

**Romans 9:10-13 (NKJV)**

**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."**

Why did Paul give a second example to make his point that **the word of God did not fail** and that God was **carrying out His purposes** all through Jewish history until now?

Think about Abraham Sarah and Hagar. What is the weak link in Paul's argument that **Ishmael** was not chosen but **Isaac** was? What is the most likely retort from a Jew about **why Ishmael would have been rejected as Abraham's heir?**

Hagar, Ismael's mother, was not a Jew. She was a foreigner. So a Jewish person might respond to Paul's first point and say, Paul, that is no mystery. The solution is obvious. God chose Isaac because he was from a purer blood line.

So Paul leaves his better argument for last. **Ishmael and Isaac** were from different mothers. But that is not true of Esau and Jacob. They had the same father **and** the same mother. So this will put the capstone on His argument about God carrying out His purposes through selecting his **spiritual** seed in the midst of Abraham's **natural** seed.

So we start with verse 10. The verse makes it very clear that there was one woman, **Rebecca**, and one man, **Isaac**. There was essentially no genetic difference between the children. They were pure bloods. And they were twins. Let's look at the story.

**Genesis 25:20-26 (NKJV)**

**20 Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian.**

**21 Now Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived.**

**22 But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If all is well, why am I like this?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.**

**23 And the LORD said to her: "Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger."**

**24 So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb.**

**25 And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau.**

**26 Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.**

Notice in the story that both Jacob and Esau were born as a result of a **special act** of God. Just like Isaac, they were born after Isaac and Rebekah's **human efforts** had failed. God did a special act because he was bringing into existence the continuation of true Israel.

Notice here too that Jacob was 40 years old when he got married and 60 years old when he had a child. He and Rebekah had gone through 20 years of trying to have a child and never having one. I have been thinking a good bit lately about how often **God uses our difficult life's situations in His plan for us**. Think about Mary, the mother of Christ. The greatest blessing that the world ever has known was couched in slander and suspicion. Mary was asked to live with that burden. In fact, it was a **result** of God's **supernatural activity and blessing** in her life that **her bad reputation** arrived. There are so many dramas in scripture that only take **a little bit of empathy** to understand how difficult those situations would have been. But God promises that He will always use those things for good. If your situation in life is difficult, don't assume immediately that your situation is because of God's **disfavor**. These difficult situations are often avenues that God will use **to show his favor upon you**. And very often they will turn into the source of greatest ministry. And they will be used by God to bring glory **to Himself**. We see this morning that the promised seed came after 20 years of waiting. It came only after prayer that God would do a miracle. And who do you think got credit when the babies arrived. It was God who got the credit. Maybe God will use your difficult situation the same way. Keep calling out to Him. In His timing he will provide the result He desires.

Now the example Paul is about to give is a very striking argument. This is something that was very obvious in the Old Testament but it is likely that it was given very little thought. We know that Esau was the father of the Edomites. They had been a thorn in the Israelites side all through their history. The average Israelite was not at all keen on their blood relatives on Esau's side. In fact they despised them. So the contrast between Jacob and Esau could not possibly be more pronounced.

But look at the similarities. Same father. Same mother. Same time of conception. So if we were to apply the common Jewish misconception that Paul is arguing **against** you would conclude that both of these children would be children of Abraham and therefore recipients of the blessings of the covenants. But not only did the Jews **not believe** that the Edomites were children of Abraham, they **would not have wanted them to be**. Paul uses the perfect argument to tear down their castle.

Notice too, that Paul says “our father Jacob”. He is still doing everything in his power to identify with fellow Jewish countrymen. Paul told the truth boldly. But at the same time he told it in a way that shows he cared how his audience would receive it. He told it in a way that was never **unnecessarily** offensive. He couched his evangelism efforts as much as he could in an endearing approach. We would do well to follow his example. If we **do not care** if those we witness to **take it or leave it**, we are not doing evangelism the way the Apostle Paul did.

**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),**

Now, what state were these twins in when God chose one of them? They were not even born. While they were born in sin just like every human ever born, they had not yet had an opportunity to express that sin. It isn't like one was well behaved in the womb and the other one was out partying in riotous living. They were both pre-activity. They had not yet had time to sin.

And we find here that **this is the state they were in** when God chose **Jacob**. Why? That is the question that often plagues us. Why did God chose Jacob and not Esau. We see here very clearly what God's decision **wasn't** based on.

It wasn't based on breeding. Jacob and Esau had the same bloodline.

It wasn't based on the **decisions made** by Jacob or Esau. They had no **ability** at the time to make such a decision.

It wasn't based on the decision of the parents. If that had been the case I think Mom would have chosen Jacob and Dad would have chosen Esau.

We find that it had **nothing to do** with that which comes out of human capability. In fact I think that is why Paul chose this example. It makes the point clearer than any other example in scripture.

It had nothing to do with any human capability because if it had, God carrying out His purpose would have a big question mark. God's purpose would then be dependent upon **the will of man**. And if it is dependent in the least upon the will of man **it could fail**. Paul is making that very point here. He is proving that not

only **didn't the word of God fail**, which Paul claimed earlier. Here he shows that the decision had nothing to do with man's will **in order to show** that God's purpose in election **has stood, will stand**, and there **will never be anything that man can do that will undo that plan**. God's purpose will stand because it is based upon the execution of God's sovereign will.

You see Paul was making it clear. It doesn't matter that men and women decide to have babies. It doesn't matter that some people are kinder, gentler, nobler, of even more moral people than others. For the Jews it doesn't matter that they can trace their bloodline back to Abraham. It doesn't matter how zealously they have sacrificed their sheep. It doesn't matter how well they can quote the law of God. What matters is **God's choice**. What matters is who God chooses and preordains as children of promise.

If you ever want to find a truth that takes the wind out of a human's sails, this is it. There is a natural part of us that wants to cry out, **now wait a minute**. Look at **my virtues**. Look at my **goodness**. That ought to count for something. But we only do that because we still don't get it. We were born in sin and any righteousness we think we have is still just an illusion. If we trace it to its core it is another expression of pride and selfishness. We are naturally blind to that fact until the Lord opens our eyes.

Romans 8 taught us that our assurance is based, not upon **our wills** but upon **God's action**. Here we are taught that God carries out His purpose according **only to His will**. What security there for us is in God if we can just humble ourselves in view of the awesome **sovereignty** of God.

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

I think that the fact that Rebekah was told that Esau would serve Jacob before either of them was born was intended to emphasize that God's choice was not based on performance. This is not a fact that arose over time. The announcement didn't happen after **each had a chance to show what they were made of**. It was made before either was born. And it showed the clear choice of God regarding who was the child of promise and who was not.

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

Now the word for hated here is the same word that is used in **Luke 14:26 (NKJV) 26 "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.**

Now let's think about this. Is there anywhere in scripture that eliminates the need for us to honor our father and mother? I know of none. And Paul said that

those who do not take care of their families are worse than infidels. We see a lot in scripture telling us that we have great obligations to take care of our families. Timothy tells us that the family of a widow should take care of the widow and the church should not put a widow on the widow's list unless that is not happening. It is very clear that we are responsible for our children and our parents. So we know that scripture **does not contradict itself**. This **cannot mean** that we should treat our fathers mothers wives and children horribly, which is what we would do if we hated them in one sense of the word. So what does this mean?

I have read that the best interpretation is to **understand the word in contrast to greater loves**. It would almost appear that we hate them in contrast to the degree that we love something else. I believe that is what Christ was saying. Essentially, when it comes down to doing **what Christ says** or doing **what humans prefer**, when that becomes an either/or situation, we should be **relentless** about doing what Christ says. Our love for Him might make us **look** inconsiderate of our own family members, but that is **how important Christ is**. I believe this is describing unflinching and unflinching commitment.

A good example might be found in the ministries we support in Laos. The husband and father is a preacher. He knows that the government will lock him up if he keeps preaching. He knows that Christ has called him to preach. He knows that his wife and children desire his presence in their family. But he boldly continues preaching. It might look like he hates his family. But he doesn't. He just loves Christ incomparably more.

Is that the kind of commitment we have to Christ? Would we do the right thing, even when we know that all kinds of things are going **to blow up in our household** due to our decision to serve Christ? Will we obey Christ no matter what cost we may pay at the hands of the world? Will we obey Christ even when it will cost us the love of our parents or spouses or children? That is what this is talking about. That is what discipleship requires. If we are not willing to pay that cost, we should ask some serious questions about our love for Christ.

Now that is the kind of hatred God had toward Esau. There was no comparison in the favoritism that God had toward Jacob and the regard that God had for Esau. We see that God blessed Esau greatly. Esau had a funny way of showing appreciation. But God blessed Esau. But Jacob was the apple of God's eye. Jacob was the one God chose to carry out His purposes.

There are several other lessons to learn from this passage. We have had discussions in the past about Armenianism and Sovereign Grace theology. Armenianism clearly holds the view that every man has an equal opportunity and

ability to respond to God's call to repent. Salvation is therefore based on man's choice. They say the opportunity is held out to all, but only those who make the proper choice will be saved.

Sovereign Grace holds the view that God chooses and enables those who will respond to Him. It is due to God's choice, not man's choice, that a person responds to His call.

Now, we are in the middle of a teaching passage. The topic is God's purpose in election. We are in the middle of a study about this very topic. Now **which view** does this passage appear to support? There is no doubt in my mind that this passage was given to **undo any of our wrong thinking** about the place of **man's will** in salvation. Here we see God's choice being made before Jacob could even think. And it was not based on what he would eventually do or decide. Paul is crystal clear about that. He says "Not of Works but of Him who calls." Now he could have described this lots of other ways. He could have said **God knew** what Jacob would **do** and so chose him over his brother. But that is not what this says. Paul makes a point of saying that God's choice has nothing to do with the works of the recipients of His grace. Just like Christ said, if God had not chosen us, we would not have chosen Him. We could not have.

Now what does that mean to any of you who do not know Christ? What it means is that **if you perceive God's call on your life you are extremely blessed**. If God is making you sick of your sin and desperate to be right with Him, you could not be more fortunate. And it means that you should call out to Him while He is near to you. Today is the day of salvation scripture says. And God calls everyone everywhere to repent. If you see your need to repent, do so without delay.

Another thing we can see is that the promise is not universal. It is not to everyone who is born. It is only to certain people.

We can see also that people of the promise are what they are and become what they become, **not due to a natural proclivity or a superior wisdom**. This all happens due to the **promise and purpose of God**. In fact every one of these people are brought into being **physically** in order to be born **spiritually**. We tend to think about it the other way around. We might think we **just happened** to be born physically. But once we are born physically we have **the opportunity** to be born spiritually. And then we look to the time in our lives when we responded to God's call on our lives as the most significant event. And that is all true from our perspective. But look at the perspective that scripture puts on this.

Here is the Apostle Paul speaking. Now remember that he spent his youth killing Christians. He would have been pleased if he had wiped every one off the map.

He would have felt that he had just done his God a great service. Yet this is how Paul describes his past.

**Galatians 1:15-16 (NKJV)**

**15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace,**

**16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood,**

Think about this. Even though Paul knew his history showed a long gap between his birth and his conversion, his theology saw through that delay to the truth. Paul was chosen even before he was born. He was chose to carry out God's purpose.

We have reason to believe that what happened to Isaac and Jacob is what happens to every believer. We are brought into **physical existence** for the purpose of being **brought into spiritual existence**. We were chosen with a purpose. **Flesh and blood** cannot explain a Christian's life. Only **the will of God** can explain a Christian's life.

What an appeal for humility this is. There is no room for pride in a believer's life. It is **all of God** and **none of us**.

**Ephesians 1:3-7 (NKJV)**

**3 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,**

**4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,**

**5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,**

**6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.**

**7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace**

He **chose us in Him** before we were **ever born** that we should be holy and without blame as a result of what **HE** would do, not what we would do. We have all of this according to us unfulfilling purpose. It is a certainty.

Can you see, in light of this, that all of those fleshly things we believe about ourselves are a bunch of hogwash. We are so quick to say I can't do this and I can't do that, even though they are things commanded in scripture. And we say it as if **flesh** is what best describes us. But Paul has already told us that we are more than conquerors through Christ. **Flesh** does not best describe us. **Flesh** is just the

vehicle through which God is carrying out His divine plan. We have got to **stop fearing that we cannot do what God has told us we are here for** and we need to **exercise the faith** He has given us **to do** those things. If all we learn how to do at our church is **talk**, we might as well quit. We must be willing to **walk**. We are not victims to all our physical predispositions. They are simply obstacles that faith will overcome. And they are given to us so that we will have **the work to do** that God **fully intends for us to do**. Have you considered that those things you find most difficult were **work assignments given to you by the hand of God**? Now do you honestly think that He gave them to you so you could fail miserably? I think we all know better than that. We might be lazy and we might be selfish, but we are not **powerless** to do God's will in our lives if we will simply **walk by faith**.

According to the Bible, every person who comes to Christ has always been different. We didn't **know** we were different. We couldn't even **see the seeds** of being different. But scripture tells us we **were** different.

While the rest of the world is here to live and to die, we are here for another purpose. We are the people God has chosen to **glorify Himself by** and to live forever with Him.

Now, as we are looking at Romans 9 I think we can see some signs that the emphasis of the passage is not so much God's **choosing people for destruction**. The emphasis is much more positive than that. God is choosing a section of people who are sinners, who deserve condemnation, and He is choosing them for salvation. To the rest God shows great endurance and restraint. He allows them to amass wealth and to enjoy the pleasures this world has to offer. He lets them live in complete **rebellion** against Him or in complete **ignorance** of Him. He does not destroy them in mass. But he does use them to further his agenda for **His people**. It doesn't look like that. Those being used don't know they are being used. They feel like they are in control of their destinies, doing those things they feel like doing. But scripture tells us that **how they perceive things** is not how things really are. They are doomed and damned and God is being patient until the last one of His chosen people respond to His call. At that point there is no reason to wait any longer. And that is when the end will come.

How very very very blessed any of us as children of God are, to have the whole weight of the sovereignty of God coming to bear **for our good** and to assure us a wonderful future in eternity.

Let's live like it this week!