

Romans 9:1-13: God's Salvation and the Jews

(Does God Eternally and Unconditionally Predestine Individuals to Salvation?)

INTRODUCTION:

1. One of the problems of my Calvinism class is having the time to examine proof texts.
2. Because of the time constraints, I have decided to address some of these proof texts in sermons.
3. One of Calvinists' most used proof texts for God's sovereign *predestination* of individual's *unconditional* salvation is Romans 9.
 - A. One reason is of 9:10-13 which reads, "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."
 - B. Calvinists claim that this passage teaches that it is God's purpose to unconditionally elect some to salvation and unconditionally condemn others to condemnation, seeing God chose Isaac to rule over Esau, to love Isaac and hate Esau, *before either of these twins were born or had done any good or evil.*
4. Of course, in a lesson like this my job is to examine Calvinist's interpretation of the text to see if they have used it properly.
 - A. And, one of the rules of proper interpretation is "context, context, context."
 - B. So, one thing we must do is examine whether they have remained true to the context of Romans 9, the book of Romans, the N.T., and the O.T., which is quoted/cited often in this chapter.
 - C. And, in doing so we must also examine whether Calvinists have properly *applied* the analogies of Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau.
5. It is my hope in doing this that we will come to a better understanding of Romans 9 as well as a better understanding of Calvinism and how to help those who teach and practice it.

BODY:

I. Paul is heartbroken over *Israel's* rejection of the Christ (9:1-5).

- A. Paul is sorely grieved for his brethren, his countrymen, **Israelites** in the flesh (9:1-3).
 1. His grief for them *as a people* is such that he wishes he could be *accursed from Christ*, or forfeit his own salvation, if it would mean Israel would be *saved in Christ*.
 - a. Here we see the heart of one who truly loves souls, who understands the value of a soul and the horror of dying separated from Christ!
 - b. And, brethren, that is the key to becoming a true soul-winner for Christ—mourning the condition and consequences of those living their life in sin, which is eternal hell fire.
 - c. And I think we easily grow callused to this, which is truly unlike our Lord (Matt. 23:37 – "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!").
 2. We know that Paul was mourning for Israel because of their refusal to believe in Christ (Rom. 10:1-4).
 - a. Again, note Paul desires is for national *Israel*, the nation of the Jews, corporate Israel, to be saved (10:1-2).
 - b. Israel was lost because they refused to trust Christ for salvation and **sought it by works of the O.T. law instead**, rejecting God's righteousness by faith in Christ (10:3-4).
 - c. All who are saved today will be saved by that same trust in Christ!
- B. The tragedy of their lost condition is only heightened by the fact that Israel was a people in covenant relationship with God (9:4-5).
 1. It was the *Israelites* that God adopted as His son from all the nations of the world and had been blessed by God with glory through this adoption.
 - a. Blessed as beneficiaries of the covenants with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that brought about their nationhood, their salvation, and their possession of the Promised Land.

- b. Blessed with God's Law to direct them to Him and set them apart from the world, giving them the way of profitable service to Him.
 - c. Blessed with the promises of salvation through the Messiah who came as a *Jew*, as well as the promise of a new covenant He brought, and who now reigns as King over all.
 - d. That salvation would slip through their hands is truly an amazingly tragic thing!
2. Since these things were so, the question arises: "If the covenant of salvation was promised to the Jews, fulfilled through the Jews, and preached to the Jews, why are so many Jews lost?"
- a. This, my friends, is the focus of Romans 9!
 - b. And, we need to be telling the world of this salvation and blessings, as did Paul the Jews, so that they do not end up missing it, as were the Jews!

II. Context 2: Not all Israel (of the flesh) are the true Israel (of God) (9:6-9)!

- A. Paul heads off any argument that God's word (covenant, promises, etc.) has failed by asserting that not all *fleshly Israel* are the *true Israel* of God, the children of promise (9:6).
1. Note again that the context remains of Paul addressing the *fleshly nation of Israel* in contrast with the *spiritual nation of Israel* today, which is a nation of *faith in Christ*.
 - a. This change of who is now the Israel of God was alluded to earlier (Rom. 2:28-29 – "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;²⁹ but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.").
 - b. Physical Israel is not God's Israel today. True Israel is a *spiritual* Israel.
 2. So, Paul point here has been made before, which is that even though many physical Jews have forfeited their part in the covenant and promises *by rejecting the Christ*, this does not mean that God's promises have failed (Rom. 3:3-4 – "For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?⁴ Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar...").
 3. For, brethren, all along God's promises to Israel were *centered in the Christ*—in Jesus. To reject Jesus was to reject God's promises, prophecies, and their own heritage!
- B. Proof of this assertion (not all physical Israel is true Israel) is now presented in God's choosing of the children of Abraham (9:7-9).
1. Just because they (the *nation* - context) are the physical lineage of Abraham doesn't assure the nation to be *children* of promise (9:7).
 - a. For, though Ishmael was Abraham's first born, he was God's choices as the child of promise—the one through which Abraham's seed would be called.
 - b. God determined that Abraham's seed promise would come through *Isaac*, the younger, not Ishmael the elder first born—all contrary to the norm.
 - c. So, again, just because Israel (nation) was the lineage of Abraham does not guarantee that they are the children of promise, or those who receive the blessings of the new covenant.
 - d. John the baptizer echoed this same sentiment with a warning (Luke 3:8-9 – "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.⁹ And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.").
 2. Paul further explains himself by pointing out that God can so choose that those who are the *fleshly lineage of Abraham* (Israel - context) are not necessarily the children of God by this fleshly connection (9:8-9).
 - a. Example: Ishmael was rejected for Isaac as the one through whom the promises would come to Abraham.
 - i. For, the nation would come through Sarah by God's working, not through Hagar, who had Ishmael by Abraham, who tried to work out God's plan himself.
 - ii. This doesn't mean Ishmael was totally rejected by God and received no blessings, seeing God was with him and made him a great nation (Ishmaelites – Gen. 21:14-21).

- b. So, if the nation of Israel had no problem with God making this kind of choice in the past (overlooking the one who physically *deserved* it), seeing they had reaped the benefits of it, they should have no problem with God choosing who are His promise children today.
 - i. This choice was that of choosing those who are of faith in Christ, over those of works!
 - ii. So, Israel wasn't left out...if they would submit to God and trust in Jesus!

III. God's choice of Jacob over Esau had nothing to do with their works/deeds (9:10-13).

- A. Here is where Calvinists miss the mark in their interpretation of this chapter.
 - 1. Instead of remaining within the context of *national/fleshly Israel* of the works of the law versus the *spiritual Israel* of faith, they interpret these verses to God choosing certain *individuals* for salvation unconditionally, while rejecting others *individuals* as reprobates to condemnation unconditionally.
 - a. Calvinism ignores the context of Rom. 9:1-9 which is that national Israel, the children of the covenant at Sinai, are not the true Israel today.
 - b. True Israel is the spiritual Israel by faith (made up of Jew and Gentile)—which is emphasized in the whole chapter (9:30-32).
 - c. So, to apply these analogies as do Calvinists to God unconditionally electing *individuals* to salvation while unconditionally condemning all other *individuals* is simply wrong!
 - 2. So, what does the passage teach?
- B. Paul uses God choice of Jacob over Esau to again prove that Israel has no right to complain if God now saves those of *faith* over those of the *works* of the O.T. Law (9:10-13).
 - 1. God chose Jacob, the younger, to be the child of promise *without any consideration of their deeds*, seeing God made the choice before they were born (9:10-11).
 - a. National Israel accepted that God in His sovereignty had the right to make this choice of Jacob as the child of promise *without any consideration of his deeds!*
 - b. So now *fleshly Israel* should not feel slighted that God has chosen who will be His children of promise *without consideration of their works of the Law—their deeds*.
 - 2. So, like the other example, God's choice *overrode man's expectations of what seems fair* (9:12-13).
 - a. It may not have seemed fair that Esau, the older, served Jacob—yet God chose this!
 - b. In the same way, it may not seem fair that God took the kingdom from national, fleshly Israel, who strove to keep God's Law (imperfectly) and earn their election, and gave it to the *lowly dog Gentiles* (and remnant of the Jews) who obtained it *by faith in what Jesus did*, while never once keeping the O.T. law! Yet, He did!
 - 3. Why God did this, though not explained here, should be evident from the context of Romans which is that no one can earn their salvation, seeing all Jews, except Jesus Himself, have failed to keep the Law perfectly and fall short of God's glory and expectations, standing condemned as sinners (Rom. 3:23).
- C. Points established:
 - 1. The whole context addresses how national Israel's lost their position as God's elect, which now belongs to spiritual Israel of faith, because they...
 - a. Trusted in their physical lineage of Abraham over obedience of faith in Christ.
 - b. Sought to save themselves by works of the O.T. law, while refusing to accept Jesus as the Messiah and *trust in Him as their Savior!*
 - 2. Not a word is spoken in the context about individual, unconditional, election to salvation or rejection to condemnation by God's eternal decree.
 - 3. Calvinism deviates from the context of Romans 9 in their attempt to present this as a proof text for their doctrine of unconditional election by God's eternal decree.

IV. Calvinists' objections:

- A. Objection: Did not God *arbitrarily determine*, even before they were born, that the elder would serve the younger with *no consideration of their deeds*, thus unconditional election (9:10-12)?

1. This quote is taken from Genesis 25:23 and concerns how the *nation* from Esau, or Edom, would be weaker and serve the *nation* from Jacob, or Israel (Gen. 25:23 – “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.”).
 2. This choice of God had nothing to do with Jacob being *unconditionally chosen to be saved* while Esau was *unconditionally chosen to be a reprobate and condemned!*
 3. Paul’s use of this example simply proved that God has the right to choose to save *spiritual Israel of faith in Christ* over *unbelieving Israel of the works of the Law*.
- B. Objection: Did not God arbitrarily choose, by His eternal sovereignty, to love Jacob and hate Esau, separate and apart from anything they had done, though unconditional salvation and condemnation is established (9:13)?
1. This objection, like the one above, **ignores the context** of the quotes taken from the O.T.
 2. Like that of 9:12, this quote, which was taken from Malachi 1:1-5, concerns the fate of *nation* of *Israel* which came through Jacob, and *Edom*, the *nation* that came through Esau.
 - a. It was used to corroborate how Edom did serve Jacob, falling under God’s condemnation throughout their history, ultimately because of their choice to be wicked and faithless.
 - i. Remember, both children were raised to know God.
 - ii. Both had a choice as to whether to remain faithful and teach their children of God!
 - iii. The fact that Esau apparently did not do so resulted in a nation that didn’t know God!
 3. Also, that God “loved” Jacob and “hated” Esau are *aorist active indicative*, indicating that at some point in the past God chose to love one and hate the other.
 - a. Yet, it must not be assumed that God loved/hated these individuals, or more correctly the nations that came from them, *before they showed God their character*.
 - i. **Esau** was described as a profane person of whose character we should avoid (Heb. 12:16 – “lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.”).
 - ii. And, **Edom** showed itself to be opposed to God and His people and became the focus of God’s wrath for their evil.
 - 1) Joel 3:19 – “Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom a desolate wilderness, because of violence against the people of Judah, for they have shed innocent blood in their land.”
 - 2) Amos 1:11 – “Thus says the Lord: “For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because he pursued his brother with the sword, and cast off all pity; His anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever.”
 - iii. So, what Malachi presents as God’s love and hate of these nations cannot...
 - 1) Be presented as coming by God’s eternal decree made before creation.
 - 2) Be presented as having nothing to do with their character, choices, or actions!
 - b. Also, we must not forget that *love* and *hate* are used in the N.T. concerning one being chosen as supreme over the other (Luke 14:26 – “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.”).
 4. So, again, Calvinism must be rejected because its use of Romans 9 ignores the immediate context, the context of Romans, and the context of the O.T. quotes.

CONCLUSION:

1. So, God has chosen those of faith to be His children of promise today—those who will be saved.
2. You have a choice to make—a choice of whether you will try to live your life by your own will and actions, or whether you will give your life to Christ, trusting in Him to guide your life and save you!
3. Will you put your faith in Christ as Savior, repent, confess Him, and be baptized into Him to serve?