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Teaching: Carlon Tschetter
Series: Romans: The Just Shall Live by Faith
Message: Objections to the Doctrine of Election

Transcribed Message
July 4, 2021
Romans 8:29-30

A couple of weeks ago, I quoted Deuteronomy 29. Remember that wonderful statement that Moses makes that the secret things belong to the Lord our God but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever. We will do these things written in this book. And that of course reminds us that there are secret things that we do not know and those things truly do belong to God and God alone. Last week we looked at the mystery of election. I had a television crew from a local station come by the office this week. The reporter said that he was with *Unsolved Mysteries* and he said that they would like to do a story on my sermon from last week. We'll see where that goes. One of the things that is for sure, there is ample mystery within this doctrine of election. We're going to press in to it one more time this morning and then guess what? When we get to chapter 9, Paul is going to come right back to it again. We're going to get to look at it all over again in a little different context.

This morning we're looking at God's sovereign selection of those whom he would save that is based on His eternal purposes alone. It is not based on our merit. It is not based on our behavior. It is not based on anything that we have done or would do. That's why the Bible speaks of this always in the context of good. So let's begin with a little bit more of a review maybe than normal because some of these things are worth reminding ourselves about. We're going to start off by looking at what we didn't get to cover last Sunday, but in reading our passage this morning from Ephesians 1, it just reminds us that if you were ever to have a quiz in which the quizzier asked the question – what would be the three main passages that you would turn to study the doctrine of election? You would remember Romans 8, Romans 9, and Ephesians 1. Even though we didn't get into this material last week, much of it is familiar because it's Paul reemphasizing much of what we've looked at in Romans 8.

Let's jump in and the very first thing I want to say is this reminder that the Bible teaches election. The Bible teaches election. Now here's the thing. It may not be that you see election in the way that I have presented it or the way somebody else does. To say that the Bible teaches election doesn't mean that we understand it in any fullness. There is mystery here. But this is what we can't say. If we believe the Bible is the Word of God, we can't say that the Bible doesn't teach election because it's all through the 66 books. Starting in Genesis all the way to Revelation there are comments and teaching that God gives us with regard to this doctrine. One of the things we have to agree with together is to say whatever our understanding might be about this and how ever different it might be, the Bible teaches election because the words are all through the Scriptures.

With that I would say this. Based on that Ephesians 1 passage and based on what we've already seen in Romans, the very first thing that we discovered is that God is the one who does the choosing. God does the choosing. That is exactly what we read in Ephesians chapter 3 verse 1. When you look back in that 1st chapter that third verse - - even as He chose us in Him. There's a very bad illustration and if you've used this illustration, I would simply ask you to repent and never use it again. There's a very bad illustration of the doctrine of election. It goes like this: God voted for me, the devil voted against me, and now I break the tie. That is wrong on so many levels; I don't even have time to go there. The Scriptures very clearly say, as I just read in Ephesians and as Paul says in Romans, that God is the one who does the choosing. One of the guiding principles when we come to a study that is as hard as election is, it is truly one of the mysteries that God gives us a glimpse into, is to stick to what the Scriptures teach and not try to come up with a lot of our own answers to questions that the Bible may or may not even address. Let's leave aside our philosophical arguments, let's leave aside our logical syllogisms, let's see just simply what does the Bible say and very clearly the very first thing the Bible says is God does the choosing. Now, as we'll see next week, there is a sense in which we of course choose God, but the focus in this election issue is that God does the choosing.

Secondly, we're chosen in eternity past. The last part of verse 4: Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. So a little quiz. Question number

one. Were you chosen when you believed or after you believed? Were you chosen before you believed or after? Clearly you were chosen before you believed in eternity past. If I asked the question: Were you chosen before you were born or after you were born? If it was in eternity past, it had to be before you were born. You were chosen before you were born. You were chosen before you believed. Listen carefully. The text says that you were chosen in eternity past. It doesn't say you were saved in eternity past. We're going to see that there's a difference there. You were chosen in eternity past. Every elect person is just as lost as anybody else until they believe. We're chosen in eternity past. It doesn't say specific to the point of belief. Spurgeon said it this way: "I'm so glad that God chose me before the foundation of the world because He would never have chosen me after I was born." He didn't have to get to know me a little bit to decide if He wanted me or not. That's not the way God operates. He knows everything about us before He chose us. Think about that for a moment.

Thirdly, the purpose is to conform us to the image of Christ. The purpose Paul says is to conform us to the image of Christ, that we should, he said in Ephesians, be holy and blameless. That we should be holy and blameless. That is our predestination. Listen to what Paul says in 2 Timothy 1:9. "...who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of His own purpose and grace which He gave us in Christ before the ages began." Do you see this? This is all through the Scriptures. 2 Timothy 1:9.

The result of God's choosing is to the praise of His glory. To the praise of His glory. We could say it this way. Election has a near purpose that is our salvation. Election has an intermediate purpose and that is a holy life, a sanctified life. Election has an ultimate purpose and the ultimate purpose that we always need to come back to is the glory of God. That is the ultimate purpose for all of it. So those three or four things right out of Ephesians that just simply mirror Romans chapter 8.

Just let me bring before you again to the terms the Bible uses. The Bible uses three basic terms to speak of this doctrinal truth. The first one is this matter of election which is simply the word "chosen". We looked at it last week. *Eklego*. It is used 23 times in the New Testament by six different New Testament authors. It is in its most basic

form to be understood just as it says. God selected you. God chose you. God elected you.

The other word is the word “foreknowledge”. That is used four times in the New Testament. Foreknowledge. You could look at that word and say I know what that word means. That word means that God knows something ahead of time. Foreknowledge. God knows something ahead of time. Well, of course God knows something ahead of time. God knows everything ahead of time. There isn't anything that God doesn't know. We looked at that last week. When you're reading your Bible, when you're studying your Bible, and you come across a word like this or any other word you can't simply look at the word and go, oh I know what that word means. It's simple. Foreknowledge. God knew ahead of time. Yes, we've already said that is true, but when we do word studies, when we study the Word of God, a word always has to be studied within its context. That's how we know what that word means. The word has meaning based upon the context in which it is set. In this case, the word “foreknowledge” doesn't simply refer to something that God knows ahead of time. Because after all, again, God knows everything ahead of time. It is a word not referencing an event or even a time sequence. It's a word that speaks of a relationship. The word “foreknowledge” is used in Scripture to speak of a relationship, a love relationship. It's like God has stepped in to a relationship with us in this matter of foreknowledge. That's exactly the intent with which Paul uses it in Romans 8 when he says “for whom God foreknew”, whom God foreknew. God knew something ahead of time. In fact He knew, he tells us in Ephesians 1 and Romans 8, before the worlds were even created.

The last word is predestination which we looked at a couple weeks ago, this idea of marking out as a goal. Marking out as a goal. Becoming like Christ.

Let me just give you three reminders and then we're going to jump into the major part of our study this morning. The first one is election is not the gospel. Election is not the gospel. Now I believe some Bible teachers in their zeal and love for this truth almost make it seem as if election is the gospel. But election is not the gospel. We need not, and I say this for the third week in a row, we need not allow this doctrine to divide us. We can truly come to different understanding of what the Bible teaches about this and fellowship together and be a part of the same church, community groups, small group,

and whatever it is. Because the election is not the gospel. How do I know I can say that with such dogmatism? Very simple. In Acts chapter 16 when the Philippian jailer says to Paul, what do I need to do to be saved? Paul didn't step into a lengthy five-point discussion of the doctrine of election. He said what you need to do is believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you have absolute assurance that you'll be saved. That's the gospel. We know that as well because in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul literally tells us this is the gospel. He never mentions the word "election" once in 58 verses talking about what the gospel is. We want to be careful as we deal with this truth.

There are going to be many, many people in heaven who do not understand the doctrine of election. Now, unlike you, they're going to have to go to Theology 101. You're going to get to skip that remedial class and go on to Theology 201. There will be millions upon millions of people in heaven who never even had the opportunity to have the doctrine of election explained to them because they never got into that level of discipleship. But there's not going to be anybody in heaven who doesn't know the gospel. You will be in heaven whether you understand this truth or not. I hope you do come to a greater understanding and appreciation of it, but what you desperately need and what I desperately need is we need to understand the gospel because that's what brings eternal life.

Second thing. Election reminds us that truth really matters. I'm not saying a contradictory statement there in light of what I just said, but I am saying this. Election does remind us that truth matters. I say that because the doctrine of election has this wonderful tendency to shake the cobwebs out of our theological attics as someone said. It causes us to think. It causes us to press into these truths. Hopefully it causes us to open our Bible and read it. I had someone share with me this last week when they first heard of the doctrine of election they were like – "Oh no! No, this cannot possibly be true. I don't know where you got that idea but that I don't believe that." You know what they said brought them over to a greater understanding of the truth? Something as elementary and basic as they started reading their Bible from Genesis to Revelation. They did it year after year after year and the Holy Spirit of God just simply said there it is. There it is again. There it is. So that is of great value. It's when we come to the Word of God that we grapple with these things. Unfortunately, sadly, tragically, largely, the

church in America has decided on the basis of cultural relevance and a whole lot of other things to step away from the Bible and doctrine and theology and truth and to simply avoid anything that might be controversial or hard to understand. To the great deficit of the church in America, we need to be pressing into truths that are hard even to understand.

Thirdly, election keeps God as the focus of everything. Again, I'm going to say this every time we touch on this truth. This is the third week in a row I've said this. When we get to Romans 9 we have to say it because Paul talks about it. Is the ground of our election in us or is it in God? That's the fundamental question we grapple with. Is the ground and the basis of our salvation and election in ourselves or is it in God? I think the Scriptures are so terribly clear. They call us to live a radically God-centered life. That is what I want for myself. That's what I want for all of you that you would live a radically God-centered life, that every breath that you take, every action that you enter into, would be with a view to the reality of the Lordship of Christ in your life and the work of God's Spirit in giving you understanding. The tendency of our heart being what it is is to pull us towards self and self-centeredness and away from God. Paul is actually going to say in Romans 9:20, when he's grappling with this issue again, he is going to say something. I'll just paraphrase it. Who do you really think you are? He is really going to press home that point of keeping God at the focus of it all.

This morning. Questions about the doctrine of election, or maybe we could speak of it as objections to the doctrine of election, or maybe we want to soften it we would say misunderstandings about the doctrine of election. But as we jump into this, here's what I want to remind you of. As we as we come again to the mystery that is the doctrine of election, we need to acknowledge on the front end that we're already in a place of deficiency. We're already tainted by sin in every aspect of our being, and even while we have experienced, those of us who have trusted Christ as our Savior, we have experienced new life and regeneration, the reality is that we still struggle to see. That's what Paul said. Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. So we say on the front end the things that we press into here we need to simply acknowledge frequently I'm already at a deficit. I already don't see with spiritual 20/20 vision. Holy Spirit of God, help us to understand a greater degree of this truth.

So objection number one. Question number one. Doesn't election simply lead to fatalism? Fatalism as I'm sure you know is a worldview which is a philosophy. It basically says that the actions, the choices that people make on a daily basis, don't really matter. It doesn't matter how you live your life or the choices that you make. In the end there is no end. There is no goal to history. Some of you will remember Doris Day had a sitcom in which she would start off her show singing. Que sera, sera. Whatever will be will be. The future's not ours to see. Que sera, sera. That was basically fatalism. What we do on a daily basis, we're just like a machine. It robs humanity of its humanity. It robs us of our being created in the image and likeness of God.

Election isn't anything like fatalism. Election says there is a personal God who has created me, who loves me, who wants to be in a relationship with me, who went to such extremes as sending His Son to this earth to die in my place. Biblical Christianity describes a picture in which there is an open invitation to any who are willing to come to believe and to receive the gospel of grace. Jesus Himself extended that invitation often. Come to Me. Come to Me all you are weary and heavy laden and yes, I will give you rest.

Isn't it interesting that the last book of the Bible, Revelation, and the 22nd chapter, the last book in the last chapter and almost the last verse, the 22nd chapter and verse 17: "Come, let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price." Biblical Christianity is nothing close to fatalism. It believes and teaches that we are real people. We make real choices with real consequences that have an end goal in mind. Not fatalism by any stretch.

Second question. Doesn't election violate my free will? This is the one that everybody's been waiting for. Doesn't election violate my free will? Or let me ask it this way. How can I believe in a sovereign God who has according to what you've said this morning chosen people in eternity past? How can I believe in a sovereign God who has chosen people in eternity past and yet still believe at the same time that we are free people who make responsible decisions that impact us for all of eternity? That's your question to me. I've got three more for you. I want to answer back in answering that question by asking you three questions to answer that one.

First question. May be the most important. What you mean by free will? What do you mean by free will? Free will isn't a word that is used in the Bible. Even though it's nearly everybody's favorite word when you talk about this doctrine. The word never appears in the Bible, which isn't by itself a discounter. The word trinity doesn't appear in the Bible but we're Trinitarian so that by itself does not change the issues that we're looking at. But the whole idea of free will, as people usually use this word and talk about it today, is very different than I think as I said a couple weeks ago as this matter of free will was discussed and talked about at the beginning of this issue. So let me explain a little bit of what I'm thinking of. If by free will you mean you have absolute freedom to do anything you want, if by free will you mean that you are absolutely free and you can choose anything you want to do, then I don't think free will exists. Because you and I can't go to the top of this building and jump off and halfway down by basis of our free will say I change my mind. I want to go back up. Or I didn't change my mind but I want to land real softly. We don't have free will in an absolute sense in any way. The only person in that sense who is absolutely free is God. No human or created being has absolute free will to do whatever they want. When you talk about free will, do you mean that you want to be free without any influence in your life? Do you want to be so free that God would never influence any decision or choice you make? Is that the kind of freedom you want? I don't want that freedom. I don't want that kind of freedom.

When we talk about free will, if you mean by free will that I have voluntary choices that I willingly make, that I make those choices free from any sense of coercion, that I make those choices without any sense of force, then yes, I agree you and I possess free will or free moral agency. We have that capacity. The question is this. What is it that we will? What is it that we desire? What is it that we will choose? You see, a lion, a cheetah, a leopard can eat a cantaloupe or they can eat an antelope. They've got a choice to make. Am I going to eat the cantaloupe or am I going to eat the antelope? Which are they going to choose? We both know what they're going to choose. They're going to choose the antelope every time. Why? Because that's the bent of their nature. That's the desire of their stomach – the antelope and not the cantaloupe.

So even in that sense, when we talk about this coercion-free choice that we make, and I agree we have that, we step back even as we did in Romans 6. We talked

about the need to be killing sin. We talked about Augustine. We talked about Augustine giving us this picture of humanity before the fall. Humanity before the fall was able not to sin. Adam and Eve were created perfectly. They literally could make the choice at that point to not sin. Once they stepped across the line into rebellion and sin, then remember Augustine said then they were not able to not sin. They were not able to not sin. Then every fiber of their being was impacted by sin. Their mind, their emotions, their will, every part of their being. Now, granted again, when we're born again we have a new nature, but the struggle doesn't go away. We still have a bent towards sin. Even though God has done a work in us. So our wills, as Luther said, are in bondage to sin. They're in bondage to sin. So if our will is in bondage to sin, Jesus said you are of your father the devil. Paul said you were by nature children of wrath. I'm asking you if that's where we are, what is that given our own free will, our own free moral agency, we're going to choose? Election is necessary because our condition apart from Christ is that our will is in bondage to sin. That's why God has chosen those who will believe.

Second question. Well okay, I've tracked with you to that point but here's my second problem with what you're saying. Can I have free choice if the outcome is certain? Can I have free choice if the outcome is certain? To ask it another way – is my choice real? If you're telling me that God chose me in eternity past and at the same time you're telling me I have to choose to believe, then I'm struggling with whether that divine decree has nullified what looked like at some point a free choice. My answer to that question is can I have free choice if the outcome is certain? All of God's people said yes. An emphatic yes. Can you make a free choice if the outcome is certain? Yes, absolutely yes. I'm going to illustrate that from a personal illustration and then I'm going to take you to Scripture to show you the very thing that the Scripture reveals.

If you tell me tomorrow that Bonnie or a member of my family is going to be in danger, something is going to transpire tomorrow that's going to place potentially their lives or their physical well-being in danger, I'm telling you right now today, 24 hours before it ever happens, I'm telling you right now what I am going to do. And what I am going to do is I am going to do everything in my power, including giving up my own life, to save them. I just told you what I'm going to do. You have told me that there's a decree that has been issued, that something is going to happen that will be harmful to

one of my family members. And I'm telling you right now what I'm going to do if that happens. Tomorrow when that event unfolds and I make that choice, was that a free choice that I made? Absolutely. It was a free choice. I told you ahead of time I was going to do it but when that moment comes I'm stepping into that and I'm doing it even though I have told you ahead of time that I would.

But turn to the book of Acts because in the book of Acts chapter 2 you have a Biblical illustration of the fact that something that is predetermined can still allow for free choice, divine decree, freedom of choice. Acts 2:22 Peter preaching. "Men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God, with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him in your midst as you yourselves know, this Jesus delivered up, according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men." What is in view here is the life and work of Christ.

Let me ask you some questions. Was what Christ was going to do when He came to this earth planned out in eternity past? Yes or no. Yes. It just told us. According to the predetermined will and foreknowledge of God. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit in eternity past, in the councils of the Godhead devised this amazing plan of redemption to save us. That plan was set forward in eternity past before the worlds were created, before we were born. God had put into motion a plan of redemption. Did Jesus follow God's plan perfectly? Yes. Yes, He did. Last question. Did He do so freely? Yes. He did. He tells us on many occasions. Nobody took His life from Him. He laid it down. He freely gave of Himself. It was decreed in eternity past. He came and lived out a perfect life in obedience to that plan. He did so free from any coercion at all. He tells us that Himself. Certainty, my friends, is not a curse. Certainty is a blessing.

Third question for you. Can the non-elect come if they will? Can the non-elect come if they will? I believe the gospel is sufficient for all. I don't believe there is a human, has been a human who could say that the truth of the gospel could not save them. It can't be that they're so bad that it just wasn't enough for them. The gospel is sufficient for all. The non-elect may come if they will. The non-elect may come if they will. The elect will come. We're going to look at that next Sunday, Lord willing, when we look at the call of God on our life. The elect will come.

Listen carefully. The decree is not the barrier to coming. The decree is not the barrier to coming. The barrier to coming is sin. The barrier to coming is not the decree. It is sin. Listen. This is something that falls in to the category of mystery. I understand that. But the Bible never says people are lost because they're not elect. That's our logical syllogism. That's our philosophical answer to this question. That's not what the Bible teaches. If you're dealing with the doctrine of election, lay aside your philosophical answers. Lay aside your logical syllogism and press into the Word of God and see what the Bible teaches about this. The Bible never said somebody is separated from God for eternity because they were non-elect. Jesus Himself is the one who helps us with this. Jesus says in John chapter 5 and verse 39 you search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life and it is they that bear witness about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me that you may have life. There was a perfect teaching moment for Jesus to say, and He freely talked about election. There was a perfect moment for Jesus to say you will not come to Me because I never chose you. You will not come to Me because you're not elect. Jesus said no, you will not come because you don't want to come. You will not come because you do not desire to come. No one can say I wanted to come but I wasn't chosen. No one can say I wanted to come but I wasn't one of the chosen. I didn't come because I didn't want to come. I didn't come because I didn't want to come, and I didn't want to come because I wanted what I wanted more.

Third question. Doesn't election then make evangelism meaningless? That's an interesting question. The very first thing that you are confronted with is the fact that the apostle Paul, who other than Jesus talked more about the doctrine of election than anybody else in the New Testament. The apostle Paul took the exact opposite view of that statement. If we say election obviously kills evangelism, or anybody who believes in election doesn't do evangelism. They're all going to be saved anyway. Isn't it interesting that the teacher that the Holy Spirit of God used more than any other New Testament writer took the exact opposite view of that position? He poured out his life for the gospel. He did everything short of giving his life for the gospel, for the lost. When we get to chapter 9, Paul makes this startling statement that he would himself prefer to give up his salvation. Let me be accursed, he says that God, so that those of my people, the Jews, would believe. Paul had an incredible heart for those who are lost.

In 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 8: “Remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal, but the Word of God is not bound. Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” Nobody, my friend, is saved apart from the gospel. Nobody is saved apart from the gospel. Not even the elect.

Secondly, we, in answering this question – does election kill evangelism? – say, no, we get to enter into the privilege of partnering with God in bringing this gospel. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5 we’re ministers of reconciliation. We need to bring this glorious gospel. God has ordained the end, the salvation of those whom He has chosen. He has ordained to the end. But He has ordained the means to the end as well. The means to the end is that we go. He has commanded us to go and so we go. He commanded us to pray and so we pray. We go and we pray. Romans 1:16. Where we started at the beginning of the book. But I’m not ashamed of the gospel of Christ because it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes. That’s the message that Paul proclaimed. That’s what we are to be about. Knowing God. Loving others. Living and sharing this gospel. That’s what it’s all about. We’re ministers of reconciliation.

Then lastly, only God knows who the elect are. Only God knows who the elect. Does election stifle evangelism? No. I don’t know who the elect are. I don’t know how many in this room are elect. You don’t either. When Paul went to Corinth in Acts 18, it was from Corinth that he wrote the book of Romans. Corinth was like any major metropolitan US city. A lot of stuff happening. A lot of things that are pictured in Romans chapter 1. But Corinth especially was known as a city of ill repute, if you will. When he went there, he was alone and he pours his heart out to God in Acts 18 and basically says, God, I’m afraid. I’m the only one here. I wish I wasn’t here. Anything but this. Remember what God says back to Paul. You stay there. You preach this gospel because I have many people in this city. Many people whom I have chosen and I’m going to call to myself as you proclaim the gospel. Paul stayed in Corinth longer than anywhere else except for Ephesus. He stayed there a year and a half preaching the gospel and growing that church. We need to operate from God’s vantage point. We don’t know who the elect are.

God gave Bonnie and I the privilege of raising four children. We have 13 grandchildren. In the raising of those children and in praying for those grandchildren, I have to say to you I don't think about whether they're elect or not. I honestly, as Bonnie, I don't know that I spent 30 seconds in 30 years anxious over whether one of my children or grandchildren are elect. That's God's business. That's not my business. That's God's business. But you know what I did do? We assumed that because God put those children in our family He had chosen them to hear this gospel, to see it lived out hopefully before them more often than not and to be drawn by this Spirit to believe this glorious gospel. That's where our focus needs to be. Let God be God. Let's us be us. God will handle that detail. What we are called to do is to realize that the people that God has brought into my sphere of influence. Think about that. The people that God has brought into your sphere of influence, obviously starting with your family, but then the people that you work with, the people in your neighborhood. You ought to be looking at every one of those people that you encounter even when you go to the store as an opportunity to be an influence for the gospel. It may very well be, as Paul heard, I have many people in your life that I'm going to use you to influence and draw them to accept and believe this gospel.

Now our time is pretty much gone, but I want to end with an even bigger issue and a bigger problem. I know you see point D your outline. That was never intended for today. That's a preview for what's to come. That's Romans 9. At the end of the day, doesn't this doctrine just simply fundamentally seem unfair and unjust? Paul himself will raise literally those words in Romans 9. So come September, we'll be jumping into that 9th chapter. But here's the deal. No, that's not a joke. That's not a joke. That's real. I'm not going to get into 9 until I have about a four-week break. So don't even think about it. But here is a bigger issue than even the doctrine of election. God could have chosen to save everybody. God could have chosen to save everybody. As we read our Bibles, it's obvious from Genesis to Revelation that that's not the story. The story isn't universalism. The story isn't all of humanity is just on a different path and they're all going to end up in heaven and experience eternal life. That's not the story of the Bible. So the larger question, if you will, behind even the mystery and the difficulty of the doctrine of election is why didn't God choose to save everybody?

Well, we step into Deuteronomy 29 when we ask that question, but I think there are three fundamental principles to guide us. One. Everything that God does He does for His glory. Everything that He does He does for his glory. It is a part of the divine plan than it is ultimately for His greatest glory.

Secondly, God can never do anything that is not consistent with who He is. God can never do anything that is inconsistent with His character. God is perfect in His love. God is perfect in His righteousness. God is perfect in His holiness. God is perfect in His mercy. When you think in terms of the outworking of the plan of God, we know that it has to absolutely be consistent with His character or God is no longer God. It's all to the glory of God. It's always consistent with His character. Genesis 18 -- Shall not the God of all the earth do right? Yes, absolutely He will always do right.

Then lastly and thirdly. Do we really think that we can devise a plan that's better than His? That really presses us in to Romans 9. Do we really think in our limitations as a fallen, created being that we really imagine for a moment that our plan is better than God's? the secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever. Oh, the depth, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways.

What do we take away? Ultimately it is simply this. The offer of salvation is to everyone. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ this morning right where you're sitting, right now in this moment of time, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be granted the gift of eternal life. That's going to mean that you're going to have to turn away from your plan. That means you have to turn away from your good works. That means you're going to have to turn away from offering to God some self-effort. It means you're going to embrace grace and grace alone because it is exactly that which God offers. For by grace are you saved through faith. Not of yourself. It's the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

In these closing minutes this morning, I don't care if you've been at this church for 40 years. I don't care if you've been here for only three hours. If you've never put your trust in Christ alone, you do not have the gift of eternal life. But in this moment, in the closing of these moments, you can simply say to God: I agree with you that what

Jesus did on the cross was for me and that's all that is needed to be done. I believe.
Father God, even as the father said to Jesus, Lord, I believe; help me in my unbelief.

We implore you, Father, Lord Jesus, and Holy Spirit, to open the heart of anyone here this morning to this glorious gospel that is life-changing and destiny changing and is all for Your glory. We pray that You would do that, Father. We pray that You would do that right now. In Jesus's name, amen.