



The Sermon

Dr. Steven J. Lawson

Genesis 25:1-26

"Generation to Generation"

April 24, 2022

TRANSCRIPT

So, I want to invite you to take your Bible and turn with me to Genesis chapter 25, Genesis chapter 25. And if you're doing the math, we're at the halfway point of fifty chapters in the book of Genesis. Now the good news for you is we're only going to look at chapter 25. So as always, I want to begin by reading the passage, and then I will pray, and then we'll work our way through this passage. We have a large section of verses today; we're going to be looking at the first 26 verses. So, here we go.

Beginning in verse 1, Genesis chapter 25: "Now Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. She bore to him Zimran and Jokshan and Medan and Midian and Ishbak and Shuah. Jokshan became the father of Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim and Letushim and Leummim. The sons of Midian were Ephah" - sounds like a homeschool convention, doesn't it. Sorry. Sorry. We homeschooled for a couple of years. It's always interesting in Little League Baseball to see all those names on the back of the kids' jerseys too that wraps around to the front of the - a lot going on here. So, where were we? OK, we're in verse 19. A little humor lets you get your way.

OK, here we go, verse 4: "The sons of Midian were Ephah and Epher and Hanoah and Abida and Eldaah. And all these were the sons of Keturah. Now Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac; but to the sons of his concubines, Abraham gave gifts while he was still living, and sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the east."

"These are all the years of Abraham's life that he lived, one hundred and seventy-five years. Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life; and he was gathered to his people. Then his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, facing Mamre, the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth; there Abraham was buried with Sarah his wife. It came about after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac lived by Beer-lahai-roi.

"Now these are the records of the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maid, bore to Abraham; and these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, in the order of their birth: Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael, and Kedar and Adbeel and Mibsam and Mishma and Dumah and Massa, Hadad and Tema and Jetur and Naphish and Kedemah. These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages, and by their camps; twelve princes according to their tribes. These are the years of the life of Ishmael, one hundred and thirty-seven years; and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people. They settled from Havilah to Shur which is east of Egypt as one goes toward Assyria; he settled in defiance of all his relatives.

"Now these are the records of the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham became the father of Isaac; and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife. Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived. But the children struggled together within her; and she said, 'If it is so, why then am I this way?' So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her, 'Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples will be separated from your body; and one people will be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger.'

"When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau. Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she" – Rebekah – "gave birth to them." There's much for us to talk about and to study in this passage. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, I pray that You would open our eyes, that we would behold wondrous truths in Your word. We are all learners, we're all disciples, we are all growing the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; so add to the deposit of truth that has been placed within us, and enlarge our understanding of who You are and how You work and how You operate. And I pray that when we leave at the end of this service that we would be even more conformed into the image of our Savior Jesus Christ. So bless all who are under the sound of my voice. May You do business in every heart here today. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

The title of this message is "Generation to Generation." And in these verses we see the ongoing flow of history from one generation to the next. That's the emphasis here: one generation to the next generation. And we see how one generation comes onto the scene for a period of time. It has its moment on the stage of history only to soon exit, and God has the next generation ready to step in.

Not all generations are the same. Not all generations face the same challenges and problems. Not all generations have the same core values. Not all generations have the same ethics. Some generations are more faithful to God than other generations. Some generations rise higher and accomplish greater feats even for God than other generations. Some generations are blessed by God with strong leaders and strong preachers, and they usher forth generations of a reformation in a Puritan age, in a great awakening, in the great missions century of the 19th century. And other generations lack strong voices, and especially strong men at the helm, and witness moral decline, because there is a famine in the land for the hearing of the word of the Lord.

Not all generations are the same. And every generation has its own blind spots. The generations previous to mine, that blind spot was racial prejudice; and my generation in which I have grown up, it has been the same - racial prejudice and abortion. But this generation faces its own blind spots as well and are blind as a bat to homosexuality and lesbianism and transgenderism. And despite the changing of generations, certain things remain the same from one generation to the next.

The human condition remains the same. The human dilemma remains the same. The divine solution remains the same. The gospel remains the same. Right and wrong remain the same. The standard for personal holiness

remains the same. God's pattern for the family remains the same. And though it may change from one generation to the next, it never changes with God, and it never changes in heaven.

In Genesis 25 we have come to the passing of one generation to the next generation, and we have in our passage here actually three generations, and we see the purpose of God continuing to move forward with unwavering resolve, we see the promise of God continuing to be the same. And so as we walk through this passage, we are mindful of one generation, to the next generation, to the next generation. Each generation has its moment in the sun, but the sun quickly sets, and the sun rises on the next generation.

I want you to note first as we look at, beginning in verse 1, "The descendants of Abraham. The descendants of Abraham." That's in the first four verses. "Now Abraham took another wife whose name was Keturah." Probably he has married her after Sarah has died, just in the chronology and the flow of the book of Genesis. Sarah died in Genesis 23, and we find ourselves now in Genesis 25. And so probably after Sarah has died, he now takes another wife, which is certainly lawful.

And then verse 2 says, "She bore to him Zimran" – and these six sons given to Abraham. And apparently, when God rejuvenated the body of Abraham to be able to impregnate Sarah in his latter years, his body remained very active and very alive, and in his older years, into his hundreds, he was still able to impregnate now his second wife, and she bore him six children.

And in verse 3, the second son mentioned here is, "Jokshan, and he became the father of Sheba and Dedan." That's the second generation. And now in the second half of verse 3 we move to the third generation, "And the sons of Dedan were" – and you see the names there. And so as Moses writes this, he is wanting us to see the succession of generations. Here are three generations in just these first three verses.

In verse 4, "The sons of Midian were" – these who were listed – "all these were sons of Keturah." And so what we have here are sons and grandsons and great-grandsons that are born over three generations. And Moses records this for us to see the goodness and the blessing of God upon Abraham, that God blessed him with many children. And the children are

not a burden, but children are a blessing that comes from the hand of God. And each individual child is a gift from God.

Solomon would develop this later in Psalm 127. Solomon wrote two Psalms, and this is one of those two Psalms, Psalm 127. Listen to verses 3 and 5: "Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb" - referring to children - "is a reward." Verse 5: "How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them."

Now admittedly, many children become a heartbreak for their parents, as they choose to go their own way. And no doubt here today, there would be many who would privately give testimony of shed tears over their own children. But nevertheless, in a big picture, children are a blessing from the Lord, and they are a gift from the Lord. And those of you who are young parents here today, you need to see that your children and future children that the Lord would bring to you come directly from the hand of God. And Moses has gone to the trouble of recording each and every one of these names for a reason, to show us that they are very important to God, as well as to Abraham.

This leads us to the next heading which is, "The distribution by Abraham," verses 5 and 6. Verse 5 says, "Now Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac." He made Isaac the sole heir of his vast estate. Abraham was very wealthy and owned much livestock and cattle, and he singled out Isaac to be the exclusive heir over the other sons who were brought into his life through the second wife.

And in verse 6, "But to the sons of his concubines" - it's in the plural and it probably refers to Hagar and Keturah, those two women. I don't think this is suggesting that Abraham had twenty wives and a hundred children, I think the reference here is to Hagar and now to his second wife. We read, "Abraham gave gifts while he was still living," to these six sons that came from the second marriage. And these gifts were probably starter flocks and starter herds to get them up and going, as they have reached adult years.

And we note here that each child does not receive the same inheritance. And Donald Grey Barnhouse, who was a great expositor of yesteryear of the last century, makes the point here that a legacy should not go to unsaved children. They would squander the money and use it simply for themselves

and for the world; that an inheritance ought to go to those who know the Lord. It's an interesting point to ponder.

"Abraham gave gifts while he was still living," - in verse 6 - "and sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land to the east." And no doubt, so that there would be no rivalry between Isaac, because he has received the whole inheritance, with these other six sons who receive but a fraction, just gifts that would be relatively very insignificant and very small, so that there will not be the exasperation of jealousy. He sends them away so that their eye will not be upon what Isaac receives in a much larger inheritance.

And I think it's worth noting just to make a point here, that it is good for a father to leave an inheritance to his children. It is, one, an expression of his love, and it is also to help them as they would begin their adult life. And Proverbs 13:22 says, "A good man, an excellent man, leaves an inheritance to his children's children," meaning it is so generous that even his own children cannot spend it, and it would be passed down even to the next generation. And Proverbs 19:14 says, "House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers." And the point that the Proverbs writer is making here is only the Lord can bring a wife to a man.

Proverbs 31:10, "An excellent wife, who can find one? Her worth is far greater than precious stones. The heart of her husband trusts in her, for she does him good and not evil all the days of her life," that God in His providence, only God in the mystery of His providence can bring a good woman to a man. But here, in a lesser way - and everything is under the providence of God - nevertheless, fathers are singled out here to be able to give to their children what they should, which is a house and wealth.

And that is exactly what we see Abraham doing here, as he is a very generous father and a very loving father, and he expresses his love to them in this way. Some of you here today need to give serious thought to that, that after you die, where will your resources go, where will your treasure be? Will it be well-invested in children who follow the Lord and enable them to live a life in which they can be a witness and a testimony for Christ, or will you leave an inheritance to foolish children who will squander and waste what you have worked hard to accumulate?

We come to the third main heading in verse 7; and I use these headings just to divide up these many verses so that we can take the pie and cut it up into slices. And in verse 7 I want you to note, third, "The death of Abraham. The death of Abraham." Verse 7 says, "These are all the years of Abraham's life that he lived, one hundred and seventy-five years." This was the exact number that had been appointed by God for Abraham to live from before the foundations of the world. And I have shared with this with you before, but it would be profitable for me to say it again.

Psalm 139:16 says that, "All of our days were written in His book when as yet there was not one of them," that before you were born God had already predetermined how many number of days you would live here upon this earth; and the day of your death is the perfect day. It is the day that was marked out by God from before time began. And each one of us has a different number of days to live here upon the earth. And so this time for Abraham to die had been marked out by God: one hundred and seventy-five years.

Verse 8, "Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age." That word "ripe" literally means "good," "a good old age." It's used in Genesis 1:4 when God saw the light after He said, "Let there be light," and God saw that it was good. It's the same word. And so this number of days is good, whether it be someone die in their youth, or whether they die of old age, whatever that number is, it is good before the Lord.

And then it adds, "an old man" - literally an elderly man - "and satisfied with life," because he had been amply supplied. Think of the life that Abraham lived, going back to Ur of Chaldees and all the way going to Haran, and then down into the Promised Land. And then going down to Egypt, then coming back to the Promised Land. And in all that he has experienced, and the miraculous birth of Isaac, and Sarah who was so faithful to him, he was satisfied with life; "and he was gathered to his people." That's a euphemistic expression for "the realm of the dead," "those who have died before him."

And this is really the first illusion to life after death, that he would go to be gathered to his people. The implication is his people are alive somewhere, either in heaven or in hell; and there's no other place where they would be. And some of those people would be in heaven. But knowing Abraham's background, he was previously a moon-worshiper in Ur of Chaldees living

in spiritual darkness and religious superstition. Most of his people will not be in heaven, most of his people will be in the flames of hell. And he was gathered to his people.

Verse 9, "Then his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah; and that's exactly where Sarah was buried." That's where Abraham, he bought this cave; and in fact, he bought the whole field in which the cave was found. It had been offered to him free, and he said, "No, I'm going to pay for it." And so he bought the field, bought the cave at the end; he buried Sarah at the end - that's back in Genesis 23 - the end of the field. And so now his two sons Isaac and Ishmael - it's the only place in all of Genesis where these two names are together - they come together for this funeral. And it's amazing how a funeral can bring family back together, even but for a moment, where they have been divided. And so they bury him in this cave next to Sarah.

Verse 10 talks about the field which Abraham purchased. Verse 11, "It came about after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac." There's no mention here of the other sons. There's no mention of Ishmael. There's no mention of the six sons that came from the second wife. But the blessing of God was passed from Abraham to Isaac in a very unique way, really telling us that the purposes of God continue to move forward, that just because the leader of one generation dies does not mean that God now is without purpose moving forward. No, God blessed Isaac; and God's eternal purpose and plan will continue to move forward to the next generation.

And we learn here, just ever so briefly, that God always has the next generation standing in the wings ready to carry the promise of God forward. I mean, people say, "What's going to happen after John MacArthur dies? What's going to happen after R. C. Sproul dies?" Well, the same thing after John Calvin died, and after Martin Luther died, and Jonathan Edwards died, and Charles Haddon Spurgeon died, and Martyn Lloyd-Jones died. God always has the next man standing in the wings ready to step forward into the spotlight of human history and to carry the movement of God forward.

That's in part what Jesus meant when He said, "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it." Hades is not a reference to hell, Hades is a reference to the grave and death. And what He is saying is even the death of Christ will not stop the church, it will actually be the foundation of the church. And even the death of the twelve apostles will not

bring Christianity to a halt, they too will be a part of the foundation of the church. Even Hades itself cannot stop the advancement of the work of God from generation to generation.

After Moses died, there was Joshua; and after Elijah died, there was Elisha; and after Stephen died, there was Paul; and after Wycliffe died, there was Huss; and after Huss died, there was Luther, and so forth and on. No leader is indispensable, and no leader is irreplaceable. The work of God is larger than any one man, or even any one woman. And we see here as Abraham dies, who is singled out in the Bible as the premier father of faith, he's got Isaac ready to take the reigns, and for the work of God to continue to move forward and the blessing of God upon Isaac.

And who is to say who is among us here today, perhaps a younger person, someone in their 20s, someone in their teenage years, who is standing in the shadows, waiting the moment that God will have prepared for them, when the leaders of this church will pass off of the scene; and God will have the next generation ready to carry it forward. I love what Winston Churchill said when he became Prime Minister of England during World War II. He said, "My entire life has been but a preparation for this one moment in time."

And who is to say who God is preparing among us here today, that at the right time, within the sovereign plan of God, to be a part of the solution that God will have for His purposes. And no leader can be effectively used by God without the blessing of God upon them. The blessing of God gives them supernatural grace. It gives them supernatural wisdom and supernatural power. No leader can do it drawing from his own well, he must have the hand of God upon him.

We read the book of Ezra - I love to trace through the book of Ezra. And this repeated phrase, "And the hand of God was upon him. The hand of God was upon him." Any good that will come from any one of our spiritual lives will be exclusively because the hand of God, or predominantly because the hand of God was upon us.

That's the death of Abraham, and it brings to an end this account of the first patriarch in the book of Genesis. We began reading about Abraham at the end of chapter 11 of Genesis, and now here we are in chapter 25. And what

a rich and full life he lived, but what a foundation was laid by Abraham for the successive generations to stand upon it and build upon it and to reach even higher.

So this leads us now, fourth, to, "The descendants of Ishmael." Beginning in verse 12, "Now these are the records of the generations of Ishmael." And obviously someone was recording all of these names and all of these places. It's possible God could have just spoken it; but most probably, there is an oral tradition that has been written down. And Moses who writes a little more than fourteen hundred years before the coming of Christ, some six hundred years after what we are reading, Moses has access to these names and places that have been recorded, and pieces this account together flawlessly, with perfect accuracy and precision.

"Now these are the records of the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maid, bore to Abraham." And you'll note here the mention of Isaac was first, because he is in the premier position. Though Ishmael was born first; nevertheless, God has singled out by His sovereign will that it will be through Isaac that the blessing and the purposes of God will move forward.

So after considering Isaac, we now move to Ishmael in verse 13, "and these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, in the order of their birth." What precision and accuracy there was in the oral tradition that was recorded for Moses to research and study. And by the way, that's how Luke wrote the gospel of Luke, and that's how Luke wrote the book of Acts, that he went and researched it, and spoke to eyewitnesses, and compiled with perfect precision the historical account of the birth of the church, as well as the earthly life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, without any contradictions whatsoever.

And we see something of that here, not just even their names, but the order of their birth; and it speaks to how accurate and how precise the Bible is. And so he now says, "Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael, Kedar and Adbeel and Mibsam," and all of the rest of these names. Verse 16, "These are the sons of Ishmael, these are their names by their villages and by their camps." And so they are arranged not just also in the order in which they were born, but also by villages and by camps. Villages were unwalled settlements, and camps were a nomadic form of living in tents: Bedouins, tent settlements.

And you'll notice at the end of verse 16, "twelve princes." The word "princes" here refers to "tribal chiefs," refers to "clan leaders," like family clan leaders, like you would have in Scotland in the Highlands, that each family, each clan has their own prince or chief. And that's what's taking place here.

And this is in fulfillment of the word of God, lest this pass our observation. God had already promised Ishmael that he would have twelve sons, "Not just twelve children, you're going to have twelve sons, and each of these twelve sons will be princes." And it was God who produced it, and it was God who provided it, because God said that there would be twelve sons. And back in Genesis 17:20 we read, "As for Ishmael, I" – God is the speaker here – "I have heard you," – and the "you" refers to Abraham; Abraham has prayed for Ishmael. And so God says, "As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and I will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He" – Ishmael – "shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation." And so as God had promised it, so it came to pass.

This is just but one illustration that all the promises of God are yea and amen, and behind the promise of God stands the sovereign will of God and the omnipotent might of Almighty God to bring to pass everything that God has promised. And the same is true for you and me as well; every promise of God you can bank your entire life on it. God is the guarantor of every promise in His word. He has promised that you will never fall from grace. He has promised that He's preparing a place for you in heaven. He has promised that He will reward His servants who are faithful. He has promised that we will have access to the throne of grace. He has promised that we will drink from the river of life and eat from the tree of life. He has promised that we will behold His face. He has promised all of these things; and they shall surely come to pass, because God has said it.

So we move on to verse 17, and I want you to note, fifth, "The death of Ishmael," and we're reminded again here is the passing of a generation off the stage of history. In verse 17, "These are the years of the life of Ishmael, one hundred and thirty seven years," – he outlived **Abraham** by forty-eight years – "and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people." We're reminded what Hebrews 9 says, that "it's appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment."

It's appointed to each and every one of us here today. We have two unbreakable appointments, death and judgment, and those are coming, unless the Lord returns first, and then it will be simply judgment; as we will stand before the Lord, and He, like a master auditor, will examine our lives, and there will be reward or failure of reward. But here, Ishmael, it's appointed unto him to die, and this is the appointed time, "and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people," the realm of the dead in the grave. I don't think it's to be intended to be understood just by that phrase, either heaven or hell; it's just simply the grave, the dead.

Verse 18, "They" - referring to the descendants of Ishmael - "they settled from Havilah to Shur" - that's the Arabian peninsula, really north-central Arabia, it's to the east of the Promised Land; they settled there, the sons of Ishmael - "to Shur which is east of Egypt as one goes toward Assyria." So it's between Beersheba and Egypt. And Moses, as he records this, is very specific. He's not rounding off the edges, he's giving us specific geographical information. He's giving us specific names and places, and even number of years that someone lives, "and he settled in defiance of all of his relatives," and even this was prophesied in Genesis 16:12.

Without going into all that, here's the point I want to make. Why all this detail? Why all these names? Why all these places? I mean, there's so many things. I wish we had a chapter on this in the Bible, I wish we had a chapter on this in the Bible. And I don't have this addressed, I don't have this address that I so wish I had; but I come to this, and so much space is devoted to these names, to these places, to this detail. Why?

This underscores that Christianity is a historical faith. It's not merely some philosophical faith that came spinning out of the mind of some guru someplace sitting in a cave, pontificating on life. No, Christianity, the entirety of God's redemptive purposes here in the world took place in real time, in real places, with real people. That's what's being underscored here to us, that this is not just philosophical musings that we are following, but as we follow the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are following the message of the gospel of Christ that has been played out on this earth for thousands of years. It was lived out on this planet, and we have a historical faith that occurred in time and space dimension; it is that real.

This leads us finally to, "The descendants of Isaac," that's verses 19 to 26. "Now these are the records of the generations of Isaac," - he was the son

of promise – "Abraham's son: Abraham became the father of Isaac; and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, and she was the sister of Laban, took her to be his wife."

Verse 21, "Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren." She had been barren for twenty years, two long decades; and in Old Testament times that was considered to be a curse, that there would be no fruit from the womb, that there would be no descendants that would come. And Isaac dropped to his knees and began to pray that the Lord would cause there to be the germination of life within her womb.

And we read, "The Lord answered him." God is a prayer-answering God. "The Lord answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived." Boy, did she ever conceive. God did abundantly beyond what he would ask or think. He asked for a child. There is in her womb twins, more than what either one of them would have anticipated or expected.

Verse 22, "But the children" – referring in the womb. And please note how the Bible refers to a child in the womb. It's not an it, it's not a thing, it's a child in the womb; and that's why abortion is the great sin of this generation. This is the great sin of this nation. We have blood on our hands.

"But the children struggled within her," and this was a foreshadowing of the struggle that would take place between the nation that would come from Jacob and the nation that would come from Esau in the conflict that there would be. They're already struggling in the womb, pushing each other around. The word "struggle" there that you see in verse 22, it means "to be crushed" or "to crush someone." It's not just a gentle nudge; but there is a lot of activity and a lot of pressure that's going on.

"And she said," – verse 22 – 'If it is so, why then am I this way?' In other words, "What is happening inside of me?" She has no idea there's twins: "What's going on inside of me?" So she went to inquire of the Lord.

Verse 23, "And the Lord said to her, 'Two nations are in your womb,' – and by that God means that there are twins, and from these twins will emerge two nations, as they will multiply – 'two nations are in your womb; and two peoples will be separated from your body,' – there'll be a

continental divide that will separate the peoples that will come from one child and the peoples that will come from the other child - 'and one people shall be stronger than the other,' - now notice this fourth line here - 'and the older will serve the younger.'" That is divine intervention, because the older will always be served by the younger. But here God reverses the order by His sovereign will and says, "No, I will work it another way: the weaker will be served by the stronger, the younger will be served by the older." And God has made a discriminating choice by His sovereign will, as He has marked out the path and the plan for both children before they are even born.

Before they come out of the womb, God has already marked their horizon and has marked their path, and God has gone ahead and foreordained their destiny. And what we see being taught here is the doctrine of sovereign election and sovereign reprobation. And if you have your Bible, which I'm sure you do, for a moment turn with me to Romans chapter 9, because Paul will take this very verse and he will enlarge it as one of the premier examples of God's sovereign discretion to choose whom He will for both salvation as well as for service. And so in Romans chapter 9, this bulwark of a chapter.

In Romans 9:10 we read Paul's inspired commentary on the verse that we were just looking at in Genesis 25:23, Romans 9:10, "There was Rebekah - that's Isaac's wife - "when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac," - verse 11 - "for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad," - Paul lays that out to show that it had nothing to do with foresight, it had nothing to do with God looking down the proverbial tunnel of time to see what one would do or the other would not do, it had nothing to do with that, that's just the result of man's unsanctified imagination; it has nothing to do with biblical interpretation.

"For though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad," - meaning that the choice would be exclusively God's, so that God's purpose - and God's purpose here refers to His eternal decree, that before the foundation of the world, God is the great author and architect of His eternal will, drafted everything that will come to pass, both in the macro as well as in the micro. And that is referred to as God's purpose, God's sovereign decree, God's blueprint for every molecule in the entire universe; and it would include every marking off of every nation, it would include the continents, the oceans, it would include the weather, it would include the time of everyone's birth, it would include the length the number of days everyone will live here upon the earth, it includes the time of a person's

death, and it also includes their eternal destiny beyond their death. It has all been pre-scripted by God, and there is no Plan B, and there is no alteration of God's eternal purpose and plan.

That's what he's referring to here in Romans 9:10, God's purpose. It is God's resolve, it is God's determination, and He will not be steered away from His plan, "so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works" – meaning it had nothing to do with Esau or with Jacob, it had everything to do with God – "according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls." And God's choice was made in eternity past; and then within time He calls and summons those whom He has chosen to come to Himself, such that everyone who has been chosen by God for eternal life is sovereignly subpoenaed and apprehended and arrested by God and drawn into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Verse 12, "It was said to her," – God said to Rebekah – 'The older' – that is Esau – 'will serve the younger.' – that is Jacob. The older will be subservient to the younger, And God has done it this way so that there is greater emphasis placed upon that it is all by God's sovereign prerogative and discretion – 'Just as it is written,' – verse 13 – "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.""

"Jacob I loved," is sovereign election, "Esau I hated," is sovereign reprobation. And if you're a believer in Jesus Christ today it is because God chose you from before the foundation of the world. He may have even singled you out from within your own family, passing over other family members to set His heart of affection and love upon you, and then within time has called you irresistibly and effectually to Himself through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. And those who are not chosen are passed over and are left to go their own way. Everyone in heaven is there by God's will, everyone in hell is there by their own choice, by their own will.

Acts 14:16 says that, "God permitted the nations to go their own way." And so God withdrew any influence from upon Esau and simply allowed Esau to go his own way without any restraint of sovereign grace; and yet for Jacob, God drew a circle around his name and eternity past. And in the book of Revelation chapter 13, it says that, "Our names were written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world." Names are not being written into the Lamb's book of life as people are being saved; everyone

who will be saved, who will ever be saved, their names were written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world.

That should be very humbling. And every one of us here today who is a believer in Jesus Christ should ask the question, "Why me? Why me, Lord?" And there is no reason inside of you. God chose us not because of us, He chose us in spite of us. The reason lies within God Himself, that He will go on to say in Romans 9, "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion, and I will harden the rest."

I don't know if this is new truth for you or not. I'm going to say for most of us here today, we not only know this truth, we believe this truth. We are a church that stands strongly upon the sovereignty of God in salvation, and we do not call God into account. "The clay will not say to the potter, 'Why have you made me this way?'" And this is intended to humble us, to bring us to our knees, to cause us to be more grateful for our salvation, and to look up to God with more fervent worship, and to invest the number of days that we have here upon the earth in service of the Lord.

I know when this truth first hit me. I was in seminary; and to put myself through seminary I wrote magazines. I wrote one with the Dallas Cowboys. I wrote one with the Texas Rangers. The Dallas Mavericks had just contacted me. The Byron Nelson Tournament had just contacted me. I was getting ready to expand to Houston, and I had a pretty nice life set in front of me. Tom Landry even said, "Steve, this is what you need to do the rest of your life."

I'm sitting in class in seminary wrestling with this truth, until the moment God broke through my thick head, and I saw it, and it was everywhere in the Bible, and it utterly devastated me. And the thought that first came flashing into my mind, "God, if You have chosen me before the foundation of the world to be a believer in Jesus Christ, and if You have chosen me as an extension of that to serve You by preaching Your word, then I have been the biggest fool to chase the world, to do these other things," that in and of itself were not immoral or wrong; it just was not the path that God had marked out for me.

I had no idea you could even sell a business. I just shut it down in a day and walked away from it, that, "God, if You are this sovereign, and if You have marked me out to be Yours before time began, then I am not free to squander my life however I want to live it. And if You have called me to serve You, then I must re-channel my life as if pouring it through a keyhole into the very center of God's will for my life." This truth does not make us proud, this truth utterly humbles us, and even crushes us into the dust of humility under the mighty hand of God.

If you have never come to see this truth in the Bible, if you have never come to embrace this truth in the Bible, I would urge you to read your Bible more; because for me, it wasn't until I came to understand this. It was not because I knew too much of the Bible, it was because I knew too little of the Bible. I don't know where you are in all of this, but may God give you eyes to see the truth that He has recorded in His word.

"Jacob I loved, Esau I hated." You know what I cannot understand about this? I can understand why he would hate Esau, I cannot understand why he would love Jacob. And I could understand why God would hate me, I cannot understand why God would love me. And I hope you have that in right perspective, because until I saw this, I thought I had done God a huge favor to go into the ministry; and when I saw this, it was the total other way around. No, God has shown favor to me, and I cannot waste the remainder of the days that I have here upon the earth.

How does this strike you? How does this impact you? It ought to either make you mad, sad, or glad. I hope it will make you glad. Well, I've run past my time. I think I've done pretty good actually to get us to this point. Let me just read the last verses and we're finished.

Verse 24, "When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold," – that means, "Look at this. What on earth has happened?" – "behold, there are twins in her womb." There's no ultrasound back then, there's no way of knowing what's inside a woman's womb. There's no way of knowing the gender, there's no way of knowing even the number. "Behold, there are twins in her womb."

Verse 25, "Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau," which means hairy. And verse 26, "Afterward his

brother came forth with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob," which means "heel-holder." And it came to be a manner of expression for being a deceiver, a supplanter, a trickster, as he would later be, as we will see in future studies. "Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them."

Here's the last thing I'm going to say to you. Remember I said earlier, "Christianity is a historical religion that's taken place in real time with real people in real places"? The greatest evidence of that is two thousand years ago God sent His Son, His only begotten Son, into this world to be born of a real virgin; and there was created a real human body for Him to live in with a real human nature, yet without sin. And he lived for thirty-plus years upon this planet, upon this earth in a real location, in a real place. He was born in Bethlehem, He escaped to Egypt, He came back; He lived there in the land the Promised Land. He went through Galilee, He called disciples to Himself. He went down to Jerusalem, and there created religious controversy; He cleansed the temple twice. And He set his face like a flint towards Jerusalem at the end of His life, and He went to Jerusalem to die in a real body.

He was nailed to a real cross, and He was lifted up here upon this earth, and as He died by crucifixion, He shed real blood upon that cross; and all of our sins who would ever believe in Christ, those real sins were laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and He bore our sins in a real body upon the cross. He became our substitute, our vicarious scapegoat, and he shed his blood and he made a real atonement for our sins. He was taken down from that real cross; He was buried in a real tomb, a cave, Joseph of Arimathea; and on the third day He was resurrected in a real body, and He ascended to heaven; and He is now seated in a glorified, resurrected body at the right hand of God the Father in a real place called heaven.

And whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. And there is a real heaven and a real hell, and there is a real death and a real judgment that is confronting each and every one of us today. And for those who have called upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will spend all eternity in heaven with Him and with the Father and with all of the redeemed of all of the ages; and if you do not call upon His name, you will be cast down into the lake of fire and brimstone, and you will be tormented day and night.

What an opportunity you have this very moment to call upon the name of the Lord. Lay aside whatever excuse would hold you back. Lay aside whatever procrastination there would be. Lay aside whatever lame argument you would bring forth. By faith, look up to Christ and call upon His name. And Jesus says, "Him who comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out."

You need to be rescued. You need to be saved. You need to be delivered from the wrath to come. You need to prepare to meet the living God. You have a date already appointed to stand in the supreme court of heaven and earth; you need an advocate at your side. You need someone to represent you before Holy God; and there is no one else who can deliver you from the sentence of eternal condemnation than the one who suffered and bled and died upon calvary's cross: the Lord Jesus Christ.

So believe in Him, trust Him, commit your life to Him. Call upon Him right now, right now. I press this to your heart. He who hardens his heart being often reprov'd shall suddenly be cut off, and that without remedy. But Jesus will receive you today, this moment, if you will turn to Him with a childlike faith, and embrace Him as Lord and Savior of your life. You need a Savior. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father, these are weighty truths that we've considered today. This has not been kindergarten Sunday, this has been advanced truth today. And Lord, I pray that Your word has been received by every heart here today, that no one will leave here today without Christ and without the truth of Your word. So Father, we plead with You to do business in every heart here today. And especially in that heart that is the furthest away from You, draw them and bring them into Your kingdom. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.