

LESSON 4C – God’s Mercy and Justice



Introduction

The Doctrine of Election: Pure Gospel

1. What does it mean for us to be among the elect?

John 10:28-29 “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.”

Romans 8: 30,38 Those [God] predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. ...I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. When did this election to eternal life take place?

Ephesians 1:4-6 [God the Father] chose us in [Jesus Christ] 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—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

3. What does this tell us about our works, deeds, deserving, believing, etc.?

Romans 9:10-12 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: not by works but by him who calls—she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”

Romans 9:16 [God’s choice] does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy.

Ephesians 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved.

4. Complete this sentence: If we are saved, _____ gets all the credit and glory.
5. If God is the cause when someone comes to faith, what is the cause when someone rejects his Word or doesn’t remain in faith?

Acts 7:51 “You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!”

Luke 13:34 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”

Hebrews 3:12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

6. Complete this sentence: If we are lost, we _____.

The two main teachings in the Bible are **law** and **gospel**. The law is written in our hearts and the Scriptures; the gospel is found only in God’s Word. The law tells us what God wants us to do or not do; the gospel tells us that Christ has done all things for us so that we may live in God’s presence. The law is for our sinful nature: the proud, evil, and self-righteous nature; the gospel is for those who are crushed by their sin and guilt. The law crushes and kills; the gospel gives spiritual life and strength.

7. The doctrine of election has been called pure gospel. Explain what that means.

John 15:16 “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.”

Responding to Rational Objections to the teaching of Election

1.) Since God is all-powerful, if someone dies in unbelief, it’s God’s fault for not forcing him or her to believe.

Matthew 11:28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

2.) Since God wants all people to be saved, whether someone believes must depend on what that person has decided for him- or herself.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Ephesians 2:4-5 God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.

- 3.) It's illogical to say that if a person is saved, God *alone* gets the glory, and if a person is lost, it's *all* his or her own fault.

Isaiah 55:8-9 "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."

Romans 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

- 4.) Faith in Christ can't be the only way to heaven because it wouldn't be justice for people who died before they even had a chance to hear the gospel. (Examples include the children who died during the conquest of Canaan, the children who were sacrificed to an idol, and the children who are aborted today.)

Romans 3:4 Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written: "So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge."

Psalms 36:5-6 Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the great deep.

- 5.) Read Hebrews 6:4-6. What indicates that the writer is talking about people who at one time truly believed in Jesus as their Savior? Since all the elect are saved and we won't know in this life which believers will remain in faith and be taken to heaven, why or when can we tell people that they are among the elect?

Hebrews 6:4-6 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

- 6.) Since Judas' betrayal of Jesus was prophesied in the Old Testament, was Judas predestined to do what he did and didn't have a choice?

James 1:13-15 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Note well the numerous warnings and chances that Jesus gave Judas: John 6:70 (“one of you a devil”); Luke 12:15 (“be on your guard against all kinds of greed”); John 12:1-7 (Jesus rebukes Judas for chastising Mary’s anointing him with perfume to prepare him for burial); John 13:21 (“One of you will betray me.”); Matthew 26:21 (“Surely not I Rabbi?” “Yes, it is you.”); Luke 22:48 (“Are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”); Matthew 26:50 (“Friend, do what you came for.”)

- 7.) In God’s eternal plans for us, has he predestined whom we marry, what job offers we accept, where we live, etc.?

God’s Mercy and Justice in the Conquest of Canaan

Deuteronomy 20:16-18 “However, in the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—as the Lord your God has commanded you. Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the Lord your God.”

Many today would argue that the destruction of these nations was neither justice nor mercy. For this reason, some say God has changed: In the Old Testament, he was an angry God, but now in the New Testament, he’s a more merciful and loving God. Others say passages like Deuteronomy chapter 20 were inserted by people, as products of their day, to justify killing for their own gain. This is not the way it was. In the next lesson, we will cover how we can be sure that everything in the Bible belongs in the Bible and that we’re interpreting it correctly. But for now, let’s see how God’s order concerning the destruction of these nations demonstrates both his justice and his mercy.

7. How long did God give the Canaanites to repent? Why might we say that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah were a special call to repentance?

Genesis 15:13-16 Then the LORD said to [Abraham], “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

8. In what way was the destruction of these nations an example of mercy for the Israelites?

9. How was the destruction of these nations an example of God’s mercy toward us?

Next Time: Listening to Bible Skeptics