

UNNATURAL SELECTION, ROMANS 9:6-16

Pax Romana #22

◆**Intro:** The evolutionary worldview has taught recent generations that the cells, the plants, the animals –all that exists today, exists because of what is called “natural selection”. That is, the life form most naturally qualified to persist does. Life forms less qualified, say, those that can not adapt to conditions, (like the Woolly Mammoth) die out. All of this is purely by chance of course, given enormous amounts of time for “nature” to experiment. And the reality we have in the world today, with far more advancement than say, the Jurassic era, is just, kinda the way the dirt clods crumbled. Whether or not you accept this explanation for our fascinating world, I would like to draw a contrast the the story of salvation. *MANKIND TENDS TOWARD THE APPROACH THAT GOOD, OR LIFE, OR SALVATION, OR WHATEVER HOPEFUL FUTURE MIGHT COME WILL ALWAYS COMES ON CERTAIN CONDITIONS; THOSE OF BEING BETTER THAN, OR MORE FIT THAN, or wiser than, more powerful than. The strong win and the weak lose. This is also the premise of other world religions: one must know a certain truth, or achieve a level of understanding, or excel in certain moral behavior, or accomplish some acceptable act, like say, giving your life for the cause –to reach eternal bliss, salvation, nirvana, or heaven.*

◆If you adhere to such philosophy they you must always wonder, How is it going for you? Will you be weeded out of everlasting life, or will you be fit to survive? Do you have

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enough time to get fit, or mutate before that new world order arrives?

◆ But the Christian gospel is vastly different.

◆ **1. The spiritual problem with natural selection:**

◆ A. The Christian faith says that a new era (call it the "Fantastic Period" in earth's history) is approaching with certainty. They call it the Kingdom of God. The Christian faith says that what will be required to survive in that world environment is complete moral and spiritual purity, perfection and holiness. And just as a velociraptor from the Jurassic could not survive in today's environment, so the Christian faith says that even the fittest of human creatures cannot naturally be selected for the Kingdom of heaven for they are as a whole unfit. Paul talked all about that in Romans 1-3. No human is good. No human is innocent. Abraham was not innocent. Esau was not innocent. Jacob was not innocent. Paul was not innocent. You are not innocent.

◆ "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,...and the wages of sin is death" Romans 3:23, 6:23 NIV.

◆ *"All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath."*
Ephesians 2:3, NIV.

◆ And this creates a problem: humanity as a species is due for extinction! No human is deserving of anything but spiritual extinction on account of the fact that all humans have a flawed

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gene prevents survival: sin. We all, *by nature*, turned away from God.

◆ "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; Isaiah 53:6, NIV.

◆ **B.** But here comes the unnatural part of God's selection process, in the second half of each of the verses we've just looked at...

◆ Isa.53:6b and the LORD has laid on him (the Messiah) the iniquity of us all."

◆ Rom6:23b but the free gift of God is eternal life."

◆ Eph2:4f "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved." Ephesians 2:4, 5, NIV.

◆ This is the Pax Romana, the peace we find in the book of Romans. We are not fit. We can not survive. But Jesus has been fit for us! He has given us a protective outer shell of mercy And this mercy, this unfair and unconditional mercy, is what Paul is pointing at in our text, Romans 9. It's called God's purpose in election.

◆ **2. The spiritual solution of unnatural selection: people are saved through God's unconditional election.**

◆ I say that this is a truth of wonder, relief, and assurance precisely because it is an unnatural selection. All other selection or election we speak of is based on the fittedness or merit of the candidate, but God chooses to save people out of a pool of only

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unfit candidates! Paul has at this point in Romans clearly established that the stain of sin pervades all humans and all parts of humans. We call that depravity. Even man's will is depraved, so he is hopeless to *want or chose* the right thing. Remember?

◆ "the sinful mind (Paul's term is "flesh" or "nature") is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." Romans 8:7, NIV.

◆ "We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin." Romans 7:14, NIV.

◆ "but in the sinful nature [I am] a slave to the law of sin." Romans 7:25, NIV.

◆ **A.** This presents a theological problem because Paul as made it clear in Romans that we do not have a free will. Our will is in bondage to sin. We are stuck in depravity, all of which means that in no way can I contribute to my salvation. The significance of election is described well by Tim Keller when he says that without election you compromise the central teaching of the Bible that we are saved by grace alone, not by our works. If the difference between the unbeliever and the believer is ultimately in us (more humble, chose wisely for God when others did not) then we are the real authors of our own salvation, even if faith is the only work we did to get it.

◆ **B.** Do you see where this is going? You and I have a deep predicament!

◆ 1) If we cannot chose God and thereby save ourselves, how can we get salvation? We have deformed ourselves by sin, rejected God and run into the swamp of sin's quicksand.

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We can struggle in it but it only makes it us sink deeper. At the same time we have an evil eye that refuses to call out to our Father on the shore to save us. We cannot help ourselves.

◆2) On the other hand, Scripture is clear that entrance into heaven for a sinner has a condition: If I am to be saved I must believe in Jesus substitutionary death for my demerit, and his merit being passed on to me by grace. People must in all actuality choose to believe or not to believe on Jesus. John Piper puts it...

◆If Jacob is saved he will be saved by faith. And if Esau is finally condemned, he will be condemned for his evil deeds and unbelief. Our final judgment will accord with the way we have responded to the gospel in this life. Which means that our final entry into heaven or to hell is not unconditional. To be finally saved we must have believed. And to be lost we must have sinned and not believed. No one will stand on the precipice of hell and be able to say, "I don't deserve this."

◆*So I cannot believe, but I must believe to be forgiven!* The tragedy of human sin is that I cannot make the choice for God on my own. In our text it's v 16...

◆"It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy." Romans 9:16, NIV.

◆It's also on the lips of Jesus himself...

◆"*No-one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.*" John 6:44, NIV.

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◆“For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him.” Philippians 2:13, NLT.

◆**B.** And now for the beauty and marvel of God’s grace! Oh rejoice friends, in the good news that God is full of mercy! God *does* work in people to he *does* enable them to believe! This enabling Paul calls “God’s purpose in election”(v11). God’s election is his choosing to give the gift of faith in Christ to specific people on purpose!

◆“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--” Ephesians 2:8, NIV.

◆The doctrine of election is the overwhelmingly beautiful biblical truth that those who ultimately believe on Jesus and are saved were in fact first chosen for salvation by Father God, before creation. They come to faith because they were chosen. They were not chosen because they had faith. Everyone who makes the choice to believe was only able to do that because God graciously chose them first before time even began.

◆“*[God] has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,*” 2 Timothy 1:9, NIV.

◆1) Paul is pretty direct about it in our text. He tells us that God has been choosing who to save all along! Abraham is illustration number one. His first son was Ishmael, by a servant girl Hagar. Abraham figured he could make God’s promise of a nation come

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true on his own even though his wife Sarah could not have kids. He even begged God to choose Ishmael (Gen.17:18), but God said no. Sarah would have a son at 90 years old and he, Isaac, would be the line for Abraham's descendants.

◆2) Then illustration number two: In case you thought that God picked Isaac on the condition that he was more fit for being born of Isaac's actual wife, and not a servant girl, Paul points to Isaac's boys. Twins! Esau and Jacob, born from the same lady and the same father, at the same time! Verse 11: they hadn't had a chance yet to even do anything good or bad! To believe in God or to not believe in him. And God picked Jacob for the line of Israel. He passed by Esau. Esau did not follow Abraham's God, because Esau was not given faith.

◆*"When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed." Acts 13:48, NIV.*

◆*"but you do not believe because you are not my sheep." John 10:26, NIV.*

◆**3. How do I know if I'm a chosen child of God?** This by the way is the right question to ask. Many in response to hearing about election ask "Isn't that unfair? Why should God have the right to determine what happens to the people he made?" That's verse 14 and following... *-is God unjust?...then how can we be blamed? (19)*. Paul will answer these next. For now the better question is about the state of your own heart. How will you

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know if *you* are a chosen child of God, or will be saved from sin and death? Or will live on eternally instead of going the way to the stegosaurus?

◆**A.** People have all kinds of mistaken answers for this.

◆1) My ancestors, my grandma was a christian, my cousin is a pastor so Im good with God. But salvation is not by race, it's by grace. Not by family, or ethnicity. v6 *"For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children."* Romans 9:6, 7, NIV.

◆2) have done good and spiritual things (sacraments, baptism, incense, pilgrimage, visions, tongues). I know whole church denominations that say they are Christian but maintain that only those are saved that have a certain gift, like tongues, or have had a beatific vision. Children are told about Jesus but they grow up to lose hope because they don't get a vision, and dad never had it either. There was a great uncle who had the vision but mostly no. But v12 *"not by works but by him who calls--she was told, "The older will serve the younger.""* Romans 9:12, NIV.

◆3) I believe there is a God. But according to the Apostle James, even demons believe in God, so that isn't it.

◆**B.** The Bible's answer is none of these. Rather let me ask you these:

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◆ Do you find a responding love for Jesus rising in your heart for taking your sin? I use the word love because it is more than believing information that even demons know.

◆ Have you experienced the convictions of the Holy Spirit that your sins are a problem that need settling? Do you long for holiness in your life, and thirst for God's goodness?

These are signs of true faith, and therefore also the stunning truth of being chosen of God.

◆ **Conclusion:** This is a teaching for believers, and even far too mysterious for us to fully comprehend. Nevertheless, far be it from us to disagree with the scriptures. It is a truth meant to fill you with the awe of God! To stir a depth of love by which to honor and worship God. Paul is revealing that it was never anything that a human had that got them chosen. It was never merely ethnic. It was never outstanding morality levels. It was never accomplishment. It was never the wise choosing will of man. It was always the electing choice of God. This choice is a God choice, therefore it cannot be undone. It cannot be broken. You cannot mess it up. God has his reasons, but they are not in you! So you can be sure his love is for good! This is a doctrine of realization. Praise God's name. Adore him for this unfathomable love. Sing in your heart because of the truth that his love you cannot lose!