

# The Gospel in Romans: Romans 9:6-13

## INTRODUCTION

1. Romans 9-11 is a hotly contested section of Scripture, but all agree it gives important teaching on election and Israel.
2. We must be careful to keep the entire section in context; every part is true, but every part also agrees with the rest.

### I. THE AFFIRMATION (9:6A)

#### A. *The Word of God in Doubt*

1. The context of vv.1-5 is crucial to properly interpreting this text. Many interpretations of it neglect this.
  - How can God's covenant people be lost? How can we reconcile their unbelief and God's promises?
  - All Israel enjoyed covenant blessings, but most of them rejected Christ and remained under wrath.
2. This is the issue Paul is addressing: the faithfulness of God in the face of Israel's faithlessness.

#### B. *The Word of God Has Not Failed*

1. We must properly understand God's word to Israel lest we mistake what was actually promised.
  - Covenant membership was no guarantee of eternal salvation. Men were saved or lost through faith.
  - External gifts are not the same as eternal grace, and no one could assume their acceptance by God.
2. Israel presumed grace on basis of genealogy, but salvation is a result of election by unconditional grace.  
"The substance of the argument is that salvation was never promised to every ethnic Israelite." –T. Schreiner

### II. THE RATIONALE (9:6B)

#### A. *Israel (Ethnically) and Israel (Spiritually)*

1. 9:6b is a "master key" to the entire section (ch.9-11); the principle here helps us interpret the rest.
2. *Israel* and its synonyms (e.g. children of Abraham) are being used in two senses in these chapters:
  - The Church is the Israel of God **Gal. 6:16**
  - Christians are the true circumcision **Php. 3:3**
  - True *Jewishness* is defined inwardly **Rom. 2:28-29**
  - Believers are the family of Abraham **Gal. 3:7, 14, 28-29** (cf. John 8:37-47; Rom. 4:9-17)
  - Some cut out and others grafted in **Rom. 11:17-24**
  - OT promises to Israel applied to Church **Rom. 9:24-26**

#### B. *Not of All Ethnic Israel is Elect Unto Salvation*

1. All Israel enjoyed covenant blessings, but not salvation, thus not all *in* Israel really *belonged* to Israel.
  - Election cannot be merely corporate in this text, despite the corporate headship of the characters.
  - There are *individual* salvific distinctions among the Israelites, and the same is true of these men.
2. Salvation of God's people *is* the primary issue. Paul's grief is due to their accursed state. **Rom. 9:3**
  - Israel's corporate election as a covenant people is not the point; all agree to the fact of it.
  - But corporate Israel is not saved since many of the Jews are lost. Has God's promise failed?
3. The text is meaningless unless Paul is speaking of an individual and personal election to salvation.

### III. THE EXPLICATION (9:7-8)

#### A. *Not All of Physical Family in Spiritual Covenant*

1. Some of Abraham's offspring are not his children; "*children of Abraham*" has *spiritual* significance.
2. There is an ethnic nation and an elect remnant. God never promised to save all of the former.

#### B. *Chosen by Sovereign Promise, not Physical Descent*

1. Not children of the flesh, but children of the promise
  - What is the difference? It is not in the individuals who are saved or lost. The difference lies in God.
  - God's choice to save some but not all is the decisive factor, as Paul elaborates and defends in 9:9-23.
2. The difference is not even what the various individuals do. The difference is in God's gracious *promise*.

### IV. TWO ILLUSTRATIONS (9:9-13)

#### A. *Isaac and Ishmael (9)*

1. Both were sons of Abraham. One was "natural" and one was conceived and born by God's promise.
  - Isaac's birth was the result of divine intervention. It couldn't happen on natural terms or human will.
  - God took the initiative in bringing Isaac to life in the world, despite Abram and Sarai's resistance.
  - The Lord decided Isaac would be born; He provided the means; He accomplished what He promised.
2. God's word of promise gave birth to a spiritual son of Abraham, and still does so. **Jn. 1:12-13; 1Pe. 1:23**

## B. *Jacob and Esau (10-13)*

1. The example of Jacob and Esau is now brought forward to clarify and strengthen the point.

“Paul’s purpose in referring to God’s choice of Jacob over Esau is to show that there is no way to evade the implications of God’s unconditional election here. Unlike Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau had the same parents who were both Jews (“From *one* man Rebecca became pregnant,” Rom 9:10c). Also unlike Isaac and Ishmael, when the determining promise was made concerning Jacob and Esau (Rom 9:12c = Gen 25:23), both were yet unborn and had done nothing good or evil (Rom 9:11ab). Moreover they were twins in the same womb at the same time and by all human standards the elder Esau should have received the blessing of headship over his brother. Here there are no loopholes. God’s choice of Jacob over Esau cannot be due to any human distinctives possessed by birth (like Jewishness) or action (like righteousness). It is based solely on God’s own free and sovereign choice.” –J. Piper, *The Justification of God* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 62

2. Some object that Jacob and Esau refer not to individuals but to nations, and there is some truth in that.

- There clearly are corporate and individual aspects to election; the two men are prophetic *types*.
- But the context absolutely defines the issue as involving individual salvation, not corporate election.
- If corporate election of Israel is the point, then Paul has failed to answer the original problem. **9:3**

3. God’s choice of Jacob over Esau can only be understood as Individual, Unconditional, and Typological.

- INDIVIDUAL – Two men are being discussed, not just the nations descended from them.
  - Yes, both were the fathers of nations, but the point is that “not all of Israel belongs to Israel.”
  - Ishmael and Esau descended from Abraham, but they were not chosen. So it is in ethnic Israel.
- UNCONDITIONAL – God choice was made on the basis of His goodness, not individual distinctions.
  - “The wording underscores that God’s promise to bless Jacob was both prior to and not based on any good works he did.... Any attempt to explain the promise to Jacob on the basis of God’s foresight of Jacob’s good works turns the text upside down.” –T. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 499
  - Jacob was not even a believer for much of his adult life. He believed because chosen, not *visa versa*.
  - What is defended? “God’s purpose of election” What contrasted? *Calling vs. Works* (not faith) **9:11**
  - “...the ground of choice is not in those chosen, but in God who chooses.” (Charles Hodge, *Romans*, 480)
- TYPOLOGICAL – The experience of these two men represents and explains the experience of Israel.
  - Both were grandsons of Abraham, but only one was a child of Abraham, of God, and of promise.
  - Did God owe salvation to Esau? Ishmael? All the Jews descended from Abraham? You? Me?

## V. APPLICATION: SEEKING TO UNDERSTAND ELECTION

### A. *Three Models of Election*

1. CORPORATE, CONDITIONAL ELECTION: conditions specified, individuals opt-in or out (e.g. Judges 7:1-7)
2. INDIVIDUAL, CONDITIONAL ELECTION: individuals chosen based on foreseen faith and works (e.g. Rom 8:29)
3. INDIVIDUAL, UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION: individuals chosen, effectually called, regenerated, saved **Ro 8:29-30**

### B. *Evaluating Arminian Models Biblically*

1. Corporate, Conditional Election
  - There certainly are corporate aspects to election, both in Israel and in Christ.
    - All of ethnic Israel was chosen to be in covenant relationship, but not all were saved by it.
    - Christ is the “Elect One,” and the elect saints are only sanctified and saved in relation to Him.
  - But the distinction in Romans 9 is individual and based on God’s call, not their response to it.
2. Individual, Conditional Election
  - This view affirms God knows before who will believe, which is true, but is it the basis of His election?
    - The Bible makes it clear God’s saving work and call in our lives is according to His purpose. **2Ti. 1:9**
    - Did God choose those He foresaw would believe but later fall away? If not, it is based on works.
  - Both Arminian models make God’s choice contingent on man’s choice. Who chose whom? **Jn. 10:26**

### C. *Election to Salvation is Individual, Unconditional, and in Christ*

1. Both God and the individual must choose, but whose choice comes first? Which has priority? **Jn. 6:37**
2. Are you saved because you’re better? More honest? Obedient? Moral? Or because He chose? **Eph. 2:1-7**
3. It is only in Christ we are saved. It is not personal apart from Christ, only in Him. I live because He lives.

## CONCLUSION

1. Let me encourage you as I did last week to read and re-read Romans 9-11 *as a unit*, not in bits and pieces.
2. Let the wonder of God’s grace amaze you. Stand in awe of His gracious choosing you. Worship in astonishment.