



Election 2: God's Sovereign Mercy

Romans 9:14-18

Rev. Fred Greco

This morning, our text will be Romans, chapter 9, verses 14-18. Please give attention to the reading of God's Holy Word. For the Word of the Lord is completely inerrant, the Word of the Lord is completely sufficient, and the Word of the Lord is completely authoritative. Romans, chapter 9, beginning at verse 14:

"What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! 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 depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. 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.' So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills."

Thus far the reading of God's Holy Word. Let's pray for his blessing upon it. O Lord our God, please take this Word and apply it to our hearts. Your Word is not always easy for us to obey, but, Lord, we seek by the assistance, the guidance, and the power of your Holy Spirit to not only be hearers of your Word but to be doers of it as well. Bless us, this morning, by your Word. In Christ's name we pray, amen.

This text we have before us this morning is the second in the series of three we have been studying under the rubric of a short series about election in the bigger context of our study of the book of Romans. Election is confusing to many, and it is also offensive to some. So why, then, should we teach it? We should teach it because God has given it to us, but at the same time, we must remember the context and the reason that the Lord has given to us this teaching of election.

Romans 9 is well known for its treatment of election, and in this text we look at the sovereignty of God's mercy. The very first thing we will see in our text is that Paul anticipates a question. It may be a question that has risen in *your* mind. The question is...*Is God unjust?* Then Paul proceeds to answer that question in two ways. First, he speaks of God's sovereignty in mercy, and then he speaks in God's sovereignty in judgment. So we'll begin by looking at the question, "Is God unjust?" and then we will look at Paul's answers in God's sovereignty in mercy and God's sovereignty in justice.

This question that comes to us is a natural one. It flows out of the text we looked at last week, chapter 9, verses 6-13. Paul is anticipating when someone is hearing his teaching what they will next ask or object with. Last week, we looked at God's sovereign choice, and Paul reminded us that God carries forward his purpose through his choice. First, he chose Abraham, then he chose Isaac, but clearest of all, God chose Jacob and not Esau before they were born or before they had done anything either good or bad.

Paul made it clear that all of this was grounded in *God's* choice, not grounded in anything in *them*. This is important for us to remember, because we can lose sight of God's choice just by looking at the lives of Jacob and Esau. We could criticize Esau for what he has done, we could praise Jacob for what *he* did, and we lose sight of the fact that we are told in the Scripture God chose Jacob and not Esau, not based on their lives, not based on any anticipation of what they would do, but by his own sovereign choice.

Paul also made clear that God's choice had a purpose *beyond* Jacob and Esau. Paul said God made that choice so his election might continue or might stand or persevere. So Jacob and Esau were not the only choice God made; they were just illustrative of the choice God makes in his election. Now, the opening of *this* passage this morning proves God actually is teaching election in Romans 9.

When we look at this, or anything *else* in the Bible, for that matter, we must be sure we are trying to understand what the Bible is teaching. Often, we come to a text with a preconceived notion, and either we try to force the Bible to say what we *want* it to say or else we're sure the Bible can't possibly be saying what we don't like. In this case, even though election is hard, we can't avoid it. If Paul were not teaching election, then why would verse 14 come up? It's a logical consequence of the doctrine of election for some of us to think about the injustice of God choosing.

That's where Paul picks this up in verse 14. "What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!" Paul understands what he's saying, and he understands what the reaction will be. We've seen him over and over again anticipate questions, anticipate objections in the book of Romans, and he does that *here*. He knows some will not like election and will think it is unfair. That is why verse 14 follows verse 13.

Is God Unjust?

So how, then, do people object to the idea of election? How do they deal with Romans, chapter 9? Well, they do this mainly in three ways. First, they avoid the issue as if it were an unimportant one. Secondly, they say election is only about nations, not about individuals. Thirdly, they say God is establishing justification by faith here instead of justification by works. It's not really about election at all; it's about justification by faith. Let's look at each of these in turn.

Some view the doctrine of election as *unimportant, as an unnecessary difficulty*. They say, "It is a source of division in the church. It's a source of confusion, and as a result, it is not helpful. Instead, we should seek to the helpful and practical teachings of Scripture. That's what we should focus on. There's no need to get caught up in something that divides and confuses." At first glance, this seems to be wise counsel. Why unnecessarily provoke fellow believers? Why try to understand something theologians have fought about for centuries?

But really, what this is doing is not bringing wisdom. Saying that we should avoid this teaching, that it's unimportant is really insulting God. It says God should not have bothered to give us this text, that there's nothing to be gained from it. The truth is just because we don't understand something well doesn't mean it's not valuable. We must make the effort to understand. We understand this in everyday life. The things that are often most valuable to us require study, require practice, require effort. They don't come easily.

A second way that others object to the doctrine of election is to view it as *only discussing the election of nations*. They say it is about Jacob being the head of the people of Israel and about Esau being the head of the people of Edom, and what Paul is really talking about here is how Israel was chosen from amongst all of the nations of the world. This, after all, is an easier way of looking at our text.

First, the Bible is full of references to God choosing the people of Israel among all of the nations. Secondly, it takes the individual out of the equation. God's choice doesn't penetrate down to me. It is simply him choosing a group of the nation, and then there is still liberty within that group. God has chosen the nation of Israel, but the individual salvation is still up to them, not God.

The problem with this is that, of course, Paul is talking about individuals. Before Jacob was the head of the people of Israel he was a man. Before Esau was the father of the Edomites he was an individual. Even more than that, Paul has been talking about individual salvation and the assurance of salvation up until this point. That's actually at the center of what Paul has been discussing in chapter 8. Why would Paul abandon the very topic he had been trying to prove? It makes no sense.

A third view is what we might call *evangelical Arminianism*. That is, that God is establishing his way of salvation in Romans 9, that it is salvation by justification by faith rather than salvation by justification by works. Now, Arminianism takes its name from the sixteenth-century theologian Jacob Arminius. Jacob Arminius was a teacher who objected to the Protestant view of election. He rose up in the church and taught and gathered to himself disciples, and eventually there was a formal procedure brought to the church in the Netherlands.

For many of us, we think the originator of the five points of Calvinism was Calvin, but he wasn't. It wasn't even the church. It's not as if the church sat down and said, "How can we summarize the most important doctrines in the church? Let's pick...I don't know...five and go from that point." No. What actually happened was the Arminians, the followers of Jacob Arminius, following his teaching, said, "We object to the church's teaching on these five points. We believe man is *not* totally depraved. We believe grace is *not* irresistible. We believe election is *not* unconditional. We believe atonement is *not* limited. We believe the perseverance of the saints does not exist."

So the church gathered together and studied under the Scriptures these objections, this remonstrance, to use a technical term, and they said, "No. We don't agree, and we're going to set forth the teaching of the Scripture in five points that answer your five points." What had happened was up until this point, all of the Protestant churches had held to the doctrine of election as set forth in Romans, chapter 9. The Lutherans, the Reformed, the Presbyterians all held the same view. As a matter of fact, they all followed the church father Augustine in *his* view of election, and they even followed the greatest of the Roman Catholic theologians, Thomas Aquinas, who had the same view of election Calvin had.

Up until this point, there was unanimity about what the Scriptures taught about election, but following Arminius and his followers, what they said was that this passage shows God is giving his mercy in his own way according to his own plan, that God has appointed faith as the way to salvation and not works. So God in this passage is extending his mercy to those who come when he calls, and they will believe, and this call is a general call. This

election is general. It applies to everyone, and the distinction is not whether you are called by God or chosen by God; the distinction is whether you have faith.

The problem here is that Paul is not talking about justification by faith in this passage. He has already assumed that. Instead, the issue here is why one person has faith and another person doesn't. Paul is taking it down to the next level, as it were. He's asking the question because some have said that God has failed because the Israelites have not had faith in the Messiah.

Further, what this Arminianism does is it makes our faith a work, because our faith is something we bring to God that makes all the difference. If that were so, then salvation would not be by grace. Salvation would be by our faith. No one would think God would be unjust in this circumstance, because after all, if God were differentiating on people based on whether one has faith and one does not, that is certainly just. The question in verse 14 would not even come up.

So each of these objections is unsatisfying in its own way. Where, then, do we go from here? I think we have to start by thinking about the proper way to view election. Why does Paul bring it up, why does he do that here, and how can election benefit us and others? Well, the first thing we saw last week. Paul brings up election in the context of evangelism.

Paul has an anguish for his kinsmen, the Jews. He wants them to embrace the promises of God and to believe in Jesus Christ, and they don't. That anguish comes upon Paul, but he doesn't give up. Why? He doesn't despair of sharing the good news with others, because God is in control. God has his people out there. So we can share the gospel with confidence because it does not depend on us; it depends on God.

Oftentimes, the objection that comes to election is that it will make us lazy in evangelism. If God is electing people, we won't have an effort to bring the gospel to others. I think of no better answer for this than that of Dr. Sinclair Ferguson. He says could you imagine someone walking up to Paul and saying, "Well, Paul, if what you say is true, then we're not going to evangelize at all. You probably don't care about evangelism at all."

Dr. Ferguson says, "I can imagine in my mind's eye Paul taking off his shirt and showing them the dozens of whip marks he has, all that he suffered to bring the gospel to not only the Jews but to the Gentiles." The truth of this doctrine does not drive us from evangelism; it energizes our evangelism, because we know it doesn't depend on us. It doesn't even depend on the person we are witnessing to. It depends only on our gracious and sovereign, powerful God. How empowering is that?

The second thing we see is that election is given in the context of assurance to the Christian. This is important practically, because assurance is a great comfort for the Christian. It is one thing to know we are saved; it is another thing to know we are saved and cannot be lost. There is a comfort that comes from that. You settle in. It also reminds us, in this same way, that the doctrine of election is not essential to salvation. Paul is bringing this up in the context of assurance.

It's not as if you cannot be saved unless you understand election. Many Christians *don't* understand it or even reject it. Do not make the mistake of going where Paul does not go. No one is saved by believing in election. Everyone is saved by the work of Jesus Christ received by faith. So this doctrine of election, while it is a comfort to our assurance, is not essential.

This also means we have to avoid certain ways of dealing with election. Now what do we mean by that? We can't approach this doctrine with anger or hostility. If something in God's Word makes us angry with other people or angry with God, we have to check ourselves. There is no place for bitterness or impatience with God's Word. That doesn't mean we always completely understand what God is saying, but we must always be in a position of learning, of being ready to learn from God's Word.

We are not to sit in judgment of the Scriptures. This is perhaps nowhere more evident than *here*. I could bore you with tales of commentator after commentator who speaks about this text in this fashion: "Well, obviously, Paul doesn't understand what he's saying here. Let me give you the right answer. Paul is not giving us the truth here. It can't be true, so let me tell you what *is* true."

The problem is that the commentator is not debating with another commentator. The commentator is debating with the inspired apostle Paul who speaks by the work of the Holy Spirit. What happens is by an effort to save your interpretation of a passage of Scripture, you have to throw out the window our doctrine of Scripture and its authority, and once you do that, all bets are off. Once you say the Scripture can be wrong, then *you* become the authority, not the Bible.

So we have to be very clear not to argue with the Bible. At the same time, we cannot approach the doctrine of election with a debating spirit. This is often a very real risk in Reformed churches, especially those who are newly Reformed. It's such a risk that we have a name for it. We call it the *cage stage*. The reason it's the cage stage is because when someone newly comes to the doctrines of grace, newly understands the doctrine of election, they seek to make that the content of every conversation they have. That's all they want to talk about. That's all they think is important.

They twist other teachings to come around to the true doctrine of election. Hence the term *cage stage*. Someone who has newly come to this and is a bit overzealous needs to be put in a cage for a little while to cool off, three to six months maybe. Three to six months. Take a couple of books from the Old Testament. Call me in the morning. Just dial it down a little. Again, it's not that election is wrong. It's not that election is unimportant, but we need to put it in its perspective and not make it all about the doctrine of election. Election is not divorced from life. We understand election in order to know and love God more. That's critical.

One final thing. See how Paul deals with this question in verse 14, how he deals with it in terms of the Bible. Do you see how over and over again Paul goes back to the Bible for answers on a difficult matter? He actually even does it in the passage *before* this as well. When the matter is difficult, Paul seeks to bring the Bible to bear on our thoughts. He doesn't begin with philosophy or with logic. He wants us to know the Bible is the ultimate authority, and *that*, beloved, is something we must never give up. There is a reason the Bible is completely authoritative, and that is where we must go to find our answers.

So Paul has put the question in verse 14, he has described election in verses 6-13, and that led to this objection. "What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part?" Paul does not avoid the objection; he answers it, and he answers it in two ways. First, he shows that God is sovereign in showing his mercy, and then later we will see that he shows God is sovereign in his judgment.

God's Sovereignty in Mercy

First, notice how Paul immediately answers the question. His first answer is immediately from his heart. We've seen this before. "Is there injustice with God? By no means! Don't even think about it. God forbid!" We've seen this over and over again. On the one hand, this doesn't really help us much, because it doesn't really give us an answer as to why there is no injustice with God. It doesn't give us information, but it *is* important in another respect.

Notice how Paul views God. His initial gut reaction is to believe God and his character against any opposition. As a matter of fact, Paul's answer begins grammatically with a negative. "No! There can't be injustice." He won't for a moment entertain any thought that God is unjust, and if someone thinks that, Paul says, they are wrong. Let's get that right out to start with.

Think about that for us today. In a world today that is constantly attacking God, that constantly has people who make statements like, "Oh, I could never believe in a God like *that*. If God said *that*, I could never believe in him. He would have to fall in line more with what *I* think in order for me to believe in God..." In a world like that, how quick are we to defend God? Do we trust the Lord so much we can't conceive of him being unjust? Is that the first thought that comes into our minds?

Paul also does give us more of an answer than his initial response. This is easy to spot. It begins in verse 15. It begins with the word *for*. "For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.'" This word *for* here is introducing the next line in Paul's argument. He says, "I've told you what I believe, but now I'm going to tell you why I believe it." He's introducing his argument.

I want you to notice something. The way he does it both here in verse 15 and again in verse 17 is that he quotes the Bible. His argument hinges on the Scriptures. He doesn't go into a detailed logical argument. Instead, he states the truth of God's Word. In essence, what he is saying is, "Don't listen to me; listen to God."

Now notice something else. Paul does not in his answer bring up the question or the subject of justice. Do you see that? The question is, "Is God unjust?" and he answers it by talking about the mercy of God, not the justice of God. He could have answered it by saying, "This is why God is just. We're going to prove the justice of God." Instead, he talks about mercy. If we think about it, mercy is the opposite of justice. *Justice* is getting what I deserve, whether good or bad. *Mercy* is getting what I do *not* deserve.

Now why does Paul do this? Let's start by thinking for a moment about the passage Paul is citing. The quote is from Exodus 33:19, and the context of this quote is known to many of you. It is the story of how Moses went up on the mountain to meet with God. He was gone many days, and the Israelites became extremely agitated. They

could not see God, and now they could not see Moses, so they went to Aaron and said, "You need to make us a god we can see."

They prevailed upon Aaron to make them an idol. They all took their things of gold and gave them to Aaron, and I love the way the Bible describes this. It's as if Aaron took all the gold and threw it into the fire and out popped a golden calf. It's almost like a bad miracle. This just happens to occur. Now, if you recall, no one is in opposition to this plan. There is no minority report in Exodus 32. No one says, "I don't think this is such a good idea, Aaron. Maybe we ought to wait for Moses." Everybody is in on this plan. They all want this to happen.

God tells Moses what is going on, and Moses goes down and rebukes the people. He comes back to God, and then God tells him to go forward with the people. Moses, before he goes back down, says to God, "I want a sign of your favor, not just for me but for all the people. Show me your glory, Lord." The Lord responds with the statement Paul gives us here in Romans 9:15. God says he's not going to do that for Moses. He's not going to be indiscriminate, because that's not how God operates.

God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion, because he is God. That's what he does. Again, at first glance, we might think God is unfair in this. Why isn't he fair or just with everyone? The answer Paul gives to us... The reason this is an answer to justice is that salvation has nothing to do with justice. That's what Paul is telling us. It is all about mercy.

Do you know what you would get if you had salvation related to justice, if salvation were about fairness? Hell. *That's* what you would get. Justice and fairness is that we deserve hell. We have nothing to answer to God. Everyone would get judgment and condemnation. If we demand justice from God, that is what we deserve. We forget that. You see, you have no claim on God. We are all lost, deserving sinners. You have forfeited all your rights before God. You have rebelled. You have deserted God. You have forfeited all rights to stand before him.

So when we think about salvation in terms of justice, we're thinking about the wrong category entirely. We should be glad that salvation is all of God and that he is not being just with us. Paul goes on in verse 16 to explain this point further. He's quoted from the Lord to make his point that God will have mercy on those whom he will. There is no reason for God's mercy beyond the pleasure of God to show mercy. No one is deserving.

Now, that is hard for us to hear. I know that's not the Sunday school answer, but in our real lives we talk about grace, but there are times when we think we are pretty good people. I mean, after all, we're all in church this morning. You young people are the good kids at school, the good kids in your neighborhood. We're the people who are honest. We're the people who are generous. Surely God can see that. Doesn't he see who we are and love us because of who we are?

Once we understand that salvation is all about mercy, that it has nothing to do with justice, in fact, that justice condemns us before a holy God, then we begin to see that all we are is nothing before a perfect and holy God and that anything we are is only due to the work of God in us. Paul presses the point home. He says in verse 16, "So then..." This is a double connective. He's getting our attention. "Consequently..." "Therefore..." "Therefore, therefore..." he says. "...it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy."

What does it mean that there is no injustice with God? What it means is that God will have compassion on whom *he* will have compassion. It means that what decides whether someone will be saved is not from *them*. Paul is comprehensive in his answer here. First, he says it doesn't depend on the human *will*. The language here is actually clear. It's a participle. The one who desires, the one who wills. It describes the person. It's a verb used as an adjective to describe a type of person.

Salvation does not depend on the one who is willing. What decides whether a man is saved or not is not whether he even desires to be saved, Paul is saying. Stop and think about that for a minute. This is incredible. Paul is saying it doesn't depend on you. That goes against most of modern theology and evangelism, which puts all the emphasis on *you*. I've given you the illustration before, and it's perfectly appropriate here again.

There are evangelistic techniques that go something like this: "You need to know God has voted for you but the Devil has voted against you, so you need to cast the deciding vote. What will you choose? Will you choose God and heaven or will you choose the Devil and hell?" It's as if it all depends on the one who is willing. Someone who put that evangelistic method together never read Romans 9:16, because Paul says it absolutely does *not* depend on the one who is willing.

Secondly, Paul says it doesn't depend on human *actions*. Again, this is another participle. The word here *exertion* means the one who runs or the one who acts or the one who does things. That's where we get the word *exertion* from. Paul is saying your will does not come into the equation and your actions do not come into the equation. There is no activity you can do to bring about your salvation.

Now, it may be obvious, but let me make the point. *Nothing* means nothing. *Nothing* doesn't mean just not most things. *Nothing* means nothing. That includes believing. Believing or faith is not the cause of your salvation. God does not look ahead and see that you will believe and then decide you are worthy of saving. No. God determines in his own good pleasure to have mercy on some, and those whom he has mercy on are saved.

They receive the salvation God has given, and they receive it by faith. Faith is the empty hand that receives the salvation that comes from the work of Jesus Christ. It is not that we differ from others in ourselves. We must never say that salvation depends on anything in us, because if it did, then we would be lost. Our salvation is completely of grace. It is all of God. That is what Paul is telling you here today.

God's Sovereignty in Judgment

But what about the opposite? If God is just in giving mercy to some, is he just in giving judgment to others? It's clear that what Paul is saying here is that God chooses some and *doesn't* choose others. We can focus on the positive act of choosing, but that necessarily means others are *not* chosen. We all know this from everyday life. If you've ever played any game, any sport in a pick-up fashion, you know exactly how this works.

You play a game of basketball, and you have a group of people playing, and you have two captains, or you have a soccer match and two captains select their players and take turns choosing players. As they are done choosing, they have selected a team, but they have just as obviously *not* chosen the ones who are not on their team. That is an act

they have done. They have passed over others. So choosing implies also *not* choosing. Paul is going to pick *that* point up in verse 17.

He says, "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.'" Once again we see this word *for*. You should be noticing this by now in the book of Romans. Paul's arguments are very tightly held together. He's going to give us once again what he did in verse 15: a biblical statement to carry his point. He says the Scripture said to Pharaoh that God raised him up for a specific purpose.

We have to understand Paul is grounding this point in the words of God, not his own. When Paul says "the Scripture" he's referring to God's words, because actually, in the passage at hand (Exodus, chapter 9, verse 13 and following), we are told God said to Moses, "Go and tell Pharaoh such." So it is God's word. This isn't Paul's opinion. This isn't a Presbyterian opinion. This is God's word.

So we must approach this verse with an attitude that if God says something we must accept it. We can't argue with God. That's important, because what we have here is perhaps the most offensive teaching in all of the Bible to unbelievers and even some believers. Notice once again that Paul answers this question without respect to the justice of God. He instead speaks about God's purposes. Just as before he spoke about God's mercy, now he speaks about God's purposes.

He says God had a purpose with Pharaoh, and by extension he has a purpose with all who receive judgment instead of mercy. What that means is in his sovereignty... Remember, God owes no one. He has a purpose not only in mercy, but God has a purpose in judgment. It's not as if God could only be just by showing mercy to everyone. That's not justice at all.

So what is God's purpose here? Well, God's purpose with Pharaoh is that he caused Pharaoh to stand in the first place. That is, God had placed Pharaoh in *this* place at *this* time for *this* purpose. Paul is not talking about the reason God created Pharaoh. He's not talking about Pharaoh in the abstract. This phrase *raised up* means to cause to stand, to have a position.

Considered in this passage, Pharaoh is a sinner, a rebel, a hater of God, yet God raised him up. Why? Paul tells us first *that God might show his power*. God's judgment shows that he's God, that he is just, that he is one who punishes sin, that God is holy and good. God's judgment shows that God is powerful and is not dependent on anyone, that he can bring about his will.

He certainly showed that through his dealings with Pharaoh and the Egyptians. If you want to see that in greater detail, you can join us on Sunday evenings as we're going through the book of Exodus. This evening, we're going to look at the first of the 10 plagues God brought to Pharaoh. God is showing his power through Pharaoh, that God is God and, even though he thinks he is, Pharaoh is not.

The second thing Paul says is that God has a purpose in this *that his name would be proclaimed throughout the earth*. Do you hear what Paul is saying? Paul is saying that God has caused Pharaoh to stand and has brought his judgment

upon Pharaoh that his evangelistic purposes might go forth. Do you see how we assume the opposite is true, that God is hurting the gospel?

We say to God, "Why do you put stuff like this in the Bible, God? Do you know how hard that makes it to witness to people? Do you know all of the questions I have to answer? Why don't you just leave that off to the side?" Paul says, "No, no, no. You're thinking about it the wrong way. The fact that God does this causes his name to go throughout the earth."

This is true. The Old Testament is full of stories of people who say, "We know about *you*, Israel. We heard what your Lord did to the Egyptians." It's over and over again in the conquest of Canaan. Everyone knows what God has done. Even in the days of the New Testament, it's a story that stays with Israel. Everyone knows the power of God. God's judgment proclaims his name to the whole world. It calls people to account. It tells them they must repent or they will perish.

Finally, God's judgment is not to be questioned by us because it is just. The example Paul gives of Pharaoh is an excellent one. He picks it up in verse 18. "So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills." In Exodus we see two things. We see God hardening Pharaoh's heart, and we see Pharaoh hardening his own heart.

This reminds us that Pharaoh is a sinner. Pharaoh is a sinner who does not desire to come to God. What God is doing here is judicially hardening Pharaoh. He is hardening Pharaoh for the sin Pharaoh has given. It presupposes God's judgment on Pharaoh. That's what the hardening is. It is a form of judgment on Pharaoh that he justly deserves. We cannot view the hardening of Pharaoh's heart apart from Pharaoh's guilt. Pharaoh is already guilty.

Rather than us standing in judgment of God and thinking that Pharaoh was undeserving of God's judgment, we would do much better to say to ourselves, "There but for the grace of God go I." Election is a hard doctrine to understand, but it is also a humbling doctrine. Does anything humble you more than to know there is nothing in you that brought about your salvation? Can anything close our mouths faster when we want to open them than to speak about what we deserve like election?

Election also gives us hope for others and for evangelism. It doesn't depend on them. It doesn't matter how hostile they are or how weak *we* are when we share the gospel. It is all of God. We merely need to be obedient to God's command to spread the good news of his sovereign grace. Are you willing to do that today? Election gives us a confidence and a trust that the Lord our God is in control. He is good. He is God.