

Romans 9:6-13- Text V6-8 – What is a True Christian

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Some Jews thought they were saved by being circumcised and being part of the Jewish **covenant community**.

Other Jews thought they were saved because they were part of a **covenant family**.

Today, you will see how God rejected these 2 grounds for salvation and how he pointed the Jews to the Redeemer as the only ground for salvation – the only way to become a Christian.

Our headings are:

Covenant Community Doesn't Save You

Covenant Family Doesn't Save You

Covenant Christ Saves You

Our goals are: **That you and your children will learn not to rest in the fact that you are part of a covenant community or from a good family, but that you will rest in the work of Jesus Christ alone for your salvation.**

Covenant Community Doesn't Save You

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

6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel,

1. The Israelites thought they received salvation simply because they were part of the Jewish covenant community. They felt they had God's law and they believed and obeyed it. (The ESV makes a correct interpretation.)

They had **experienced God's miracles and blessings in the past**. God had rescued them from Egypt, drowning Pharaoh's army, and made them into a great nation...and **promised them more expansion**. Solomon spoke about this in Ps. 72. They had his temple. They had seen his glory. They heard his prophets...but they were lost.

So in their eyes, they were saved from their sins. They were the chosen ones!

2. This led the Jews to think that they were superior to all other nations by virtue of being in the covenant community.

They saw non-Jews as untouchables. So they would **take off their shoes** when they crossed the border of Israel and shake the dust off their sandals so as not to take any "evil foreign dust" into Israel.

3. But Apostle Paul pointed out that not all Jews in the covenant were part of the true communion of Israel; they were not true believers. There was nothing automatic in salvation.

So circumcision, which marked inclusion into the Jewish covenant community, did not save. (So the water on your baby's head doesn't save her and it doesn't wash away her sins.)

Galatians 6:15 For in Christ Jesus **neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything**, but a new creation.

The Jews ignored the fact that when God promised to bless Abraham and all his children, God meant all "spiritual children," not all "biological children."

(See what happens when you don't properly understand the Word.)

These non-spiritual branches that were part of the covenantal **olive tree** were cut off. **Romans 11**. They **were orchids...they looked good**, but they were pests...parasites.

4. Jesus pointed out the difference between being in the covenant community and being a true Christian in the life Nathaniel. He used sarcasm.

John 1:47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"

Nathaniel was a Jew – of the covenant community, but not a Christian!

Romans 10:12 For **there is no distinction between Jew and Greek**, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For "**whoever calls on the name of the LORD** shall be saved."

This was a dagger in the heart of the Jews.

5. Lessons:

a. Being part of the covenant community does not mean you are saved, it does not mean that **you will be saved**, and it does not mean that **God is obligated** to save you. Being part of a so-called Christian country won't save either! **BAPTISM DOESN'T SAVE YOU.**

b. So why does God save you and your children? Learn the answer from Moses.

Deuteronomy 7:7 - The **LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people**, for you were the least of all peoples; 8 "but **because the LORD loves you**, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage...

This is why Jews had to make crosses on their door posts...pointing to the work of Jesus.

Covenant Family Doesn't Save You

7 nor are they all children (of God) **because they are the seed of Abraham**

7 and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring,

1. Other Jews argued that they were saved because they were related by blood to Abraham; he was their forefather.

2. Let us dispose of this argument by looking to the lives of Isaac and Ishmael (or Esau and Jacob in this chapter). Both sons, Ishmael and Isaac were from Abraham. Both were circumcised. But Ishmael was not a Christian. He was a “wild donkey of a man,” - a rebel whom God rejected.

On the contrary, God chose Isaac and saved him by grace.

Galatians 4:28 Now we, brethren, **as Isaac was, are children of promise.**

Abraham even pleaded with God to work through Ishmael. (He could never appeal to Ishmael's innocence.)

Genesis 17:18 And Abraham said to God, "**Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!**" 19 Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.

God rejected Abraham's plea for bloodline blessings and excommunicated Ishmael!

Yes, **both men had Abraham's blood in their veins**, but one was saved and one not.

Blood lines do not save. Jesus made it clear in Matthew 3:9, that many of the Jews had no right to call themselves children of Abraham **because they didn't believe as he did.**

Jesus told them that their father was the Devil.

John 8:39 They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "**If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.**"

3. Further, there were many who did not have Abraham's blood in their veins but they were saved...and they were mentioned as great people of the faith:

Jethro – a former priest of Midian, Rahab – known till her death as a prostitute, Ruth – pagan wicked Moabites, Caleb, Nebuchadnezzar, etc.

4. Lessons:

a. The fact that God did not save all of Abraham's children must not be chalked up to their rejection of God. No one is lost because he wasn't chosen. **The lost are lost because they reject God's salvation.**

b. Being part of a Christian family, even a Reformed family, learning the catechism, having been taken to church all your life, singing the Psalms, memorizing Scripture passages, and praying before every meal do not make you a Christian.

Grace **does not run in human blood!** IN OTHER WORDS: **BLOOD RELATIONS DON'T SAVE YOU.** How they are you saved?

Covenant Christ Saves You

7...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.**

...but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." 8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

1. Out of love God predestined to redeem the Jews through Jesus.

He then chose them, called them, justified them, and glorified them in Jesus.

(Sanctification was not included because God was sanctifying them at that present time.)

2. And what else?

God gave you the faith to receive the work of Jesus – his work of living for you and his work of dying for you. So the one who had faith in the Seed of promise, Isaac's Son, would be saved.

Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "**And to your Seed,**" **who is Christ.**

So it wasn't family relations, but the Redeemer, who saved...as Jesus himself testified.

John 8:56 "Your father Abraham **rejoiced to see My day,** and he saw it and **was glad.**"

Apostle Paul gave the confirmation.

Galatians 3:29 **And if you are Christ's,** then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

God gave the grace you need to effect his election through Jesus Christ.

And his Word and Spirit continue to work in you and prepare you for eternity in heaven.

3. And remember, salvation was not your birthright.

Ephesians 2:3...and **were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.**

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, **8** For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, **lest anyone should boast.**

4. And remember, God will save you and others at the time he chooses.

It does not matter how hard the heart of the sinner is, as long as he is elect, **God is able, and indeed does soften him** – and he does so when he is ready.

Sometimes he might soften the heart of sinner quickly, sometimes he takes longer.

Sometimes he does so when he is old, or when he is young.

Sometimes he does so when he is sick or when he is well.

Sometimes he does so just before he dies.

So be patient when you take the Gospel to someone who does not immediately believe.

It is God's work...not communal relations and it is not family relations...

5. Lessons, because your salvation is in Jesus Christ alone:

a. Bring that Word of Faith daily to your children and cover that Word with prayer.

This is the challenge and duty of every parent! Let the children hear the Gospel often! Faithful proclamation of the Word is what will keep them in the church! Anything short is sin. (**So pregnancy...delivery...that was the easy part!**)

b. Sing and praise God. It is true you can't fully praise God – it is beyond your words to express thanks for what God has done for you, but praise God as he enables you.

c. Humble yourself more before God. God not only elected you, but he assured you that you are elected. He did for you what you could not do for yourself! The helpless must never be arrogant.

1John 4:19 We love Him because He first loved us.

d. Cleanse yourself of your sins... You will daily repent of your sins that hurt your loving Savior.

1John 3:3 And everyone who has this hope in **Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.**

e. Fight to convince yourself of your salvation.

2Peter 1:5 ... add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 10 Therefore, brethren, be **even more diligent to make your call and election sure**, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

There is much work here. Keep **practicing living as a Christian.**

f. Evangelize to the lost.

Who doesn't want to tell the world when he loves someone and someone loves him back?

Who turns a diamond ring inwardly when she is engaged?

Who doesn't want to tell the world that there is one who loves all nations?

Let them hear the sound of one coming with good news.

Romans 10:15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "**How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace**, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" 17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Conclusion:

No one can be saved by relying on his **covenant position or the covenant sign**, and no one can be saved by relying on the fact that his **parents or near relations are Christians**. These errors might be common and even popular, but God warns against them.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Rely on Jesus' life and death for your salvation – his active and passive suffering – his obedience and his death. You don't need anything more! There is nothing more!

2. Guard your own hearts and the hearts of your children against relying on baptism...or blood relations...as if those things could save.

3. Make your calling and election sure. Do good works. Practice self-control, persevere in the faith, show brother kindness, and study God's Word.

Finally: If you are not a Christian, you could be in church regularly, you could be baptized, you could sing all the songs, or you could even have close relatives who are Christians, but without truly believing with all your heart that Jesus died on the cross for your sins...you will be lost forever in hell. But there is hope in Jesus. Ask him. He can save you from hell and give you heaven as your home.