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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

Today we are going to be talking about the sovereign selection of God, the Grace of God, the gracious character of God. You know there is so much in the Bible I do not understand, but I just accept it and believe it. I don’t have to understand it for me to believe it. I heard about a 5-year-old boy who was in Sunday School. His teacher taught a lesson that Sunday about how God put Adam in the Garden of Eden and then saw that he was all alone and so God put Adam into a deep sleep, opened up his side and took one of his ribs. Like I have said before, he must have had a “spare” rib and God turned it into a “prime” rib. He used that rib from Adam’s side to create Eve, his wife. Later that afternoon the boy was out running and playing. He came inside to the kitchen and his mother was there. He was holding his side and he said, “Mother, mother! My side’s hurting. I think I’m about to have a wife!” Yes, there’s a lot in the Bible I don’t understand, but I just accept it by faith.

We come now to Romans chapter 9, which many people feel is a very difficult, obscure, sticky passage of scripture. I don’t claim to understand it; I just claim to believe it. This is a good time for us to stop and sort of get the “big picture” of Romans.

When I was growing up we had a 1962 Chevrolet station wagon. Do you remember station wagons? That was before the minivans and SUVs came along. We had a third seat in the station wagon, which faced the back. Now, I liked sitting in the back because you could not only see what you were going toward, you could also see where you’d been. It’s good for us to stop for a moment and say, “Now, where have we been in the book of Romans?”

Romans chapters 1 through 8 are all about God’s righteousness *declared*. God is declared to be a righteous, holy God. He is perfect. Now, we, in opposition to that, are all sinners by nature and by choice. Yet, God commended his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us and so he has justified us. He is currently sanctifying us through the presence of the Holy Spirit in us and one day he is going to glorify us. Then you come to Romans chapters 9 through 11, which is the second big section we are starting this morning. This is the section about God’s righteousness *defended*. If you remember the theme of Romans is Romans 1:16, which says, “I’m not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the power of God and the salvation to everyone that believes. To the Jew first and then to the Gentile.” Then he spends eight chapters talking about salvation and all along as we are reading that in the back of our mind we are asking, “Well, what about the Jews? What about Israel?” In Romans 9 through 11, he is defending the righteousness of God and he is using it to address the issue of Israel. In fact, in chapter 9 we are going to be looking at God’s sovereignty. How God chooses whom he will choose. It’s kind of looking at it from heaven’s perspective over the shoulder of God. Then, in chapter 10, we’re going to look at man’s responsibility. The perspective changes back to Earth when it talks about, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” Romans 11 is about God’s faithfulness to synthesize the two.

What about Israel? It’s interesting as I read the commentaries on Romans. There was a man named Alexander McLauren who is often called the “Prince of Expositors”. He lived one hundred years ago in Manchester, England. There are a tremendous number of commentaries, but he stops at the end of Romans chapter 8 and totally skips chapters 9, 10 and 11. He starts

back up in Romans 12:1. Why does he do that? Even as much as I love, respect and admire that great pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas for so many years, Dr. George W. Truett, in his writings on Romans, he admits he doesn’t understand Romans 9 through 11 and kind of stumbles through it. Do you know the difference between today and one hundred years ago? Even 75 years ago? Today there is a nation of Israel. The Jews have a country, a land. One hundred years ago there was no Israel. They had to spiritualize it. Even 75 years ago there was no nation of Israel. Every time I visit the Holy Land I am reminded how God has preserved and restored the nation of Israel. It’s all part of his promise. We are living right now in the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. God is not through with the nation of Israel. That’s what Romans 9 through 11 is all about. You and I have the benefit of living in a time when there *is* a nation of Israel.

Have you ever thought about how through the centuries God has preserved the Jewish people and they have maintained their identity even though they have been scattered all over the planet Earth? Dr John MacArthur writes, “Throughout history the Jews have distinguished themselves in virtually every field of human achievement: science, arts, music, business, political leadership. They have been a noble people who have produced a disproportionate share of the world’s geniuses. Why can’t you find an Edomite today? Why can’t you find an Amorite today? A Perizzite? A Hittite? The Israelites are there. Why? Because God preserved them.” And that’s what Romans 9-11 is all about. We’ll start that section today. Looking ahead Romans 12 through 16—the last section of the book—is God’s righteousness displayed in our practical duty. Starting in Romans 12 it is very practical because we are righteous in Christ, and this is how we ought to live.

My desire is to always make the truth of the Bible simple enough that even a 12-year-old can understand it. So, I think what Paul is doing here is making three statements about salvation, then he’s giving three historical illustrations and then we are going to look at three present day applications to these points about salvation.

I. SALVATION IS NOT DETERMINED BY NATURAL BIRTH

Let’s read beginning in Romans 9:4-9. Do you remember last week the apostle, Paul, was so burdened that he was unceasingly weeping and his heart was broken? He said, “I would even be willing to go to Hell if a certain group of people could be saved.” About whom is he speaking? look at verse 4. he’s talking about “the people of Israel.” Then, he’s going to mention some benefits, some advantages that the people of Israel have had. “Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law.” They had “a temple worship, and the promises” of God. “Theirs are the patriarchs” Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Here’s the main advantage the people of Israel have had. “From them is traced the human ancestry of Christ” the Messiah. By the way, if you ever have a Mormon or a Jehovah’s Witness try to tell you the Bible never says Jesus Christ is God, it’s right there in black and white: “Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.”

When you think about the relatively small number of Jews have accepted Jesus Christ, you may wonder what’s wrong with that picture. The Messiah came from Israel. Jesus was a Jew. Why haven’t more Jews accepted Christ? Has the word of God, the promises of God failed? Well, start reading there in verse 6. “It is not as though God’s word had failed. For not all who are

descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, 'It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.'" Now, that's Isaac as opposed to Ishmael or one of the other sons of Abraham. "In other words it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. For this was how the promise was stated: 'At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son.'"

Historical example: Isaac

Now, what is the example? Well, it's Isaac. Have you ever heard the song, "Father Abraham had many sons, many sons had Father Abraham." When Abraham was 75, God appeared to him and said, "Abraham, I am choosing you and I am going to bless you. I am going to make of your children and grandchildren a huge nation. Abraham, you are going to have more descendants than there are stars in the sky. You are going to have more descendants than there are grains of sand on the seashore." Abraham said, "That's great! Let's do it!" He's 75 years old now, so he tells his wife, Sarah. She says, "That's great!"

They live a few more years and they still haven't had any children and they keep remembering God's promise about a lot of descendants. Finally, Sarah and Abraham make a terrible mistake people are still making in today. They decided God needed their help to fulfill his plan. Have you ever heard anybody say even today, "God helps those who help themselves!" That's not in the Bible! In fact, the Bible says exactly the opposite. God doesn't help those who help themselves, God helps the helpless. that's what the Bible says.

But Abraham and Sarah decided they would help God out. I can just imagine Abraham, who is 80 or 85 by this time and Sarah, is a pretty old lady herself. She goes up to Abraham one day and I can just see her saying, "You know, honey, God said we're going to have a lot of children." "Well, that's right, he did." "You know, honey. We're not getting any younger." He said, "Well, that's for sure." She says, "You know, honey. I'm getting on up in years." "Well, I wasn't going to say anything about that." "Okay. I've got an idea. I have this young handmaiden, and her name is Hagar."

Believe me, I don't believe she was "Hagar, the Horrible." Do you? I think she was a good looking young maiden. Sarah says, "Abraham, do you know Hagar?" He says, "Yeah, I've noticed her a couple of times." "Well, Abraham I have a plan. I want you to go and have sex with my handmaiden." I can just imagine. He says, "Well, if you insist, dear." They thought they were helping God out. Do you know what they were doing? They were making a mess! A child was born whose name was Ishmael. Did you know today the whole mess in the Middle East between the Arabs and the Israelites? the Arabs trace their lineage through Ishmael and the Israelites trace their lineage through Isaac, and it is still one big family feud? Think about how many hundreds of thousands of people have died and how much blood has been shed because Sarah and Abraham thought they would help God out. God does not need any help. Do you understand that? When he's going to do something, he will do it. So, later on when they were almost 100 years old, Sarah was

pregnant and she gave birth to a son named Isaac. Isaac was a son of Abraham, but also Ishmael was a son of Abraham. by the way, after Sarah died, Abraham married again. Her name was Keturah and they had six more boys. So he had at least eight sons that we know of and out of all these eight sons. What the Bible says is. God chose to trace the lineage of Isaac and Isaac alone.

A few years ago I was in Jerusalem and I was talking to a Palestinian Muslim shopkeeper. We were talking about his Muslim faith and I was talking about my Christian faith. Do you know what this man said to me? He said, "Just like you, I am a descendant of Abraham through Ishmael." and he was bragging about it. Even in the time of Jesus, the Jews were bragging about being descendants of Abraham. Do you remember in Matthew, chapter 3 they said to John the Baptist, "We are children of Abraham." John said, "Well, God could take these rocks and turn them into children of Abraham." In John, chapter 8 they are talking to Jesus and they say, "We know who our father is." Why would they say something like that to Jesus? Because there was a rumor going around that Jesus didn't know who his daddy was. Everybody knew Joseph really wasn't his daddy. Then, who was his daddy? They had a word for that back then just like they have a word for that today. They said, "Jesus, we know who our daddy is. We are children of Abraham." They are still bragging about their lineage, their human descent. Do you remember what Jesus said? He said, "Good for you. Abraham saw my dad, and he was glad when he saw me." They said, "What? You're not even 50 years old yet, and you say old Abraham knew you." Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am." It made them so mad they picked up stones and tried to kill Jesus. It's not natural descent.

Today's Lesson: Your salvation doesn't hang on your family tree

Here is today's application: Your salvation doesn't hang on your family tree. It is not who your mother is, who your father is or who your grandfather is. Years ago I was talking to a man who was what we would call a secular pagan. he was a secular humanist—a very good guy who had no time for God and no time for Jesus Christ or the Bible. He was one of these fellows who liked to trace out his roots, a genealogy nut. I mean a genealogy person. He had discovered Jonathan Edwards was one of his ancestors. I'll remind you Jonathan Edwards was one of the greatest preachers of Colonial America, a leader in the first Great Awakening. This man was proud of the fact that Jonathan Edwards, a great preacher, was one of his ancestors, as if that would cause him to have some kind of spiritual worth. I have talked to people even recently and I have said, "What about your spiritual condition? What about your relationship with God?" Do you know what they want to talk about? They want to talk about their relatives. They say, "Why, my granddaddy was a preacher. He founded that church out there, New Heaven Number Nine. My momma played the organ at that church for sixteen years. My daddy was a deacon in that church." It doesn't have anything to do with your grandfather, your grandmother, your momma or your daddy. It's *you* and you personally. Do you know God? Do you know Jesus Christ personally? Salvation does not hang on your family tree. Salvation hangs on the tree Jesus Christ died on and you must come face to face with Jesus. So that's the first point he makes.

II. SALVATION IS BASED UPON GOD'S SOVEREIGN CHOICE

Here's the second point about salvation Paul is making. Salvation is based upon God's sovereign choice. You say, "I don't quite understand that word 'sovereign.'" Well, draw a line right in the

middle of it. “sov | reign.” Only royalty reigns and that word “sov | reign” means “reigns alone.” Only God has ultimate and absolute authority. God is the one who chooses who will be saved. Let’s just read it. there in verse 10. Here’s the text beginning in Romans 9, verse 10. “Not only that,” here’s the second example. “but Rebekah’s children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God’s purpose in election might stand:” Now, that’s an important statement you probably need to underline because that’s the whole point of this passage. “in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: not by works, but by him who calls—she [Rebekah] was told, ‘The older will serve the younger,’ talking about her twins. “Just as it is written: ‘Jacob I loved,’” Now this is God talking: “‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’” What’s that word? Wow! Can you believe that that is in the Bible?

You know we say, “God loves everybody, doesn’t he?” How in the world can the Bible say “God loved Jacob, but Esau he hated?” There are a couple of ways you need to interpret that. First of all, that is a quotation from Malachi, chapter 1, and God is talking to nations here. He’s not talking to *individuals*. Edom was the nation formed by the descendants of Esau. Edom always opposed the Israelites and so God is saying I prefer Israel over Edom. So, God has a right to choose whomever He will choose. Also, here the word *hated* is like the way Jesus used the word *hated* in Luke 9 when he said, “You cannot follow me unless you are willing to *hate* your mother, father, brother and sister.” What he means is, “No other person can be more important than me. You must prefer me over everybody else.” The main thing this passage is saying is God just chooses whomever he will choose.

Historical example: Jacob and Esau

Now, I want you to just ponder that for just a moment. If you are not already confused in this sermon, you will be in a few minutes. I promise you I’m going to make it as clear as muddy water. The thing is you won’t figure this out. Sometimes people struggle between this idea of “our free choice to choose salvation” and “God’s choice of us.” Which one is it? The answer is “Yes.” Before you and I ever chose God, he chose us. Now, let’s look at the historical example of Jacob and Esau. Rebekah was married to Isaac and was pregnant with twins, and the Bible says these twins even battled within her womb. God told Rebekah even before these children were born, “Listen, Rebekah. I’m going to go against culture and custom. Instead of the oldest son being the one who is in charge, the younger is going to rule over the older one.” Okay, these twin baby boys were born. The first one born was red and had a lot of hair on his body so they named him appropriately, Harry. That was his name. That’s what Esau means in Hebrew. “hairy one.” Then the second son was born. Remember he was a twin. He had grabbed the heel of his older brother as they were coming out of the womb. So, they saw that and they named him “grabber.” That’s what Jacob or *Jacob* means in Hebrew. “the grabber”. So, the older one was Esau, “Harry” and the younger one was Jacob, the “Grabber.”

Now, culture and custom dictated Esau would have the blessing and the birthright because he was the firstborn, but God already decided, “No, I’m not going to choose Esau, I’m going to choose Jacob.” Now Jacob was a deceptive, shrewd, crooked kind of guy. He spent his whole life grabbing for this and grabbing for that, it was always for the thing that gave him the greatest

advantage. He grabbed for it here and grabbed for it there. But God said, "I'm going to use even a guy that's a grabber."

Somebody said, "When I read that verse, 'Jacob I loved, and Esau I hated,' I stumble over it. But it's not the "Esau I hated," that I stumble over. I stumble over the "Jacob I loved." How could God love somebody like Jacob who was a grabber?" Well, how could God love somebody like you and like me? We are basically selfish, sinful people who grab for all we can get. God took a grabber and changed his name from Jacob to Israel, which means a "prince of God." This is the same God who can change all of us who are selfish, sinful creatures into children of God by his gracious choice. It is God's choice.

Today's Lesson: Your salvation originated in the heart of God

Here is today's lesson. Your salvation originated in the heart of God. It was his choice. If I were to ask you, "When did your salvation begin? When did your salvation start?" You might go back to the point of your conversion. For me, I was born again on March 11, 1961. In fact, just this past week I celebrated my spiritual birthday. Every Christian has two birthdays: a physical birthday and a spiritual birthday. Mine's March 11, 1961. Is that when my salvation began? No, you have to go back further than that. Okay, let's go back to the blood-drenched slopes where Jesus died on the cross. You say, "That's when my salvation began." Nope. You have to go back further than that. You have to go back before the world was created, before God flung the stars into space. You have to go back to eternity past and that's where our salvation originated. What happened on March 11, 1961? That's my *conversion*. What happened at the cross? That was where our redemption was completed. Oh, it was started because the Bible says he was a "Lamb slain before the foundation of the world," but when I use the word salvation, I'm talking about the whole scope.

Do you know where it originated? In the heart and mind of God before there was ever even a light or a planet or a universe. Is that in the Bible? Look at Ephesians 1. "For he that is God chose us in him before the creation of the world." That's when it happened. "before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ." You say, "Why did he do that? Why did God choose me?" Look at the last few words of that verse and this is what thrills my heart, "in accordance with his pleasure and his will." Do you know why God chose me to be part of his family before the foundation of the world? He just wanted to and it just gave him pleasure.

God is God. Let's let God be God and he chooses whom he will choose. Do you remember when you were in grammar school and you were choosing sides for kickball? You usually had two captains and they chose sides. Here all of us are over on this side and we are being selected. We are saying, "Pick me! Pick me! Choose me! Choose me!" And, none of us wants to be the last one chosen. God forbid that we should not be chosen and finally he just says, "The rest of you just get on that team." We all like to be chosen. If you are in the family of God, if you are in Christ today, before you ever decided to choose God, he chose you.

You say, "Now, pastor, I don't understand this. I don't understand where does my free will come into this? It seems like you are taking that completely away from me. It sounds like it is already a

fixed deal. It's not fair. God has already determined it beforehand." Well, yes he has, and I don't understand it, but it is something like this. Romans 9 is written from the perspective of heaven looking over God's shoulder. It is a done deal. When we get to Romans 10, we will look at it from Earth's perspective. "Whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. If you believe with your heart and confess with your mouth, you will be saved." It's looking at it from two different perspectives. Somebody once said, "It's like this. Before you come to Christ you look at a doorway and Jesus said, 'I am the door.' Above that door it says, 'Whosoever will may come.' You say, 'I'm a whosoever. I'm a sinner. I need Jesus.' and you walk through that door. When you get through that door, you look at the other side of it and it says, "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world." Somebody said to Charles Spurgeon, "How can you reconcile the doctrine of free choice and the doctrine of the sovereign choice and election of God?" Charles Spurgeon said, "I don't need to reconcile friends, because those two doctrines are not contrary. They are just two sides of the same coin." You look at it from two different perspectives. God chose me and God chose you before we ever chose him.

The illustration I used several weeks ago is still true. Let me illustrate it again. Two or three weeks ago 36 of us from Tyler were in Chicago and got on board a 747 jet. We flew 12 hours from Chicago to Tel Aviv. Did you know there was only one destination predetermined of that 747? When we bought our tickets we chose that we were going to be on that flight and our names were written down on a reservation list. Once we chose to get on board the destination was already predetermined. It was predestined. Now, on that flight we had lots of choices, just like we have lots of choices right now. You could choose to sleep, or talk, or read, or watch a movie. You could choose what you were going to eat and what you were going to drink. You had all kinds of choices but the destination was already predetermined. We couldn't say, "Well, I believe I'm going to New York, or I believe I'm going to Dallas Ft. Worth on this plane." No, if you were on that plane, that's where it was going. If you are in Christ, your destination is predetermined. You say, "Oh, that's heaven, isn't it?" No, not according to Romans 8:29, "Your predestination is being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ" Like Brother John said, "On your way to heaven. that's when it happens."

III. GOD'S CHOICES ARE BEYOND OUR ABILITY TO COMPREHEND

Let's go on to the third point about salvation. If you are not confused now, you will be. Here's point number three: God's choices are beyond our ability to comprehend. say, "Now, pastor. This just doesn't make sense to me." Do you know the reason it doesn't make sense? Because you and I don't have enough sense for God's sense to make sense. You say, "It just doesn't seem fair to me." Well, the problem is you are trying to take some idea of human fairness and impose it on God, and God is God. let his character determine what is good and right and fair instead of some weak, sentimental human concept. You say, "This just doesn't seem right. It's not just. It's not fair." Well, keep reading.

Romans 9:14. Paul has already anticipated that feeling or attitude. "What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For the Scripture says God said to Pharaoh: [Here's our next historical example] 'I raised you up, Pharaoh, for this very purpose, that I might display my

power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.’ Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.” I don’t have any trouble with the first half of that verse. Do you? Honestly, the last part of that verse. Dr. J. Fiddlo Baxter said, “That is the most troubling verse in all the Bible. ‘God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy and he will harden whom he hardens.’”

Historical Example: Pharaoh

The historical example here is Pharaoh. You know you need to read your Bible, but if you haven’t seen the movie, “Prince of Egypt,” for something that comes out of Hollywood, it is relatively good. It doesn’t follow the scripture completely, but at least it honors the miraculous nature of what happened in the book of Exodus. Do you remember what happened? God sent Moses to Pharaoh and said, “Let my people go!” Pharaoh said, “No, I’m not going to let them go!” So, God sent plagues. he sent ten plagues. sometimes people read in the book of Exodus and they say, “I just can’t accept the fact the Bible says, ‘God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. I just can’t accept it.’” Take your time and read it again. There were ten plagues. After the first plague, it says, “*Pharaoh* hardened his heart.” Second plague. “*Pharaoh* hardened his heart.” Third plague. “*Pharaoh* hardened his heart.” It’s not until after the sixth plague that it says, “*God* hardened Pharaoh’s heart.” God just brought out what was already there.

That’s the nature of God’s grace and mercy. It’s like some of this rain that has just been falling the last few days is going to bring forth some beautiful flowers, but it is also going to bring forth some ugly weeds. Don’t blame the rain for the weeds. It didn’t bring the weeds; it simply revealed they were there. The grace and mercy of God does not place hardness in anybody’s heart, it just reveals the hardness that’s there. The same sun that melts ice hardens clay. Isn’t it amazing how some people can come to a gospel service like this and their heart is broken when the conviction of the Holy Spirit hits their heart, and others just sit there thinking about the basketball game, or the business deal this week, and they have absolutely no sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. How can that happen? “God has mercy on whom he will have mercy and he hardens whom he will harden”

Today’s Lesson: God is so awesome—your brain can't contain His total plan!

You say, “Pastor, are you ever going to explain this deal to me? I mean I am getting more confused by the moment.” All right. Here is today’s application: God is so awesome, your brain can’t contain his total plan. If you think you are going to figure this out, don’t! If you figure Romans 9 out, then you qualify for the fourth person of the Trinity. Last time I checked there was no vacancy in the Trinity. Do you know there is something about the character and nature of God we will never understand, that we will never comprehend? Have you ever been working on your computer, and it just locks up? That’s what happens when we try to think about the greatness and the mercy and the grace of God. Our little human computer just locks up! We run out of memory space. There is something about God that’s called his Holiness, his Transcendence, which we will never understand!

Look at Isaiah, 55. “My thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are your ways, my ways declares the Lord. as the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways, and my

thoughts, your thoughts.” Here’s the problem. Here’s God’s thinking. Here’s God’s working up here and here’s our thinking and our thinking down here—and you think you are going to figure God out. God is God! You cannot confine God to the box of your own human understanding. You say, “Well, I don’t like the way God does this.” Big deal! If you don’t like the way God does this. If you don’t like the way God does that, you leave his universe and go start your own universe. See if you can do that! It doesn’t work that way. God is God! and he is in control. He is in charge. I promise you, in the vocabulary of God there are two expressions you’ll never hear from the mouth of God. Do you know what they are? One of them is “Oops!” and the other is “Uh oh!” God is in control. I hope you walk out of this here today scratching your head saying, “God is so great! He is so awesome! I’m not going to figure him out. I’m just going to love him and accept him. and obey him.”

CONCLUSION

Have you ever watched a movie or a television show so many times you know what the next line is going to be? Don’t tell me which one it is for you, but I guess I can reveal to you I’m a fan of the Andy Griffith Show. I know all the characters and there are some episodes I can tell you every line. I just like Andy Griffith. Have you ever been watching a movie or a show like that with somebody who hasn’t seen it? Do you know what you have a tendency to do? You say, “Hey, you’re going to like this next part.” or you say the line with them. Do you know what history is? History past and history future? It’s “His story.” God is the producer, the director, the writer, the casting director and even with things that haven’t happened yet it’s like a movie that God has seen a thousand times. I can just imagine sometimes in heaven he must turn to the angels and say, “You’re going to like this next part. Watch this. You’re going to love it!”

God is in control and our job is not to figure God out. Our job is to love God and to accept his grace!

OUTLINE

The Big Picture of Romans:

Romans 1-8: God's righteousness declared
Romans 9-11: God's righteousness defended
Romans 9: God's sovereignty
Romans 10: Man's responsibility
Romans 11: God's faithfulness
Romans 12-16: God's righteousness displayed

I. SALVATION IS NOT DETERMINED BY NATURAL BIRTH (4-9)

Historical example: Isaac

Today's Lesson: Your salvation doesn't hang on your family tree

II. SALVATION IS BASED UPON GOD'S SOVEREIGN CHOICE (10-13)

Historical example: Jacob and Esau

Today's Lesson: Your salvation originated in the heart of God

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will. *Ephesians 1:4-5*

III. GOD'S CHOICES ARE BEYOND OUR ABILITY TO COMPREHEND (14-18)

Historical Example: Pharaoh

Today's Lesson: God is so awesome—your brain can't contain His total plan!

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." *Isaiah 55:8-9*