

Election

Romans 9:10-13

The Jews were of the mind that all of Israel was all of Israel, end of discussion; all of them were going to heaven. But Paul says they rejected the Messiah, and are not saved.

He insisted not all Abraham's children but only Isaac was the spiritual heir. And now he focusses greatly on Rebekah's twins.

Remember that the question or accusation against the Christian gospel was that God's word failed. See verse 6.

Paul's reply is ultimately in verse 11. God's sovereign purpose of election is being perfectly fulfilled in salvation by grace and rejection by the flesh.

God is completely sovereign. Our God is a God who fully purposes all that comes to pass, high and low, great and small, ancient and modern, first to last.

In particular, Paul writes in verse 11, “so that God’s purpose according to election,” says the NIV, NKJ and ESV, would stand.

Election is a most biblical concept; God’s sovereign choice, God’s loving choosing of His people from all eternity.

You find the word in nearly every book of your New Testament!

When Paul weeps over the failure of his kinsman to come to Jesus, he defends this not as some unfortunate accident.

So there things here: the text Explained; the typical Error made here; and then true Election, the purpose of God which must stand.

First, the Text Explained:

If the Jew says that mere physical descent assures salvation, how is it we do not refer to Father Esau instead of Father Jacob?

The choice of Jacob, the **election** of Jacob, is even more evidently purely of grace than the choice of Isaac.

The Jew might argue that Ishmael's mother was an Egyptian, so Ishmael is not pure born.

Also the promise that in Isaac would the seed be called was made after Ishmael reached the age of 13, when his character as a wild donkey person was already showing.

But in Esau and Jacob, neither of these setbacks can be placed on Esau and God's choice of Jacob.

1. Both had the same mother, Rebecca, beautifully chosen for Isaac in Gen. 25. They had the same father, same mother. In fact, Esau had the birthright by nature. But grace is not about nature.
2. Both had done nothing good or bad to sway God's mind or purpose. Neither had shown how sinful they could be; neither of them could possibly merit grace to themselves or earn God's displeasure by their actions. Yet God chose the younger, and rejected and subjected the elder.

It is not works which determined God's choice but God's own good pleasure.

Thus the even sharper remark from Mal. 1:2 is added – Jacob I have loved, Esau I have hated.

God, of his own good pleasure, who did not owe anything to Jacob, was self-moved to love him with an everlasting love; the same God, of his own good pleasure, who did not owe anything to Esau, was self-moved to hate Esau, righteously, passing over and leaving him in the sins Esau loved and the sins the Lord hates.

Now Paul is saying here that this is behind why not all Israel is true Israel – why so many who have the privileges of being Jewish did not come to Jesus their Messiah. They were not elect and therefore, were not called effectually like Esau.

They were left in their sin, which included being left in pride and seeking salvation by their own righteousness - Christless!.

Esau looked like the proper choice for God to give the blessing. But Esau is left to himself and despises his birthright, selling it to his brother.

The Jews seemed to be the proper choice for God to receive the blessing of the promised Savior, but no. The Jews are left to their own ways and despise their birthright, and sell him to the Gentiles.

We will see that not only is this predicted and foreseen in the OT Scriptures, it happened repeatedly in the OT.

Now it is right here where we must come to our second point – the Typical Error made. We have the text explained. How the Typical Error. And what is it? That Paul is not speaking about personal, individual election to salvation, but national election to privilege.

God's choosing of Jacob over Esau his elder brother, is an election to prominence and privilege, not personal salvation.

They say this speaks of two earthly families – the tribes of Israel, and the line of the Edomites, or the Idumeans, on Mt. Seir.

What shall we say to such a view?

Number one: there is such a thing as national election. God giving privileges to some and not to others.

There is an election to **vocation** – Jesus chooses some to be his 12 disciples. That is not to salvation for Judas was evil. There is an election to privileges:

Deuteronomy 7.6-8 For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

So there is Israel as a whole chosen out of all the nations of the earth.

But there is an election particularly and personally to salvation. That is what we read in Ephesians 1:

*Eph 1.3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He **chose** us in Him before*

*the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He **predestined** us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.*

Now, which election is it in Romans 9? It is not to vocation.

Is it to national privileges? To be fair, the passage quoted in Malachi 1 leans that way as the Lord protects Israel as a whole from the evil intentions of the Edomites. So why would we insist upon personal election when Paul quotes this national election text?

We respond:

1. The election of Israel to a privileged position by God is not in question. Paul is regularly defending the benefits of being a Jew, of having the heritage, especially having the Word of God addressed to them uniquely. Rather what is in question is how it could be that such privilege did not transfer into being salvation. In fact, the Jews were still saying they were saved on account of their God-given, external privileges.
2. Second, Paul is making the question one of not all Israel being of Israel. Not all natural children of Abraham have Abraham's faith. Not all children are true children but false, like Esau. Not all the seed is the true seed. Not all Israel is true Israel. Or put it this way, they are not all elect who are of elect Israel! Of all those chosen by God to come out of Egypt, how many died in unbelief in the wilderness?! So to say national election is here, does not answer Paul's question of why so many of his privileged kinsmen have not

come to Jesus. It is almost funny and silly to say, because they were elected to privilege!

3. Third, Romans 11 puts this view out of bounds. Read 11:5-7.

In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to god's gracious choice. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. What then? What is real is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened.

What God here gives to privileged Israel is hardened hearts, except for the elect!

We need to see clearly that Paul is answering Israel's unbelief. These words are drenched in his tears as he writes them. There is a false belief in his kinsmen, resting on their Jewishness, resting in circumcision, resting in self-righteousness; all of which is tied with their privileged heritage, and all which Jesus, and John the Baptist, and the Apostles, put an axe to, as we saw last week.

There is clear individualism in 9:6b that is being defended. And it cannot be defended by mere national privilege. Quite the opposite – these are vessels of wrath fit for destruction within the covenant community.

So these privileges need to be read the other way around. Privilege is not above salvation, above grace, above effectual calling. No – salvation provides privilege!

God's standing and sovereign purpose of election secures the means, the instruments, the outward privileges of the Word to bring his chosen into glory.

Where there is no preaching of the gospel, there are no elect! So because God has his elect in every tongue, tribe, people and nation, including from the Jews, his gospel must be preached and will be preached, by His grace, by His Spirit, by His church, in all the world!

He will bring his elect in touch with that gospel. He will bring Christians or the Bible or a book or tract into contact with them, that they would believe. He will put his elect often in believing families, where they are raised under the gospel from day one. He will establish his church throughout the land to be a witness to the Word of God and Jesus the Lord.

And each and every believer who comes into heaven through Jesus, are so by the sure election of grace by God!

This brings us to **our third point**: The True Election of God shall stand, which effectually calls.

That is the centerpiece of this paragraph – verse 11.

We find in Scripture a rich vocabulary of election – purpose, good pleasure, His will, election or choosing, foreknowledge, predestination, counsel, good intention, foreordained, predetermined, appointed.

There is an internal consistency to these terms – a clear connection between them.

We begin with a *designing* purpose, what precedes election or moves election is God's good pleasure (Eph. 1). Election is moved by his counsel or will, his foreknowledge or foreloving. This is not mere foreseeing or forerecognizing but foreplanning and fore-delighting.

Next to that is the *distinguishing* purpose of God in election, in choosing. Peter begins his first letter – elect according to the foreknowledge of God.

After the designing and distinguishing purpose – *determining* purpose of predestination and foreordination. Foreknowledge precedes predestination – Rom. 8. The kind intention or good pleasure of his will is before predestination – Eph. 1.

So these are something of the contours of election or the purpose of God in salvation.

Are there not great mysteries here? Yes, says AA Hodge:

The decree of God is the act of an infinite, absolute, eternal, unchangeable, and sovereign person, comprehending a plan including all his works of all kinds, great and small, from the beginning of creation to an unending eternity. It must therefore be incomprehensible, and it can not be conditioned by any thing exterior to God himself – since it was matured before anything exterior to him existed, and hence itself embraces and determines all these exterior things and all the conditions of them forever.

(AA Hodge, Outlines of Theology, p. 201)

We should say here further that it is this **purpose** of election that stands, that abides, that cannot fail.

Why is this so? How so?

First it is firm because it is not based in man but in God. The privileges God gives to the Jews are irrevocable as well, but they are only for time. This is for eternity. It is God according to his own good

pleasure, as we heard in Eph. 1, that sits at the bottom of your salvation – just as in Romans 8:29-30 – the golden chain.

It is God and not man. And when did God do this? Recently? A few years ago he chose you? No, from all eternity. He has loved you with a love that is from everlasting. In some way beyond our knowledge, he has always decreed his people be with him forever.

In what manner is this choice of his people? It is all of grace, freely – Rom. 11:5-6.

Please note this action of God leads to other actions – to calling us out of our sin and guilt into life and salvation. In other words, this election of grace is not based in something he recognized in us. That then would be according to works. It would be choosing based on good or evil in Jacob or Esau. But it is emphatically NOT man's will but of God!

Can Romans 9:16 be any more clear?

"So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but I'm god who has mercy."

We will have more to say next time about a conditional election.

But let us notice this **second** feature – that election, predestination, leads to calling; divine calling!

Again, this is not the general call of the gospel, but the effectual, life giving summons out of sin and death to salvation and life.

This is why election must be all of grace – all of God's will. For if it were left in any way up to man, we would find a way to reject it.

God does not choose between morally neutral men. Choosing unto salvation implies a lostness about man.

And who would come to the Lord if the call were only one of simply trying to persuade someone to believe or repent?

Men are dead in their trespasses and sins; men love darkness rather than light; men are blind to the light and cannot receive the things of the Spirit; how then can I receive Christ?

God omnipotently calls the dead to life; he speaks in the darkness and says, let there be light; you must be born again, you must be given a spiritual heart transplant which you cannot give yourself!

Psalm 65:4 says "Blessed is the man thou chooseth and causes to approach unto thee!"

"No man comes to the Father except the one He draws."

"As many as were ordained unto eternal life, believe!"

Oh, what a gospel we have that calls the dead to life; all the Lazarus's of the world into the light and life and love of God which came down at Christmas!

But it is not as though Jesus only made salvation possible. He did at least do that. But his gospel is able to change the hardest heart, cleanse the foulest life, clear the guiltiest sinner!

Now **thirdly**, it is here where questions arise – again, showing that we are on the right track that this is a personal election to salvation and not to national privileges. Who would quibble with the righteousness

or fairness of having privileges which leads to salvation given to the Jews? Who would say this is unfair, as the text for on to say?

Likewise how does God hardening his enemies fit here?

Is it fair, is it just, is it really that we are only clay in his hands, and He is the sovereign Potter? There is much to consider yet. Does God owe salvation to any? Are we all really good people who deserve a chance to be saved? Is God presented as a cruel dictator who withholds blessings from those who really want to be saved? The answer to all three is, NO!

But that is how this passage is read by so many.

Take this to your heart – election should not be viewed as a limitation. It does limit, but not in the way people say it does.

It is better viewed as life-giving concept. In some inexplicable way, whenever a sinner comes to the Jesus, believes and is saved, it is because God has loved him or her everlastingly. Our message is come and receive an eternal love as well as a free and full love!

His election does not condemn anybody. It is our sins which condemn us. We are depraved, in love with ourselves and darkness, unable to come to Christ. But at the same time we are responsible to come, commanded to come.

And our God is a God who is willing to save all who come to him. Yes, only the elect will come; but you don't know who that is. God is the one who commands dead hearts to believe. He doesn't say I will help those who help themselves – but he does say I will help the helpless. If you cry out to him with your hard heart, your sin-loving

heart, and ask him to change you, he will! As you continue to ask, to seek, to knock, the door opens from the inside. But in the end, even the sense of your weakness and sin is from him.

Let us lose with our gospel being all of grace!

We believe that it was grace that provided a Savior, that it was grace that paid the price of our redemption, That it is grace that begins, carries on, and finishes the sinner's salvation, So that salvation from its original and from its first ray of heavenly light which dawns upon the sinner on earth, Until a crown of glory is put upon his head in heaven, is all grace, pure unmixed grace. (Moses Hoge)