

Romans #19 - Predestination Problems Unbiblical?

- Alrighty. If you've got a Bible, go to Romans 9. We're studying the Book of Romans for a very long time. This is gonna be a great sermon. You're gonna enjoy this. This is gonna be four or five of the greatest hours of your life. So if you've got a Bible, go to Romans 9 and we're looking at our relationship with God and how does it start, and when does it start and who is the one who starts it? And I'll start with a story. So this was a big week for us. It was 33 years ago this week that I took my now wife, Grace on our very first date, 33 years ago. So how did we enter into relationship? Well, thank you for asking. So the way it worked was this. I knew about Grace before she knew about me. I liked Grace before she liked me. I had a heart that was open toward Grace before her heart was open toward me. So what did I do? I architected circumstances so that I could predestine her. That was what I was doing. I wanted her to respond to my love by loving me and her respond to my pursuit by pursuing me. So I set everything up so that I could enter into this hopeful, loving relationship with Grace. We were 17 years of age, in high school at the time. So first date was very, very nervous and I picked her up and took her out to Red Robin 'cause I'm fancy. And we were 17. So I was like, all the fries you wanna eat are on me. So we had Red Robin and then we got to know each other a little bit, but I already knew what my heart was toward her. And I needed her to get to know me, and then her heart open toward me. And we got to know each other. And over the course of a few weeks, I then bought her a jewelry box. Then we're 17 years of age in high school. She was like what's that for? I said that's for the engagement ring when I propose to you and you accept my agreement to be my wife.

- [Congregation] Oh wow!

- So that's either a stalker, or a guy who knows what he wants or both. And so you just don't know. So you give it a little time. So what I wanted to do was I wanted to have a relationship with her. And I had a destiny that I was working toward for this loving relationship. Let me use that as a simple analogy that that's how God has a relationship with us. The Bible says that Jesus is like a groom. The church, His people are like a beloved bride. And so far as this relationship goes, Jesus initiates, we respond. Jesus pursues, and then we respond. Jesus loves, and we respond that He is the leader and we are the follower. And this is how we enter into relationship with God. Theologically, theos means God and logos means study. So the study of God. Theologically, the category this is under something called predestination. That's what we find in Romans 9 and 10. That's the big idea that God has a destiny that is predetermined and He is pursuing that destiny for you and that relationship with you. So in the Old Testament, the words for this will include words like plan, purpose, or choose. And the New Testament words like predestine, elect, choose or appointed. Romans 9 and 10, where we find ourselves tends to be the most condensed section dealing with predestination and some of the most intensely debated portions of the entire scripture. Knowing that hearing that God chooses us before we choose Him would raise a lot of questions. Paul, in the spirit anticipates five potential questions and objections. And we're gonna deal with those over the course of many

weeks, starting with the first question this week as we go through Romans 9 through 10. And part of the reason we don't like God choosing and voting is because we're Americans. So let me just deal with the obvious. We think, no, no, no, we should vote. We should get the vote. My question is, how's that going? Right? How many of you are just loving the results? How many of you, first of all love the voting process? All the polls, the candidates, the process, the media, the riots, how many of you love that? And then once the results are decided, how many of you are really happy with what we now have? Would it be better if God just decided everything?

- [Congregation] Yeah.

- You know what? God in heaven God's gonna decide everything. In heaven, you won't need to register to vote. There'll just be one guy who votes, His name is Jesus. And He won't make things better, He'll make everything perfect.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- The point is that the best person to make the big decisions is God. And if God is good, then the decisions He makes are good, including the destiny for you. So let's start in Romans 9:1-5 and here's my first question. And we really start with a heart before we get to the head. And that is, "I'm speaking the truth in Christ," the apostle Paul says. "I am not lying. My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit." There's a lot of lies, misinformation. The Bible is true. And my hope for us is that we would always speak the truth not lie, live in the spirit with a clear conscience. Don't worry about the consequences of what you say. Worry about the truthfulness of what is said. "That I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart." He's saying I'm so heartbroken. And why is that? "For I wish that I, myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers." He's talking about the Jewish people. "My kinsmen according to the flesh. They are the Israelites, to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the laws," running through the Old Testament, "The worship and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs." All the people we read about in the Old Testament, those are all the Jewish people. "And from their race, according to the flesh is Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen." What happens when we start talking about God predetermining our destiny is that some people are concerned that this would lead to a heartless Christianity. If God chooses people, then why should we love or pursue them or speak to them? If God's gonna work it all out, why should we care or involve ourselves? That's kind of the common question. Here Paul demonstrates not a heartless Christianity but a heartfelt Christianity. He says my heart's broken for people who don't know and love Jesus. And so before we get into the whole belief of predestination, we need to have the predisposition of heartbroken love for people who don't know Jesus. How many of you, there's somebody that comes to mind when you hear Paul's words? Family, friend, neighbor, coworker, somebody you really love and care about. And you're heartbroken because they have no heart for Jesus. And you just wish they would become a Christian. We all know people like that, amen. They've got problems in their life. And you're like, you know, first thing you need is Jesus. And once you meet Jesus, then He's gonna help you with everything else. But until you meet Jesus, nothing's gonna come together because Jesus is

the only one who pulls it all together. Paul wants us to know his heart before he tells us his beliefs because behind it is the heart of God. And Paul is a guy who has a tremendous hope that people who even hate God can come to know God because Paul's own story was he wasn't pursuing God, God was pursuing him. He wasn't loving God, God was loving him. He wasn't looking for God, God was looking for him. In fact, the story Paul, in Acts he's out murdering Christians, harassing Christians, arresting Christians, harming Christians. He's the last candidate to become a Christian. He's the Bin Laden of his day. And then Jesus comes down from heaven and saves him. And it shows that Jesus can get anybody, that Jesus can get anywhere and Jesus can save under any circumstance. And so what that means is even if people are far from God, God is not necessarily far from them. And if people have a heart that is opposed to God, God may still have a heart that is open to them. And so Paul here talks about his openness of heart and his love for people. And what he's saying is it's really tragic that his family, he's Jewish, that his family history has been so blessed by God and so many have missed that Jesus is that God. And he sang the whole Old Testament from Abraham through all the kings, they're all Jewish. The prophets are Jewish. The priests are Jewish. The Old Testament is written in Hebrew which is the Jewish language. It's written by Jewish people. It's written about Jewish people. It's written for Jewish people, all of which is to bring forward Jesus Christ through the nation of Israel as the fulfillment of all the prophecies and promises. And He shows up, and a bunch of the Jewish people don't even care about Him. And He's like, that's just devastating. How many of you, you come from a family that has really experienced some of God's grace? Like people have been saved. Maybe there was even missions or ministry that is in your family, and God's been gracious to your family for generations. And then there are some people born into that family that just couldn't care less. They have no interest in God or the things of God and their heart is far from God. That's Paul's brokenness of heart. He's saying God has been so good to my family, the Jewish people and many members of my family have no heart for God. And so what happened early on in the early church, Jesus was Jewish, the disciples were Jewish. Most of the early Christians were Jewish. We've inherited a great blessing through the Jewish people and that ultimately then many of us Gentiles, non-Jewish people, we started to worship the God of Abraham, the God of the Old Testament, the Lord, Jesus Christ. And then it led to all this confusion in the New Testament like what do we do with the Jewish people? And what do we do with the Gentile people? Do they have two churches? Do they have one church? And if the Gentiles come in, the Jews were there first. We all need to become Jewish. And so if you read the rest of the New Testament, it's where all these questions are raised. And whole books are written about things like circumcision because the Jewish people were like, well we've always been circumcised. The Gentiles are like, hm not us. Jesus is like you need to do that. The Gentiles are like hm, no, I don't think we do. Right And there's all these debates around things like dietary laws, right? The Gentiles show up for, you know real men and they've got ham and pork and sausage, that's their Trinity. And then the Jewish guys are like you can't do pork. Can't do pork? Yeah, no, no, no. We're going to heaven full of pork. That's our plan, you can't. When the rapture comes we're grabbing him and taking it with us. That's what we're doing. We're pro pork. So it raises all these questions. And what Paul is trying to do through the remainder of the New Testament, he's trying to say okay, here's the Old Testament. Here's the Jewish people. Here's Jesus, the Jewish Messiah. Here's God's love for

the Jew, then the Gentile. And then here's how the Gentiles are sort of adopted in to God's great big family. What he's talking about here is two things I wanna make very clear. Knowing that your relationship with God is secure allows you to start to focus your energies on the needs of others. If you don't know that your relationship with God is secure, that He has chosen you from eternity past, Ephesians 1, that He's predestined before the foundations of the world, that Jesus really did live, really did die, really did rise, you really are forgiven, you really are adopted, you really are loved, that relationship is secure, that God had a heart for you before time began, and His heart for you will never turn. If you know that, you just sleep differently, you live differently. There's just a peaceableness that comes upon you. Then you don't have to be constantly worried. Is God gonna turn His back or change His mind on me? Now you can focus on other people. What do you need? Since me and God are good, how can I now help you? Because I have no concern regarding his affection for me. That's what Paul's demonstrating. In addition, what this doctrine does for us, predestination, God choosing and electing, it allows us to just love and serve people and not worry about the results because you know what? We can speak to people, but we can't save people. We can serve people, but we can't save people. I've been preaching for 25 years. Sometimes people are like, well how do you feel when somebody doesn't become a Christian? I'm like, that's between them and God. That's not me. I'm not God. I don't save people. I tell people about a savior, but I'm not a savior. My hope and prayer and goal is to speak and to serve. And God's job is to seek and to save. That's how this deal works. And it takes the pressure off of you because I know some of you are very burdened. You have friends, family, people you care about. You're like, what could I say? What could I do? Do all you can, say all you can, but at the end of the day, leave that between them and God. And don't carry that burden for their salvation. It doesn't mean you become heartless. You become heartfelt. That's Paul here. He's saying if I could go to hell so that they could go to heaven, I would trade places with them. This is like Jeremiah in the Old Testament, the Weeping Prophet. He's so heartbroken for his nation. We should be heartbroken for our nation. Jesus weeps over the city of Jerusalem. We should have a broken heart that weeps over people in our own city who don't know and love the Lord, Jesus. And so what I wanna demonstrate here is that Paul is both a thinker and a doer. That's where we begin. Is Paul true or false, one of the greatest most influential minds in the history of the world? Yes or no?

- [All] Yeah, he is.

- Impeccable resume, studies under a leading rabbi named Gamaliel. He's bilingual. He's got dual citizenship. He's a genius. He's one of the highest intellects in the history of the world. The Old Testament, your Bible is two parts. The Old Testament's got 39 books. New Testament's got 27 books. Of those 27 books, Paul wrote at least 13. There's a debate about a Book called Hebrews. If he penned that, then he was the author of 14 books of the New Testament. God had the opportunity to give the majority of books in the New Testament through anyone in the history of the world. He chose Paul. That tells you he is a thinker. And what we're gonna get into in the ensuing weeks of Romans 9 and 10, it's some of the deepest, densest, most difficult teaching in the whole Bible. I've got a free eBook for you at RealFaith.com. It's just a commentary on Romans 9 and 10 because I'm gonna cover a lot in the sermon, but I can cover more there. Or

you can sign up for daily devotions at RealFaith.com, and I'll send them to your inbox five days a week and walk you through it. But he's a thinker. But is he just a thinker, is he also a doer? He's doer. He's not just an academic in an ivory tower with tenure writing blogs and papers. He's on the streets and he is working so that people will meet the Lord Jesus. Over the course of his ministry, over the course of about a decade, he would walk upwards of 20 miles every single day to go preach to people about Jesus. He's not a guy who's indifferent. He's active. He's not saying well, if God's gonna work it all out, I'm just gonna stay home. No, he's working. He's preaching, he's teaching, he's planting churches. He's enduring riots, imprisonments. He is jumping on ships that ultimately sink and he is swimming to shore so that he could preach some more. The point is that, what happens when we get into Romans 9 and 10, is that people argue about Paul's thinking, but they don't follow the example of his doing. So in our life groups, and in our time together, we wanna learn what he has to say but we wanna live the way that he lives, which means we're not just reading the Bible to argue. We're reading the Bible to learn about God so that we can then tell other people about the God who loves them.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Okay? And so let me say this as well. This whole concept of God having a destiny for us should be very exciting, very hopeful, very enthusiastically pursued. If you believe that God has you on the earth for a reason, and that you get to be part of his plan, and he's gonna work through you to further his kingdom and to bring people to come to know and love the Lord, Jesus and you get to be part of what God is doing on the earth and that every day he's got a mission for you and he's got a destiny for you, and he's got a purpose for you, and he's got a plan for you, this should really excite you.

- [Congregation] Yeah!

- It should really excite you because right now we live in a world, nobody's got a plan. And everywhere you go, it's just total confusion. And everyone's blaming one another for what is not happening rather than pursuing what God has already planned. And so let me just encourage you because not only are we studying predestination, we are living a God-designed destiny as a church family. And so let me just tell you how God predestined how we got to this point. We moved to here five years ago. And at that time we were looking to planting a church and our family, thought about planting and we prayed about it. And some of you probably don't know the story. I'll tell you briefly. I went and met with Pastor Jimmy Evans one of our overseers, one of our pastors. And he said that don't rent a building. You're gonna buy a building. It'll be offered one-on-one, it'll seat, 800. You'll be able to purchase it. It'll be grandfathered as a church. And God's gonna provide that for you. I said 800. That's very specific. I came back, as a realtor. I said, okay, where's that building that was prophesied? Like, it doesn't exist. I asked Jimmy, Pastor Jimmy, where is it? He's like, it's coming, just wait. Okay, okay. Next thing I know this building comes available. We were able to purchase it before we had people. So thank you for coming. And we got the keys to the building on the 50th anniversary of the grand opening to the day. This place opened on Easter, 1966. We had our first informational meeting, Easter 2016.

And then it was the following Easter. We finally had our full Easter service. We set up every single chair in this room. There were 793. And I was like, well, Jimmy was close. And then we looked in the sound booth and there I kid you not, seven seats. We sat exactly 800 seats in a church off the 101 that was grandfathered in, that we purchased that God had prepared for us. So then we've now been meeting for four years. And what's interesting is it was one year ago this week that we shut the church down. Remember the 15 days to slow the spread? That was adorable. Loved that. That was adorable. Just give us 15 days. Oh, okay. Okay. So 15 days to slow the spread, we closed the church, but God predestined a destiny for us. Prior to that, I was thinking about getting maybe another property or campus. And God said, son, this is not the time to go get real estate, to try and do construction, raise money. You need to maximize Scottsdale. I was like, okay, Lord. And I prayed. And I felt like God said, new HVAC, new foyer, work in the kid's ministry, new kids entrance they laid out a bunch of construction projects. And I was like, Father, how do I do that? We're open every week. He told me this in like December. And I told Grace and I told the kids and I told the staff I was like, well, we need to sequence contractors and work. I don't know how we're gonna do it. We're open every week. So we got closed. Literally the construction was scheduled to start the next day. We don't know the future, but God does. And God told us to prepare, but God didn't tell us exactly why to prepare. And let me say, I appreciate this about God. How many of you were like, "God, tell me exactly what's gonna happen?" He's like, no. You're like, "No, I wanna know." He's like, "Actually you don't," because between now and then, you'd have a helmet on and a cap and a nervous side twitch, you would not be prepared. So sometimes God tells us how to prepare, but He doesn't tell us exactly why to prepare because He loves us. He doesn't want us to freak out between now and then. So while we were closed, we did all this work on the building to get it ready. Previous to that as well, God spoke to me and said to be in the pulpit after your daughter is married, she got married a year ago, January. And so I was gonna be out of the pulpit. So I changed the preachers I told grace, the kids and the staff. I said, God said to be in the pulpit because we're gonna need new sound, light and video. I don't know why this was before everything hit. We're gonna need to go online and multiply our digital ministry. And the church is gonna grow. And God says, we need to get all the technology but we can't afford it. God said, if you're in the pulpit, someone will stay over from the wedding. They will approach you. They will ask you what you need. You need to have the number ready. You need to have everything ready to order. And then they will give you a one-time gift to cover all the technological upgrades. So I preached and somebody came up after the last service. They're like, you need new gear? I was like, yeah, we do. All our gears Fisher-Price, like we need to upgrade. And so they said, well, how much is it? I said, well, actually I know because it's all in the cart. Now I didn't pay because we believe in Jesus and math. So we put it in the cart. But until we get the money we don't pay for. I said here's the number, boom. While we're closed, all the technology's ordered. All the construction is sequenced. All of the work is planned. We did a supernatural amount of improvements while closed. We opened in June and we started a Saturday night service that is now full and going to two. And then we started running a lot of events for kids. Since we opened in June we've added 1,500 children to the roster of our church. It's a supernatural season. Okay. And so let me just say this. Congratulations on your marriages. You only have babies if you're getting along and you guys are getting along. Okay. So congratulations on that. And then what happened to

prophecy was given by Pastor Jimmy that a veil would be over the church for the first few years but then in the fall, God would lift it and we'd have exponential growth to be prepared. And so I told the staff this, and we were waiting for years. We opened in June, that prophecy was fulfilled in the fall. And we have since more than doubled. The average church in America is running 36%. Pray for all of them. We want them all to be healthy and strong, but we're recently 237%. We're over capacity. We have more people than seats and we baptized hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of brand new Christians, and many people have met the Lord Jesus. Because again, God, having a destiny for you is a really exciting thing to pursue, not something to just argue about. So last Wednesday, two Wednesdays ago we called a prayer meeting last minute. And I said, hey, please pray that God would open some classroom space for students, interns, junior interns in women's. The next day, literally, 12 hours later, 18 hours later, God answered your prayer. We're under contract. We get the keys this week to the closest building to the church 7,000 new square feet of ready to go classroom space. He answered your prayer immediately. I asked you to pray as well for a studio so that we could capture content and get out more Bible teaching than ever. And I kid you not, within the week a full production studio became available. We're going under contract and Lord willing, we'll get the keys to the building in about a month. Everything you guys prayed for, God literally answered within hours. And everything He'd been working on for years, just sequenced perfectly. And so I just want you to know that we're walking in God's destiny, that God has a purpose and a plan for this church family. And He has a purpose and a plan for your part in it. And I just wanna invite you to be praying with us and to join us for Easter. It'll be a great time. And what we're working on now is an offering called "All Things New." And what we're asking God is with the people contribute, generously a one-time gift. What I'd like to do is finish the campus, get the studio, get the classroom space open. I'd like to build a park out front for people to hang and kids to play, finish the parking lot. There's some things we need to do. And so I asked you a week and a half ago for \$1.5 million above and beyond between now and Easter. Somebody came forward and said I'll do a matching fund of 300,000. A couple other people came forward and said we'll push that to 530,000. So every gift you give between now and Easter is doubled up to \$530,000. I'm happy to report that we're already two thirds of the way to our goal after a week. The point is when Paul says I wanna do everything I can, to tell as many people as I can about Jesus and see what he might do supernaturally in their life. We wanna have Paul's heart and we wanna be on Jesus' mission. And the last thing I give you to pray for is campuses. As we fill up, our whole current goal is to go to campuses and I have a heart for the Northwest side of town. I don't have a word from God, but that's the prayer. The point is that when God has a destiny for you you can walk forward confidently, enthusiastically in it and every day is just watching him show up and show off. Okay? So, knowing this, then Paul transitions to the first of five questions because people will have questions. How does this work? Here is the first question. If many Jews did not love Jesus, did God's word fail? If it's working for everybody but the Jewish people, is it actually working? He goes on to say, "But it is not as though the word of God has failed." Question. Does the word of God ever fail?

- No.

- No. The Word of God never fails. "For not all who are descended from Israel, and not all physically Jewish people belong to Israel." Not everyone who is physically Jewish is spiritually a descendant of Abraham by faith. "And not all are children of Abraham because they're his offspring, but," quotes the Old Testament "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named. This means that it is not the children of the flesh, those who are just born, who are the children of God, but the children of the promise, those who are born again spiritually are counted as offspring. For this is what the promise said, 'About this time, next year, I'll return and Sarah will have a son.' And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac." So Abraham had a son named Isaac. "Though they were not yet born, and before they had done anything good or bad, eternity passed in order that God's purpose of election," there's our word, "Might continue not because of works, but because of him who calls. She was told, 'The older will serve the younger as it is written.'" Tough line here. We'll unpack all of this in the next few hours together, "Jacob, I loved, but Esau, I hated." So the first question is, okay Abraham started the Jewish nation. Through the Jewish nation, came the Old Testament and the prophets. Through them, came Jesus. And when Jesus came, some of the Jews loved him. Some of the Jews hated him. Did God's word fail? Answer, no, because ultimately what he's talking about here is Abraham and Sarah. And he's saying that Abraham has three kinds of offspring or children or seed. Physical descendants. If you're Jewish and you don't know Jesus, you're a physical, biological descendant of Abraham. Second category. He has physical and spiritual children or offspring. So Paul, before he met Jesus would have been in category one, a physical descendant. Once he met Jesus, he moved to category two. Not only is he a physical descendant of Abraham he's a spiritual descendant because he worships Abraham's God, the Lord, Jesus Christ. And then the third category would be people like me perhaps, most of you. We are Gentiles, not Jewish. So we're not biologically related to Abraham but we worship the God of Abraham, the Lord, Jesus Christ. So we're spiritual descendants. So these are the three categories. And what he's saying is it's less about your birth, it's more about your new birth. It's less about whether or not Abraham is your father, and more about if God is your father. How many of you have had the same confusion that he is addressing because you were born into a believing family or home? See, before I met Grace, I was raised in a Catholic home. My mom knew the Lord, but I didn't know the Lord. And then I met Grace and she's like, are you a Christian? I was like, well, I believe in God, and I was born into a Christian family, but I wasn't born again into the family of God. The point is you can't just point back to your parents. You need to point up to your father. And ultimately it's this relationship, not just that one, that determines your destiny. And many people think this. So I was born into a Christian family and I was baptized as a child. No. Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? That's really the issue. It's great if your parents love the Lord but it's of no benefit if you don't because the line into God's kingdom is single-file. And so what he's about here is using Abraham as a case study. So let me tell you the story of Abraham. It goes all the way back to the Book of Genesis. And when we finish Romans, I'm thinking about jumping into Genesis and doing the whole Book of Genesis starting this next fall. So Abraham's a guy, shows up early in the Book of Genesis. For those of you that know the story, did he start out as a Jew or a Gentile?

- [Congregation] Gentile.

- Gentile, pagan guy just like all of us. He's got a godless dad. He's living in a godless country. He's in a godless culture, religion, worshipping a demon God. He's on the wrong team. That's where we all start. And so early in Genesis 10 and 11, there's this group of people and they decide they're gonna construct something called the Tower of Babel which is how to have heaven on earth without God. One of the people who was involved in that project was Abraham's father, Terah. It's ultimately today what we would call Iraq. So spiritually, there's always been a little bit of trouble there. And so what happens is in Joshua 24, Joshua assembles the people of God. He comes long after Abraham and then God speaks through Joshua. And here's what he has to say in Joshua 24. And all this is in the notes at RealFaith.com for my nerd friends. Joshua said to all the people "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel." Okay? So God's gonna speak. "Long ago, Terah the father of Abraham," So Abraham's dad was this guy, Terah, "Served other gods." Okay. What that means is that Abraham and his dad, they were either in a cult or a demonic religion. They're godless people, godless place doing godless things with a godless religion. That's where we all start. "Then I took your father, Abraham from beyond the river." He was like, I chose him, I saved him and I moved him and I made him the beginning of a new family and a new lineage. "From beyond the river and let him through the all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac." Your children, our children come from the Lord. Okay. He says I chose Abraham. And then I gave him Isaac, his son. And then I gave him two grandsons, Jacob and Esau. And that's what Paul here is referring to. Abraham didn't choose God, God chose Abraham. Abraham didn't seek God, God sought Abraham. Abraham didn't love God, God loved Abraham. The relationship that Abraham had with God was started and sustained by God. And what he's saying is this is how relationship with God always works. But Abraham is our father in the faith. And he's our forefather in our faithful relationship with our faithful God. And he was not yet Jewish, he was Gentile. He didn't start the Jewish people until he circumcised himself, 13, 14 years later. So he was chosen and saved by God. He didn't circumcise himself and his whole household. So 13 to 14 years later, this is how we know people didn't make up the Bible. There are zero men on earth that wake up on a Tuesday, like "I got an idea. I got an idea. This is what I'm doing today." Guys, we're having a meeting, everybody come. Come, come to the meeting. You're never gonna guess what I'm thinking of. Right? And so he circumcised, this is the beginning of the sign of the covenant. And this is the beginning of the Jewish nation. But it was 13 to 14 years after he was saved by God. Then God makes a promise. And it's continuous throughout Genesis "Through Abraham, I'm gonna bring forth a son," even though he and his wife are barren and elderly, it's gonna be a supernatural, firstborn son of a promise. And through them will come other sons and through them will come a nation. And through that nation, will come Jesus Christ. And he will be the seed or the offspring of Abraham. He will be the blessing to the nations of the earth. My Jewish friends, misinterpret God's word to Abraham. And they think the seed or offspring of Abraham is the nation of Israel. It's ultimately Jesus through the nation of Israel. Paul says in Galatians 3:16, it says seed, singular not plural or offspring, singular not plural. Meaning one man, Jesus Christ, not the whole nation. And so what he is here also saying is the promise isn't that all the Jewish people will love Jesus, but that ultimately the Jewish people will bring forth Jesus and God will save Jews and Gentiles through Jesus, the

blessed promise and offspring of Father Abraham. And so ultimately, the story of Abraham is the story for every believer. How many of you, Abraham's story makes sense? You're like, God just picked me, okay. This is Paul's story. This is my story. And so Christians will even give their testimony and testimony is powerful. But let me say this. It's even important how you tell your testimony that you're not the hero of the story. "I was looking for God and I found Him." And I was like, I didn't know He was lost Right? No, God's not lost, you are. You're not seeking God, He's seeking you. Jesus said, I came to seek and save the lost. So you're the lost and He's the one seeking you. So even when we tell our story, I'll say, when God saved me that's how I tell my story. When God saved me because God saved me. I didn't save me, God saved me. I didn't seek God, God sought me. I didn't love God, God loved me. The Bible says, it's not that I love God but that God loved me and sent His only son for me. So even when we tell the story, we need to make sure that the person who gets all the credit is Him, not us. And then He brings up not only Abraham but his sons, Jacob and Esau, these are his grandsons. So Abraham, well, Terah was the father, and then Abraham was the son and then Abraham became the father. He had a son named Isaac and then he became the grandfather of two boys, Jacob and Esau. So Paul here is going back and he's using Jacob and Esau as a case study for election and predestination. So they were twin brothers. For those of you that know the story, when did they start arguing and fighting and having conflict?

- [Congregation] In the womb.

- In the womb. How many of you have got a brother? You scrap with your brother, amen. I mean if there's two boys in the house, there's gonna be some conflict. Their conflict started in the womb. Poor mama. She's pregnant with twin boys who are always fighting. That's the thing. They're fighting in the womb. So then she prays, God, what is going on here? Why do I have a cage fight going on in my belly? What's going on? God can speak supernatural things to women, especially when they're pregnant, because what she has in her are human beings made in the image of likes of God. They have names and destinies. This is why we're pro-life because God is. Okay. And so this is why we believe life begins at conception because it does. Okay? And so God says, you've got two boys, not two lumps of fetal tissue in you. And they are two boys that have a destiny and what's gonna happen is they're gonna be born, but the older will serve the younger. Now, the reason why this is important is because in that culture, the first born would have particular legal standing and right. You would get double the inheritance. You would be the patriarch over that generation of the family and the way that it would work, your family would own land, and you would conduct business on that land, you'd be born and live and die on that land, and you would work whatever that company was that your family owned from generation to generation. This is where the best way to secure wealth is to pass it on from generation to generation. And so what would happen is if the patriarch died, if you don't have a clear succession plan for who's in charge, now you get lots of conflict and entry. All of a sudden it's like, well, who's in charge? Well, whoever wins. How many of you, family member died, left a big estate and no wealth? It's a mess. It could be a legal bloodbath. People do horrible things to one another when they have a love of money. And so this was God's intent to architect the family for succession. Churches, ministries, families, businesses, succession is crucial because

people's lives are at stake. And so what would happen is the firstborn would have the legal status of being the patriarch and the head of the family and the business and the real estate and the next generation. But on occasion, God, in His electing and His predestinating in His sovereign choosing and His free will selecting, He would occasionally up-end what was the traditional birth order. And the younger would serve the older. He did this previously in the Book of Genesis prior to Jacob and Esau, with Cain and Abel. Additionally, He is going to do this with Isaac and Ishmael. And later in Genesis, He does this with Joseph and His brothers. Joseph is the little brother but he becomes the one who is ruling and reigning, and he has authority over his older brothers. God can invert. God can invert anytime that He wants for any reason that He sees fit. So these boys are fighting to see which one's gonna be the first born. So the story of the Bible is that she's given birth to twin boys and they're fighting all the way through the birth. I mean, I just feel for this woman. Having a baby? That's a thing. Having twins, that's a thing. Having twins who are fighting? Ah, that's a, that's a thing. Having twins that are fighting while being birthed? The Bible says that literally they're fighting to see which one's gonna come out first. Esau comes out first and Jacob's got him by the heel. This had to be so weird. Jacob's like, "Get back in here, I'm gonna be the first born." I mean, these boys are going at it. And ultimately, there's a fatal flaw in the parenting of Jacob and Esau. It's the fatal flow of parenting throughout Genesis and into the present day. The fatal flaw of parenting is this. The parents play favorites. Okay. Don't raise your hand, especially if you're here with your mom. But how many of you in your family, your dad had his favorite, your mom had her favorite and their division led two generations of division? See, Jesus says a house that's divided cannot stand. If mom prefers this one and dad prefers this one, there's division and it creates division for generations. That's what they did. So, dad loved Esau. Mom preferred Jacob. Esau means hairy, so I like him. I like look, let's do this Say my dad was a Wookiee. My mom was a chia pet and Old Driscoll is the Irish word for Chewbacca. So I like Esau, he's hairy. And I always say, I don't have a hair growth problem, I have a hair distribution problem, so my banks thinner than they should be, but I have dreadlocks on my feet, so I have a hair distribution problem. So Esau means hairy, it can also mean red. So he was a really hairy, red-headed kid. So he comes out, looking like Elmo. That's how he comes out. Okay. His brother's name means trickster. He's a con man. How many of you had that sibling that always cheated in games, that always found a way to win? And sometimes they would annoy you and frustrate you until you erupted, and then you got in trouble because mom always walked in as soon as they were done setting you up for the loss. They're the tricksters. That was Jacob. Question, which of these boys is a good boy? They're both bad boys. See a lot of people are like, God picks the good people. Well then, nobody's getting picked. Nobody's getting picked. So God picks the bad people and he does good things for bad people. That's what our God does. So here's the difference. They're very different. Esau is a man's man, he's dad's son. Jacob is mama's boy. He stays home with mom. So here's how it works. Esau goes hunting with dad, and he eats meat that he kills with his hands. Jacob stays home. He's a soy boy and bakes with his mom. That's what he does. Okay. Esau drives a lifted truck. It's an ESOP. Jacob drives a Prius. Esau loves country music. Jacob loves Disney soundtracks. Esau watches cage fighting, and Jacob cries at all the Lifetime movies. Esau wears boots and Jacob wears Crocs with socks. That's what he does. Okay. Trust me, it's in the Hebrew. I researched all week. It's exactly what happened. So what happens is these boys grow

up and Esau's out hunting, killing with dad, comes home and he's hungry. Jacob, the trickster says I'll trade you your birthright for a bowl of soup. And Esau says, I'll take the deal. So let me say this. One of the most important things that we need to teach young men is delayed gratification. If you just eat what you wanna eat, smoke what you wanna smoke, drink what you wanna drink and sleep with who you wanna sleep with, you're gonna ruin generations. Okay? Our culture does not teach delayed gratification. You don't need to save, just go into debt. You don't need to wait to be married, just move in and sleep together. You don't need to practice self control. You just drink it and eat whatever you want and just wreck your life and go into debt and then vote for a socialist who will send you a stimulus check, so you can continue your extended adolescence. Right? And if that offends you, you don't have a job. But for those of us who do, it's frustrating.

- [Woman] Right.

- [Man] Amen!

- See, I mean, I got nothing else to do. Let's just talk about this. So even things like, well we need to just cover healthcare for everybody. Well, first we need to teach people to make good life decisions.

- [Congregation] Yeah.

- Because a lot of people are self-destructing because they don't understand that part of the fruit of the spirit is self-control. Esau is a case study in a young man who has no conscience and no sense of delayed gratification. I'm hungry. I'll trade my birthright for soup. Okay, and we do this all the time. We trade a relationship with God for something that feels good in the moment. And we don't think long term. And so he takes the deal and he loses his birthright. And so then the younger supplants the older. Jacob replaces Esau as now, the firstborn, legally and positionally. And what's crazy is what's at stake is who Jesus will be born through. So literally, literally Esau is being told, okay, through, you can come a nation. Through that nation will come Jesus. Through Jesus, will come salvation to all the nations, and he's like, "I'll take the soup." But how many people, they care so little about Jesus that they would trade nothing for Jesus? That's what Esau does. And it's not like one is a good guy, and the other is a bad guy. The way that Jacob got the birthright is he stole it through trickery. And so what God is saying is I work through bad people and I do good work in spite of bad people, because God is good, though we are bad. And then this leads to a question. God chose Jacob, not Esau. Jacob I loved, Esau I hated. It leads to a theological question that I'll try and answer for you in a moment. It's one of the most debated questions in Christianity. And that is this question. Do we choose God or does God choose us? That's the case study with Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob. There are three options. The first three are false teaching and wrong. And then there are three Christian options. The first is universal damnation. And that is that no one chooses God and God doesn't choose anyone, that we all go to hell. This, by the way, is not super popular. It's not really caught on. Yeah, there's not like a whole group of people like we're kindling. And they're not super excited

about that. But let me say this. This is the deal that Jesus Christ gives to Satan and demons. Satan and demons sinned, rebelled and fell before we did. They have no possibility of salvation and eternal life. Jesus didn't come in the likeness of a demon. He didn't die and rise in the place of demons. Jesus, in fact says, and I quote, "That hell was made for the devil and his angels." So what Satan and demons get is complete total justice, no mercy, no grace. We need to start with the absolute gratitude that we got an alternative to their deal. A lot of people are like, how could God send anybody to hell? Well, he sends all the demons there. So my question is, since we did the same thing they did and we joined them in the rebellion, how come we get to go to heaven? The thing that I've always struggled with is not hell but heaven. Hell makes sense. Bad people go to jail. Okay. Bad people get ice cream. What? It's grace that is a bit complicated, if you wanna know the truth. So before we start with everybody in heaven, start with everybody in hell. Okay. The second option is universal salvation also called universalism. And that is eventually somehow, someday some way, everybody goes to heaven. Nobody's going to hell. You got a purgatory, pay it back. You suffer for awhile, hell's temporary, heaven... Some version. Eventually, we're all gonna get there. Not true. It's a false teaching. Jesus talks of hell more than anyone in the entire Bible. Jesus is very clear that there's heaven and hell and guess what that means. There's heaven and hell. And they both are forever Says in Daniel 12:2 And then Jesus quotes that verse, "That multitudes that sleep in the dust of the earth will arise," talking about the resurrection of the dead. Some to eternal life, some to eternal death. You're gonna live forever. Question is where? You're gonna be in heaven or hell. So not everybody goes to heaven. Some do, some don't Third possibility, Pelagianism named after a guy named Pelagius. He was condemned as a false teacher in a heretic. And he taught that we are not sinners by nature, that we have a totally free will. We're basically good people. We're basically like Adam and Eve before sin entered the world. We looked at Romans 5:12-21 that because of one man's sin, the whole race fell and we've inherited an imputed, sinful nature. He denied all of that. And he said, you know, we're good people with a free, we're like Adam and Eve. We could just pick God or not pick God. And here he told us in Romans 3:10-11: "No one is good, no one is righteous, no one seeks God." God's the one who seeks, not us. God's the one who chooses, not us. God's the one, this will blow your mind, God's the one that has free will, not us. You and I are not free. God is free And God is free to do what He wants. We're not free to do what we want. God's decisions override our decisions. God is the Lord. He's the sovereign. Thankfully, He's good. And so His decisions for us are actually better than our decisions for us. Like I chose hell and God's like, no, I'm gonna take you to heaven. His free will overrode my choice, and I really prefer His decision. God's not just in charge, He's good. So the decisions He makes are right. Okay. Then the other three are possibilities within Christian belief. So if you hold any one of these three positions at the end, we love you. You're welcome at the church. You're not a second-class citizen. Arminianism also called Wesleyanism, all of this is in the "Dark, Dark Doom", e-book. It's the belief that we are sinners by nature and choice. But that God at some point gives us a freewill opportunity, a moment to choose, that He opens our will kind of like Adam and Eve into a state of possibility of making a freewill decision toward God. They would call this prevenient pre-meaning first, prevenient grace that God gives everybody a chance to choose. Okay. Now I would not necessarily hold that, but there are a Bible-believing, Jesus-loving faithful brothers and sisters in Christ who have come to that conclusion based

upon the study of scripture. The next option is simply called double predestination, also known as Calvinism. I didn't say this the other services, but I'm not sure John Calvin believed in Calvinism. So that's in the e-book too. That'd be fun, read that. So anyways, I just throw that out there. So double predestination is that before time began, God said, you're going to heaven, you're going to hell. There's nothing you can do about it. Your destiny is either heaven or hell and I'm predetermining where I'm putting everyone in advance and there's nothing that they can say or do about it. Okay. That would be Calvinism or double predestination. There are many godly people. Some of my dearest friends would hold that position. Some people emotionally struggle with it because it seems like God is being mean or capricious. The third is called single predestination. It was held by the church father Augustine and Martin Luther. This is my position. So this is the right one. And that is that we chose hell, all of us, and God singularly predestined some of us by overriding our decision with His decision. Okay. And that is that God doesn't make anybody go to hell, that we make ourselves go to hell. And that God chooses to save some, which again, is a much better deal than Satan and demons got. Okay.

- Amen.

- Now, if you hold any of those three last positions, we love you. and you're welcome at the church. And this is an opportunity for me to say that. And many of you are new. We've grown so fast. Most of you are new. We believe in closed-handed and open-handed issues. Closed-handed are things that Christians need to agree on. Open-handed, these are things we can disagree and debate and dialogue and discuss, but we don't need to divide over. And the good news is we can open our Bibles and talk about it and maybe actually change one another's minds because the only place everyone agrees on everything is a cult. I don't wanna be in a cult. I'd rather be in a church. And so in the closed-hand for us would be the Bible is fully and totally and completely the Word of God. It's perfect, trustworthy and true. The centerpiece of the Bible in history is Jesus Christ, fully God, fully man, born of a Virgin, lived without sin, died on the cross in our place for our sins, rose from death, conquered Satan, still, Satan, sin, death hell, the wrath of God. He's coming again to judge the living and the dead. And He is the Lord over heaven and earth. His name is Jesus Christ.

- Amen.

- Okay. And the open hand, how old is the earth? Old enough. Should you do public, private or homeschool? Yup, one of those. Yeah. How about, how should we baptize? With water? And however that plays itself out, open-handed issues. Do you believe in single predestination, double predestination or free will? That's in the open hand, not the closed hand. When we get before Jesus we'll be on the same team. Until then, we just stay on Team Jesus.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Okay. So the reason I give you all of this, I can tell you right now, many people are like, ah, big word, big word, big word. Where's the funny guy? Bring the funny guy back. Okay, we'll do that.

Okay, it leads to this. How can a loving God hate some people? Make sense? I'm not making this up. Romans 9:13: "As it is written, 'Jacob, I loved, Esau I hated.'" And when he says it, as it is written he's quoting Malachi, last book in the Old Testament. Their argument. So this is the key context from Malachi. I preached it some years ago, it's all on RealFaith.com. But Malachi, the people are struggling, their borders are being invaded, their economy collapsed, they all had sickness and illness and their government was a joke, and it was in total debt. I know you can't relate to any of that, but that's exactly what's happening. And they're looking at God. They're like you said, you loved us. Look at this. How many of you felt that? Okay. We've all felt that "'I have loved you,' says the Lord. But you say, 'How have you loved us?' 'Is not Esau Jacob's brother,' declares the Lord. 'Yes, I have loved Jacob, but Esau, I hated.'" So up until that point, it's important to note he's talking about two brothers. From the two brothers will come two nations. He's then going to in a moment, talk about the two nations. Here's what I want you to know. You're not just raising sons, you're raising nations. When I look at my boys, I see destinies and legacies and nations. So ultimately, these boys grow up to be nations. Jacob becomes the nation of Israel. Esau becomes the nation of Edam. The conflict that started in the womb continues through international conflict, all the way to the coming of the Lord, Jesus Christ, who is a descendant of Jacob, and King Herod tries to murder him, and he is a descendant of Esau. It's very spiritual and somewhat demonic what's going on behind the scenes. So it transitions from two boys to two nations that descend from the boys. "I have laid waste his hill country," that's the nation, "And left his heritage to jackals of the desert. If Edam says we are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins, the Lord of hosts who rules the angels and the demons says, 'They may build, but I will tear down and they will be called the wicked country. And the people with whom the Lord is angry forever.' Your own eyes shall see this and you shall say, 'Great is the Lord, beyond the border of Israel.'" You see what he does there? He moves from individuals to brothers, to nations that descend from them. The big debate here is does God, what does God mean by hate? And is He referring to individuals or groups of people? So there are three interpretive options here. The double predestination of the Calvinist position would be taken at face value, "Jacob, I loved, Esau I hated", God chooses one for salvation, chooses the other for damnation before the foundations of the world. There's nothing you can do with that. Who are you clay to talk back to potter? Just keep that to yourself, thank you very much. Okay. The second would be the single predestination. And that is that ultimately, the word hate here is not as strong as our English translation would indicate. Words like colors have hues. So let's say it's blue. You can have a blue that's so light it almost looks white or so dark it almost looks black. There's a range. So words like colors have a range. So some translations will say that the word hate here has a range of meaning. Some translations will say rejected, did not accept or God chose Jacob instead of Esau, can mean to passover, not to choose or not to prefer. And the big idea here is God says there's two bets, bad boys. I'm gonna choose this one to bring Jesus into the world, not this one. I choose this one, not this one. I prefer this one, not this one. I'm gonna work through this one, not that one. And it's not that God is actively utterly despising. It's that He is preferring and choosing. Okay. So that would be more the single predestination view. Now, as I was praying for you yesterday, and I walked downstairs and I was prepping the sermon, Grace is like, "How are you gonna explain the hate thing?" We kind of had this conversation. And God brought to mind the words of Jesus. And so I'd finished my sermon and I went back up and I

looked at the original text and the original language. Jesus uses this exact same word for hate that Paul does in Romans 9:13. Paul says, "Jacob I loved, Esau I hated." Jesus uses the exact same word. And I'll read it to you. Luke 14:26: "Jesus said and if anyone comes to me and does not hate," same word that Paul uses in Romans 9:13, "Hate his own father and mother." Okay, does God want you to actively utterly despise your mother and father?

- [Congregation] No.

- No, because the Bible says to honor your mother and father. It goes on to say "And wife." Ladies, what do you think about that? Your husband's like I hate you because Jesus said to. You're like, "You need to do a great word study. I think you need to be nice to me." And children. You think Jesus wants us to actively utterly despise our kids?

- [Congregation] No.

- No, he loved kids. He said that "heaven was made for such as these." He said that you must have a child-like faith to enter into the kingdom of God. "And brothers and sisters." And you're like, well, I could go either way on that. But anyways, and even his own life he cannot be my disciple. What Jesus the thing is you need to prefer the relationship with me in first position over all of your other priorities.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Okay. That's what he's saying. He said, yeah love your mom and dad, love your brothers and sisters. Love your kids. Love your spouse. But your relationship with God is your first priority and needs to be in first position. You need to prefer me and choose me first. And the reason for this friend is not only is this what is glorifying to God? This is what's good for you. Because until you have a relationship with God, you're not ready for any other relationship until you have a healthy relationship with God. You don't even know what a healthy relationship is. Once God loves you, you're like, okay now I can love you with God's love. Once God forgives you, now I can forgive you with God's forgiveness. Now that God has pursued me, now He is encouraging me to pursue you. When you get the relationship with Jesus, right, He helps you in all your other relationships. That's the big idea. And so what Jesus is saying here is not to utterly and entirely despise, but to have your priorities in order. And in context, that would mean Jacob I loved, Esau I hated. It is that I made Jacob the first priority and I was gonna work through him to bring Jesus. The third possibility is that it's not even referring to individuals, but it's referring to nations. And part of the context in that day when Malachi writes in Paul in Romans 9:13 is quoting Malachi is that in that day the nations of Israel, which descended from Jacob and Esau then the nation of Edam that followed in his wake, they were in a global war and the nation of Edam was trying to commit genocide and eradicate all of the Jewish people. It was their version of Nazi Germany. The spirit of Nazi Germany is the spirit of Satan antichrist. And he is always seeking to destroy those who are bringing forth the message of Jesus to the nations. And so ultimately in that day, God, they would say that God is dealing here with nations and he's

looking down and it would be the equivalent of God, looking down to Nazi Germany, seeing physical descendants of Abraham being put in furnaces and God saying, "I hate that and I'm against that," which is entirely true. It's why in our day we can't lose our sense of justice. We can't lose our sense of right and wrong. And we can't let those who don't have the spirit of God decide for us what is just and right and wrong.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- So, let me bring the band up. Here's what we're gonna do. We're gonna worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is the blessing to the nations of the earth. He is the first born son of God. He is the child of the promise. He is the blessing to the nations. He is the savior of the Jew and the Gentile. What's his name? His name is Jesus Christ. And two things I wanna stress as we get ready to worship him, something that the demons cannot do because he did not have a salvation plan for them, but something that you and I get to do because of God's great love and His affection for us. Number one, let me speak to those of you who are Christians. If you are a Christian, God predestined you. He chose you in eternity past. Before you did anything, he chose to do something for you. Before you loved Him, He loved you. Before you knew Him, He knew you. Before you pursued Him, He pursued you. Let me tell you that this God is so great and so grand and so glorious and so good. But he was for you even when you were against him. And that his commitment to you stretches from eternity past into eternity future, which means that you should sleep well tonight and that you should wake up with hope for tomorrow. That he who has had his heart set for you forever will never turn his heart from you. That is secure. And I want you to know that that is a miracle that God has done in your life. If you're a Christian, you are a miracle. God has done a miracle in your life. Number two, for those of you who are not yet Christians, what do you think about Jesus? Somebody may wondering why I'm in church. Well, maybe God is pursuing you. Why does this even sound interesting to me? But maybe God is awakening you. Why does this sound like hope for me? Maybe God is saving you. And I want you to consider this relationship with Jesus Christ, who is living. He hears prayers. He receives worship. He's coming again to judge the living and the dead. This is the place where we make sure that we pay attention to that first priority, that relationship with Jesus Christ. And if you even care, it may be because you're predestined. If you even are open, it may be because God is pursuing. If you're even hoping that your sins can be forgiven and your eternity can be secure, I have good news for you friend. The people who tend to care about that are people who are chosen and God is changing them on the inside. And it causes them to want a relationship with Jesus Christ. And so if you're here, this is where we would encourage you to begin having this personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He died the death, you should die. He lives the life that you can live and he lives to live with you and for you. And I'm just telling you this. If you have a relationship with Jesus, it's the most precious gift that you can possibly have. It's the most secure love you will ever experience. And it's the promised destiny that no one could change. Amen.

- Amen.

- Father, God, as we come to worship, we thank You for the Lord Jesus. And we thank You that we are like Abraham. We're sinners and You've chosen to pursue and to love us. So Lord Jesus, we come now in response to make that relationship with You a priority, to celebrate who You are and what You've done and look forward to the day when all that is predestined comes to pass, heaven comes to earth, the dead are raised, Satan and demons are sent to hell and the chosen children of God are throwing a party together forever in Jesus' name. Amen.