

**GOD'S SOVEREIGN MERCY, PT. 3**  
**ROMANS 9:6-13**

Starting at the end of July, we are going to spend a few weeks reflecting on God's glory and grace to us as a church body, as we think about 40 years of ministry at GBC. We will think about a variety of ways that we have experienced God's grace, but mostly we will be thinking about God's grace in salvation and the work of Christ in us and through us.

Even when we've been saved for many years, it's appropriate to think about Christ and to remember His salvation and the impact that salvation has had on us. Paul instructs Timothy, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel" (2 Tim. 2:8). Peter tells his readers of their salvation and then says, "Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you. I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder" (2 Pt. 1:12-13). The ordinance of communion also is fundamentally a remembrance of Christ's work on our behalf. We do well to remember regularly God's work to save us.

In a sense, that's what Romans 9-11 is about. It is God's sovereign salvation — the story of God's faithfulness to save His children. He is faithful to His salvation plan for Israel and for us. That plan, which Paul begins to unfold in Romans 9:6-18, reveals that —

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**SALVATION IS ALWAYS THE RESULT OF GOD'S SOVEREIGN, MERCIFUL, AND FAITHFUL CHOICE.**  
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In verses 6-18, there are five demonstrations of God's faithfulness; we looked at the first three previously; we will look at the fourth today:

- 1. God is Faithful — His Promises Don't FAIL (v. 6a)**
- 2. God is Faithful — His Election Doesn't FAIL (v. 6b)**
- 3. God is Faithful — His Election of Isaac is TYPICAL (vv. 7-9)**
- 4. God is Faithful — His Purposes Will STAND (vv. 10-13)**
- 5. God is Faithful — His Non-Election of Pharaoh is JUST (vv. 14-18)**

### 1. God is Faithful — His Promises Don't FAIL (v. 6a)

- In chs. 9-11, Paul is addressing whether or not God is faithful and trustworthy. He anticipates questions from his readers because in spite of the exultation in salvation in 8:31-39, Israel has not repented and the covenantal promises to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) have not been fulfilled. So the readers might ask, "If God hasn't saved Israel when He promised to save her, will He save us?" Paul is anticipating that some might come to think God isn't faithful and can't be trusted.
- Paul's immediate answer to his anticipated question (v. 6) is an unequivocal, "No!" — ***But it is not as though the word of God has failed.*** The promises God made to Israel beginning with Abraham did not fail and will not fail because God cannot fail. God has not rejected His people. He will save His people (e.g., 11:28-29). And if the nation of Israel can be confident of His salvation of her, then we can be confident of His salvation of us. He has promised salvation to Israel and to us, and He will do it.

### 2. God is Faithful — His Election Doesn't FAIL (v. 6b)

- In the middle of v. 6 Paul places the word ***for*** to provide a reason that God's Word has not failed. And the reason quite simply is that ***they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel.***
- When Paul says ***they are not all Israel*** he is introducing the idea that some are excluded from "spiritual Israel." Not all national Israelites have been saved because not all national Israelites have been individually chosen and elected for salvation. Paul is introducing a theological concept of divine election — something that is going to dominate the rest of this chapter and section (chs. 9-11).
- When we talk about election, we mean that God is sovereignly (as Master) choosing and pre-ordaining who will believe in Christ for salvation; that choice is apart from any merit in the believer and apart from any anticipation of what the believer might do to believe.
- Paul is demonstrating the adequacy and power of God; He has chosen and all He chooses will be saved. If God has made a promise, He will keep it; if He has made a promise of sonship for anyone, that one *will* be made His child. Paul follows this with three illustrations of God's election: Isaac, Jacob, and Pharaoh.

### 3. God is Faithful — His Election of Isaac is TYPICAL (vv. 7-9)

- To demonstrate that not all Israelites are chosen and part of the promise, Paul uses the story of Isaac — that the promise to Abraham and Israel (Gen. 12:1-3) will be fulfilled through Isaac.
- How God chose Isaac (which will also be similar for His choice of Jacob, vv. 10-13):

- ✓ *God made a call* (v. 7) to use the line of Isaac to complete His promises — **through Isaac**. At the end of v. 7, Paul says, **your descendants will be named**. “Named” is the word “called.” This is the divine call of God that results in the accomplishment of His will. God’s call is the call that gives life to the dead and brings non-existent things into existence (4:17). Here, God’s call brings a people into fellowship with God through fulfillment of a covenant.
- ✓ *God made a promise* (v. 8). Paul uses “children of God” in parallel with **children of promise** and **descendants**, and in contrast with **children of the flesh**. Isaac was born only because of the divine promise and intervention of God; those who belong to Israel are only the result of divine intervention, and if we are saved, it is only because of divine intervention (8:30; 9:18).
  - The promise is received in the same way justification is received — by faith (4:3ff)
  - So, the lesson of v. 8 is that the spiritual descendants of God have been decreed and planned by God. To be a child of God, one must be chosen by grace and believe in faith.
- ✓ *God (alone) acted to fulfill the promise*. Verse 8 tells us that there was a promise that resulted in childhood to God; verse 9 tells us what **the word of promise** was: **At this time I will come** and **Sarah will have a son**. The emphasis is on God’s activity. He will come and in His coming the promise will be fulfilled. Abraham and Sarah did nothing to fulfill the promise; God did the work. That is the same way God’s electing purposes in salvation always work; He does it all.
- ✓ Paul demonstrated how election was true in Isaac (vv. 7-9) and now will do so in Jacob (vv. 10-13).

#### 4. God is Faithful — His Purposes Will STAND (vv. 10-13)

- If the account of Isaac was the only illustration of election in Scripture, that would be enough to prove the point. But it is not the only example, so Paul says, **and not only this....** That is, there is more. God’s sovereignty and divine election and choice are also seen in Isaac’s wife Rebekah, and Jacob and Esau.
- Similarities and differences between Sarah and Rebekah (v. 10a): they were both barren and they were both promised sons and they both had sons through divine intervention. But Abraham’s sons were rivals, from two different women, while Jacob’s “rival” was from the same mother. There *might* have been reason to grant favor to Isaac over Ishmael because of the mothers, but not Jacob over Esau.
- **How God chose Jacob**.
  - ✓ *There was nothing distinctive in the conception of Jacob and Esau* (v. 10b). Paul emphasizes that their conception was by **one man**, Isaac. But Isaac was not all they shared: they shared the same father, the same mother, and the same act of conception.
    - There was nothing distinctive about the start in life — they were positioned identically with no reason to grant favor to one over the other.
    - Though they shared one father and were in the same family, they had two different destinies. The only difference between the two boys was the different plan God had for them. The difference was the result of God’s purpose and intention and nothing about what they did.

- ✓ *There was nothing in their actions to distinguish Jacob or Esau* —
  - The choice between them was made when **the twins were not yet born** (v. 11a). Because they had not been born when the choice was made, there was nothing they could do to commend themselves; there was nothing about their character that was commendable or condemnable.
  - The choice was made when neither **had done anything good or bad**. They had no accomplishments or detriments that could influence God's choice. There was nothing **bad**, "morally substandard" or "de-based" to deter God from choosing them.
  - The choice was **not because of works** (v. 11d). This is the emphatic statement that has been inferred throughout this section. Election and choice are not merited; Paul is expanding **4:1ff**. The work of man and the call of God are mutually exclusive; one excludes the other.
  - Election is never about what a man does to ingratiate God; in fact, God often chooses the particularly despised and needy to emphasize His choice (**Dt. 7:7-8; 1 Cor. 1:26-28; Eph. 2:1-4**).
- ✓ *God's purpose and God's choice alone was the distinguishing act* (v. 11b). The words **so that** emphasize the inadequacy of Jacob and Esau to influence God's electing plan. It was so that God would be seen as preeminent and sovereign. It was to emphasize God's superiority and greatness.
  - God chose Jacob to accomplish His **purpose**. God had a plan, will, and resolve with the boys and with the nation of Israel, and that purpose could not be thwarted. God's purpose is often connected in the NT to salvation (**Eph. 1:11; 3:11; 2 Tim. 1:9**). Here His purpose was to **choose**.
  - God chose Jacob as a result of His electing **choice**. The word **choice** is often translated "election." God has selected which of the two would carry forward the Abrahamic promise. For His own purposes — His own personal interest and desire, God chose Jacob (and not Esau). As will be noted in **v. 13**, this choice is an act of love (and grace: **11:5, 28; cf. also 1 Thess. 1:4**).

... *What election is:*

  - Election is God's active, purposeful, particular choosing (for His own glory) who will be adopted in His family (**1 Thess. 1:2-4**). "[Election is] that act of God whereby He, in His sovereign good pleasure, and on account of no foreseen merit in them, chooses a certain number of men to be the recipients of special grace and of eternal salvation." [Berkhof]
  - Election is necessary because of man's depravity. Man has no ability to respond in faith or even understand until God acts on man's behalf (**Eph. 2:1ff; 4:17-19**).
  - Election includes the whole process of salvation: justification, sanctification, glorification (**Rom. 8:28-30; 1 Pt. 1:2-4; Eph. 1:4-5**)

... *What election is not:*

  - Election is not based on who God "knows" will believe. Election is God's active plan and choosing those who will believe. One well-known preacher a century ago said, "God chose me for himself, but the devil chose me for himself. My choice is the tie-breaker." If that's true, then no one would be saved, because no one would choose God (3:11). If I choose, then God has not chosen and God's choice is not effective, and God is not God.

- Election does not remove human responsibility. Everyone is accountable before God because everyone has received the testimony of God in general revelation (1:20f; 2:15).
- Election is not an excuse not to evangelize. The only way anyone will can have faith in Christ is to hear the gospel message (10:13-15)

... This act of election is how God chose Jacob to be the recipient of His promise to Abraham.

- God chose Jacob by means of His *call* (v. 11d). Paul emphasizes a contrast — *not works, but call*. It was God's effectual, gracious call that chose Jacob. The cause of choosing and fulfillment of the promises was all in God and not at all in the patriarchs. There *is* a cause to salvation, but it is outside the scope of man's ability and wholly in the hands of God, who sovereignly calls (4:17).
- "In the final analysis the reason why some people are accepted and others rejected is that God so willed it. The divine, sovereign will is the source of both election and reprobation. Human *responsibility* is not canceled, but there is no such thing as human *merit*. God's eternal purpose is not ultimately based on human works." [William Hendriksen]
- ✓ *God's purpose and God's choice was unchangeable* — it **would stand** (v. 11c). The word is "abide," "remain." God's purpose is unchanging. It is permanent. It will not fail. Jacob might fail (and he did in many ways), but the promise could not fail because it was dependent on God, not on Jacob. This is hopeful for the Israelite — God's promises to the nation will be fulfilled! — and to us: God's promises of salvation are sure and certain and cannot be overwhelmed by any deficiency of us.
- ✓ From start to finish, everything about our salvation is all of God, and that's what makes it secure. God's promise to Israel has not failed, and His word of promise to us for salvation will not fail.
- **God's choice of Jacob is about the choice of a nation** (v. 12)
  - ✓ Verse 12 is another quotation from the OT — from **Gen. 25:23**, only part of which Paul quotes.
  - ✓ When God says the older would serve the younger, he is talking about the nations and not the boys. In fact, the account in Genesis does not suggest that Esau ever served Jacob (apart from the bowl of stew; but he was not subservient to Jacob in that act).
  - ✓ It is notable that later "Jacob" would gain the name "Israel" and the two were used interchangeably (with the nation at times also being called "Jacob"). Similarly, Esau would be used interchangeably with "Edom," the nation over which he was the head (cf. **Obadiah 1, 6, 8, 10, 21**). And the nation of Edom was definitely subservient to Israel (as Obadiah affirms).
  - ✓ The quote from **Mal. 1:2-3** in v. 13 also affirms that the nations are in view in this section.
  - ✓ These verses are not about the salvation or non-salvation of individuals (i.e., Ishmael and Esau could have been individually saved); these verses are about God's choice of nations. The principle being emphasized is that God has the authority and power to choose — both nations and people.
  - ✓ The point is that God has chosen Israel to be His people and He was sovereignly directing those nations through their heads and leaders, Jacob and Esau. The source of their futures was in God's decree and plan and purposes. God caused and brought about their futures (just as He does us).

- **What about God's hatred of Esau?** (v. 13) Isn't that unfair?
  - ✓ Some suggest that when it says God hates Esau it simply means that God doesn't love Esau as much as He loves Jacob. That sounds more palatable and reasonable, because **hate** is so harsh.
  - ✓ The problem is that idea does not fit the biblical data.
    - The Scriptures only rarely speak about God hating someone or something.
    - When it does speak of God hating, it speaks of God's hatred of sin and sinners:

- **Deut. 12:31** *"You shall not behave thus toward the LORD your God, for every abominable act which the LORD hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods."*
- **Ps. 11:5** *The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked, And the one who loves violence His soul hates.*
- **Prov. 6:16-19** *There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil, A false witness who utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers.*
- **Is. 61:8** *For I, the LORD, love justice, I hate robbery in the burnt offering...*

- These don't speak of "less love." They speak of hatred as we typically would use it. God detests these things and cannot be partnered with them.
- God's hatred is actually part of His attribute of wrath and judgment: God's wrath is an expression of His righteous hatred of sin. He must pour out His judgment against sin (1:18).
- We should also note that Mal. 1:2-3 speaks of God's judgment against Edom; His hatred of Edom results in His judgment against her. He doesn't just "love Edom less;" He *hates* Edom.
- So when God says He hates Esau in this verse, it is an expression of His condemnation against Edom for its rejection of God — His hatred is an expression of His right wrath (as it always is).
- ✓ Even when God hates sin and sinners, though, there is much expression of grace:
  - He withholds His wrath, waiting for repentance (Rom. 2:4). That He doesn't immediately send sinners to Hell after their first sin is an expression of loving grace.
  - While God did hate Edom, it is also true that God loves and adopts as His children many whom He hates. Every believer in Christ was once the object of God's hatred and wrath (5:8). But His loving grace superseded His hatred and folded us into His family. Why? Because it did (there is no good reason for grace, other than it is an expression of God's grace, which we will see in 9:23).

"God also hates wickedness and the wicked themselves....His hatred has awful consequences, of course. Ultimately God will destroy his enemies and send them to hell. But God's present enmity is not always his final word. All of us were once 'by nature children of wrath' (Eph. 2:3) because of sin....God's wrath upon us then was genuine wrath. We were wicked, and God really hated us. We were headed for hell. But God loved us in Christ (Eph. 2:4). Since that love went back before the creation of the world (1:4), evidently there was a period of time when God loved and hated us simultaneously. Before an elect person is converted, God both loves and hates him: God opposes him, prevents him in the long term from achieving his wicked purposes; but for such a one, God also has glorious blessings in store." [John Frame, *Systematic Theology*.]

- ✓ There is something unfair in v. 13, but it is not unfair that God hates Esau. It is unfair that He loves Jacob (and also us, under a different promise). It's never unfair for God to hate sinners. His hatred of sin and sinners is always just and righteous. It's always amazing grace that God loves sinners.
- **God's choice of Jacob is typical (again) for how He chooses all men for salvation**
  - ✓ *God's choice has nothing to do with spiritual heritage or moral action* (vv. 10-11a). There is nothing commendable in any person that God chooses to be His.
  - ✓ *God's choice is God's choice* (v. 11b). He alone determines who will be His. It's all about Him.
  - ✓ *God's choice is a secure choice* (vv. 11-12). When He chooses, it is unchangeable and unalterable. It was that way for Jacob and Esau, and it will be that way for us as well.
  - ✓ *God's choice is in spite of God's right to righteously damn those who are worthy recipients of His hatred and wrath* (v. 13). We could be condemned. We should be condemned. If we are His, we are not condemned and not hated, but loved.
  - ✓ *God's choice should produce worship and gratitude for those who are chosen*. Paul is demonstrating how 8:37-39 are true for us. And he is building to another benediction (**11:33-36**). Let us praise the One who has chosen and saved us in grace.

#### 5. God is Faithful — His Non-Election of Pharaoh is JUST (vv. 14-18) [next week]

**CONCLUSION:** As we come to the communion table, it is fitting that our mind is filled with the remembrance of what God has done for us — not what we have done to save ourselves, but what He in His amazing grace has accomplished in saving us.

**BENEDICTION:** **Romans 11:33-36**