

“JACOB I LOVED.”

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Scripture Texts: Romans 9:6-13

Introduction.

Well, friends, things are about to get intense. We are in the front car of a roller coaster and we have just come to the top and are cresting a very high hill, about to plunge down. So hang on. We are jumping into the deep end of the doctrinal pool.

We have gone from Romans 8, the greatest chapter in the Bible, to Romans 9, the most intense and challenging chapter in Scripture.

We turn this morning to one of the most central truths of our Christian faith. We have here the revelation of the fundamental and foundational truth of the ultimate purpose and plan of God. God’s sovereign grace as it is revealed in the Gospel. Don’t glaze over now, these really are great and glorious truths, that when understood are a tremendous comfort to our souls.

God is going to do what is impossible for anyone to do, He is going to exercise His sovereign grace and mercy by turning some sinners into children of God. This is the heart of the Gospel.

Romans 9:6, Ishmael and Isaac.

Romans 9:6-7 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, 7 and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring.

When Paul starts out saying “it is not as though the word of God has failed” you can know that he is being accused of that very thing. Last week we heard Paul in great sorrow because his people are accursed and cut off from salvation.

To this the Jews violently objected, to the point of trying to kill Paul. They were after all the most privileged nation of God. Just look at all the blessings, benefits, privileges over the past two thousand years. He has given them adoption, glory, covenant, the Law, the worship, the promises, patriarchs and prophets. After all that, how could you not come to the conclusion that Israel is the children of God, the Jews are the children of Abraham.

To this Paul could have responded the way Jesus responded to the Pharisees, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures” (Matthew 22:29). If you knew your

Scriptures you would know the Word of God has not failed, because God never promised to save all Israel, all Jewish people. God often spoke of His people in terms of the remnant.

Romans 9:6 Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel.

Paul sets out to prove his point, using two great well-loved and well-known stories from the OT. He starts with the story of Abraham and Sarah, and Abraham's two sons. Abraham's first son was from Sarah's Egyptian slave girl, Hagar. Abraham being 85 and Sarah being 75 and barren, decided to hurry up God's promise of a child, so Ishmael was born.

But 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 as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him" (Genesis 17:19).

Romans 9:10 The Lord said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son."

This is a surprising supernatural promise made to a 90 year old woman.

God declares the true seed of Abraham will come through Isaac. God sovereignly chooses Isaac over the older Ishmael, to receive the call, the promise of the covenant.

Abraham's two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, are called two different kinds of children, children of the flesh and children of the promise.

Who are the true offspring of Abraham, his true spiritual seed? Don't both sons have Abraham as their father, aren't they both circumcised? Aren't they both of the same ethnic origin?

Genesis 21:12-13 Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

Not all Abraham's offspring are Abraham's offspring, not all Jews are Jews, not all Israel is Israel. God's covenant with Israel is not about ethnic identity, but heart loyalty.

Romans 2:28-29 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. 29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.

The true Jew, the true Israelite, is not who has Abraham's blood in his veins but who has Abraham's faith in his heart.

Ezekiel 11:19-20 I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

The choice was God's. Isaac was chosen and Ishmael was rejected. It is a matter of God's sovereign choice, not human effort or physical descent. To him God gave His Spirit who gave him a new heart.

Romans 9:10-12, Jacob and Esau.

Romans 9:10-12 *And not only so, but also when* Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, 11 though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— 12 she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”

That's all well and good, Paul, the Jews might counter argue. Ishmael's mother was an Egyptian servant, so he is disqualified ethnically from being the seed of Abraham according to the promise. Isaac and Ishmael had different mothers, a free woman and a slave woman.

We can see why God chose the one over the other, an obvious, logical choice.

Oh, Paul says, so you want stronger proof not all Israel is Israel and God's sovereign choices are not based on human considerations. So Paul doubles down with the story of Isaac and Rebecca.

Unlike Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau had the same father and the same mother, conceived at the same time.

Gen 25:22-23 The children struggled together within her, and she said, “If it is thus, why is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of the Lord. 23 And the Lord said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.”

Although Esau was the first born and should have been the recipient of the blessing, God chose Jacob instead to be the heir of God's covenant of salvation. God made His choice clear to Rebecca before they were born, and before either had done anything good or bad, before either of them did anything to merit or deserve the choice.

Paul makes the point strongly there was nothing in either Jacob or Esau that moved God to choose one over the other. If you remember the story of Jacob you know the

astonishing thing is not God's rejection of Esau, but God's choosing Jacob who didn't deserve it.

A woman once said to Pastor Charles Spurgeon, "I cannot understand why God should say that He hated Esau." Spurgeon replied, "That's not my difficulty, madam. My trouble is to understand how God could love Jacob."

Jacob was a liar, deceiver, manipulator, sneaky scoundrel. They were both sinners, deserving of nothing from God but judgment.

God is sovereign and His Word stands, it is not based on human will or human choice. It is not based on morality or privilege or works. The choice was God's and God's alone.

God doesn't wait to see who will believe, or how they act, nor does He chose based on His prior knowledge of who might believe in the future. It is all God, it is all sovereign grace.

The choice was put into effect by the sovereign call of God. The point is ethnic descent doesn't determine who God's children are.

What did motivate God to choose Jacob but not Esau? Paul tells us in v. 11, it was "in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls." Why did God order the world in this way? "In order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls." According to the purpose of His will, according to the riches of His grace, for His glory alone.

God takes nothing about us into account when He makes His choice. God's choice is utterly free from any outside considerations. God is His own influencer, no one and nothing else.

Romans 9:13 Jacob I loved, Esau I hated.

If we could just cut that verse out of our Bibles we could sure save a lot of questions and heartache.

What do we do with texts in Scripture that we don't like or don't meet with our approval? There are two responses.

We can try to explain it way. We can hem and haw and say well see what God really meant say was thus and such. In the Greek what it really means is We try to find ways to protect God's reputation and clean things up a bit for Him, do Him a favor.

This verse is a direct quote from Malachi 1:2-3 in which God pronounces judgment on the wicked descendants of Esau, the Edomites. Hatred in that context means judgment. These are the words of sovereign, holy, just judgment. The Malachi text ends with this:

Malachi 1:5 Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, “Great is the Lord beyond the border of Israel!”

That’s the second response. We can humbly submit ourselves to the Word of God and say, great is the Lord, glory be to God. Let God be God. God is God.

I am aware that a text like this stirs up many questions, especially doesn’t this make God unfair, unjust, unrighteous, and doesn’t it take away any human responsibility. Paul anticipates those very questions and answers them in the next text, but we are going to have to wait three weeks for his answer.

Implications and application.

We don’t like this text, but what is our alternative? If we deny God’s sovereignty in choosing us, if we say God doesn’t chose, that God doesn’t decide, that God leaves it up to us, then what?

If we say that, then what is our salvation based on? On us, on our smarts, our intelligence, our figuring it, our righteousness, our good behavior, our good fortune, our family of origin, our being better than some others, our what? The minute we claim a salvation based on something besides God’s mercy, we lose all hope and comfort.

None of us have anything in us that merits God’s favor. Who is good enough to convince God to give us His favor, His salvation. Not Abraham, not Jacob, not Paul, not Billy Graham, not Mother Teresa, and least of all not me, the chief among sinners.

Believe me, you don’t want to trust in anything but the mercy of God for yourself and others. Your peace and hope and joy depends on the unconditional sovereign electing, choosing of God. Your joy is that God actually chose you, and that is cause for worship.

Don’t we all say we can’t believe God chose us. I can’t believe that God knowing all He knows about me would ever choose me. We all know it was pure mercy and grace. None of us have anything to boast in. Who of us says “I must have been pretty special for God to choose me.

But what about others? What about all of us who have children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles, parents, any loved ones who are not walking with the Lord? They may be baptized, they may have made profession of faith, they may be members of a church, but they are not giving any evidence, any fruit of a heartfelt faith and love for Jesus.

Not all Israel is Israel.

Not all baptized are baptized.

Not all in the church are in the church.

Not everyone who is called a Christian is truly a follower of Christ.

You aren't a Christian because you say you are, or because you were born into a Christian family. You are a Christian only by faith, by being born again by the Spirit into Christ, and bearing fruit in keeping with repentance.

Whenever I preach on a passage like this I want to be as clear as I can in saying from Scripture:

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Where is that verse?

Romans 10:9-13 If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. 11 For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 13 ***For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”***

Jesus Himself said in John 6 that whoever comes to Him He will never turn away or cast out.

Nobody who humbly wants Christ as Savior is lost.

There will be no innocent people in hell, and there will be only forgiven sinners in heaven.

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

If you do not come to Christ in faith, you have no one to blame but yourself. The unconditional choosing of God for salvation doesn't contradict the truth that you and I make real choices in life and will be held responsible for those choices. We are saved by faith and we are condemned by unbelief. We are called to respond to the Gospel. Our final judgment will be according to what we have done with Jesus and His Gospel.

We are Christians only by God's grace through faith, through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:26-29 ... in Christ Jesus ***you are all sons of God, through faith.*** 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.