



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Malachi 1:1-5

“The Enigma of the Divine Hatred”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of the study of one of the Old Testament prophecies. We thank Thee for the relevance of the holy Scriptures that though written many hundreds and thousands of years ago, they are still applicable to us today and set forth great principles by which Thou dost carry on Thy work throughout all the ages. And we thank Thee for this book, and we pray, Lord, that as we study Malachi that we may be able to make the personal application as well as the application to the local church and the ministry of the Lord Jesus in 1977. We do ask, Lord, that our hearts may be open that we may be receptive to the truth and that in our own spiritual lives we may as a result of our study be drawn into a closer relationship to Thee. Implant within us, Lord, the faith that brings salvation if we do not have it and nurture that faith through the Scriptures we do pray in this hour. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Returning tonight to Malachi chapter 1, verse 1 through verse 5. And our subject is "The Enigma of the Divine Hatred." There are interesting and important questions that are raised in these opening verses of Malachi which accent the relevance of this prophet. One of the commentators on the Old Testament Book of Malachi has said,

"Malachi is like a late evening which brings a long day to a close, but he is also like the morning dawn which bears a glorious day in its womb."

The thing about Malachi that is so interesting to us is that it is the last book of the Old Testament canon in our English text. And it is the last word that God spoke in Old Testament times, and then he fell silent for about four hundred years, so far as revelation is concerned. And the New Testament opens with the need, that Malachi has expressed, met in the coming of the King, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But now the questions that this particular part of the word of God raises are questions like these: Does God love everyone alike? I dare say that almost all evangelicals who haven't darkened the doors of Believers Chapel, or a church where some of the doctrines of the sovereignty of God are proclaimed, would almost inevitably answer that, Why certainly, God loves everybody alike. But it's very doubtful that such a sentiment is true to holy Scripture. And it would seem that both Malachi and the Apostle Paul say that it is definitely not.

One other question that arises before us here is the question: Does God really hate anyone in a personal sense? Now I know the passage says, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." But could it really be true that God hates anyone with a personal animosity? Well, I think we will see the answers to some of these questions at least as we go through this section that we're going to look at tonight.

Now remember, the historical background of Malachi includes these things: The remnant of Israel had returned in the 6th century to the land of Jerusalem and Judah. It was just a little less than fifty thousand, probably composed not only of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin of the kingdom of Judah, but also probably a great number from Israel or the ten tribes, because it's highly likely that when the captivity took place and Judah finally went into captivity that many of them married, intermarried, with the Israelites who were already in captivity. And so, when we read in the opening verse of Malachi, "The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi," we probably are

to take that in a literal sense, in the sense that there were representatives of the twelve tribes in Malachi's mind as he wrote the book.

Well, they had come back to Jerusalem. They had rebuilt the temple which had been done in the days of Haggai and Zechariah. We have just looked at Haggai. And then in the fifth century before our Lord, Nehemiah had come back to Jerusalem to institute the rebuilding of the walls. And it was shortly after the rebuilding of the walls around the city that Malachi wrote his prophecy, sometime around the year of, say, four hundred thirty plus or minus BC.

Now the subject for tonight is "The Enigma of the Divine Hatred." And of course, we are talking about these verses that open this section of the book of Malachi. So, if you have your Old Testament, I want you to listen now as I read the five verses which open or give us the first section of the book.

"The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi. "I have loved you," says the Lord. But you say, "How hast Thou loved us?" "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the Lord. "Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness." Though Edom says, "We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins"; thus says the Lord of hosts, "They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom the Lord is indignant forever." Your eyes will see this and you will say, "The Lord be magnified (or probably better, the Lord will be magnified) beyond the border of Israel!"

I think if we're going to understand these opening verses, we must go back to the opening sections of the Old Testament which give us the background of the relationship between Jacob and Esau. And so, what I want you to do now is to turn with me back to

Genesis chapter 25, verse 19 through verse 34, and the first section of our study tonight is Roman I.: Jacob, Esau and Genesis chapter 25, verse 19 through verse 34.

Now let me read beginning with verse 19 through verse 26.

"Now these are the records of the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham became the father of Isaac; and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian, to be his wife. And Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived. But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is so, why then am I this way?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples shall be separated from your body; And one people shall be stronger than the other; And the older shall serve the younger." When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau. Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob (which means one who takes by the heel or supplanter); and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them."

This story of Jacob and Esau is a very important story in the Old Testament record. Now, we not only have the account in Malachi chapter 1, "Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated," but the Apostle Paul in the 9th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans uses this as his crowning illustration of the fact that God works according to his determinant counsel in the election of certain individuals out of the human race.

Now, the story of Jacob and the story of Esau is therefore a story of election. It is a story of faith that is wrought in one by the work of God. And it is a story of secularism because Esau is the living illustration of a materialistic humanist who let secular things be the predominant interest in his life.

Now, the important section of this particular story that I want you to look at is the prophecy and the birth. And the prophecy is the word of the Lord that was spoken to the mother of Jacob and Esau, Rebekah. And I just want you to notice two or three importance aspects of these verses.

Verse 23, "And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb." Now I want you to notice those words. "Two nations are in your womb."

Now you can see from this that this prophecy that the Lord gave to Rebekah included a fore view of the history of two peoples. Not simply the story of Jacob and Esau, but the story of Jacob and his descendants and the story of Esau and his descendants. "Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples shall be separated from your body."

Now you can also see from this that there is right here evidence of the fact that God has selected one man and his progeny for special determination with regard to his future. And he has also determined that the other man and his descendants shall have another kind of future. "Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples shall be separated from your body."

Now this is altogether of grace. There is nothing said in this context that would indicate that the reason that God chose Jacob was because he was a more attractive individual. Most of us know from reading the Old Testament that probably we would have been a great deal happier with Esau than we would have been with Jacob. We probably would have been much more attracted to that man of the outdoors, Esau, than we would have been to Jacob who has often been called a "mother's boy". Whether that's true or not the Bible doesn't really make plain. But nevertheless, you can see that the determination of the destinies of these two is traceable to the sovereign will of God. "Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples shall be separated from your body."

Now the second thing I want you to notice about this is the word "separated". "Two peoples shall be separated from your body." The Revised Standard Version renders

this Hebrew word "divided". And the point that is made by the use of this term is that these two men and also their progenies are utterly opposite to one another. They are incompatible with one another. It is as if God has said one person with his descendants shall have a certain destiny, and another person with his descendants shall have a certain destiny. And these two will not have any fellowship with one another, the incompatibility of the two.

And then third, the third thing I want you to notice about the prophecy is the last line of it. "And the elder shall serve the younger." Now you can see that up to this point the stress has rested upon the national aspect of this prophecy, two nations, two peoples. One people, the other people. But now "The elder shall serve the younger." Here is the individual aspect. And it is important that you see this individual aspect. When we come to the Epistle to the Romans in a moment, we'll see how important this is. And we'll see how the Apostle Paul uses this particular clause here in order to make his point in that 9th chapter.

But again, notice that the sovereign choice of God has determined the destinies of nations and the sovereign choice of God has determined the destiny of individuals. "The elder shall serve the younger." Well now, that's a remarkable prophecy. I don't read here of any big dispute or discussion that arose over the question of the relationship between the sovereignty of God and human responsibility. Evidently in those days they didn't have to be argued with about the sovereignty of God and his right to do what he pleases.

Well now, the next part of the story has to do with the sell of the birthright. And let me read these verses beginning at verse 27.

"When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents. Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. When Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished; and Esau said to Jacob, "Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff

there, for I am famished." (If you have a Bible with a marginal note, you'll notice that he can hardly get the words out. He's sputtering and stuttering and saying something like Let me have a swallow of the red, this red here. I'm famished.) Therefore his name was called Edom (which means red). And Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." (Always the trader) And Esau said, "Behold, I am about to die; so what use then is the birthright to me?" And Jacob said, "First swear to me"; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. (So, Jacob supplanted his brother. No, the Bible doesn't read that way, does it?) So, or thus Esau despised his birthright."

Now, you can see right here the evidence of the utter oppositeness of these two people. Esau the firstborn had the birthright. He had the rights of inheritance. He had the right of a double portion if the later regulations of the Mosaic Law obtained. And so far as we know, at least something similar did. Incidentally, the New Sea tablets have made known to us the fact that it was possible to transfer birthrights, so this is nothing unusual in that sense.

So here are the two people. They are utterly opposite one from another. They are in the words of Abraham Kiper, the Dutch theologian, illustrations of the fact that the world is divided into two people, those that are sons of the palin genesis and those that are not.

Now the sons of the palin genesis are those that are the sons of the new birth, for palin genesis is the Greek word for new birth. Everybody falls into one of these two categories. They are either a son of the new birth or they're not. They're either a child of God or they're not. And their whole makeup, all of their dispositions, all of their interests, all of the things that dominate one class are the things that the other class despise.

Now, of course, it's possible for a child of God not to live up to his calling and to have a kind of weakness for the world. But ideally, these two are opposite one from the other. They have two different ruling principles of life.

Now, Jacob, while we can say a great deal about him so far as his nature was concerned, he certainly was a ruthless kind of individual. He was a man who would do anything to get what he wanted, evidently. But the thing that dominated Jacob was the fact that he really did believe that the birthright was worth something. He had faith in God. The faith of course had been created in him by God the Holy Spirit. And the reason that it had been created in him by God the Holy Spirit is that he had been ordained to eternal life. That's why faith was given.

Now we read in the New Testament, as in Acts chapter 13, in verse 48 when the Apostle Paul was preaching in Antioch in Pisidia, "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." You notice that? "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." And the word ordained is the reference to something in the past. "As many as had been ordained to eternal life," out of that ordination, out of that eternal purpose of God, there comes faith as a product of it. So election is in order to faith, not faith in order to election.

I have in my notes some notes of a friend of mine who occasionally teaches on the doctrine of election. It's a catastrophe when he does, but nevertheless, he occasionally does. In his notes, that was just said to wake you up, in his notes it is said, We are elected when we believe. Those specific words, We are elected when we believe. Well, that's no doctrine of election at all unless we want to speak about the election of man instead of the election of God.

Now, you can say a great deal about Jacob. He was a very unattractive man, so far as I can tell, but God had chosen him and God also had brought him to faith. Esau, on the other hand, was one whom God had determined for this individual a different destiny. Esau was feckless, someone had said, which means something like weak,



irresponsible, careless. He had come in from his hunting, sputtering, embracing the present and the tangible at any cost. Let me have some of that pottage, or let me have some of that stew, that red stuff. He's so anxious to have it that he cannot even express himself well. That which is before his eyes as visible and tangible is the thing that dominates him, and that takes precedence over all of the blessings of God for this man.

Now that's why when we look at Esau, we can if we will observe him carefully, we will see why Esau is called in the New Testament a profane man. He may be very attractive at times. We have sympathy for him when he weeps over the blessing that Jacob later stole from him. And one cannot help but have sympathy for the man because of the loud outcry over the fact that Jacob has stolen his blessing. But he's a profane man who doesn't really care about spiritual things. He regrets but he doesn't know what it is to truly repent.

So he has at any cost embraced the present and the tangible. He's confirmed it in verse 33 by swearing. Jacob calls on him to swear. He's not going to let him get by with just a promise. He's got to swear to it. He does swear to it. And then when he eats, he gets up according to the word of God. He eats, drinks, he rises up and he goes on his way as if the whole thing doesn't mean anything to him at all. So he walks away unconcerned. He's the flippant counterpart someone has said of the worthies of Hebrews chapter 11, the men of faith who looked unto him who was invisible and walked by the word of God. It's not without accident that the story of Esau appears in the 12th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews right after that long list of the men of the faith that that author sets forth. And I say, note the ending of the chapter, So Jacob supplanted his brother? No, the important thing is "Thus Esau despised his birthright."

Well, we need not go into the story of the stolen blessing in chapter 27. I suggest you read that again in the light of this, but it's the sad story of four sinners. And the four sinners are, of course, Esau and his father Isaac, a very weak man by this time, a man who really wants to thwart the plan and purpose of God which he knows. And then

there is Rebekah and there is Jacob. It's a sad story, but it is a story again of at least on Jacob's part, a story of faith.

Now let's, with that in the background, let's turn back now to our passage in Malachi chapter 1, because Malachi assumes you know well that story about Jacob and Esau. And so the book begins with the superscription, "The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi."

Now, all we want to note is two things in this superscription: the first word, the oracle. This word in the Hebrew text is a word that means something like burden. It comes from the Hebrew word massa which means to pick up or to carry. And so the word massa means a burden. It can mean an oracle in the sense that a person who is a prophet may have a burden to give a certain message, so it can mean proclamation. But let's leave it with the force of burden.

Now, usually a burden is, when it refers to the message of a prophet, is a message of judgment. And there is a great deal of judgment in Malachi. Not all of it is judgment, but there is a great deal of judgment in the book, and so it's very fitting that this should begin with the burden.

Now, a burden is something that is heavy. You know, the young people today are using the term heavy. They speak about something that's got a lot of meat to it, it's heavy. Now, we spoke of it, we used to use the term, too, heavy. In fact I heard one of the fighters in the heavyweight fight the other night use the expression after the fight was over. And the one who had won the match had been staggered by a right or a left to the chin in about the seventh round, and he'd just managed to get through the round. And when the fight was over and he had managed to win the fight, he was saying that, Yes, he did hurt me. He said he gets over some sneaky blows and they are heavy, man, real heavy. And I know exactly what he was talking about. Well not really, I never have received one of George Foreman's blows. I don't ever want to do that until I have my resurrection body [Laughter] when I won't particularly mind.

So, this is a burden for the prophet. It means that there is something that he has upon his heart and mind that he's concerned about: the burden of the word of the Lord to Israel.

Now the other thing I want you to notice is the expression "through Malachi." Now in the Hebrew text, this word, this expression is simply by the hand of Malachi, and so the expression is an expression of agency. Now the reason I want you to notice this is because it gives us a beautiful picture of the nature of biblical inspiration.

Now we know that in the New Testament in passages such as Matthew chapter 1 and verse 22. You just turn over two or three pages. And there in introducing the prophecy concerning the virgin birth, Matthew the evangelist says, "Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying."

Now notice the expression, "All this took place that what was spoken by the Lord." That is direct agency, "By the Lord." The Greek text stresses that: "By the Lord." In the construction in the Greek text, stress rests upon the fact that it is direct agency. "By the Lord."

But then he says, "Through the prophet." Now the expression there, the preposition that is used is the preposition *dia* which expresses intermediate agency. In the Old Testament when Malachi writes by the hand of Malachi, he is speaking of intermediate agency. And we have the same thing. "This is the oracle of the word of the Lord." So the direct agency, the real source of the prophecy is the Lord. But the prophecy comes to us through the intermediate agency of a man.

We have a great deal of debate today over the question of the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Are the Scriptures truly without error? Or is it possible that they are filled with historical and geographical and scientific errors, and it is the work of the interpreter to pick his way through holy Scripture avoiding those parts of the word of God that are in error and centering his attention upon the parts that are without error? Now that is a very live question. And also it's a very complicated question.

But I think you will notice from these expressions in the word of God that it does appear from the reading of the word of God that the word of God is regarded as having its origin in God. And of course, if the word of God has its ultimate origin in God, it is a natural deduction to then assume that it is without error and that we should not think of the Bible as the product of God and man. Not the product of a man with the help of God, but the Bible or the Old and New Testaments are products of God through a man. In other words, the true author of Scripture is the God who cannot lie, who cannot make a mistake, who cannot make an error. So this expression, "Through the hand of Malachi" stresses that Malachi is an intermediate agent. The word really comes from the Lord. It is God's word.

Now then, we come to the controversy. "I have love you," says the Lord. But you say, "How hast Thou loved us?" " Now isn't it strange to find God defending his love for Israel? If there is anything that we see from the study of the history of Israel it's the love of God for a sinning and wayward people. And he still loves them, constantly loves them, in spite of their failures. They spend their time in departing from him. He spends his time in seeking to bring them back to him. But we have a strange thing here: God defending his love for Israel. "I have loved you."

Now, what is meant by that? Well, as the rest of the Old Testament and the rest of this prophecy indicates, what he has in mind is the Abrahamic covenant as the source of the sovereign love of God. Out of that Abrahamic covenant there came the marriage of God to Israel. He was a faithful but spurned husband. "I have loved you."

Electing, covenant love and the consequent care of Israel is what is intended by these words, "I have loved you." And he's just brought them back from captivity, enabled them to rebuild the temple, to restore the walls, enabled them to be restored to their own home and they're still complaining about no evidence of the love of God. Isn't it an amazing thing?

By the way, in the Hebrew text, that expression, "I have loved you," is in a state which indicates that he is not simply speaking about the past. But he is speaking about the past all up to and including the present. "I have loved you," that is evident from the verbs that follow, "says the Lord. But you say, "How hast Thou loved us?" This shocking reply that God puts in the mouth of the nation at this point sets the tone of the book. How quickly men forget. And how quickly it is, how quickly and how easily we forget too. How quickly we forget what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. How easy it is to fall into the same kind of trap that these people had fallen into.

Oh, the chances are that the reason that they had begun to complain about the Lord is because they had misunderstood the prophecies of the Old Testament, such as the prophecy of Haggai. They had thought that in the light of the fact that Haggai and Zechariah spoke of the prophecies of the kingdom that it wouldn't be long before the king would come. And now it's been a hundred years and nothing has happened. And so they're complaining.

And they probably had all of the other reasons to complain that we have too. Our health is not so good. Our environment is not exactly that which we would like. We have a job that is not very happy. Insurance business, whoever wanted to be in the insurance business? Or whatever it may be, I know exactly what you're talking about, since I was in it for eight years myself.

And we have all of these means by which we complain over our present circumstances. "You say, "How hast Thou loved us?" What an amazing thing for people to say. In the light of Calvary, that should still all of our complaints about God and his dealings with us. If he has loved us enough to deliver us from hell fire by the blood that was shed on Calvary's cross, then it doesn't make a bit of difference what kind of life he ordains for us here. We are far better off than we could ever imagine as a result of the redemption that we possess. Complaining Christians.

Now then, let's look at God's case. He has a pretty strong case. He says, "I have loved you." You say, "How hast Thou loved us?" Now he begins his answer by saying, "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" Think how close they were. They actually were twins. "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the Lord. "Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau."

Now God's hate has perplexed almost every Christian at one time or another. That's because we still inherit some of the thinking processes that have come from those days when we were not sons of the palin genesis. And we don't think straight.

What does it mean: God has hated Esau? I'd like to take that one first. Does it mean simply that God loved Jacob more? Well, there is a sense in which that's true. You can turn to the New Testament and you will find in Luke chapter 14 when the Lord Jesus said if you're going to be my disciple you must hate father and hate mother and hate brother and hate sister and hate your own children, also. And then in the parallel passage, Matthew says what that means is to love father and mother more than me. So that it's possible to interpret this as to love more, that is, he loved Jacob more than he loved Esau.

But now, is this really a question of degrees here? Does he say anything that indicates that he loved Esau at all? No, all he says is "Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated." It doesn't say anything about degrees of love in the context. That is imported into the context by those who don't like to face up to the question that says God hated Esau.

What then does it mean? Well, I think that in the light of the context it can only mean one thing, that he refused to elect Esau. Or to put it in theological terms, he reprobated Esau, that is, he determined the future of Jacob and it was the future of election and faith and salvation and eternal blessing. And he also chose the future of Esau, and the future of Esau was reprobation.

Now those are very strong words but I want you to know now, I'm not adding anything to this text. This is exactly what it says. "Jacob have I love, Esau have I hated." And if you want the final commentary upon it, turn to Romans chapter 9, verse 14 through verse 29. Now we're not going to turn there, just a moment yet. But when you turn there you will see that that is exactly the interpretation that the Apostle Paul puts upon it. And if you have any question about it, if you want to sit down and have a little disputation over it, we'll turn to Romans 9 and perhaps you give me a better interpretation than the one I've suggested. I'll certainly be happy to listen because there's some things about Paul and Romans 9 that are very startling and hard.

Now when did this happen? "Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated." Well, Paul tells us it happened before they were born, as we shall see in just a moment. So in other words, it was the expression of his sovereign right.

Now you say, that's terrible. Yes, it is terrible. Of course, it's terrible. It's a serious thing to be a member of the human race and a creation of God, very serious. We must take these things seriously.

Now the other, "I have loved Jacob." Ah, I can see how God could hate Esau a whole lot easier than I can see how he could love Jacob. If I had any problem, it's not with the fact that God should hate Esau. It's the how in the world could he possibly love Jacob? He was equally unworthy. But God made Jacob ultimately by his marvelous grace Israel, a prince with God. I think I can almost hear Jacob say, Hallelujah.

Now then, just for the sake of time, let me pass on. He says, "I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness." Now let me say that in the Malachi context here, he is talking about the nations. When he says "Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated," he is laying stress upon the descendants, that is, the head and all of the members of the nation. As you can see from verse 3 and 4,

"I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness. Though Edom says, "We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins"; thus says the Lord of hosts, "They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom the Lord is indignant forever." "

Now you can see here that the stress in Malachi then rests upon the national destinies of the head and the members of the two families, nations. Now it's possible, and some people do do this, they will say, Now wait a minute. In the case of Jacob and Esau, when God says Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated, he's not talking about individuals, he's talking about nations. And so we shouldn't make any personal application about God hating individuals. This has to do with nations.

Now, there could hardly be anything more irrational than a statement like that as we see now that we turn to Romans chapter 9. Jacob, Esau and Romans 9:11 through 13. Now there are just two points that we have time to make. I hope I have time to make them. Romans chapter 9, verse 11 through verse 13.

I want you to notice first the sovereignty of the divine choice. And I want you to notice now these harsh things that I've been saying are nothing more than that which the Apostle Paul says. So if you want to blame anything, don't blame it on Dr. Johnson. Go out and blame it on Paul, he's the one that started it all.

Verse 11, "For though the twins were not yet born." Notice, "the twins were not yet born." That's true to the context there in Genesis 25. He spoke to Rebekah when she noticed that she had twins in her womb.

"Though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad." Notice, it's not based on any moral distinction between them. "In order that God's purpose according to His choice." You see that? His election is based on his purpose. "According to His choice." Please read that, ponder it. "That God's purpose according to



His choice might stand, not because of works but because of him who calls." The reason is in God. "It was said to her, "The older will server the younger." Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau have I hated."

Now notice that Paul stresses that the purpose is not grounded in works. It's grounded in election and calling. Election is the fountain of the divine blessings. And election proceeds out of God's determination, his determinant will. That why we talk so much about election, because it is God's determinant will, and he carries it out by means of his election. And all of the blessings that come to us, come out of the fountain of election. That's why this doctrine is so important. I know you think I overdo it. Well think, the Bible overdoes it. But all of our blessings proceed out of this. That's why it's so important.

Now notice the particularity of the divine choice. "It was said to her, "The older will serve the younger."" Now did you notice what part of the prophecy Paul cites? There are individuals who say when we come to Romans chapter 9; it's a very popular interpretation today. Romans 9 has to do with nations and how he chose the nation Israel and he did not choose the Gentiles. It doesn't have to do with individual election, in spite of the fact that there are countless texts in the Bible that speak about individual election. But it's said, No, Paul doesn't have to do with individual election in Romans 9. It has to do with national election.

Now I say there couldn't be anything weaker than that, because, listen, if it is unjust for God to choose one man and not to choose someone else, how much more unjust is it for him to choose countless thousands and millions or a group of people and pass by countless thousands and millions? How much more unjust is it to choose a nation and reprobate nations? So if we're talking about what is just or unjust, the choice of a nation as over against the nations, it's far more unjust.

But furthermore, what is the choice of a nation but the choice of so many units, so many persons, so many individuals? Isn't that right Mister? You cannot choose a nation

without choosing the members of the nation. And did you notice that when Paul quotes this prophecy, he doesn't quote that part about two nations are in the womb? Two peoples shall be separated one from the other, one shall be greater than the other. He centers his attention on the last line of that Old Testament prophecy, "The elder shall serve the younger." So you see that he's interested in the individual when he says, "Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated."

Now how wonderful it is in the light of this that we belong to him? The love of God, what a tremendous thing it is, the love of God which he has manifested to us. We can see the love of God in the fact that he has chosen us. He has brought us to faith. He has given us life. Yes, and we can see the love of God in his afflictions, because after all, the gardener prunes the grape but he doesn't bother with the thistle. It's the thing that he really cares for that he's concerned with. And the afflictions of life are part of God's tender nurture of his plants which he's going to bring to their beautiful fruitfulness ultimately in the presence of God.

Well the sovereign purpose of God then is the stress of this, and it's the ground of his favors. And it's the ground of his curses. There may be difficulties in referring salvation to his election, but it's greater if it's referred to the election of men and more contrary to the word of God. I'm sorry; I've gone over two minutes. I apologize to you, but this is a great passage.

Let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for these wonderful truths that so beautifully express the sovereign right that Thou as the great creator and redeemer dost have over the children of men. Enable us, O God, to be subject to Thee and Thy word. And as Jacob had implanted within him the faith to look to Thee, O God, give us that faith that trusts Thee. For Jesus' sake. Amen.