



Sermon Transcription • Romans 11:1-10

The Difficult Doctrine of Election - The Final Act

Pastor Jeff Bucknam

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

I was trained as a teacher. In seminary, I decided that I did not work in the church because in my opinion churches were filled with politics and academia was not - I was a fool at that point in my life because as I got involved in academia I realized that actually they can out-politic anybody. But at that point I wanted to be in the classroom. My experience in the classroom was very profound for me - both as a learner and also a teacher. My early days in teaching, I remember teaching several classes and having those *moments* in the class where you'd have a student who would just get that epiphany, that moment, that *lightbulb*, that moment - where it would just come on for them. Usually, let's be honest, it was after like weeks, sometimes months, and even years of repeating the same thing over and over again and finally toward the end of the time with them, they would say, "Wait a minute, are you saying this?" And you say, "Yes! I was saying it for the last few years, and you've been so dumb, but now, here you are, ohhh, thank God I can justify my teaching my now because you finally got it." They're like, "Oh yes, and it makes so much sense." That epiphany moment was so rich, you've probably had that maybe if you've been in a class you remember it - how you know it. Your professor or teacher was thinking, "You idiot." [Laughter] But probably not, you had better teachers than what I was. You have small children you know this, I mean, it happens through repetition, there's a power in the repeated message, right? If you have small children you know that right, because you have children who see the crayons or the permanent markers, and they grab them and think, "Hmmm I need a palate somewhere, oh there's wall here - I'll draw a picture of my dad." And you go to them and say, "Don't use the crayon or the marker for the wall! You should use that on this paper dear, on this paper." And then you know a week later, it's on the wall, "The paper! The paper!" You repeat this over and over again and when they're 18 or so, that they realize, "Oh the paper, I see now, the paper." "Yes, you're not like your father." [Laughter] There's a power in a repeated message. In fact most of the things that you and I believe in our lives, we believe because they've been repeated to us over and over again. Sometimes they're not even true but we just believe them because they were said so often and we just say, "I give in!" There's a power in repeated message.

I'm hoping that because that's the fact, that this sermon will be powerful, because it's a repeated message. I don't mean repeated in the sense that, "Oh you preached on this passage last week." No, I mean that this sermon, about Romans 11:1-10, is about the doctrine of election. And you're going to say, "What?! Didn't we just talk about it?" Yes we did, the Apostle Paul in Romans 9 talks about the doctrine of election - we split that into two pieces, we preached on it, we came away from it. In Romans 11, Paul comes back just to make sure you were listening. Some of you are thinking, "Alright



another one on the doctrine of election!" Others are like, "Stop already!" Right, the goal here though, is maybe this is a light bulb moment for you. Maybe this is going to be a moment where you think, "Ooh that's what Paul's saying." I hope it is, I hope that's exactly what happens here. When I say the doctrine of election - just so we're clear, what I mean is, the doctrine that the church has believed for a long, long time regarding - by the church, I mean the church universal, has believed for a long long time that God chooses some for salvation and he leaves others. The entire church, in its majority, has always believed in the doctrine of election. What they debate about is what the basis of the doctrine of election is - is why does God choose and leave? Maybe that will come clear as we go on here in Romans 11. Here's how I want to do this in the next few minutes, Romans 11:1-10. I want to go through the passage itself first and just show you Paul's argument and then at the end I want to focus a bit of time, quite a bit of time in fact, on the application, on the points to the doctrine of election - both in this passage and more generally. I want to just tell you, how should this affect the way you live and think and breath and feel. So, the passage and then the point.

[The Passage]

So here's the first of those, let's deal with the passage itself. Romans 11:1,

"I ask then: [this is Paul speaking, I ask then] Did God reject his people?"

Now let's pause, and let's just get an understanding for why Paul raises that question. Why would Paul be interacting with the question from an imaginary opponent saying, "Listen, clearly Paul what you're saying is that God has rejected his people." So Paul feels like he has to interact with that, why would they even feel - like how's God rejecting their people? So if you go back one verse to Romans 10:21 it says,

"But concerning Israel he says, 'All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.'"

The way that Paul pictures the relationship of Israel to their God is God as the lover all day long, reaching out his hands so that they will love him in return. The problem is their disobedient and they're obstinate, they're ground in they're disobedience and unwillingness to turn their hearts toward him and they run away repeatedly. And so Paul's trying to interact with the question, with the problem, in front of him, that all of these Jewish people in his day did not believe the gospel and they should've believed it was about Israel's Messiah; they should've believed it, but they didn't so maybe the reason that they don't believe is because God basically has rejected them because he's held out his hands so often that they just finally turn away and God has said, "Fine if you're going to turn away, I'm going to turn away from you."

Maybe an illustration will help here, to get you to understand probably what it's like for God to hold out his hands and have the people reject and then maybe the way he might respond to that. And it's about my grade 7 crush. Her name was Shannon, hmmm close my eyes and I can see Shannon. She had curly hair, very curly hair, I've seen pictures since of her in grade 7, she had a lot of hair, very big,



1980's curly hair. I used to walk along in the hallway and when I'd see Shannon I'd get all, like quivery inside and think, "Oh Shannon, I hope our eyes meet, I hope our eyes meet, I hope our ..." [Laughter] And no, and often they didn't and the reason they didn't is because Shannon found out from one of my friends that I had a thing for Shannon. And everytime she would walk down the hallway and she saw me coming, she would deliberately make sure that she looked the other way, like I didn't actually exist. But I wasn't put off, okay. We had this, in our P.E. class, we had a square dancing unit. Those were the days, the '80s right, ah? '80s in America, let's do some square dancing - it was the best thing because you, in order to partner up with your square dancing partner, they formed two lines, okay. One on one side of the gym and one on the other, it was girls on one side and boys on the other - And they would do the promenade, they'd come together like this, right? So you could figure out who was going to be your partner by just counting out the number of girls on the other side, like one, two, three, four. "Okay Shannon is in position seven, so I'm going to get in position seven here," right. And then you'd walk along and you'd join up. Now I did this every time, three week long unit, every day we were square dancing and we would come together like this and I would always figure out where Shannon was and it was always number 7, or wherever she was in line. Now she knew that I was doing this after the first day, and she realized, "Oh wait a minute, I don't want to dance, square dance with that guy." So she would see me figuring out she's in seven and then she'd go to eight. But again, you can't away from me you sweet thing. [Laughter] So I would go to number eight right, and she's in eight and I'm in eight, and then she's go to nine and I'm in nine and then eight, nine, eight, seven, right. [Laughter] But she was clever, we'd come right to the end and then she would switch right at the last minute and I'd be like, "Ahhhh, Shannon!" Finally, after three weeks, I figured, "Okay, Shannon, if you're going to play that way, I'm going to play it that way too." So I was on my toes and we came together and at the last minute she went to eight and I went to eight! And she, she could go nowhere, except the teacher said, "Okay, link arms, link arms." And she looked at my arm, looked at me, ran out crying. [Laughter] Now at some point gentlemen [laughter] you get the hint. And I decided after that, "Okay fine, I've had enough trying to figure this whole thing out. And you're looking away from me in the hallways. You don't want to have any part of me then you don't have to be part of me, right. I'm going to look the other way as well." Cause that's how you do, when somebody doesn't want to have anything to do with you and you reach out your hands and you want them to be part of your life, you want to love them and they keep repelling your love, eventually there's a point at which you say, "We're done! I reject you then."

Paul is basically saying at this point, look that's the way God has been treating Israel. He's wanted to love them, wanted to love them, wanted to love them, but they will not respond, they are obstinate in their disobedience, they turn away, and finally God's like, "Enough! I'm done with you." At least that's the question that he's interacting with - has God rejected his people? So many of them don't believe guys. Is that evidence that God has rejected his people? So I ask then, did God reject his people?
Romans 11:1,

"By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin."

So I'm living proof that God hasn't rejected his people, cause I wouldn't be here if had rejected his people completely. I'm from the tribe of Benjamin. Romans 11:2,



“[I’m] from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.”

So in other words there’s a group within in the people of God, within Israel, who God foreknew, there are others who God has rejected, but there is a group - true Israel, that God has *not* rejected. They are the remnant within. That language of Israel within Israel should sound familiar to you if you read Romans 9-11 in one sitting. The reason I say that is that if you go back to Romans 9, the beginning of Romans 9:2 here’s what it says. This is when Paul frames his whole discussion about this issue, he says, Romans 9:2-3,

“I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race.”

It hurts me so much that the people of Israel aren’t believing in Jesus, their Messiah, that I could wish that I could reverse with them, that I could trade places with them. It kills me that they’re being condemned and I have life. So let’s switch places. But Romans 9:6,

“It is not as though God’s word had failed. [It’s not as though God’s promises though to Israel have failed because so many of them have rejected him.] For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.”

Well he’s being sneaky with language. You might remember me drawing this picture, I’ll do it again. What he’s saying is that there is the the group, an ethnic group called Israel, its defineable, its a national entity. And he’s saying that there’s Israel, the national entity, and then there’s Israel the spiritual entity. See there’s <loudly> Israel and then there’s <whispering> Israel. There’s those who have Abraham’s blood in their veins and then there’s those who have Abraham’s faith in their hearts. There’s the large group of everybody and then there’s the remnant. There’s those who God’s knows and then there’s those who God foreknows. And God has not rejected his Israel, whom he has foreknown. Notice what he does with this now. Romans 11:2-4,

“God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don’t you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah [so I’m going to give you an example in other words he says, of a time in Israel’s past where there was a large group of people in Israel, many of whom did not believe and yet there was a remnant, a small group including Elijah that God had kept faithful. So, don’t you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah]—how he appealed to God against Israel: [verse three of Romans 11] ‘Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me’? And what was God’s answer to him? ‘I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.’”

Okay so this is the story that many of you will know, some of you maybe not, this is one of the stories if you’re new to the faith, you want to tell your kids because it’s a great story in the Old Testament, it really is! 1 Kings 18-19, let me tell you the grand story of what’s going on here. So Israel has a king in those days, his name is Ahab. And Ahab is married to Jezebel, Jezebel’s not a nice woman generally speaking and she’s not a very good queen for Israel, and the reason for that is because her heart is pinned, her allegiance is given to another god, his name is Baal - god of the storm. Thought to be a very mighty warrior this god of the storm, this Baal. And she wanted to see all of the nation of Israel turn their hearts toward Baal so that Baal would answer their calls. Baal’s particular gift was that he



would bring rain on the land. And in a place of course where you have crops and things, that's like the most important thing. And Israel at the time was struggling with a drought. And so they didn't have any crops and they needed rain and so she's like, "Okay everybody needs to worship Baal. You need to turn away from this Yahweh and worship Baal." Of course the king and queen were pushing that way, but Elijah, the prophet in the land at the time, was saying, "No! To turn your hearts toward Baal is to basically be adulterers against the God with whom you have a covenant. You have an arrangement, an agreement. You need to serve Yahweh and him alone." So the people in Israel were in two opinions, like on the one hand they were thinking, "Well maybe we should serve Baal, because it's kind of a cool storm god, you know lightning in his hand."

"Ohh Yahweh's kind of good too."

"Yeah Baal."

"Yahweh." Two opinions. And Elijah gets sick of it, he's like alright, here's the thing, we got to solve this problem, and so, "Ahab, Jezebel, here's the way we're going to do this. Ah we're going to have a competition, it's going to be on the mountain, on Mt. Carmel over there where you do a lot of your worshipping to your god Baal. We're going to take the altar that you set you up up there and we're going to put it up again and we're going to have a competition. We're going to pray to our respective gods and we're going to see which one will answer our cries." So they say, "Alright this sounds like a good idea." They assemble at the top of this mountain, 450 prophets of Baal versus one Elijah, the prophet of Yahweh. The people of Israel are assembled there, or at least representation from them are assembled there, and Elijah begins with the speech, he says okay, "So here's what you need to know Israel. You need to choose today who you're going to serve. If Baal is God, serve him. If Yahweh is God, serve him. But stop wavering between two opinions. You guys, you 450 prophets, you call on your god, and then I will call on mine and we'll see which one answers. We'll see which one brings fire from heaven and burns the altar where we have the sacrifice." So prophets of Baal get together, they're 450 there and they start to do their worship <chanting> "Ha na num na num na nah." No kidding that's the way they would, the low, "Mum, mum, mum, mum." And they started going around in circles very slowly around the altar, "Ha mum, mum, mum." One of the great scenes in the entire Bible, is right here where it says that Elijah's sitting over there eating an orange or a cake or something like that. And he's making fun of them saying, "Hey maybe you guys should talk a little louder, cause maybe your god's on a holiday. <laughing> Maybe you should walk faster so that he can see better." Literally it says in Hebrew, "Maybe he's on the toilet." It's in the Bible, you can see it. "Maybe he's just preoccupied." He's killing himself over here. And the prophets of Baal, <angrily chanting>, the way that they would worship they would slash themselves with their spears and swords. "<shouting>Look how much we care, we're bleeding for you Baal, answer us!" Nothing, nothing - blood everywhere, exhausted prophets, and finally Elijah says, "Enough!" he's finished with his orange or cake, "I'm done! Alright everybody what I need you to do now, is I need you- see the altar over there. I want you to douse it with water cause I don't want anyone of you, when God answers my prayer and brings the fire from heaven, I don't want you to think I pulled a David Copperfield here and just threw a match when you weren't looking. Cover it; water, and cover it again; cover it again, make a moat around it." And then he prays, "God prove yourself to your people," basically, "show yourself mighty." Before the words are even out of his mouth <Phooooof!> Fire from heaven sucks up all the water and the ditch and everything. God, Yahweh, is King! Imagine being there on that day? "We win!!!" Elijah, "We win!!" He goes off and starts killing all the other prophets, "Get out of here!" Looks like he's on the cusp of Israel



turning to God for the rest of their lives. They're like, "Yeah okay, we believe it now, I mean cause Yahweh is obviously better than Baal who didn't answer and was busy somewhere." Even Ahab is like, "Yeah okay, I have to admit, Yahweh's kind of cool." So Ahab goes back, after Elijah prays for rain and the rain comes, Ahab goes back with news of this great miracle, how God has come through and Yahweh has brought the rain, Yahweh is king. He goes back to the palace where Jezebel was and he says to Jezebel, "Man you should have been there, it was amazing Honey. Like fire from heaven, and Yahweh is really pretty good." And she says, "Oh okay, what happened after the fire and the prayer and all that?" Ah well actually Elijah went around and killed all the prophets of Baal. And she says, "Huh, well here's what I need your messengers to tell Elijah - that because he killed all those prophets I'm going to do the same thing to him, sucker." And Elijah's waiting outside the palace and he gets this word from this messenger and he thinks he's gone from the top, literally, the top of the mountain, "Woah God's amazing and all of Israel's going to repent!" to "I'm all alone! I mean this was supposed to be the biggest moment of repentance in the entire country, and it's nothing." So he takes off running and he runs and runs and runs and runs - he goes way south, like hundreds of miles, eventually he ends up south on the Mount Zion where Moses received the law and he's there because he sees himself like Moses. He's like, "It's just you and me God! I'm going to go up on this mountain, I'm going to sit in the cave like Moses did when he met you on this mountain, and you and I are just be together forever and the rest of everyone else is turning away." The Lord meets him there, 1 Kings 19:9-14,

"And the word of the Lord came to him: 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He replied, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.' The Lord said, '[Okay, I want you to] Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by. [You want to be like Moses, let's have a little Moses game. I passed by him, I'm going to do the same thing to you. Okay you go up there, you ready?]' Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He replied, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.'"

What in the world is going on with this scene - some people end up taking this and saying, "See that's how God speaks to people in quiet whisper." That's not at all what's taking place here, what's taking place is Elijah expects earthquake, fire, wind level repentance for the people of Israel. Carmel; fire from heaven; everyone's going to repent; name in lights; woah! Big, BIG level repentance, that's what he expects, and God's like, "No, no, no, but you don't understand, I'm not in the earthquake and the fire, and in the wind. I'm in the whisper. I get it Elijah," says the Lord, "You want the big show, you want to see everybody turn, but that's not my plan right now. My plan right now is to do a quieter work. I've



got seven thousand, it's not just you brother, I got seven thousand that I have kept back from bowing their knees to Baal." So do you see the image, you have big Israel, most of whom are turning away from the Lord, and then you have this remnant, Elijah and seven thousand whom the Lord has kept. Paul picks this up then and he says in Romans 11:5-6,

"So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. [Just like in those days, he says, there is now with Israel a remnant chosen by grace. The Israel within the Israel, the foreknown Israel. A remnant chosen by grace] And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were [by works], grace would no longer be grace."

It's really important, how does somebody get, to being in the remnant? Well they're chosen. But yeah, based on what? On grace, not on works, grace there's nothing in those who are chosen that God is drawn to. It's all of grace. This is a really important point, listen whatever you believe or think about the doctrine of election, your viewpoint has to cohere, has to be formed, by those words - election is a doctrine that espouses chosenness by grace.

R.C. Sproul who is a professor for years, he passed away last couple of years and tells the story about how he taught lots of classes for lots and lots of years and was very common for him to talk about the doctrine of election because he'd be going through Romans, Romans 9 and then eventually Romans 11 - he'd get to the end of it and there was always some people in his classes who would say, "Well listen, I understand I think what Paul's saying here, that God is choosing purely based upon his choice and not based upon anything he sees in those he's choosing. But I don't really like that. I'd prefer to view it this way. I'd prefer to view it that God basically lifts people up to a point where they're able to make a free choice for him and some choose to follow him and others do not. So whatever's going wrong with them in their hearts, he lifts them out of that depravity, he puts them on an equal playing field, kind of like Adam and Eve, and some choose for him and some don't choose for him. Those who choose he elects and those who don't choose he does not elect." Sproul says look when he'd face a student with this he'd say, "Okay so let's assume you're right. For the sake of argument, let's assume that what your saying is the case. God lifts people up and he makes, he gives both people free choice and one of them chooses and the other one does not. I'm assuming you're like that, he would say to the student."

"Yes." Because they're somebody who's a Christian. "So you chose, I'm assuming you know somebody in your life who didn't choose."

"Yes."

"So you chose, and your friend didn't choose, okay. Why did you choose and they didn't?"

"Well," the response would be, "Ah because I just in the moment that the gospel was presented to me, I just felt like it was right."

"Okay, yeah, and the other person did not they felt like it was wrong, and that's why they rejected it. Okay. But why did you feel like it was right?"

"Well, there was just something inside of me that said, it's true."

"Okay but why did you think that it was true? Your friend did not think that it was true, so why did you think that it was true?"

"Well because I could see the truthfulness of it."

"Yes but why did you see the truthfulness of it?"



“Well I had a softer heart.”

“But why do you have a soft heart?” He said eventually after a while they would give in. And his point ultimately he said to them, “Look at some point, we’re going to get down to the base and the only answer that you can give for me is that the reason you chose and your friend did not is because you’re just a little bit smatter. You just see it a little bit better.” So here’s the question. Is that what it means to be chosen by grace and not works? No. God’s not impressed with the remnant. He doesn’t look at them and think, “Ah I need Elijah on my team. All those seven thousand, I desperately need them to be part of my team.” No he doesn’t look at them and think that. They are chosen by grace. So Paul sums up the entire argument that he’s making here, Romans 11:7-10,

“What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain. [They wanted righteousness before God, they wanted to do it on their own merit but they couldn’t do it, and they didn’t turn to Jesus. What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain.] The elect among them did, but the others were hardened, [and he gives you a couple passages to prove this kind of thing, it’s happened through Israel’s history he says.] ... as it is written: “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear, to this very day.” And David says: “May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever.”

[The Points]

So God elects based on grace and he leaves and hardens. So look let me finish here by just talking a little bit about application. This is very difficult doctrine. What does election mean for us. Here’s three points to answer that question as we finish.

[Election means our salvation is in good hands]

First, the doctrine of election means, our salvation is in good hands. The doctrine of election means that, Christian, *your salvation* is in good hands cause here the thing: if your responsible ultimately for your salvation - really was left up to you, then your salvation is as sure as you are, and how sure are you? I mean do you always feel like following Jesus. Did you wake up this morning and think, “Alright another day with the Lord!” All of the moments in your life do you consistently choose Christ? His way, his plans, always? Or do you wander a little bit? Man it’s up to you, it’s on you whether or not you continue or you don’t continue, how’s that going? Going well? Look at your life as a general and say, “Ah yeah man I’m amazing just like I was an amazer chooser, I’m an amazing liver, I always live the right way, I always do the right thing, I always repent when I’m wrong.” See if it was up to you. It’s on you. But if God is responsible for your salvation, and it’s as sure as he is, how sure is he? Well let me give you a couple passages, Paul actually addresses that and Jesus himself addressed that. John 6, here’s Jesus speaking to some Pharisees, some Jewish people who don’t believe. And he’s going to explain their unbelief, and essentially how all this salvation stuff works. John 6:36-39,



“But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All those the Father gives me will come to me, [So why is that you don’t believe because you’re not some of the ones the Father gave to me. All those the FAther gives to me will come to me,] and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those [the Father] has given me, but raise them up at the last day.”

Jesus said, “I got a simple job, Father sent me here, he gives me those who will believe and I then keep them and I raise them up on the last day. The reason you don’t believe is cause you weren’t one of the ones he gave me. And I hold them in my hands and I will raise them up, cause I’m sure of my ability.”

Jude 24-25,

“To him who is able to keep you from stumbling [Jude ends with a prayer. Let’s pray to the God who is able to keep you from stumbling] and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.”

See your salvation because it’s in the hands of God who can keep it and has the power to keep it, is absolutely, positively, 100% sure, regardless how you feel about it.

Man, I have a friend who writes me texts, and he often struggles with his assurance of salvation, he wonders about God to me and he writes me and he says things like, “Jeff you have to explain to me how I can be sure, how can I be sure? Cause I look at my life, and here’s the things that I’ve done, even the last 24 hours. And it’s been horrible and my life is this way, and I’m sure that there’s fundamental problems with who I am and how I’m living and can I be honest with you, deep inside of my spirit sometimes I don’t even want to follow. I’m prone to wander Jeff, explain to me, give me some assurance.” Everytime he writes me, you know what I respond, every time, I respond you are looking brother, to the wrong person. Not by asking me but you are looking to the wrong person by saying that all of my salvation is depended upon me and my ability to do this thing. No, your salvation has always been on God. He never saw something in you that drew him to you to begin with, and so he’s not surprised now that there’s nothing there. Election means our salvation is in good hands.

[Election means our mission is in his hands]

Second, election means that our mission is in good hands, the work that we’re supposed to do, the mission of God, it’s in good hands. Here’s what I mean by that. This story about Elijah really strikes me deep to my core because I got to tell you, there are moments in my life where I want to climb up on the mountain with God and say, “Just you and me man!” You look around you, look at all the decisions and courts and Christians who were following who walk away, and how false teaching is just infiltrating the church. It just feels like its decimated, it’s never going to work God - this mission. You were supposed to go out and proclaim the gospel and everyone’s rejecting it and mocking it. Are you



kidding me?” So when you get in that kind of feeling what you end up doing is saying, “Maybe what we need to do then in order to get those people to believe it better is we take the Bible, the gospel, and we kind of put it through the marketing grid. Let’s just figure out the good parts of it, and tell people the good stuff and then hide the others right? Treat God like he’s an Instagram subject right? You understand what I mean? Instagram, you’re not supposed to ever post pictures that are bad of you on Instagram, ever. Right, you always show pictures of you on the holiday and it looks idyllic and perfect, and I see it and go, “You suck.” [Laughter] Right, cause my life’s not like that, it’s never like that. There are girls who take 15 pictures of Instagram and send it around to their friends and then they end up getting word back, “Oh this number four is amazing, you’re so beautiful.” And then they post number four right? Or if you have a goiter on the side of your head, from the left side, everything’s on the left side right? So about a week and a half ago, two weeks ago or something like that, see I end up, I end up throwing grenades and stuff all the time, so here I took a picture of myself with bedhead and I posted it on Instagram, I did a series of a couple of bedhead shots in the morning right. And I had friends saying to me, ah not on Instagram, some of them were saying “That’s hideous I can’t unsee that,” right? [Laughter] But then they quietly say, “Jeff do you understand what Instagram’s for? Like it’s not for showing your bad side, it’s not showing bedhead.” One guy said to me, “Maybe I should run your Instagram for you right?”

I actually think for some of us, we actually believe, “No if God put me in charge of his Instagram account it would be amazing because what I do is I take all the really good stuff about him and talk about that all the time - like he was a used pickup truck, and then hide all of the bad stuff. You want to talk about love and mercy and grace and kindness and beauty - that’s the stuff we major on, don’t talk about the election and the wrath and all that kind of stuff, hide that, that’s a goiter, that’s bedhead man!” But you know what the beauty - the belief is, “Oh if we do that all these people will come.” You know what the beauty of the doctrine of election is you don’t have to do any of that. Because the very people who are going to come to faith in Jesus will actually see the bedhead of God and say, “It is glorious! What a magnificent God!” See Paul thought this way, he did, 2 Corinthians 4:1-6,

“Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. [Brothers and sisters Paul had a lot of reason to lose heart - like here’s a man, who almost everyday his life is in danger because he’s proclaiming the gospel to people who don’t like it. And even the people who do like it sometimes want to fight him because they don’t like how he’s planted their church or left who’s behind. Or they don’t want to agree with him on this, that or the other thing okay. He had a lot of reason to lose heart as a Christian pastor. But he said, no I don’t lose heart,] Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God. [I don’t need to cut the edges off of it, I don’t need to change, ultimately, who God is and the way he describes himself in his word, I just tell people that plainly.] And even if our gospel is veiled [verse three], it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. [I know when I’m sometimes saying the gospel to people, I’m describing the glories of the Son in the sky. And they’re like, “What a big round ball up there with burning...Shut up I hate



you.” I get it. That’s the way some people are, but it’s because they’re perishing.] For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.”

See that’s how salvation happens, the same way the world was made, let there be light. And God, the Jesus who used to despise all the sudden becomes magnificent, and you see his beadhead and you’re like, “Ooh that’s even better!” So you don’t need to worry, you might get mad, you shouldn’t talk about the doctrine of election. Why not? It’s about the glorious God.

[Election means we are truly loved.]

Finally and probably most importantly, election means we’re truly loved. There is a low murmur that sits underneath my life, every single day, it’s always there. It was formed because for a lot of my life I was rejected and mocked in a lot of different settings and when you’re a kid and that kind of thing happens to you it starts to form a picture of yourself in your mind that you think is absolutely true and it ends up affecting the way you interact with people. You start wondering “If you got to know me really, I think you wouldn’t like me”. Cause others haven’t. It’s not just the Shannons of the world, it’s other girls and then friends and I didn’t make it into that, and I was second place in this, and third place in that, but for whatever reason I was never chosen, I was never the one who was in, I was always left ultimately out. And that forms this sort of picture of yourself in your mind and it affects the way you talk. And people say to me sometimes, “Man sometimes you seem so aloof.” Yeah you know, quite honestly I see that and part of the reason is because of all that baggage. I just think, if you and I don’t get very close then you can’t reject me. I don’t know maybe you feel that way, maybe you don’t.

Here’s the thing, if the doctrine of election is true, then even though I should’ve been left by the wayside, cause all that stuff is true, there’s stuff inside of me that if you saw it you’d say, “Ohh disgusting!” But if the doctrine of election is true, then God didn’t pass me by, he should have, he didn’t. He loves me just because he loves me. And there’s not going to be a day in, in my life where God looks at me and says, “Ah Jeff, you know what, had I known that about you, I wouldn’t have started you know with this whole thing because that’s just ridiculous and disgusting.” He never based it upon anything he saw to begin with, so he’s not surprised by anything he finds. He just loves me because he loves me. He just loves you because he loves you.

Sally Lloyd Jones says it, her *Jesus Storybook Bible*, “God loves you with a never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love.” If there’s anything you leave with today, let that be your *lightbulb*.

Let me pray. Father I’m thankful for your grace. And the surety of knowing you. We love you because you first loved us. And I’m thankful Father that our message, our beliefs, our mission, our ministries, all of the things Father that we’re on about, we’re all about you, and from you and through you and to you are all things. So I pray Father that you would cause this message to erupt with joy in our hearts and minds and that what might be the fruit of it is our response - not just in song, but certainly in song, but



our response in life with all the things that we have Father, we see this grace, which helps us to respond with money and time and energy and all that we have Father until our Saviour comes we pray. In Jesus name, Amen.