suspended for three chapters while he deals with this important question
 - So that's where we're going to be too for a while
- Let's look at the start of Chapter 9; Israel's past
 - As we do, we need to appreciate an important shift in Paul's focus
 - Where before Paul taught about an individual's relationship to God, now Paul is describing a nation's relationship
 - Paul uses these chapters to specifically address Israel's past, present and future as a nation
 - Obviously, the nation is made up of individuals, and each individual still has a requirement of faith in order to be saved

- But the question we're examining is what do we make of God's obvious choice to leave Jewish people largely outside the call of the Gospel for this time?
 - It's self-evident that the Church is almost entirely Gentile
 - And we know God determines His elect, as Paul taught
 - So the question is why did God not permit His people to embrace the Messiah while He brought Gentiles from all over the world
- This distinction is important to remember, because it will guide our interpretation of some important concepts presented in these chapters
 - So when interpreting Paul, we must ask is Paul speaking about the experience of an individual believer or the unique experience of Israel
 - And then allow our interpretation to fit the context

[Rom. 9:1](#) I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit,

[Rom. 9:2](#) that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.

[Rom. 9:3](#) For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,

[Rom. 9:4](#) 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,

[Rom. 9:5](#) whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

- Paul opens this section in a diplomatic fashion, defending his motives concerning Israel
 - Paul recognized he was wading into dangerous waters and his answers might not please everyone
 - The history of the church has validated Paul's concerns
 - Paul's explanation in this chapter and the ones that follow have stirred considerable controversy
 - Many Christians have simply rejected what Paul teaches, preferring a different explanation

- So Paul begins by reassuring his audience that he is no antisemite
 - It's hard to believe anyone could think Paul was against the Jewish people
 - But remember Paul's ministry was focused on Gentiles, even as he also spent time seeking Jews too
 - So now as he begins to explain God's plans for Israel, he wants his audience to trust his personal motives
- Paul says he is not lying in what he will say about Israel, and the Holy Spirit testifies in agreement to all who receive these words
 - That Paul grieves for Israel's loss as they reject Christ
 - In fact, Paul says if it were up to him, he would willingly trade his own salvation for Israel's
 - Obviously, that wasn't possible and Paul acknowledges that reality
- But the fact that Paul says this (he's not lying) is remarkable, because Paul knew better than most what he would have been trading away
 - And that's not a deal most (if any) of us would make, is it?
 - It's a very strong statement about Paul's personal convictions for his people
 - We can hardly indict Paul's genuine concern for Israel given he was willing to spend eternity in Hell for their sake
- And speaking of Israel, Paul offers a definition to guide his discussion
 - In vs.4-5 Paul gives the definition of Israel, the people in view in these three chapters
 - They are the Israelites, those descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (the "fathers" in v.5)
 - They were a nation of people created by God and adopted as His people from among all the nations on earth
 - They were the people who live in the presence of God's glory in the tabernacle

- They received the covenants of God, the Law of God and the temple and the promises of the prophets
- Most importantly, they were the people from whom came Christ as promised
- This definition is critical because it clarifies that Paul was talking about an earthly, physical Israel
 - He's not talking about the Church or Gentiles certainly
 - He's not talking about a "spiritual Israel" or some group of people who mimic Israel's lifestyle or culture or share in their beliefs
 - He's speaking only of the literal, physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
 - The people from whom Jesus came
- And concerning these people, what do we say about their past relationship with God?
 - Would we dare say that the people of God have failed to receive the promises that God said they would receive?
 - After all, that's the crux of the issue here
 - We know in the past God called this people special
 - He went to the trouble to form them out of nothing, to place them in their land and dwell among them
 - He also promised them a Messiah – but He didn't permit them to receive Him
 - So Paul asks the obvious question first

Rom. 9:6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;

Rom. 9:7 nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "through Isaac your descendants will be named."

Rom. 9:8 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.

Rom. 9:9 For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son."

- Already we begin to see how important Paul's definition will be
- Because he says that if we think that Israel's rejection of Jesus means the word of God concerning Israel has failed, then we're looking at the wrong Israel
- Because Paul says not all who are descended from the man Israel (Jacob) are considered God's Israel
- What Paul is saying is this: to be considered Israel, it is necessary to be descended from Jacob but it is not sufficient
 - There is more to being part of God's Israel than merely having the right father
 - So if we're going to evaluate God's faithfulness to His promises to Israel, we must first make sure we're looking at the right Israel
 - We must understand which group of people God gave His promises to in the past before we can evaluate His faithfulness today
- Paul proves his point with a simple example of Abraham's children
 - Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael
 - Yet only one of them received the promises God gave to Abraham
 - God issued His promises to Abraham before he had any children
 - But later Abraham learned that when God spoke those promises, He only had one of Abraham's descendants in mind
 - Paul shows evidence for this truth from Genesis 21, when Abraham was told that only through Isaac would God number (or consider) Abraham's descendants
 - Abraham had other descendants through another son
 - But those descendants did not receive the promises God gave to Abraham
 - So if we looked at those descendants, we might think God was not faithful to His promises
 - But we would be wrong, because God had already determined who would receive His promises

- Or who His elect were to be
- And He determined they would come through Isaac alone
- As He spoke to Sarah saying it would be a certain son to receive God's promises, not all sons
- This choice is a prerogative God never relinquishes
- Therefore, Abraham's example leaves us with an important principle that will carry us through the rest of this chapter and into Chapter 10
 - It was not Abraham's earthly or fleshly children that are in view when God issued His promises
 - Only certain children He calls "children of the promise" were in view
 - The term children of promise means those God chooses receive His promises
- There is nothing inherently better about these children of course
 - They didn't do anything to deserve God's favor (that's why it's called grace)
 - They were simply chosen to receive the promises while others weren't included
 - And that distinction is one God repeats throughout history
- If you were tempted to think that Abraham's situation was unique, Paul offers Exhibit #2:

Rom. 9:10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac;

Rom. 9:11 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,

Rom. 9:12 it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger."

Rom. 9:13 Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, But Esau I hated."

- One generation later, Isaac faces a similar situation with his own children
 - He too had a barren wife until God opened the womb

- And when He did, He gave Rebekah twin boys
- And once again God demonstrates His prerogative to choose by telling Rebekah that the older son would serve the younger
 - That's a somewhat cryptic way of designating the child of the promise
 - In that culture, the older child received the patriarchal blessing as a birthright and the greater share of the family inheritance
 - But in the case of Isaac's family, there was another unique part of the estate that would be handed down too
 - It was the promise God gave to Abraham which went to Isaac
- That promise could only be inherited by one child, since it wasn't divisible
- But to make sure we see God acting apart from man's ways, God selects the younger child to be His child of promise
 - Notice Paul says the Lord expressed this desire before the twins were born
 - Paul says the Lord selected this timing to ensure we couldn't say that the boys merely received what they deserved
 - They hadn't done anything good or bad at that point, Paul says
 - So neither son had anything to commend or discredit himself before God
 - And Paul says the Lord did this to ensure we would conclude that the chosen child was made so according to God's grace and not by an act of human consideration
 - It was merely on the basis of God's call, His election of Jacob over Esau
 - Paul backs his conclusion with a quote from Malachi
 - God declared that He "loved" Jacob and "hated" Esau
 - Those terms are loaded with emotion for us, so they seem harsh to us
 - We feel as though we need to explain them away

- Some say that God made his choice on the basis of what he knew these boys would do in the future
- But Paul's words specifically preclude that interpretation, since Paul says God made his declaration in advance to preclude such a conclusion
- So we must understand the words hate and love in the context of God's choice
 - They are definitions really
 - To be chosen by God is to be loved by God
 - To be passed over by God is to be hated, not in an emotional sense, but simply in the sense of being the opposite of love
- But the point is it was God who determined which boy received the promise
 - It wasn't on the basis of personal merit
 - And that's how God's choice works throughout history
 - God's elect are not elected on the basis of merit but merely on the basis of God's gracious choice
- If you look for it, this is a common pattern of God in scripture
 - God commonly chooses those who the world would not expect to receive the honor
 - Isaac was the younger, but God chose him over the older
 - Same for Jacob over Esau
 - Same for Judah over Reuben
 - Same for Joseph over his brothers
 - Same for David over his brothers
 - And men like Moses, Gideon, the prophets, the apostles, Paul particularly were all unlikely heroes chosen by God
 - As Paul himself explains to the church, this pattern is intended to expose man's foolishness in thinking he knows how God works

- God intentionally works against the nature thinking of sinful men to show Himself stronger

[1Cor. 1:25](#) Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

[1Cor. 1:26](#) For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;

[1Cor. 1:27](#) 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,

[1Cor. 1:28](#) 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,

[1Cor. 1:29](#) so that no man may boast before God.

[1Cor. 1:30](#) But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

[1Cor. 1:31](#) so that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."

- Doesn't the truth of God's sovereign election reveal God to be mean and unfair?
 - This is probably the single most common, natural thought for every person who grasps the Biblical truth of God's sovereign election
 - In fact, it's easily the most common reason for why some people refuse to accept this truth
 - It's become a particularly strong sentiment in the Western Hemisphere in the last 200 years
 - Probably because independence, freedom, equality, and being self-made are so ingrained in our culture
 - We automatically count it unfair anytime someone is without equal opportunity or complete self-determination
 - The idea that anyone or anything else may be in control of our destiny is offensive and just plain wrong
 - Specifically, isn't it wrong that God is at work electing some but leaving others outside the family
- That's the question we address next week in the rest of this chapter