



Romans 9:6-16
God's Electing Mercy

6 But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel,

7 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called."

8 That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.

9 For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."

10 And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac

11 (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls),

12 it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger."

13 As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

[14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!

15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."

16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.]

We come now to the heart of Romans 9. The sad thing is that this chapter, instead of being what Paul intended it to be, a further explanation of the Amazing Grace of God in the redemption of fallen men, has become a battleground between Calvinists and Arminians. You reach this chapter and immediately instead of listening, we are either searching for ways of explaining why Paul can't possibly mean what he seems to mean here, or we are grabbing individual verses and storing them away in the armory to be used for our next foray against the ever present Arminian horde.

I hope instead that today, we look upon the doctrine of God's election as Paul presents it in this chapter as something that scripture teaches in order to humble you, encourage you, fill you with confidence, and drive away your fears and uncertainties, and ultimately to give glory to God.

When the great evangelist Whitefield began to preach upon God's electing grace, John Wesley, who had been brought up to detest the doctrine of election with a vengeance, accused him of having learned it from John Calvin. At the time he assured Wesley that he had never read a page of Calvin, but had learned the doctrine of election from the Bible and far from being an impediment to his growth in Christ he wrote:

“The doctrines of our election, and free justification in Christ Jesus, are daily more and more pressed upon my heart. They fill my soul with a holy fire, and afford me great confidence in God my Saviour. Surely I am safe, because put into his almighty arms. Though I may fall, yet I shall not utterly be cast away. The Spirit of the Lord Jesus will hold, and uphold me”

I hope that is or at least will be your testimony, when it comes to what are called the doctrines of grace, I can testify that it is my testimony. I tell you no lie when I say, I would have no confidence as a Minister or a Christian if I did not believe those doctrines.

Anyway, on to the text itself. As we look at these verses we mustn't forget or ignore their connection to Paul's earlier point. You remember that before Paul had been speaking about how grieved he was that the greater part of his Jewish countrymen had rejected the very Messiah that they said they were waiting for. So much so that he could wish he himself were unbelieving and damned and they were believing and saved. The pain for him was all the more acute because of all the privileges they had been given from God as his special people, and he lists the most precious of those privileges.

And when you think about that, it naturally raises the questions, *“Then has God failed? Have His promises to redeem Israel fallen flat? Is the preaching of the gospel powerless to save Israel?”*

Paul in this chapter anticipates that question, and several others the read might have, and he answers. No! it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. Paul affirms that what the Lord said in Isaiah 55:11 is still true **“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”**

Well then Paul why haven't most of the Jews believed, and his answer is because the promise of redemption wasn't made unilaterally to all the descendent of Abraham after the flesh. *“For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “In Isaac your seed shall be called.” That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. “*

And he's going to prove that point by using the example of Esau, a physical descendent of Abraham but one who never believed and contrasting him with Jacob, his brother who did believe. He's going to say here as he does everywhere else, that its not possessing the genetic material of Abraham that saves you, but possessing the same FAITH that Abraham did that saves you.

Jesus made that point to the Jews who didn't believe in Him in John 8, they claimed to be Abraham's sons, but he said that their unbelief proved that they were really his sons, if they were then they would have believed in Him and not tried to kill Him, because as Christ said **“Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”**

Gal. 3:7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

As John Flavel put it *“If Abraham's faith be not in your hearts, it will be no advantage that Abraham's blood runs in your veins.”*

So it's not physical descent from Abraham that is the key to redemption. After all, Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, and Ishmael was the first born, but he was not saved, he did not come to faith in the promises of God, he was not the son of the promise as Isaac was. And why was Isaac the Son of

the Promise? Because God *chose* him and not Ishmael, even though Abraham had begged God to make Ishmael the son of the promise.

Now someone desperate might say, well maybe that had something to do with the fact that Ishmael was the son of Abraham and Hagar an Egyptian, not Sarah Abraham's wife. So Paul ups the ante considerably he uses the example of Esau and Jacob. They were the sons of one man, Isaac, the Son of the Promise, and they were not just the sons of his wife Rebecca, they were twins!

Same Father, Some Mother, and yet God chooses one of the boys Jacob to come to faith and inherit the promise, and not the other Esau. And here again God works against the way that men do things. You see amongst men it's the firstborn who gets the inheritance, but in this case it's the second born Jacob who is chosen by God, and AGAIN that is despite the fact that Esau was the one his father wanted to be the chosen.

Well still some might say, maybe God saw something in Jacob that didn't see in Esau. Maybe Jacob was a good and faithful son to His father and Esau wasn't. Actually, that were both faithless, but if we had to pick the better son to his father, it would be Esau. Jacob on the other hand lies and deceives his blind and elderly father in order to steal the blessing that his father wanted to give to Esau.

But we don't even need to refer to the history of these boys after their birth. Because what Paul wants us to know is that it wasn't the works of either of these ne'er do well sons that God based his decision on, but on his sovereign choice. He elected Jacob, not based on his works, he chose he was born and before either of them had done any works good or evil.

So if it wasn't their works, what did God make his choice of Jacob and his rejection of Esau based on? The answer is his own good pleasure. God says specifically that before he had created either of them, he loved Jacob and he hated Esau.

Now some people who have trouble the doctrines of election and reprobation have had great difficulty with verse 13, and have tried to say well it's not that God *hated* Esau, he just loved him a little less. So it should read, Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have loved a little less. Brothers and sisters does that not fit the context and theology of these verses, that just isn't a viable translation, at all.

The Greek word there for *hated* is *Miseo* – *hated or despised* and Paul of course is quoting verse from the Old Testament, Malachi 1:2-3 and the Hebrew word there is *Sane'* (Sah-nay) meaning hated.

Let me give you just a few other examples of the use of that word to make the point, I could give dozens, but I'll just give you some typical ones to make the point:

Hebrews 1:9 speaking of Christ "You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions."

Jesus Loved lawlessness a little less than righteousness? I don't think so!

Matthew 24:9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake"

They're going to kill you because you're loved but not quite as much?

Well what about the Hebrew *Sane*’?

2 Samuel 13:22 But Absalom did not speak to Amnon either good or bad; for Absalom hated Amnon because he had violated his sister Tamar.

Loved him less? No.

Now that Sovereign Love and Hate of God, made all the difference between these two boys, because we need to remember that both of them were born into this world fallen, and sinners, and both deserved to go to hell. And that really is the answer to those who say it’s not fair that God chooses some to receive his mercy. **Fair** would be everyone gets justice after all, everyone is a sinner, and every sin deserves death, no one deserves mercy, it would be mercy if it was deserved. What we need from God is neither justice, nor injustice, it is mercy. What we need is what happened to Jacob when God met him at Bethel in Genesis 28. There he showed Jacob a ladder **“set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.”** That ladder that alone can bridge the divide between heaven and earth is Jesus Christ, He himself told us that John 1:51 “And He said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” But in order to believe that and embrace the salvation offered in Jesus God has to change our hearts as he changed the heart of Jacob.

If we are going to see the Kingdom and ascend that ladder, we must be born again. And that is what God mercifully does for all his Elect, because all of us were just a fallen and sinful as Jacob and Esau:

Titus 3:3 For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,

5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

Now some will still say its not fair that God shows mercy to some and not to others, the funny thing is most of them wouldn’t read that a Governor had pardoned a convict and angrily proclaim that he should have pardoned every criminal in the state! And Paul in answering the “its not fair” complaint will give a fuller answer later, but here he simply quotes what God said to Moses, **“I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.”**

And then points out the good news that when it comes to salvation it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. And I say GOOD NEWS deliberately, because if our salvation depended on our own efforts, NONE of us would be saved:

Matt. 19:25 When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?”

26 But Jesus looked at them and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Now if you are still having difficulty with God choosing some for salvation and not others, consider all of the other things that the word tells us he sovereignly chose: he chose prophets, he chose patriarchs, he chose tribes, he chose angels, he chose nations, to chose kings, to chose disciples, he chose the way men went, but he isn't allowed to make the choice that Paul speaks of in

2 Thess. 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,

Brothers and Sisters I hope you will embrace this good news that it is God's Choice that led to our salvation, and NOT our works that saved us and keep us in salvation, because then you will be able to love and serve God without fear of rejection!

George Whitefield replying to a sermon against election and assurance by his friend John Wesley, said this after quoting Romans 8:33-39:

“This, dear Sir, is the triumphant language of every soul that has attained a full assurance of faith. And this assurance can only arise from a belief of God's electing everlasting love. That many have an assurance they are in Christ today, but take no thought for, or are not assured they shall be in him tomorrow—nay to all eternity—is rather their imperfection and unhappiness than their privilege. I pray God to bring all such to a sense of his eternal love, that they may no longer build upon their own faithfulness, but on the unchangeableness of that God whose gifts and callings are without repentance. For those whom God has once justified, he also will glorify.”