

Divine Sovereignty-Romans 9-11

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[0 : 00] Beginning with Romans 11, verse 25 through 36. For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, so that you will not be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

And so all Israel will be saved, just as it is written, The Deliverer will come from Zion. He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.

This is my covenant with them. When I take away their sins. From the standpoint of the gospel, they are enemies for your sake.

But from the standpoint of God's choice, they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you, they also may now be shown mercy.

[1 : 49] For God has shut up all in disobedience, so that he may show mercy to all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are his judgments, and unfathomable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord?

For who became his counselor? Or who has first given to him, that it might be paid back to him again?

For from him, and through him, and to him, are all things. To him be the glory forever.

Amen. What an utterly incredible passage of Scripture. It's just loaded with so much. And we will be looking at these verses in conjunction with dealing with the issue of God's sovereignty and human responsibility.

[3 : 09] And as we have pointed out to you in the past, Romans 9, 10, and 11 are some of the principal passages appealed to by our Calvinist friends.

And I say that as a former Calvinist, but one who no longer subscribes to that theology. But they appeal to Romans 9, 10, and 11 and the clear statement that is issued by the Apostle Paul under inspiration.

Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated. And this passage and that expression in particular is pointed to as clear-cut evidence that God selects and chooses, that is, God elects individuals for salvation while damning others.

Now, most people who are not terribly familiar with the Bible have a difficulty in looking at it that way. And I must confess that when I first heard the Calvinist argument about election and about God choosing, etc., I completely rejected it.

It was human common sense that was rejecting it. I trust that it has returned to me, and I still reject it. But as a young student at Cedarville University in the late 1950s, when I heard that doctrine propounded, I just could not accept it at all.

[4 : 32] It just seemed so unlike the character and nature of God for him to pick and choose in advance those who were going to heaven and those who were going to hell.

That just didn't seem to make any sense to me at all. But then, there were presented to me a number of stellar individuals whom I greatly respected from theological circles who held this view.

And I still rejected it, but I thought, well, if that's what the great exegete Calvin believes, if that's what one of my very favorite preachers of all times, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, believed and taught, I at least ought to give it some further consideration, although I don't think I buy it.

But as I looked into it, you know what? They sold me. And I became convinced that that's the way it was. I still had some difficulty with it just from a human logical standpoint.

But who was I, who was I to throw the weight of this puny flyweight against the likes of those individuals with these incredible reputations and accomplishments and books they had written and mighty churches that they had built down through the centuries?

[5 : 53] I mean, if this is what they believed, I probably ought to just get on board and say, well, that's the way it is. And then, becoming the pastor of Grace Bible Church in 1971 and beginning to pursue not only the New Testament, but the Old as well, verse by verse, verse for the next 30 years.

And we went through the entire New Testament, verse by verse, most of it. And much of the Old Testament, I just could no longer endorse that.

And I don't. But it made me regret what I taught here several years earlier. So that's why I'm trying to reverse myself now. And I am back to the place where I was when it just didn't make sense to me.

And you know something? The Bible is incredibly profound. While it is also incredibly simple. The Bible contains truths that are so basic and so simple that a child need not err therein. And it also contains truths and content that are completely above and beyond the most astute intellect that humanity is able to produce.

[7 : 16] But by and large, by and large, the Bible makes very good sense when appealed to with the common intellect of the average ordinary man.

And I think that's the way the scriptures were intended to come across. This book was not given to dazzle the intellectuals. It was given to provide basic, ordinary, everyday human beings with vital information that they need to know about the God who created them.

And it serves that purpose, I do believe. So, when our Calvinist friends appeal to the arguments that they do, some of them coming from Romans 9, 10, and 11, and I told you this before, so let me say this again for the record.

I do not demean nor depreciate the ability of these men, and I certainly do not demean or depreciate their intent or their motivation.

I am convinced those men with whom I now profoundly disagree are honorable men, men who seek to glorify and honor God, men who seek to proclaim the truth in an unvarnished way.

[8 : 35] I have no question whatever about their motivation or their sincerity. I just think they are wrong. And nothing will convince one of wrongness more than just a methodical verse by verse exposition of scripture because throughout it you see so much of the partnering between God and man and God being willing to utilize human instrumentality even though he was never obligated to do so and he was never necessitated to do so but he chose to do so and we find that from Genesis through Revelation.

And I am confident that these men had a very honorable desire to really extol and elevate the sovereignty of God.

They wanted to make God so sovereign and so completely in charge and so in control of everything that even those who thought they received salvation because they believed in Christ were wrong because God programmed them and made them alive and made it possible for them to believe otherwise they would have never believed the gospel.

And these are the elect. Those are they whom God has chosen for reasons known unto himself. He's given no rationale no conditions. He just chose certain ones to save and others he's going to let go to perdition.

Well it just isn't so. God has gifted each of us with this thing called a will a volition and that means you not only have the responsibility of responding to the truth that God has provided you also have the capability because there is no responsibility where there is no capability but we are capable we do have the power of choice and for those who think that you do not have the power to choose God do they also think that you do not have the power to not choose God you see it works both ways we have the power for a yes or a no and we are accountable for the decision that we make that's a very important thing I've said it before and so say I again it is a serious business to be a human being who is endowed with the power of making moral choices and decisions it is very important and you ought to take everything into consideration that you can when it comes time to exercising that will and making the choice and be advised of this while the choice is yours to make you have the responsibility and the freedom to make it you do not have the ability to choose the consequences that come from your choice because when you make a choice when you make a moral choice you set in motion certain dynamics that are going to be consequence of that choice and you cannot

change them so decisions are very very important things now we are just looking at this passage here in

[12 : 06] Romans 9 because it is used by our Calvinist friends and I used it this way myself to prove the idea Jacob have I loved Esau have I hated and that means God chose Jacob for heaven or salvation and he chose Esau for perdition and the rationale for it is God is God and he can do whatever he wants and God has made everything and who is man to reply against him who made it so don't question God he says he loved Jacob and he hated Esau we talked a little bit about that and what the love hate thing means and how Jesus used it how he actually told us that we are to hate our parents but we said also that that is a Hebrew idiom and it is a comparative thing and it doesn't mean that you're supposed to go home and say mom and dad I hate you but it means that the love you are to have for the creator is by comparison hatred for the love you have for the created nothing should surpass our love for the giver and sustainer of all life and that's not our parents that's our

God and when Christ said he who does not come after me and hates us not his mother and father cannot be my disciple he was just talking in terms of a Hebrew idiom that everybody understood and nobody intended that at all or took that at all as meaning that you should hate your parents because there are too many other passages in the gospels given by our Lord where we are told that we are to honor our mother and our father and how are you going to honor them if you hate them well it's ridiculous of course but and you know the same thing is applied to the Jacob and Esau thing God doesn't hate Esau but it does mean that he chose Jacob and now the issue surfaces around this we're still talking about individuals and God's preferential treatment for them no we're not and that's where the thing as they say the plot really thickens because this passage in Romans 9 10 and 11 is not talking about Jacob and Esau as individuals at all it is talking about their aggregate descendants those who come from the loins of Jacob and Esau and I think if you look at this passage and understand how it is used in connection with the Old Testament and we looked at Genesis 25 and we looked at Malachi you will see that very often the name the personal name of an individual is used when it refers to a whole company or all of his descendants matter of fact we've got a classic example today this strategic land in the Mideast right now that has been in the forefront of all kinds of political activity and military activity since 1947 when this nation was rebirth what's the nation called it's called

Israel well Israel is a man but Israel is also a nation and before Israel's name was changed to Israel guess what his name was it was Jacob Jacob's name was changed by God was changed to Israel so as you look at this verse 25 here in Romans 11 Paul said I do not want you brethren to be uninformed of this mystery lest you be wise in your own estimation that and this is one of the most strategic verses in all the New Testament that a partial hardening has happened to Israel a partial hardening not complete but partial what does that mean it means that not every Jew was afflicted with this hardening only part of them and this is one reason why

Jews today can embrace Yeshua Hamashiach as their savior and become a completed Jew because salvation is available to Israel today as an individual the same way it is available to you a partial hardening has happened to Israel is this Israel the individual or Israel the nation well I think it's quite clear in the context he's talking about the nation the man Israel formerly named Jacob had been dead for 1500 years when Paul wrote this he's been off the scene for a long time but it's talking about all of his descendants they are Israel and they are the ones to whom this partial hardening has happened and it means that Israel Israel as a nation is under a divine sentence of judicial blindness it is a hardening the word

[17 : 44] I think that is used here and I have to check it out to be sure but I think it's in the Greek it's from the word sclero or from which we get the word sclerodoma and it means a hardening like a building of scar tissue or hard tissue that cannot be penetrated or that has no feeling in it this is what has happened to Israel as a nation until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in what does that mean Gentiles are people who are not Jews Gentiles make up about 99% of the world's population Jews make up about 1% or less of the world's population so this gospel of the grace of God that goes out to the whole world wherever it is proclaimed there are Gentiles coming to faith in Christ every day by the thousands all over the globe on every continent where the gospel is proclaimed there are people who are believing it and these people all make up an aggregate sum of individuals called the spiritual body of

Christ in using a physical body we can all identify with what belongs to it arms and legs and feet and toes these all go together to make the body and we think of them as a complete whole as part of my body my nose and my ears part of my body so it is with every believer every believer in Jesus Christ is a member of the body of Christ it is the spiritual body of Christ not his physical body of course but it uses the physical body as an analogy in order to communicate what we're talking about about the closeness and the nearness how close is your arm to your body how close is your head we say well it's part of it it's part of what makes it what exactly that's what it means to be in Christ and that's why Paul uses that expression dozens and dozens of times throughout his epistles in

Christ in Christ in Christ what does that mean it means when you believed on Jesus Christ as your personal savior you were baptized no water you were baptized into the spiritual body of in unity with him and all over the world from the first century God has been about the business of building this huge spiritual body it doesn't make any difference what language you speak what color your skin is what country you hail from what your economic background is none of those things matter there is neither Jew nor Gentile bond or free male or female you are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus and if you are in Christ you are a member of that spiritual body it is in process of being completed everyone that is added to it completes a little bit more we don't know when the body is going to be complete but when the last

Gentile who comes to faith in Christ makes that decision is placed by God into the body of Christ then the body is finished and it leaves that's the rapture the body is complete it's done when the last person who is going to be saved is saved we are taken into the presence of the Lord the body is complete we don't know when that's going to be it could be before this day is out it could be another hundred years we don't know but that is when the fullness of the Gentiles will come in and that's what he's talking about in this verse and thus all Israel will be saved what does that mean it means that the body of Christ non-Jews Gentiles have been taken off the scene removed from the earth with the

Lord and God's focus goes right back on the nation of Israel the church is gone now it is Israel and the Antichrist and all the rest of individuals who were Gentiles who were never believers who remain here on the earth after the rapture they are going to be the focal point of everything that's going to take place and when it says all Israel will be saved that's exactly what it means but it's not talking about an individual person it's talking about the nation the nation of Israel is going to be under intense persecution and martyrdom during this time at the hands of the Antichrist and there is going to be open season on Jews all over the world and these people are going to flee for their life this is what

[23 : 19] Matthew 24 is all about the Olivet discourse and it's a holy Jewish setting so they are the focus of the Antichrist because the Jew has been still is and always will be God's peculiar people God's chosen people and the Antichrist in his lashing out at God lashes out at those who are nearest and dearest to him and that's Israel and then just as it is written verse 26 the deliverer will come from Zion who's the deliverer well guess who's the deliverer always been the deliverer the savior our Lord Jesus Christ he will come from Zion he will remove ungodliness from Jacob and you know what the principal portion of that ungodliness is it's their unbelief unbelief

Jews today do not see Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah they rejected him they still do far as they're concerned they're still waiting for the Messiah to come the first time we're waiting for him to return for the second time and when he comes he will remove ungodliness from Jacob and this is my covenant with them you see that plural pronoun them it's not talking about him not talking about Israel a man all of these passages in Romans 9 10 and 11 are talking about national identities not Esau and Jacob as individual people but their descendants and if you read the context it becomes very apparent that he's not talking about individuals and then he goes on to say from the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake why is that because they oppose the gospel they're not receptive to the gospel they are like those on the other side they reject the gospel and they are enemies of the gospel that makes them enemies of the they are enemies for our sake now we don't regard them as enemies we don't look upon them as enemies but in reality they are the opposing force they reject the gospel they reject

Jesus Christ as their savior and he says they are enemies for your sake but from the standpoint of God's choice who's God choosing God's choice who is his choice Israel the nation through Abraham through you and your seed all nations of the earth will be blessed God chose Abraham and out of Isaac and Ishmael God chose Isaac and out of Jacob and Esau God chose Jacob and so

it goes as I've told you so many times if God's going to choose anybody he has to choose somebody and he could have chosen the opposite just as well as the one he chose his prerogative to do so from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the father what does that mean that means that Israel Israel remains God's beloved for the sake of the fathers who are the fathers same as they've always been

Abraham Isaac and Jacob they are the fathers why is that so important because God promised and God cannot and will not lie and the verse says for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable what does that mean well what does it say it says God chose Israel and God's choice and God's gift he will not renege on he will not withdraw do you realize what it would mean if he did God would be saying oh boy I really blew it there I made a big mistake there I have to go back and correct myself well preachers have to do that when they're talking about the doctrines of election but God doesn't have to do that God never makes mistakes the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable that means they cannot be taken back

God God has no regrets for just as you once were disobedient to God who's he talking about he's talking about Gentiles and when he says you he's talking about you he's talking about everyone all over you once were disobedient to God when was that before you came to faith in Jesus Christ you were a son a child of disobedience even as the rest Ephesians 2 makes that very clear we were all in that posture just as you were once disobedient to God but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience what does that mean their disobedience is Israel's disobedience as a nation when they said we will not have this man to reign over us crucify him that was their disobedience and their disobedience was intensified in their final answer of rejecting

[29 : 15] Jesus as their Messiah even after they rejected him the cross they rejected him again with the stoning of stoning they rejected him all throughout history and they're still in a mode of rejection and do you know what their rejection of their Messiah has resulted in you and me look at that verse now as you were once disobedient to God but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience and God is saying okay you know what I'm going to do now I'm going to reveal something that had never been revealed before nobody had ever even dreamed of this before it was a secret that was hidden in the mind and heart of God from eternity past and nobody had a clue and he never divulged it until this precise specific time and we won't go there but you can read at your leisure

Ephesians chapter 3 and what it all has to do with is that God is going to do a totally new thing he's going to take Jews and Gentiles amalgamate them and put them together in the same body on the same level making them equal inheritors equal in their position one with another in the same body and he's going to take the two Jew and Gentile and make one new man out of them well where in the world did that come from where do you find that predicted in the Old Testament you don't it isn't there that's why it's called a mystery it's called a secret never devolves before an entirely new thing and all of this has come about through the disobedience and the rejection of

Israel toward their Messiah and God has opened the flood gates for the whole world and you know why because ultimately this was God's plan in the beginning God was not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance so what did he do to demonstrate that willingness he sent his son to die for the sins of the entire world because he didn't want anybody to perish yet there are people who are going to perish perish but it is not because God wanted them to perish and it is not because God did not make provision for them it is because they chose to exercise that thing they have called volition and will and they willfully deliberately rejected God's way of salvation which is through Jesus Christ and when they do that God has no other alternative but to give them what they want a

Christless eternity and all of this is coming about through this marvelous thing called God's election but the election is of a nation not of an individual so these also now have been disobedient in order that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy for God has shut up all in disobedience that he might show mercy to all and then it is as if Paul is saying wow I am flabbergasted with this Paul is saying what is the upshot of this what is my response to this and he comes out with this oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God how unsearchable are his judgments and unfathomable his ways it's another way of saying you know what nobody never figured that out that never occurred to man in his wildest imagination he could have never come up with a plan like that isn't that amazing this is something that only

God could do for I love this expression from Isaiah 40 who has known the mind of the Lord any takers here it can say oh I know the mind of the Lord we'll call for somebody to put them in a jacket and take them away so they don't hurt themselves or someone else or who became his counselor can you imagine sitting down at the table with God and he looks at you and says I really don't know what to do Marv could you give me some advice on this I'm kind of stuck here who has been his counselor or who has first given to him that it might be paid back to him again in other words is there something that you've given to God that puts him in your debt how absurd hey [34 : 54] God you owe me God doesn't owe you anything for from him and through him and to him are all things to him be glory forever that means to him be the credit the honor the recognition forever amen wow what a passage this is an incredible passage and it all capsized this subject of election etc so bottom line is this we are confronted with the decision and the decision has to do with what will you then do with Jesus who is called the Christ you bring your will your volition into action and you make a positive or a negative decision and you know something in all honesty most of us make a negative decision before we make a positive one because that's the way we are we're reluctant to do something and part and parcel of this is there is lurking in our mind the idea that if I do this if I receive

Jesus Christ as my personal savior does that mean I'm no longer going to be in charge of the show yeah that's exactly what it means that's exactly what it means it means you recognize him as being who he says he is and you come in line with what his requirements are and his requirements are when you believe on the Lord listen you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ that means you are acknowledging his rightful place and you are under it not over it it means your autonomy is no longer yours and when Paul said don't you know that you have been bought with a price that your body is the temple of the spirit of God and you are not your own you are bought with a price therefore glorify

God in your body and in your spirit which are God you have no right to run the show it's not your show anymore and a lot of people just can't handle that thought they're not interested in surrendering their autonomy oh I'll take Jesus as my savior but I don't expect him to I don't expect to live according to what he says or dictates I mean I still want to do my own thing so that that he can save me and then just leave me alone and when the time comes to die I'll call him again reminding that I'm one of his so I'll go to heaven whoever heard of such a thing that's really foreign to the scriptures that that is an easy believism that's not fiducia that's not an entrustment of oneself to Jesus

Christ and that's what makes the difference I'm not finished but I quit so we've got a few minutes for Q&A; who has comments or questions anybody we've got our roving microphone so in the back Roger you mentioned the fullness of the Gentiles come in but is it possible that a Jew could be the last person saved in this dispensation oh absolutely very good question because you see while blindness in part has happened to Israel it's only blindness in part and that means that the Jew an individual Jew is certainly not exempt or cut off from salvation or the possibility of believing in fact it's been my privilege to have known over the years a number of Jews who have come to faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Messiah and they refer to themselves as completed Jews and it's entirely possible it's not likely simply because the numbers ratio is so small as regards the number of

Jews but it's possible that a Jew could be the last one in the body of Christ absolutely other comments or questions over in the back yeah as you read that it's almost as though the Gentiles were offered this as a result of being turned down by the Jews and in reality you have to know that this was planned by the Lord all along so when you read it you start getting that feeling that okay if you guys are going to do this and we're going to offer this to someone else yeah absolutely good good observation and you know one of the purposes for God calling Israel way back when was to be a light to the Gentiles but frankly they weren't all that interested they wanted to corner on [40 : 46] God they wanted to keep God to himself and a good illustration of that is Jonah Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh go down there preach to those pagans a bunch of heathen why I'm not going and God called him to go and do you know why God called him to go to Nineveh because God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance and Jonah got on the ship and went in the opposite direction because he didn't want anything to do that so and then when Paul this is fascinating Paul opens the book of Romans and he closes the book of Romans with this expression that for this purpose was I called and was I raised to be an apostle that I might

bring the Gentiles to the obedience of faith Israel as a nation had not done that they were charged with that responsibility and

God says you know Israel maybe you don't care about the Gentiles and you're not interested in being a light to them but I'm going to make a light available to them anyway and I'm going to use one of yours to do it and he raised up the apostle Paul and if you want to know what the Gentiles position was they are indebted to God for the grace that they have other comments or questions up here Chuck has a question a strong Calvinist will tell us that if we really believe in faith and that we have to exercise faith for salvation then we're actually assisting God in our salvation and if we're assisting God in such manner then it becomes a work and you cannot be saved by works so strong Calvinists will totally dismiss that kind of faith and he would say that we're making faith a meritorious act right well they go on to say that exactly and then they would say that faith comes in after salvation to make Christ your Lord but as confusing as all this sounds and you know we really haven't even touched the scope of the doctrine of Calvinism and Arminianism the best way that I have resolved this in my own mind I think I emailed you that when I was at Moody I had a similar experience that you did I was walking down the hall and the seniors and juniors were asking each other and asking the new freshman coming in are you

Calvinist or are you Arminian and I had no clue like I was telling you I got back to my room and I figured well I'm an American that satisfied me at that point ever since that time the best illustration I came up with was a parallel railroad track one of those rails is the absolute sovereignty of God the other rail is the volition of man and the Calvinist will try to tell me that I have to bring those rails together somehow and understand it but Hebrews 11:3 tells me that I can understand creation through faith by faith I can understand all kinds of things and in my own mind then

I don't ever have to have those railroad tracks come together if God and his infinite wisdom can bring them together I suppose that's his business but right now he hasn't led me one way or the other and I find it interesting that as Bonnie and I have traveled all over here there and everywhere that the Calvinists tend to be very argumentative and almost force you to take that position but we've worked with some fabulous people who would be totally Armenian and when they talk about the subject they say well why do we need to even talk about this we got a lot of work to do here let's get busy thank you Chuck I appreciate the observation well we've got just maybe one more message left in this we have to deal with a couple of passages in

[46 : 04] Ephesians where the apostle uses the term elect according to the foreknowledge of God and those do need to be addressed so probably just one or two more sessions and we will conclude this so I want to thank you for your patience in going through this with me and it's allowed me a kind of a catharsis in my own soul to get this off my chest and I hope that it has been somewhat understandable to you and that you can see where I'm coming from over the years having taught this in years past so but thank you for your participation and for your kindness and your patience time for us to dismiss so if you'll stand you that we never ever will fathom and we wouldn't have it any other way because that's just one of the things that makes you so much greater than us and we are humbled by the fact that you have been willing to create beings such as us and then give us some insight into your own nature and character and to allow us the amazing privilege of being connected with you the giver of life through the avenue that you've made available to us even the rupturing asunder of the triune nature of the

Godhead in order to make Jesus into a human being who could do what he did for us on that cross we marvel at that we'll have all eternity and we'll still never get over it but we bless you and thank you for it in Christ's wonderful name Amen