

Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 022

Deuteronomy 7:7

March 23, 2025

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Let's take our Bibles this morning, and open them to Romans 9:10.

The last time I was with you in this class, we were working our way through the whole concept of "Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible."

Neo-Calvinism vs. The Bible

- I. Calvinism's Mixed Blessing
- II. Why Critique Calvinism?
- III. The Source of Calvin's Theology
- IV. Calvin's Manner of Life
- V. TULIP Through the Grid of Scripture**
- VI. Conclusion

We are in a section of our study where we are on Roman numeral V running TULIP, which is the Calvinistic acronym, through the grid of Scripture.

V. Running TULIP Through the Grid of Scripture

- A. Total Depravity
- B. Unconditional Election**
- C. Limited Atonement
- D. Irresistible Grace
- E. Perseverance of the Saints

The "T" in the Calvinistic acronym stands for Total Depravity; the "U" stands for Unconditional Election; the "L" stands for Limited Atonement; the "I" stands for Irresistible Grace; and the "P" stands for Perseverance of the Saints. We were taking those letters and comparing them to Scripture to see if they are biblical.

B. Unconditional Election

- 1. Divine sovereignty vs. human freewill = a profound mystery
- 2. Calvinism and double predestination
- 3. Calvinism's overstatement of Divine Sovereignty

We were working our way through the "U," Unconditional Election. The "U" in the Calvinistic system stands for Unconditional Election: meaning that God has ordained, before the foundations of the earth, certain people to be saved; and others who are not elect He has passed over, and they have no hope of salvation at all. I do not claim to have all the answers on election versus free will. I think that there are two strands of thought in Scripture: God chooses us and we choose God. That is how the Chafer Theological

Seminary doctrinal statement runs.

"We believe Scripture reveals two clear and indisputable lines of evidence. One line shows God sovereignly choosing His own in Christ; the other shows man possessing the function of volition, able to receive or reject God's uniquely born Son (regarding sovereignty, see Job 42:2; Psalm 135:6; Isaiah 46:9–10; Jeremiah 1:5; Matthew 24:22, 24, 31; Luke 18:7; Romans 8:29–33; Galatians 1:15; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1–2; regarding human volition, see John 1:9–13; 3:16, 36; 6:47; 20:30–31; Acts 16:30–31; Romans 10:11–13; 1 John 5:9–13, as well as every command in the epistles)."¹

But Calvinism basically teaches double predestination—it is not just that certain people are elected to salvation, but that others are elected unto damnation. And since they are—"T"—totally depraved, defined by Calvinism as inability, they have no hope of salvation whatsoever. They cannot even choose Christ, even if the Holy Spirit convicts them. John Calvin himself said,

"Now, since the arrangement of all things is in the hand of God, since to him belongs the disposal of life and death, he arranges all things by his sovereign counsel, in such a way that individuals are born, who are doomed from the womb to certain death, and are to glorify him by their destruction."²

As these people that are doomed from the womb are experiencing eternal torment, they "are to glorify him by their destruction." So as these people go into hell, having had no opportunity to receive Christ—as they are tormented throughout all eternity—somehow God is glorified in that. That is Calvinism, particularly Neo-Calvinism, the aggressive form of Calvinism being taught today.

What we were doing with part 3 was dealing with Calvinism's overstatement of divine sovereignty.

3. Calvinism's overstatement of Divine Sovereignty

- a) Omni-causality
- b) Salvation is available to all
- c) **Election proof texts (John 6:44; 15:16; Rom. 8:29-30)**
- d) **Double predestination proof texts (Rom. 9)**
- e) Loss of evangelism
- f) Loss of love for the lost (Ezek. 18:23, 32; 33:11)
- g) Babies in hell? (2 Sam. 12:19-24)

We were in the process of looking at some of the verses that they use to support this doctrine and showing that most of the verses they use are out of context (John 6:44, John 15:16, Romans 8:29-30).

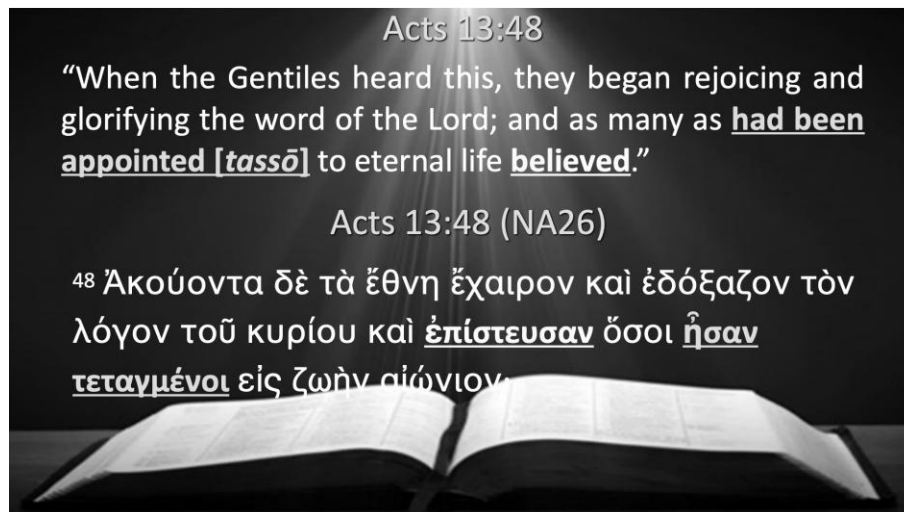
¹ Chafer Theological Seminary Distinctives: Election. <https://www.chafer.edu/soteriology>.

² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 3, Chapter 23, section 6.

We had spent some time in Acts 13:48, which says,

"When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).

We were making the point that in most English translations "appointed" ("tasso" [τάσσω] in Greek) is before the word "believed." One of the things that we brought up when we were studying Acts 13:48 is that "appointed" is first in the English text, and "believed" is second. So when your typical person reads this, the most important verb is "appointed" because it occurs first; "believed" occurs second. This fits with the Calvinistic system in which, they say, God has appointed people, before the foundations of the earth, to believe. They are almost coerced into believing. (I wanted to revisit this and bring up this slide because Pastor Jim did such a nice job on this slide. I had not shown it to you yet, and I did not want to just move on without showing it to you.)



But when you read Acts 13:48 in Greek, "believed" is first, and "appointed" is second. It reads the opposite way from your typical English translation. So if you read this in Greek, "believed" is the most important issue because it comes first; "appointed" is a secondary issue because it comes second. So "believed" is first—it is the Greek word "pisteuo" [πιστεύω]—and "appointed" is second—it is the Greek word "tasso" [τάσσω]. This opens the door to the idea that God appoints those who believe. The English translation would not give you that interpretation at all—God appoints some to believe. But when you read this in Greek, "believed" is first and "appointed" is second—God is appointing those who believed.

In other words (this is the prescience view), God looks down through the corridors of time and He picks winners—those who are going to believe in Him. The order of the Greek text in Acts 13:48 opens the door to that interpretation. The Calvinist does not want you to know that. They want you to read it only in English, because only in English is the Calvinistic view supported.

Something else that is worth mentioning is that "believed" ("pisteuo" [πιστεύω]) is in the

active voice, not in the passive voice. So, in the Calvinistic system, faith is essentially a gift. It is not something that you do—it is something God imparts to you. Now, that is a very strange interpretation because in Acts 13:48 "believe" is in the active voice: it is something you do. It is not in the passive voice: something that is done to you.

We went through several passages with which the Calvinistic system is arguing for this double predestination. Let me take you to the Grand Central Station of the Calvinistic system in their arguing for double predestination (some are predestined unto life, some are predestined unto damnation): Romans 9:10-23.

As you read Romans 9:10-23 through the first time, you get the impression that Calvinism and Neo-Calvinism must be right. Romans 9:10-23 says,

"And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; 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, it was said to her, 'THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER'" (Romans 9:10-12).

This, by the way, is the opposite of the way it works in the ancient Near East: the younger always served the older. God says, "I am making a sovereign choice here."

"Just as it is written, 'JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED'" (Romans 9:13).

So God chose one over the other. When you read this through Calvinistic lenses, because He loved one and hated the other, He predestined one to life, and the other unto damnation.

"What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, 'I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.' So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I HAVE RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH.' So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires" (Romans 9:14-18).

Calvinistic reading: one is elected to salvation; one is elected unto damnation.

"You mean God hardens people to the point at which they have no ability to hear or understand the gospel?"

Calvinistic answer: "Yes, that is what He did with Pharaoh—read your Bible."

"Why does God do that?"

"Well, because He loves one and hates another—Jacob and Esau, Romans 9:18."

"So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires."

"Excuse me, God, that is not fair." you say to the Calvinists.

Answer: "Who are you to argue with God? Do you not know that you are just a little speck of sand?"

"So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?'" (Romans 9:18-19).

"So, Lord, how are you going to hold all these people accountable, who are programmed to go to hell with no opportunity?" That is the logical question.

"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? 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? 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?" (Romans 9:20-22).

You read through that and you say, "Well, there must be something to this Calvinism, because there it clearly says in Romans 9 that one is elected, and one is unelected. God loved one; God hated another. After all, God hardened Pharaoh's heart. And to say to God, 'Well, that is not fair,' is like a lump of clay saying to the potter, 'Why did you make me this way?'" So you are not even allowed to question the fairness of God.

Anyone that gets into any kind of discussion with Calvinists, will at some point be redirected to Romans 9. So what in the world are we going to do with Romans 9? Well, what I am going to do with Romans 9 is the same thing I am going to do with Romans 10 and 11. I am going to put those chapters back into their context. Let us go up to the 10,000-foot level and look at the Book of Romans for a minute.

Romans Outline

- I. Salutation (1:1-17)
- II. Sin (1:18–3:20)
- III. Salvation (3:21–5:21)
- IV. Sanctification (6–8)
- V. Sovereignty (9–11)
- VI. Service (12:1–15:13)
- VII. Summation (15:14–16:27)

The Book of Romans has a very logical structure. Each letter in the outline begins with the letter "S." There is the "Salutation" section in which Paul greets the Romans. Then there is the "Sin" section, in which we learn why we need a Savior. And then there is the

"Salvation" section, in which we learn that we are justified by faith alone in Christ alone. And then comes the "Sanctification" section, in which we as blood bought saints are learning to allow our practice to catch up with our position.

Romans 6-8, the "Sanctification" section, is a magnificent set of chapters. Romans 7 is a description of Paul as a saved person trying to live the Christian life through his own power, and becoming very, very frustrated. The Holy Spirit is mentioned only once in Romans 7, rather indirectly (Romans 7:6). But in Romans 8 the Holy Spirit is mentioned over and over and over again.

In Romans 6, we learn about our baptism into Christ Jesus which occurred when we were saved. At the point of faith alone in Christ alone, we were identified into the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. That means that when He died, we died. When He was buried, we were buried. When He rose from the dead, we rose from the dead. When He was seated at the right hand of the Father after His ascension. That is where we are seated as well. That is our position. And in that position, our baptism (not water baptism, but identification into Christ Jesus), we have the ability to tell the sin nature, "No."

The sin nature is there to bother us. Have you noticed that as a Christian? Do you ever get tempted by the sin nature as a Christian? If you are never tempted as a Christian by the sin nature, then can you come up and sign my Bible after this session. In Romans 13:14, after Paul has talked about all of this, he says,

"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts" (Romans 13:14).

Just because I am a Romans 6 person now does not mean that the sin nature took a vacation. It will be there until Rapture or death, whichever comes first. So why is Paul struggling with sin? He keeps saying, "The very things I want to do, I do not do," etc.

Why is he struggling so badly? Because he is trying to live the Christian life through his own power. He is not tapping into the resources he knows he has from Romans 6, nor is he tapping into the resources of the Holy Spirit that he knows he has from Romans 8. There is an escape from being a Romans 7 Christian. The escape is your resources in Christ: Romans 6 and Romans 8.

Now notice that Paul introduces all that stuff after he has outlined the doctrine of salvation by faith alone (justification). He has only outlined that after he has told us why we need justification: because of sin. See how logical this is? There was actually a time in American history when in law schools lawyers would be taught how to argue cases by studying Romans. I think things have changed a little bit. Romans is the most beautiful, logically arranged book you may ever read in your entire life.

Romans 8 ends on a very high note. Paul says,

"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined" ³—

Foreknowledge comes before predestination. We covered that. It opens the door to the prescience understanding, that God picks winners. He chose those whom He foreknew were going to trust in His Son.

—"to become conformed to the image of His Son," ⁴—

Notice that the predestination in that verse is not for salvation, but it is to be conformed to the image of His Son, which is progressive sanctification. I used to read all of these verses with Calvinistic eyes, and I got on another set of glasses. So I am de-Calvinizing these verses for you.

—"so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified" (Romans 8:29-30).

Did you see what Paul skipped over? Where is sanctification? Why did Paul skip over sanctification at the end of Romans 8:29-30? Because sanctification is not automatic. That is why all these other phases of salvation (sometimes this is called the "golden chain of salvation") are automatic. But sanctification is not. To move from being a Romans 7 Christian to being a Romans 6 and 8 Christian requires delving down into God's Word. You have to be in an environment that teaches the Bible correctly, and you have to appropriate God's resources moment by moment, as you live for Him as a Christian.

Some Christians make great strides in that area. Some do not. That is what the Bema Seat judgment of Christ is for. It is to reward those Christians who are, not sinless, but are sinning less, because they spent their lives in Christ actively appropriating by faith the resources of God and obeying them.

So, a lot of people will be in heaven, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 3:15. But some will smell the smoke on their garments, because their life in Christ was spent pursuing wood, hay and stubble: fleshly things. And those are dissolved in the fire. We do not go through a fire, but our post-conversion lives' works go through a fire to test their quality.

A judgment like the Bema Seat would not be necessary if everyone got a ribbon for participation. We are living in a culture that wants to give participation trophies to everybody. A lot of people treat the Bema Seat judgment of Christ as one big ribbon-pinning ceremony. Yet the Bible does not teach the Bema Seat judgment of Christ like that. It teaches it as a reward for some, which would be unnecessary if progressive sanctification were automatic.

Paul would have stayed in Romans 7 if he had not chosen to appropriate the resources that he has (Romans 6 and 8), living day by day. So in the process of explaining all of these things, Paul ends on this high note: "Nothing can separate you from the love of God" (Romans 8:35-39, paraphrase). Whether you are a Romans 7 Christian or not,

³ Romans 8:29.

⁴ Romans 8:29.

nothing can separate you from the love of God. Paul says in Romans 8:37,

"But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

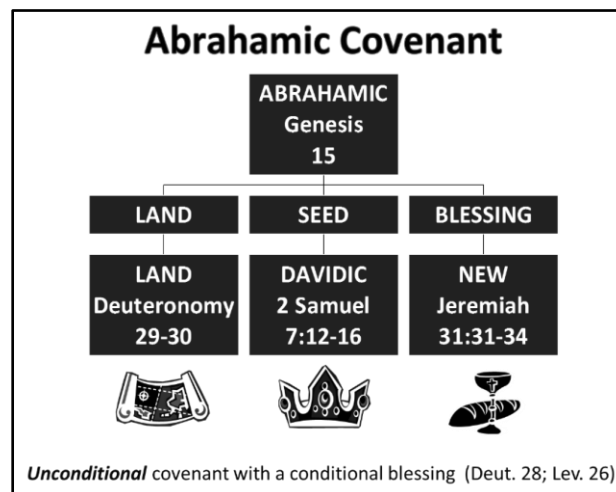
And then in Romans 8:38-39, Paul says,

"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 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" (Romans 8:38-39).

That is a high note as Paul is outlining sanctification. So at this point, some guy in the back of the room raises his hand and says, "Paul, I have a question. You have ended Romans 8 on such a high note about God's ironclad promises to us. Even my glorification is on a fast track—it is as though it has already happened. I am so there already. What do we do with the Abrahamic Covenant?"

What I am doing is putting Romans 9, in which I read all those Calvinistic passages, into its context. Some guy is probably asking, "What in the world do we do with the Abrahamic Covenant?" You remember the Abrahamic Covenant from Genesis 15, in which Abraham was put to sleep and God alone was represented by the oven and the torch that passed through the animal pieces. This means that the whole covenant rests on God's shoulders.

These are promises to the nation of Israel, spelled out as land, seed, and blessing, which are amplified in the covenants that God made with Israel. Land was amplified in the land covenant (Deuteronomy 29-30). Seed was amplified in the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:12-16). Blessings were amplified in the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34).



And from the standpoint of the time that Paul wrote Romans 9, around A.D. 57, the nation of Israel was in unbelief. They had nationally rejected their King. In fact, in just a few short years, the nation of Israel was to go through intense discipline at the hands of the Romans, in A.D. 70, because that is what God said He would do with His nation, going back to the Mosaic Covenant (Deuteronomy 28). So from the standpoint of A.D. 57, when

Paul wrote Romans 9, it looked like Israel was finished. It looked like Israel had been cut off. It looked like God had taken that covenant in Genesis 15, and clipped it and given it to somebody else.

And if God had done that, it makes all of the promises of Romans 8 not worth the paper they are written on. I cannot trust what God said in Romans 8, or John 3:16, or whatever verse is your favorite verse. I cannot trust God on any of those New Testament promises if he has taken Israel's cord and clipped it. Because if God can take Israel's cord and clip it, he can clip Romans 8, can He not? He can dissolve Romans 8 and give it to somebody else.

Most people, when they read Romans 9, 10, and 11, are not putting those chapters into their context. They are going into those chapters and trying to find things about personal election and God hardening people, etc. But I am here to tell you that Romans 9, 10, and 11 is the national, Israel section. Paul in Romans 9-11 is not dealing with these individual soteriological issues that he deals with earlier in the book. He is specifically dealing with the question, "If God cannot keep His Word to the Jew, then how can I trust Him to keep his word to you?"

It is amazing what theologians and commentators that do not have a place for Israel in the future, do with Romans 9-11. They call Romans 9-11 an afterthought. I have heard it called a digression—Paul kind of got off on a tangent. No, there is no tangent here. Remember what I said about the Book of Romans, about how logically structured it is?

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- VII. Summation (15:14–16:27)

You cannot have impeccable logic through Roman numerals I through V and then just say, "Well, all that Jewish stuff and Israel stuff is just a tangent." This is a logically structured book. So when you approach Romans 9, 10, and 11, you have to approach it with the question that the text is answering, not with your own questions about things. So what is the central question in Romans 9, 10, and 11? It is very simple: How can God be trusted to be faithful to us—Romans 8—if He has been unfaithful to Israel?

"If God is not going to keep Genesis 15—and from the standpoint of A.D. 57, it seemed as though Israel was going to be a Christ-rejecting nation forever—then how do I trust Him to keep the promises that you have laid out, Paul, at the end of Romans 8?" That is the question here.

So Paul says, "Your premise is wrong. God has not forgotten the nation of Israel, although it looks as though He has." In the "Sovereignty" section, Romans 9, 10, and 11, Paul is vindicating God as a true promise and covenant keeper. Remember that movement

Promise Keepers? There is one problem with it: nobody's a promise keeper. We all break our promises. God does not. That is why Romans 9 follows Romans 8.

V. Sovereignty (Rom 9–11)

- A. Israel in the past: elected (Rom 9)
- B. Israel in the present: rejected (Rom 10)
- C. Israel in the future: accepted (Rom 11)

So what Paul says in Romans 9 is that Israel, nationally, in the past, is elected. He is dealing with national election. He is not dealing with individual election. Israel in the past is elected. But according to Romans 10, Israel in the present is rejected. Why are they rejected? Because, nationally, they tripped right over Jesus. They wanted to be saved through their own righteousness, and that is not how it works. You have transferred righteousness from Christ, or you are unsaved. But they wanted to, to quote Frank Sinatra, "do it my way."

So in Romans 10, Paul explains what happened and what went wrong. But then in Romans 11, Paul says that Israel's hardening is in part. In other words, there is a time coming in history when God is going to fulfill every single promise He has ever made to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They will go into the seventieth week of Daniel, when they will receive nationally their Messiah. According to Matthew 23:39, they are going to call Yeshua back to the earth in the Second Advent—not the Rapture, in the Second Advent—and He will rescue them from the satanically energized Anti-Christ who is trying to kill them.

So by the time you get to the end of the Tribulation Period, there will be a scenario in which every single Jew on planet Earth that is living (many of them will be cut off in this process) will be regenerated. And the Millennial Kingdom will begin with the believing Jews entering the kingdom in their mortal bodies, along with some believing Gentiles, and repopulating the earth.

See how Romans 9, 10, and 11 fits with everything? Logically structured, Romans 11 is followed by Romans 12.

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We moved from "Sovereignty" to "Service," where the guy's question from the back of the room is answered.

"Hey Paul, I have a question. If God has cut the cord on Israel, on the covenant made in

Genesis 15, then how can I trust Him to keep the promises that you are articulating in Romans 8?"

Paul's answer is very simple: "God is not going to cut the cord on Israel, although it looks like it at the present time. Nationally, Israel is elected; currently, rejected because of self-righteousness; but one day, accepted."

And at that point, everybody in the room just breathes a sigh of relief. "Oh, praise the Lord."

"So what you are saying, Paul, is that God's Word can be trusted."

"Yes."

"What you are saying, Paul, is that God is perfectly upright in terms of His character."

"Yes."

"What you are saying, Paul, is that if God is going to keep His Word to the Jew, then He is going to keep His Word to me."

"Yes."

That is what you are supposed to get out of Romans 9, 10, and 11. Although all the Jewish stuff looks foreign to us Gentiles, this is not a digression. This is not an afterthought. This is not a tangent. This is not there to fill up three chapters. This is a critical piece of the logical puzzle that Paul is presenting to his Roman audience. And once we figure out who God is, and that He always keeps His promises, we move into the "Service" section of the book, where Paul says, "Therefore."

Whenever you see the word "therefore" in Scripture, you ask, "What is the word 'therefore' there for?" Typically, in Paul's writing, it is to move us from doctrine to practice.

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God,..." (Romans 12:1).

What mercies? The ones Paul just finished talking about in Romans 9, 10, and 11. I cannot tell you how many commentaries and Bible studies mess this up. They will have a commentary on Romans 1-8, or a class on Romans 1-8. Well, Romans 1-8 does not mean anything without Romans 9, 10, and 11. I have been in classes where they have taught Romans 1-8. At the end, they say, "Okay, we are done with the class. Time for another study."

I am like, "What is going on here? Nothing in Romans 8 can be taken to the bank unless you have an answer to the Israel question."

So therefore, brethren, in light of these mercies (Romans 9-11), *"present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship"* (Romans 12:1).

As a Christian, I cannot present my body as a living sacrifice to God if I do not trust God's character. If I think God is a God that clips the cord on promises like He has maybe done

with Israel, how in the world am I supposed to build my life as a Christian? Paul is talking here to the brethren about that God. It is impossible to present your body as a living and holy sacrifice until you come to grips with the absolute trustworthiness of God. You could never offer Him your body as a living sacrifice because you do not trust Him. But the trust issue just got fixed. Romans 9, 10, and 11 fixed the trust issue.

Once you come to this realization, you can wipe the sweat off your forehead and you can say, "God is one hundred percent trustworthy because He is going to keep his word to the Jews; so I can give Him my body." So when I see the Jews being regathered into their ancient homeland, I do not get mad about it like most of Christendom, or go on internet and start condemning them as not the true Jews, and all these things that people are doing today.

I look at that and I just celebrate, because to me, that is the firstfruits of what God is going to bring in later. And I am seeing tangible evidence that God is going to keep Romans 11. He has to keep Romans 11 because he elected Israel nationally in Romans 9. So, I rejoice in it. I do not get upset about it, because if God is this faithful to them, He is going to be this faithful to me.

That is why Romans 12-16 occurs at the end of the Book of Romans. When you are in Romans 9 and you are reading about election, you are reading about Israel. You are not reading about individual election. You are reading about things that God is going to do nationally. Israel is the elect of God. We know that from Isaiah 65:22, in which God calls the nation of Israel "My chosen ones." It is God's choice of a nation. Isaiah 65:21-22 says, of the Millennial Kingdom of Israel,

"They will build houses and inhabit them; They will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They will not build and another inhabit, They will not plant and another eat; For as the lifetime of a tree, so will be the days of My people, And My chosen ones will wear out the work of their hands" (Isaiah 65:21-22).

Go to Deuteronomy 7:7-8. This is what God said to Israel in the Mosaic Law:

"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, 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" (Deuteronomy 7:7-8).

God calls Israel His chosen ones here. Moses says in Deuteronomy 7:7,

"The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number..." (Deuteronomy 7:7).

In fact, they were the fewest (Deuteronomy 7:7). So the choice that God made for them in the Old Testament was national, not individual. It is not a statement that this single Jew is going to be saved and this one is not. It is a statement that of all of the nations of the

earth, God picked Israel. God formed Israel, and they are His instrument of blessing.

"Well, gee, God, why didn't you choose the Egyptians?" "Why didn't you choose the Babylonians?" "Why didn't you choose the Persians?"

And God says, "Because I am God. I have a right to do stuff like that."

It is very clear contextually that the choice that is being made in Romans 9 is a national selection. When people go to Romans 9 with individual election in mind, they are going way outside all these contexts. In Matthew 24:21-22, Jesus said, speaking of Israel in the Tribulation Period,

"For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short" (Matthew 24:21-22).

People look at that and say, "Well, who in the world are the elect?" Well, the elect of God is the nation of Israel. How do we know that? Because Matthew 23 comes before Matthew 24. Matthew 23:37-39 is the statement that Jesus made, that prefaced Matthew 24. Matthew 24 is explaining or answering this issue that Jesus raised in Matthew 23:37-39, when it became very clear that the religious leaders were going to reject him.

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem," ⁵—

Does that not sound Jewish? It is not First Baptist Church of Houston. No offense to our brethren there, but Jesus is not talking about any Baptist church, Presbyterian church, or Methodist church. He is not even talking to Christians or believers here at this point because the word "Christian" did not even exist yet. That word is not even used until Acts 11.

—*"who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather ["episynago" ἐπισυνάγω]"*⁶—.

Do you recognize the Jewish word "synagogue," meaning "gathering," in "episynago" [ἐπισυνάγω]? Does not that sound Jewish? Jesus is essentially saying, "When I came the first time, I wanted to have synagogue with my nation, the elect nation of Israel. But the problem was not Me. The problem was you, Israel.

—*"your children together, the way a hen gathers ["episynago" ἐπισυνάγω] her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house"*⁷—

What is the "house"? The temple, that Jesus used to call "My house." He said things like "My Father's house." Jesus is saying to Israel, "Well, now the temple is your house

⁵ Matthew 23:37.

⁶ Matthew 23:37.

⁷ Matthew 23:37-38.

because you kicked Me out of it."

—"*is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you*"⁸—

Who is "you"? Jerusalem. It is a collective "you."

—"*say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'*"
(Matthew 23:37-39).

This is a reference to Psalm 118:26, which is a Messianic psalm. In other words, Jesus is not coming back for Israel until Israel nationally acknowledges Him as the Messiah. Well, when is that going to happen? Matthew 24-25 explains it. Matthew 24:31, which is speaking of the end of the Tribulation Period after Israel is in a state of repentance, says,

*"And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER"*⁹—

What is the Greek word for "gather"? "Episynago" [ἐπισυνάγω]—related to "synagogue." The synagogue—gathering—Jesus wanted to have with Israel in His first coming, He is going to have with them in His Second Coming. When they are in the sheepfold by way of faith, Jesus will send forth His angels with a great trumpet. Not the Rapture, as people think. As if God cannot have more than one trumpet. No. He can have all kinds of trumpets. This is a different trumpet from the Rapture.

—"*TOGETHER His elect...*" (Matthew 24:31).

Who is the "elect"? The nation of Israel (Deuteronomy 7:7, Isaiah 65:21). So when you are seeing this concept of "elect" in Matthew 24-25, it is the nation of Israel. I would like you to see Romans 9 that way. Romans 9 is saying exactly the same thing. So with all of that in mind, let us go back and reread Romans 9, now that we have de-Calvinized some of this. Starting at Romans 9:10—

"And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; 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, it was said to her, 'THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER'"
(Romans 9:10-12).

So concerning the twins in the womb, Jacob and Esau, God says, "Although Esau is the firstborn and deserves the rights of the firstborn, I am going to make a sovereign decision here, over my choice nation, concerning which of the twins the Messiah is going to come through. The Messiah will not come through Esau. The Messiah will come from Jacob." There is nothing here about one going to heaven and one going to hell, because what is written in Romans 9 is about national decisions being made. So do not read into the

⁸ Matthew 23:38-39.

⁹ Matthew 24:31.

passage more than what is there. Keep it in its context.

"Just as it is written, 'JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED'" (Romans 9:13).

"You mean to tell me that God hates people? I thought John 3:16 says, 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.' If John 3:16 is true, how do you reconcile this with God hating Esau?"

I want to show you how the word "hate" is used in biblical times. It is not always speaking of an emotional hatred for a human being. It is speaking of the one not chosen. Jacob was chosen to launch the lineage leading to Jesus. Esau was not chosen. Look at Luke 14:26, where Jesus is laying out the requirements for discipleship. He says,

"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26).

Discipleship is for the believer. Once a person is saved, God calls them into discipleship. And part of the requirements of discipleship is that you put God's will over your own. If you are not willing to do that, then you are not a disciple. You may be a believer, but you are not a disciple. You may be a believer who is going to be unrewarded at the Bema Seat, but you are not a disciple who is going to be rewarded at the Bema Seat.

So what if Mom and Dad say do "X" and Jesus says do "Y"? Well, if I am a disciple, I had better do "Y." If there is a conflict between parental will and Jesus' will, and the conflict is crystal clear, if I want to be a disciple, I had better do what Jesus tells me to do and not what Mom and Dad say. In the process of describing this issue, Jesus says, that disciples have to be willing to hate their mother and father.

Now, that cannot be emotional hatred towards one's parents, because the Fifth Commandment is to *"Honor your father and your mother"* (Exodus 20:12, Deuteronomy 5:16). Jesus could not be saying that you have to hate your father or your mother. What He is saying is that your mother and father represent something you are not going to choose in comparison to God's will.

Now, that is not the way we communicate in English in the twenty-first century. "Hate" to us means something totally different. But that is how the biblical world used the word "hatred" in many instances. In Luke 14:26, Jesus is not saying to emotionally hate the guts of your mother and father. "Hate" is used as a synonym for when there is a conflict between the Lord's will and my parents' will. I am not going to choose my parents' will. I am going to choose God's will. And that becomes described as "hate." It is a different understanding of "hate" from how we use the word.

So with that being said, let us go right back to Romans 9. Does God hate Esau? No. God loves everybody. But "hate" here is used as an expression to mean that God did not choose Esau to be the progenitor of the Messiah. God chose Jacob.

"God, why did you choose Jacob and not Esau for that role?"

"Well, because I am God and I can do what I want. I made a sovereign decision."

Romans 9 has nothing to do with Esau going to hell. This has nothing to do with Esau, being hated by God the way we understand it. It has to do with God making a sovereign decision to choose Jacob for the national honor of bringing forth the Messiah, rather than Esau. If you come to this text with the wrong set of lenses, you are going to be asking all these questions that this text is not answering.

"What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, 'I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.' So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. 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'" (Romans 9:14-17).

"God, how can you make a decision like this?"

God says, "I do it all the time. I hardened Pharaoh's heart."

So the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is used as a justification for God making a decision to bring forth the Messiah from Jacob instead of Esau. Romans 9:18—

"So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?' 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? 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? 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? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon the vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,..." (Romans 9:18-23).

"God, why did you pick Jacob to be the progenitor of the Messiah?"

God says, "I do that kind of stuff all the time. Look at what I did with Pharaoh. I hardened Pharaoh's heart."

Now, at this point, the Calvinists jump on the bandwagon and say, "There it is: in the Bible, God hardened Pharaoh's heart and made it impossible for him to embrace God." Next week, I will show you that, yes, God hardened Pharaoh's heart. After Pharaoh hardened his own heart—not once, not twice, not three times, not four times, not five times, but six times. Did God make a decision to harden Pharaoh's heart? Of course He did. But do not just quote Exodus 9:12, the sixth plague, in which God hardened Pharaoh's heart.

Please interact with all the biblical data, which clearly indicates that Pharaoh hardened his own heart against God six times. The only thing I am doing with these verses is putting them into context. That is all I am doing. I am not coming to them with a preset script: one goes to heaven, one goes to hell, because of double predestination.

Even though these verses are used for those arguments, I have tried to de-Calvinize some of them simply by getting back to basic Bible reading, without reading the Bible through the lens of your favorite teacher or scholar or theologian. Just read the Bible. Pay attention to the order of things in Scripture, and you will see that God did harden Pharaoh's heart. But six times earlier, Pharaoh hardened his own heart against God.

So the big takeaway for this is that Romans 9, 10, and 11 is not individual, but national. God is making national decisions, and Calvinism and Neo-Calvinism is trying to turn this into individual election, and double predestination, those issues which I think are the furthest thing from Paul's mind. I think Paul, if he were alive today, would be shocked at what has been done to Romans 9 to make him deal with subjects he is not dealing with.