

**Record of Sermons delivered during the month of**  
**July 2020**

(added progressively after each Sunday)

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(see following pages)

Romans 9:6-24

## Unconditional Election

Romans 9:16

***<sup>16</sup> So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.***

In introducing this topic, Stuart Oyott, in the 1990's, commenting on the Religious environment in England, observed that many, even in his current Congregation would find this topic 'strange' to them. Because of the modern situation that they were in.

He went on to enumerate the orthodox religious groups that historically carried the banner of the Reformation in Europe and Great Britain from which his parishioners were derived. Each of these were 'Confessional' traditions. That is they had and were supposed to abide by carefully considered and crafted definitions of the Christian faith as it had been painfully defined over the first two centuries after the adoption of the Reformation: Reformed from the Rome based decadent church.

Church of England: still claims tacit obedience to the '39 Articles'. Congregational, Unionist, Baptist, Presbyterian, (and even some divisions of the English Methodist Church before their union in the 1932): Have as their supreme standard the Word of God and have a subordinate, convenient, coordinated summary, in various forms, following the Westminster Confession of Faith of the mid1600's.

Many more recent churches have developed either with no Confession or a deliberately varied one due to one or more conflicts with the Bible Based 'full counsel of God' that their members had fallen into believing. Some have even followed the whim of a wealthy or charismatic leader and in many cases thus are purely sects – not Christian at all!

Despite the fact that in all these earlier mentioned affiliations, there is a clear 'confession' that defines the details of what they believe the Bible says: the doctrine. In the case of topics like today's (and several others), where such topics are clearly stated, at best many find them 'strange' at worst they deny them outright!

But we shouldn't be surprised at the state of the many religious groups that profess to be Christian: having a lack of knowledge and understanding demonstrated by their participants!

On Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May, quite recently, we found that Jude (probably Christ's post resurrection-converted half brother) began to write a letter extolling the virtues of the blessings of the Christian Life, to be overwhelmed with the need to warn against the inroads of false teachers into the life of even the very early Churches. Similarly most of Paul's, John's and Peter's letters are practically obsessed by this concern, as we have noted in our Bible Studies over the past couple of years.

So much for the reported state of England in the 1990's.

In Australia there are many similarities. In some ways we suffer, in addition, from the influence of Church development in the USA. A country which, in so many ways, has a national psyche, which leads to being different for difference's sake!

But even in supposedly traditionally, orthodox Churches we would find that today's topic would be 'strange' to many.

Again we can see why. Not only is the natural tendency of the 'flesh' (*sarx*) to want to be like God and assert the logic of the human mind against the sovereign will of God, but also the human manufactured 'means' adopted by 'institutions' corrupt its members.

I have experience of the Uniting Church as it operates in Western Australia.

They publish and promote the use of the Revised Common Lectionary.<sup>1</sup> When in the context of endorsing and promoting the use of this Lectionary they instruct, "*The Uniting Church lays upon its members the serious duty of reading the Scriptures, [and] commits its ministers to preach from these..*"

This Lectionary claims to offer congregations a **balanced diet** of readings, in a three year cycle, which then repeats indefinitely. The readings are allocated to each of the Sunday dates in the current cycle.

This seems a valuable 'means' to enable, seeking the 'whole counsel of God'. Or does it? If it is followed there are no Sundays available for any readings that are not mentioned as part of their, 'balanced diet'.

Consider the Book of Romans<sup>2</sup>, and in particular, Chapter 9: Except for 8 fragments included in 'Year B' and 'Year C', the bulk of Romans that is covered is in 'Year A', where from the first Sunday in Advent (beginning of December) to the middle of September a suggested 'second' reading from parts of Romans, roughly in order, from Chapter 1 to 16 (except for 1:8 – 3:31) is to be found. The scope and general order of these readings is suggestive of a deliberate treatment of Romans. However the disturbing fact is not what it includes but what it excludes: 1:8 to 3:31 and 9:6-33<sup>3</sup>, as well as many other Reformed 'gems'. Is it any wonder then, that so many people find God's Sovereign Choice 'strange' to them?

So now we delve, perhaps for first time, into God's Sovereign Choice in the fact of Unconditional Election<sup>4</sup>. *We aim to get a better understanding of the Word of God.*

1 <https://assembly.uca.org.au/cudw/worship-resources-and-publications/item/863-the-lectionary>

2 Apart from the deficiency with respect to Unconditional Election by omitting most of Chapter 9, The first three chapters of Romans are only represented by the first 7 verses of Chapter 1. This then excludes from typical education of Christians the following headings: God's Wrath Against Mankind (1:18-32); God's Righteous Judgement (2:1-16); God's Faithfulness (3:1-8); No One Is Righteous (3:9-20); and Righteousness Through Faith (3:21-31). This latter omission contains the seminal (strongly influencing later developments) statement that brought Luther to realise the basis of the Reformation: <sup>22</sup>*This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.* (NIV)

3 The first 5 verses of Romans Chapter 9, where the Heading (NIV) is God's Sovereign Choice, is an introduction where Paul shows deep concern for the Jews – *those who are of my own race* – even to the extent that he could wish that he was cut off from Christ (forfeit his own salvation) if it would save them. This heavy burden on his soul is seen as an example for all Christians in how they show concern for all those who are lost without Christ. See sermon by S Olyott, *A Burden for Souls* [www.knowyourbible recordings.org/sermons\\_locked/HWS05.mp3](http://www.knowyourbible recordings.org/sermons_locked/HWS05.mp3) Listen again to the Olyott sermon listed for 2 weeks ago -June 21st

4 Unconditional Election is one of the 5 statements characterised by the mnemonic of TULIP, where it provides the second letter. The 5 statements were composed to refute the 5 objections to the orthodox understanding of Reformed Theology that was infecting the Dutch Reformed Church of the early 1600's, by those called the Remonstrants.

*These truths are the very truths that God uses to breathe new life into His Church. He's done it again and again and hopefully yet again, through us.<sup>5</sup>*

This truth, is clearly stated in the Bible, if we are given the opportunity to study it, but it is also the second of the 5 responses made to the Arminian Remonstrants, who early in the development and formalisation of the Reformation, attempted to destroy it. Attacking its basic Biblical truths in 5 ways. The first response to this serious heresy, was to counter the attempted overthrow of the doctrine of original sin: that after the “fall” of Adam and Eve and then to all their naturally born progeny, human nature would be intrinsically sinful in all aspects – Total depravity (The T of TULIP). This then accounting for the fact that all are under the wrath of God; are rightly under His judgement; and none have the ability or inclination to: seek God; satisfy God’s justice; and escape eternal damnation.

The acceptance of this first basic truth causes us to possess the clear diagnosis of the essential reason for the plight of humankind – which has all the repercussions and side-effects that blight out existence. With this diagnosis we can now proceed to announce (and with the Holy Spirit electing to work within us) recognise and accept the cure.

To recognise what a mess the human race is in is essential to the cure. If we don’t recognise the need we will never be in a position to understand, appreciate and receive the cure: Unconditional Election.

We have already had presented the Westminster Confession of Faith’s description of this essential cure in order for any to be saved. (see back of Order of Service for 7<sup>th</sup> June – 4 weeks ago). But to illustrate the similarity in the various versions of the Reformed Christian Faith, I quote the 1689 London (Baptist) Confession of Faith. “Before the world was made God’s eternal, immutable (unchangeable) purpose, which originated in the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, moved Him to choose (or elect) in Christ, certain of mankind to everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace (kindness) and love He predestined His chosen ones to life, although there was nothing in them to cause Him to choose them.”

All of the reasons for this choice are in God. None of the reasons is found in the particular man or woman, who is chosen. This is the explanation for the word Unconditional in the title of this essential, fundamental truth of God’s purpose and will: in election.

If we accept the first point, as Bible believing professing Christians must, then we know that we all begin on this earth, spiritually dead and under God’s wrath and judgement. We cannot do anything to raise ourselves from this state of death. Could Lazarus, 4 days dead in his tomb, raise himself? No! Christ called, “Lazarus. Come forth!” Can we, dead in our sin, raise ourselves to ‘newness of life’? No! Christ’s call of the Gospel comes, “Follow me”. Christ’s Spirit brings those whom God has chosen to a New Birth, making the call of Christ’s Gospel effective. The Triune agents of Salvation: God the Father chooses; God the Son – the Living Word calls, God the Holy Spirit Converts.

5 Quoting from S Oyott in Unconditional Election. [www.knowyourbiblerecordings.org/sermons\\_locked/FPC02.mp3](http://www.knowyourbiblerecordings.org/sermons_locked/FPC02.mp3)

So far, continuing on from the truth of total depravity, by mere observation – where we know that some who cannot save themselves are saved, while we equal well know that there are many, so very many, that remain lost – we can recognise that only God can do that which He wishes to do and allow what He doesn't wish, still to happen. That He saves those He chooses and He passes by those that He doesn't choose. Even human logic can work this out, by observing what actually happens!

But, more importantly, here is the Biblical Basis for this truth of Election. No longer are we dealing with a vague philosophical idea. We are dealing with truth that is taught in black & white in God's revealed truth: the Bible.

Within the Bible there is a vast array of evidence and example to guide us. We will consider briefly just a few of the brightest guiding stars in that vastness.

“The story of the Bible is the story of Unconditional Election!”<sup>6</sup> Those that fail to believe Predestination fail because they have not come to see the truth of that quotation!

- We begin with Abraham: Perhaps you might say, “I can't believe in a God that chooses some and leaves others as they are.” Yet you readily believe that in the Pagan darkness of Ur of the Chaldeans, God spoke! He called Abraham out and He left the others in their Paganism. Christians throughout the world have no trouble believing that. That's Unconditional Election.
- Similarly Christians have no trouble believing that of all the Nations of the world, God chose Israel. Why did He? Was there something special and appealing to God in them? We don't have to guess the answer. God tells us, through Moses, in His Word. **Deuteronomy 7:7** <sup>7</sup> *It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples,*  
The reason that God chose the Jews (Ancient Israel) is found in God, not in them. That's the Unconditional Election. The choice, whereby He 'set His love on them', was not based on anything God saw in them or could see that they would do. But entirely in God's secret counsel and decrees. Done out of His mere, free kindness and grace.
- Isaac had two boys. They were twins – they had the same father. One was born first, and would normally have had the greater inheritance. Esau preceded Jacob in birth. **Romans 9:10-13** <sup>10</sup> *And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac,* <sup>11</sup> *though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—* <sup>12</sup> *she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”* <sup>13</sup> *As it is written<sup>7</sup>, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”*  
Verse 11 is again the key to the word Unconditional. Entirely God's purpose (that election might continue) not anything in one or the other.
- It was Unconditional Election that the Lord Jesus Christ preached! That's why we preach it. Luke 4:25-30. An incident which began right at the beginning of Our Lord's teaching, in His home town of Nazareth. At verse 25, He is teaching

<sup>6</sup> Quoted from: “The Five Points of Calvinism”. <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/fivepointsseaton.html>

<sup>7</sup> Malachi 1:2,3

in the Synagogue. <sup>25</sup> *But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, <sup>26</sup> and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. (Only one widow was chosen – one that was even outside the borders of Israel) <sup>27</sup> And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”* All those lepers in their need that God didn’t choose, He cured only the outsider. God chose one and passed the others by!

What did the people in the Synagogue say and do when they heard the Son of God preach that? <sup>28</sup> *When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. <sup>29</sup> And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. <sup>30</sup> But passing through their midst, he went away.*

They hated the doctrine of Unconditional Election! If you can’t get rid of a truth at least get rid of the person who proclaims it. That’s how the devil works. But they couldn’t, because He was the Lord of Glory.

- We finish today, at the feet of Christ, as He speaks from John’s Gospel:

<sup>37</sup> *All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. <sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup> And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.*

<sup>40</sup> *For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”*

**(John 6:37-40)**<sup>8</sup>

Not everyone believed when Jesus taught, as we read in John Chapter 10. They don’t today! Jesus explains why people don’t believe: ever! From verse 26.

<sup>26</sup> *but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock.* (That’s exactly **not** what Arminius and the rest of the Arminians said! They said and many modern preachers today say, “You are not of His sheep because you do not believe”.

But Jesus said, *you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. <sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one.”* (John 10:26-30)

Jesus said it! He also said John 15:16 <sup>16</sup> *You did not choose me, but I chose you ...*

This topic is too important to confine it to one session. With the blessed words of Jesus ringing in our ears let us pause and consider. To return next week to add to our knowledge and acceptance of the ‘full counsel of God’. Not as we fail to understand it, but as God has revealed it. [2533]

**Pray for God’s grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.**

**Amen**

<sup>8</sup> In presenting a series on John and in the succession of weeks featuring Chapter 6 we get the ‘curious’ (we might say deliberate) passing over of these very verses Jn 6:35,41-51 is ALL that is present in the Lectionary

Romans 9:6-24

## Unconditional Election – Part 2

Romans 9:14

***<sup>14</sup> What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!***

Last week we started this topic with a description of the state of mind of many people in Christian Churches these days. There are parts of the Bible and consequently special knowledge of Himself that God has revealed that have been, in some cases deliberately hidden from their members. Things that were well known, believed and cherished in the early years of the Reformation, but have been 'passed over' by 'liberal' elements in even evangelical, reformed Church affiliations. All the major reformed churches in the English speaking communion, believed and taught the 'full counsel of God', as found first and foremost in the Bible, and conveniently and systematically summarised in the 39 articles of the Church of England and the various derivatives of the Westminster Confession of Faith of the rest.

After pointing out that the doctrine of Unconditional Election was a logical consequence of the fundamental doctrine of the 'fall' of mankind, we put aside human philosophical-like reasoning and the beliefs of orthodox Ministers, to take a serious look at what God has revealed about Himself in the Word that He has created for just this purpose.

We continue with our dependence on God's word and then make application of it to ourselves and our circumstances.

It is the sovereign God Himself who chooses those persons, He appoints to eternal life (Election) and then provides all the means necessary for each of them to be brought to belief in Christ through the Gospel. This entirely through God's free, kind grace and not in any conditional way on the person's nature and merit (Unconditional).

- Luke when He wrote the Acts of the Apostles, had to make comment on some of the preaching done by the Apostles. **Acts 13:48** <sup>48</sup> *And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.* This is surely 'as clear as crystal'! It's tragic, criminal, blasphemous that it's not so long ago that some Bible translations, in direct contradiction of the meaning in the Greek, rendered this as: 'as many as believed, were appointed to eternal life'.
- It is in order that as this evidence grows, some hearing it might begin to fear. When we hear the Bible read, it is the person who reads, voice. But it is God's Word. **Romans 9:15-16** <sup>15</sup> *For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."* <sup>16</sup> *So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.* You're only

saved because God chooses to save you. You're not saved by human desire. You're not saved by human effort.

- Look at Ephesians Chapter 1:3-5 (We're just looking at a few of the stars in that vastness we mentioned last week. To show that we are hearing God's Word. Not just hearing what's written in old Confessions. Not just hearing what a particular preacher believes! We're hearing what the *Scriptures teach*.<sup>3</sup> *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,*<sup>4</sup> *even as he chose us in him ... (but when, Paul?) ... before the foundation of the world, ... (but why, Paul?) ... that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love*<sup>5</sup> *he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, ... (but what was the reason, Paul?) ... according to the purpose of his will,*
- So Paul writes to some new Christians in 2 Thessalonians Chapter 2.13-14 If we write to new Christians why don't we write these words to them?<sup>13</sup> *But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.*<sup>14</sup> *To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

It is Unconditional Election. Election is choosing. Unconditional means that the choosing is not based on anything in the person. It's God's free, kind choice.

Well someone may now say, "Well that's fine, but I don't see it that way. You haven't mentioned Romans 8:29<sup>9</sup>.

Let's not let them 'off the hook', we'll read this verse.

<sup>29</sup> *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

They have said that our interpretation is one way but theirs is different. They say, "I believe in election. I believe that God saw beforehand, who was going to accept Christ, so then He chose them to eternal life. God could see who was going to believe and those were the people He chose."

That's what they say and they base it on Romans 8:29. <sup>29</sup> *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined ...*

Careful! Look carefully at the verse. It is 'people' whom God foreknew. Not any action they may take. It doesn't say that He foreknew that they would believe. It doesn't say that He foreknew that they would accept Christ. It doesn't say that He foreknew that they would be sympathetic to the Gospel. It says that He foreknew 'them'.

When Adam 'knew' Eve, it was because he entered into the most intimate expression of love, possible, with her. Foreknow means to love beforehand. That's why God said to Israel, through Amos. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." (Amos 3:2) Because the word 'know' means to love very dearly.

<sup>9</sup> It interesting to note that in the Lectionary mentioned last week this verse is one of many tucked away in one Sunday's reading of Romans.

“Those He loved, very dearly, beforehand He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, ...” That’s what the verse says.

God chose us, not because we were going to accept His Son. God chose us so that we would accept His Son!

The Bible says so: Ephesians 2:10. <sup>10</sup> *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* God chose us not because He knew that we were going to believe. God chose us so that we would believe!

*As many as were appointed to eternal life, believed. (Acts 13:48)* God chose us not because He saw that we were going to have faith. God chose us so that we would have faith! <sup>8</sup> *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,* <sup>9</sup> *not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* (The earlier two verses in Ephesians 2 of the above verse.)

So instead of setting ourselves against what God’s Word teaches, we should quieten our hearts and say, “Yes, Lord.” And then hear this word from God: (2 Peter 1:10) <sup>10</sup> *Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, ...* What ever else you do in life, make sure you are one of the elect people of God. That’s the thing you most need to discover.

The final point of this two week message: the concrete effects of this truth. Why do we believe in Unconditional Election? Because it’s in the Bible! Why do we believe in human responsibility? Because it’s in the Bible! Why do we try vainly to ‘untie the knot’<sup>10</sup> to explain how both can be true? Because the Bible doesn’t explain, it teaches!

If you are a ‘lost’ man or woman, older boy or girl, it’s your fault. The Bible says so. If you’re a ‘saved’ man or woman, boy or girl, it’s God’s doing (fault?). Because the Bible says so. That’s why people who believe in Unconditional Election get on with evangelism, because the Bible teaches Election but it also teaches responsibility. The Bible won’t let you sit in Church and say, “Well if I’m elect, God will find me. If I’m not elect it’s just too bad for me.

The Bible insists, if you’re ‘lost’, it’s because you refuse to believe; you decide today to stay as you are; you refuse to change; you will not repent; you will not quit your sin; you will not ‘come to Christ; and you will not be under His government. The practical effects are that we don’t play down the doctrine of human responsibility, against the doctrine of Election, because we believe them, not because we understand them fully, but because God has reveal them.

In evangelism, by the way, we don't get discouraged! Why? Because we **do** believe in Unconditional Election. It tells us that there are people out there, who when they hear the Gospel they will believe! They're Christ's sheep, you see. When they hear His voice, they will follow Him.

When we see conversions, we don't see that conversion as something to clap the person for (as they once might have received congratulation for making an 'altar call', in times past). "well done!" Because what has happened, in Conversion, is the coming to pass of part of God's eternal plan. That person has come to faith because of God's eternal decrees and purpose. We are seeing in 'time and space', in our lifetime and in this situation, what God decided in eternity. That puts a whole new significance to Conversion. We tell the converted person the work of God.

When we evangelise, with such understanding and optimism, there will be evidence of Conversions.

But we should also be filled with realism. The human heart is wicked. Left to itself it doesn't want to know. Each day, we ourselves, lift our eyes to heaven, and say. "Lord, why me? Why me?" So we go to a lost world and tell men and women, boys and girls, what they most need to know: Men and women you can't save yourself. Yet you need saving! You're 'lost'. You can't stop yourself being lost. Only Someone outside yourself can save you. You can't find your way to Him. He'll find His way to you. The only thing you can do! Is to say, "God be merciful to me, the sinner." Then you will find the doors of heaven, will open wide for you too. And you will see that you believe, precisely because God did choose you. You believe because He did come looking for you.<sup>11</sup> (note from LC 13, that God has: *ordained all the means to this end.*<sup>12</sup>) You believe because He did give you the faith.

Everything's different then: Why me? In answer you want to please him.

One final question to answer: If the doctrine of Unconditional Election is so obviously true, why is it that so many professing Christians refuse to believe it? If it is as 'clear as crystal' in the Bible why do they not only choose to refuse it but sometimes to twist it, deform it and even vehemently oppose it? Why is it that Christians set themselves up against this doctrine?

This needs to be answered: If people refuse unconditional election, the reason is that to them it makes God look unfair. Why do you believe God is fair? Why do believe God is just? Why? Where did you get that idea from? You got it from the Bible. *A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he. (Deuteronomy 32:4b)* It tells us that He is holy and just in all His ways. How is it then that one can accept what the Bible teaches about God, but one won't and can't accept what the Bible teaches about predestination!

11 The way God comes looking for you is in the means that He has ordained beforehand especially for this purpose. WCF 3:6. from Ephesians 2:10. & LC 13 from Eph 1 4-6 & LC 153 – 161 (discourse on the 'use of means which are made effectual to salvation.)

12 Quoted on back cover of Order of Service for 5<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

Two truths in the same Book, you accept one and reject the other? The answer is this. You've put your human reasoning above the Bible. At the end of the day you're making yourself the judge of the Bible. You think you know better than the Bible, in certain areas that you choose. You are in the words of Scripture a 'lover of yourself'<sup>13</sup> and proud. You are a modernist. You are a liberal. Because you believe that human reason is to be trusted more than the Bible! Isn't that a terrible thing? So what you need is not just a change in opinion, but a heart that confesses to God your pride and repent.

We're commanded to love God in the Scripture. His ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9)<sup>14</sup>

If you believe in a God who does not choose, who does not predestinate, you've invented a God who does not exist. The God who does not predestinate is a figment of your imagination. You want a God about whom there is nothing mysterious. You want a God whose ways are rather like our ways and whose thoughts are rather like our thoughts.

You want a God who at the end of the day is controlled by men and women. Actually by you! That is idolatry. That is precisely what idolatry is. You've invented a God that doesn't exist, who at the end of the day you can put Him where you want Him. That's to be repented of, too!

Why is it that you don't want God to be God? Why is it that you don't want God to be highly exalted? Why is it that you don't like the thought than man is weak and powerless and dependent. There's something wrong with your spirit. Is it unteachable? Is it rebellious? Can't you see that God loves the sinner and you're grieving this great God by refusing what He says about Himself?

We all need to sit back and listen to the greatest commandment of all: *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."*<sup>15</sup>

[2316]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.**

**Amen**

[mention listening to the full sermon by Olyott]

13 2 Timothy 3:1-2. <sup>1</sup> But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. <sup>2</sup> For people will be lovers of self, Where this is the start of the list of attributes of the 5<sup>th</sup> Columnist false teachers expected to infect the Christian Church.

14 <sup>8</sup> For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.

<sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

15 Matthew 22:37, Jesus quoting Deuteronomy 6:5

Delivered Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July, 2020

Romans 9:6-26

## **Sin & Did God Leave All to Perish in Misery?**

Rom 9:14

***<sup>14</sup> What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!***

The Subordinate Standard of our Church is the Westminster Confession of Faith, being a convenient summary and rationalisation of God's Word – which is the Supreme Standard of our Church! Associated with this Confession are the Catechisms (Larger and Shorter). Today's title comes from the Shorter Catechism #20 - see back page of today's Order of Service (The Shorter Catechism is expanded and expounded by the Larger Catechism, in this case at #30-35 which relate to WCF 7:3-6. See previous back pages of Orders of Service: 23 Oct 2016 to 4 Dec 2016 – still available under the TAB 'Downloads' on the Website.

In it's summary of the Christian Faith up to question 20 of the Shorter Catechism and the associated articles of the Confession, we would learn that you and I are not here by accident; we are not persons who have just happened; we've been created by God by being brought into the world by the Will of God. We have been made and are alive for God. We are creatures who have been made to glorify God and to enjoy Him. Not made for ourselves, our pleasure, or our sins. But for God.

Where can we learn about this God? From the Bible. What does the Bible teach? Things to believe and how to behave.

So we see in the Bible what we are to believe and what the Bible tells us about God: we see that before the world was made God had an everlasting plan; how He made the world; how He governs the world; how God related to Adam and Eve and their terrible sin; and as background to today's topic – Did God leave all to perish in sin and misery – we learn two things about ourselves, that we are in a state of sin and of misery.

We are in a state of sin because our nature is depraved – our hearts are not right with God, <sup>5</sup> ... *that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* (**Genesis 6:5**) Every part of us is tainted and polluted with rebellion against God.

That's the state of every man and woman born (except our Lord Jesus Christ).

We find that we are in a state of misery. Everybody here and everybody in the world, some time or other has pains of body; pains of soul, spirit; anguish of heart; everybody dies; all must taste the Judgement; and, if we remain as we are then all of us must be

consigned to the righteous and ever lasting punishment of a righteous and everlasting God.

That is the background to today's topic, Two things basically: who God is and that we are ruined!

Now the Catechism takes a much more pleasant turn. Whereas it's been spelling out man's ruin. Telling us what we are really like – while our consciences have been affirming and approving what we learn, telling us that it is so. Even though we might not admit it to others. Now we turn to the wonderful account of how some sinners – some ruined people – come into a right relationship with God, receiving all the blessings and promises that He has to offer.<sup>16</sup>

You could stop almost anyone in the street and ask them what they know about God. Almost all, but in a sentimental way, will answer that God is love! [so the American fostered, 'free grace' merchants have been really effective.] Here today, you will see that the love of God is greater than any 'man in the street' can ever envisage.

The exceedingly great, everlasting, infinite love of the God of Scripture. The Doctrine of Election, which we continue to talk about is basically the teaching relating to the love of God, which is found in the Bible. Because look at yourself, and look at me as we begin: do we want God? No! Do we like being sinners? Yes! Do we like being in a state of misery? Yes! We are so blinded to it that we actually like being what we are. Ordinary men and women want to live without God. They go to work and never talk about God; come home and watch TV – which rarely mentions God, except by blasphemy; read popular newspapers and find hardly anything about God; talk to relatives and friends, without mentioning God.

God is completely absent from their life, apart from an occasional thought, possibly at Christmas, or an occasional fragment of Scripture seen on a sign or the side of a bus or in the paper, or an occasional conversation about the subject. The average man or woman is quite content that although he or she faces the grave, he or she is quite content to live their life without God.

That's how men and women are by nature. But God is so great, in His love, that although men and women are against Him and although there is no man or woman who wants God and none who want everlasting life. No man or woman, left to themselves desires the glories of heaven – of which the centre is God – God despite that, from all eternity, made up His mind, to save for Himself a number of people who, 'no man can number'. (Rev 7:9 KJV)

16 Shorter Catechism # 20. **Did God leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery?**

God, solely of His love and mercy, from all eternity elected some to everlasting life, and entered into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of the state of sin and misery, and to bring them into a state of salvation by a Redeemer.

That's the great teaching of Scripture: God has stepped in to save men and women, despite themselves. God has chosen to save a great company of men and women, although they don't want to be saved. He in His perfect wisdom knows that this is the best for them, loves them eternally and has named them as His own. He will most certainly have them! He will bring everyone on whom He has set His love to everlasting glory.

This is the subject which was called in the past – in what now sounds formal and cold language – *unconditional election*. It's really the **doctrine of the love of God**.

God by His mercy alone has provided a way of escape for lost men and women. God by His power works in the lives of individual men and women enabling to take that way of escape. And this whole doctrine of Election is the Doctrine of the everlasting love of God, towards the people on whom He has set His loving choice.

The Bible teaches five things about this unconditional election:

- Out of the multitude of people, past present and future **God has already chosen a definite number** to be His own people and to share with them everlasting glory.
- God has chosen each one not because they are a 'cut above' anyone else; **not because He has seen anything good in them** – *because there is none good, no not one (Rom 3:10)* – but, as the Catechism says, "solely of His love and mercy". He's loved them because He loved them. He's set His love on them for reasons only known to Him. NOT for reasons which lie in them. That is why it's called *unconditional* election.  
Remember those parliamentary elections. The candidates are announced and the voters try to evaluate who is the best – based on the merits of those candidates. That would be called conditional election. The choice being decided by certain things that relate to the particular candidate.  
God's election is unconditional, His choice does not depend on anything He can see in any particular person. His choice remains in His own loving heart, and nowhere else. The reasons are found only in Him! Not in the person.
- **Out of His sheer kindness**, He has chosen to save these rebels! God is under no obligation. There is no compulsion upon God. There's no one coercing God. In other words there is no one in any way putting pressure on God, or forcing God in choosing someone to be saved. It's because of His great attribute of love. That He has chosen to save [any] out of sheer kindness – or in the word many of us like to use, since it is a Bible word (159 examples from a search of *the KJV*) ... is *grace*. Unmerited kindness; un-sort kindness; undeserved kindness. It is through sheer *grace* that God has decided to save to Himself a people.
- God has chosen to save everybody who is going to be saved, **through the Lord Jesus Christ**. Further studies will emphasise that: <sup>12</sup> ... *there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*" (Acts 4:12) Jesus said: <sup>6</sup> *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* ... (John 14:6)

God has chosen nobody to be saved by any other [man devised] method or religion. He has chosen those from any background He wills, but only through Jesus Christ. No one in heaven will be rejoicing in anyone else than in Jesus Christ. We are told that when all the elect arrive in heaven out of every nation, tribe and tongue. Although they come from such different nations, families, tribes and tongues, they all will be singing the same theme. (Revelation 7:9) The great worth of Jesus Christ! Everyone who is saved to eternal glory is saved by that same, and only, Redeemer!

- **Unconditional election is from all eternity.** There is no changing with God. If God hadn't decided a thing one day, as it were, and then he had decided it the next day, this would have been a change. So to believe that God has chosen someone but not from all eternity, is to believe in a different God from the One in the Scriptures. Scriptures distinctly teach that God has chosen people, but that God is God – He cannot change. Therefore the choice must have been as long as God has been God! Which is from all eternity. It's an everlasting choice. We can try to wriggle our way around this truth, but eventually we find that we can escape it no further. We must bow down and worship God, that such a truth is taught in the Holy Scriptures.

Now the truth of Unconditional Election is plainly taught in the Word of God!

**John 6:37-40:** Jesus is talking about who will come to Him. Some modern day preachers would like the verse to read: ... all shall come to me. That's not what it says. <sup>37</sup> **All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.** <sup>38</sup> *For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.* <sup>39</sup> *And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.* <sup>40</sup> *For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.* Jesus is saying that the Father has given Him people; all those the Father has given will come to me; all these will see me and believe the Gospel; all these that the Father will give me will be raised up at the last day – taken to glory. There is the Lord Jesus in John Chapter 6 plainly teaching, the Doctrine of Election, which so many people hate today.

At the end of that Chapter some of the 'general' disciples could 'stomach' no longer this teaching. The very things our Lord Jesus was saying. They found that His teaching was so hard that they could no longer walk with Him. They turned their backs and walked away. Really that's the choice for all today.

The choice is that you submit to Jesus' teaching or you invent a Jesus of your own. But the Jesus who is God's Son, teaches that those who are saved are saved because the Father gave them to Him.

John 15:16 Jesus talks to His special disciples in the upper room. (The ones that stayed with Him after the incident of Chapter 6.) He says quite bluntly to them: <sup>16</sup> *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you ...* Why were they disciples?

Why that eleven in the room with Him? Was it because they of all the people in Palestine at the time, suddenly decided to choose Him?

In a sense they did choose Christ they heard His call and obeyed it. But none the less the real reason was, says Jesus, that it was His choice not theirs.

“Don’t think you’re a Christian because you chose me! You are my disciples because I chose you.” That’s the unchangeable Son of God, and what He said to a few Christians, applies to us all!

**Acts 13:48** Here’s Dr Luke writing His history of the early Church: The Gospel is being preached in modern day Turkey: <sup>48</sup> *And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.* Some earlier translations tried to ‘put the cart before the horse’ by putting the *belief* before the *appointing to eternal life*. The sense of the Greek is clear: the way reputable translations such as the above do, since they apply the available scholarship of the then Greek common day language.

Why did those particular Gentiles in the town believe? Because they were already appointed (elected) to eternal life. God had chosen them before the world was made. As long as God has been God He laid His electing love upon them. When at last they heard the Gospel, they believed it. As many as were appointed to eternal life, believed it.

The proof that anyone has been elected by God, is that when they hear the Gospel (at God’s appointed time) in their lifetime, they believe it. Calling proves election. Personal faith is the proof that you are one of those on whom God has set His everlasting love. His everlasting Decree.

Finally for today, Ephesians 1:4-6 Where Paul is writing to people who believe the Gospel and he says: <sup>4</sup> *even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him* <sup>5</sup> *in love, having predestined us*<sup>17</sup> *for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,* <sup>6</sup> *to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*

If right now you can feel your great need for Christ and you long for Him. And right now you hate your sins and you long for everlasting life with Jesus Christ and you believe that He died upon the Cross for sinners like you. Then there is no hindrance to you in coming to find life in Christ. None at all. You don’t have to have prior knowledge as to whether you are elect or not! All the elect are given repentance and faith. If you hate your sins and you long for everlasting life and believe that only Jesus Christ can give it to you. You may call upon the Name of the Lord, right now, and be saved. Even if you’re completely ignorant of the doctrine of Election.

[2553]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.  
Amen**

[mention listening to the full sermon by Olyott]

## The Resurrection of Christ

### Romans 10:10

<sup>10</sup> ***For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.***

Today we began reading the 10<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Paul's letter to the new Christian's at Rome. Written probably, from Corinth, in AD 57 to a group of house Churches that had become established in the capital of the Roman Empire. No Apostle, it seems, was the evangelist that initiated this collection of Churches. Paul had wanted to go there for some time to 'share the Faith' with them but so far had been prevented from doing so. So he writes. He writes what he would have said. He puts in writing what he specially wanted to say about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to them and now to us. That's what the letter is. An explanation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In attempting to systematically expound on a given book of the Bible, as is our principal intent. We can come to topics which are referred to in part, but which are added to elsewhere in the Scriptures. Unconditional Election, for example recently, drew its Scriptural warrant from several books of the Bible while it was initiated for us, by Chapter 9 of Romans. Today's topic – The Resurrection of Christ – was referred to in our NT reading from Romans 10, but we will range much further through Romans to cover it.

Imagine those Romans hearing the inspired, summary of the Gospel from the Apostle, when it was read to them. One of the things they would have heard, twelve times, was details about the place of the Resurrection of Christ in the Gospel message. The paramount importance of the Resurrection in the Christian life. The reason, in fact, why the early Church, while it did not have a special date (Easter) to celebrate the Resurrection, did in fact celebrate it through Worship, on the first day of every week. The Lord's Day! Sunday.

'Central to the Gospel which we preach and central to the faith which we believe is the Resurrection of Christ.'<sup>18</sup>

Those 12 references will give us six points to consider and inwardly digest:

- From Romans we learn that **the resurrection was an act of the triune God**. (Rom 4: 24-25) The resurrection was an act of God, the Father; the Son; and the Holy Spirit. ...<sup>24</sup> *but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,*<sup>25</sup> *who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.*  
So He was raised up by someone. Paul is telling us, that when the resurrection took place, somebody raised Christ! And in 10:9 ...<sup>9</sup> *because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that **God raised him from the dead**, you will be saved.* So what we commemorate every Sunday morning is an act of God! (Usually when the word 'God' is used, without refer-

<sup>18</sup> Quoted from Stuart Olyott – as is the bulk of this study – from [http://www.knowyourbible recordings.org/sermons\\_locked/CDR05.mp3](http://www.knowyourbible recordings.org/sermons_locked/CDR05.mp3)

ence to the Person it refers to God the Father.) God the Father has acted in human history in a Judean grave and has raised the body of His Son from the dead.

But now Rom 14:9. The resurrection was an act of Christ Himself! ...<sup>9</sup> *For to this end Christ died*<sup>19</sup> (something He did) *and lived again* (something He did), *that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.*

Our Lord continued to be God, although He was also man, He raised Himself from the dead, in accordance with His own Word: that He has power to lay down His own life and He has power to take it up again, (Jn 10:18) “ ...<sup>18</sup> *No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.*” Although the resurrection is an act of God the Father, it is equally an act of God the Son. It’s something He did Himself.

But it’s also an act of God the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:11. <sup>11</sup> *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.* The Spirit, as you know, is the Third Person of the Godhead. He is the agent of God. He acts on behalf of the Father and the Son. Is sent by both of them. The resurrection in that verse is attributed to God the Holy Spirit.

So we have here this tremendous mystery that there are three that are God. But not three Gods. Three who are God, who are distinct from each other. Each One of whom is the complete Godhead. And each one of these blessed persons has acted in our history on the day we commemorate each Lord’s Day. The Resurrection of Christ was an act of the Triune God!

- For the second thing we learn from Romans, read the first 4 verses of the letter: By the resurrection, **the identity of Christ was finally made clear.**  
<sup>1</sup> *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,* <sup>2</sup> *which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,* <sup>3</sup> *concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh* <sup>4</sup> *and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ...*  
So there are Paul’s opening comments of his summary of the Gospel.

As those keenly, anticipating Roman Christians, are listening to the Gospel as it is being read: the first thing they would have learned was that the Gospel is a Person. The very centre of the Gospel message is not a set of propositions, but a Person! Paul’s purpose here is to show to you that the Person who is the centre of the Gospel is both God and man:

You can see clearly that He is man, because you can trace His ancestry from David. It was clear to everyone who met Him that He was ‘man’.

But it was not clear to everyone that He was God. That was something that was almost unknown, to the majority of people who met Christ. There were a few who saw it. Just a few; by spiritual enlightenment. At Caesarea Philippi for in-

<sup>19</sup> Both verbs in Greek, (translated as ‘died’ and ‘lived again’) have the suffix which denotes the ‘active’ voice. That is, the subject of the verb (Christ) is the performer of the action of the verb.

stance with Peter's confession: <sup>16</sup> ... "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." <sup>17</sup> And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ... (Matthew 16:16-17)

But after the resurrection things were very different indeed. His real identity was publicly declared at the resurrection. If you look at the sermons in the Acts of the Apostles, you will see that this is the constant theme of the teaching. David is still in his grave, but Christ is raised from the dead. This fulfils prophecy. (Acts 2:29-36)<sup>20</sup> <sup>29</sup> "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. <sup>30</sup> Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, <sup>31</sup> he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. <sup>32</sup> This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. <sup>33</sup> Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. <sup>34</sup> For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,  
"The Lord said to my Lord,  
Sit at my right hand,  
<sup>35</sup> until I make your enemies your footstool.'  
<sup>36</sup> Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

It confirms His divine identity. <sup>36</sup> ... God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Again and again the Apostles major on the same theme! The fact that a man has laid in a tomb and is now alive, never to die again, is the convincing proclamation: that that 'man' is none other than God Himself. The resurrection finally makes that clear.

Many people today are Christians because that truth has burst on their minds: at first, sceptical about the Christian faith; then beginning to examine it seriously; finding the evidence of the Resurrection; one day like a flash of enlightenment; it flashes into the mind that Christ really is alive, never to die again. Finally being compelled to 'bow the knee' and to say to Jesus Christ, "My Lord and my God!"

So far, then: The resurrection is an act of the Triune God and it makes clear the identity of Christ. Now an 'open' secret; before only a few could see it.

- Now come again to Chapter 10 (of Romans) verse 9. The third point is that a **belief in the Resurrection is 'part and parcel' of a Saving Faith.** If you don't believe in the Resurrection you're not a 'believer'. Every true believer believes in the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ!

*<sup>9</sup> because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

This verse confirms that some are saved and conversely that some are not. Belief in the Resurrection of Christ is an integral part of Saving Faith.

Now go to verses 6-8 of Chapter 10, and then follow the Apostle's argument:  
*<sup>6</sup> But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) <sup>7</sup> or "'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). <sup>8</sup> But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);*

Moses (in Deuteronomy [4:1-2](#) and Leviticus [18:5](#)) hypothetically says that if you were able to perfectly fulfil the Law you would be saved by the Law. But Jesus – the Gospel – says from verse 6, that with the divinely appointed way, to be made right with God, you don't have to do some impossible feat. You don't have to climb into the heavens – to get the righteousness of God – because Christ has brought it down. You don't have to dig into the deeps – to find how to get right with God – because Christ has risen from the dead, to procure this righteousness. Righteousness that you need is here; present; within reach. The righteousness of God is not something far away. Not something unobtainable. Not something you have to search for or earn. The righteousness of God is something you accept, by inward faith. That's the faith that we preach in the Gospel.

But what is it that we must believe in our hearts, if we are to be put right with God by faith? What must the believer – believe?  
That's the answer of verses 9 & 10.

You must believe in the Lordship and Saviour-hood of Christ. Believing that He is alive to save, because God has raised Him from the dead. It must be a living faith. Sufficiently real to lead you into open confession.

*<sup>9</sup> because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. <sup>11</sup> For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame."*

So we must answer the questions about our own faith: Do you believe that Jesus Christ is Lord? Do you believe that God raised Him from the dead to be an ever living Saviour? Is your faith sufficiently real to lead you to open confession? Because if not, you do not have the 'marks' of a believer, because a belief in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is part and parcel of saving faith.

This has been part 1 of the topic, The Resurrection of Christ – as seen in Romans. So far we have reminded ourselves from the Scriptures that:

**The resurrection was an act of the Triune God.**

**The identity of Christ was finally made clear, by His Resurrection.**

**Belief in the Resurrection is 'part and parcel' of a Saving Faith.**

In part two next week we will find 3 more points to remember.

[2160]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.**

**Amen**