

## Romans Part 25 (9:10-10:4)

by Erik Olsen

**I. "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.'" (9:10-13)**

--in the preceding verses (9:6-9) Paul used the example of Isaac to help explain that just because someone is a Jew doesn't mean that they are automatically saved, thus further establishing the underlying theme in Romans of salvation by faith alone.

--in 9:10 Paul continues this train of thought by addressing further arguments the Jewish religious leaders would bring up... another way that they would try to undermine the principle of salvation by faith alone and promote the idea that God chooses people for salvation based on their own merit was to argue that God chose Isaac because he was in some way superior to Ishmael, but this argument falls apart in light of Jacob and Esau, as Paul explains...

--Isaac and Ishmael had different mothers, one Abraham's wife and one the maidservant of Abraham's wife; therefore one could argue that Isaac was in some way superior to Ishmael based on his pedigree.

--Jacob and Esau not only had the same mother, but they were twins, thus the distinction between Isaac and Ishmael that could be used as a basis of superiority was completely absent in Jacob and Esau.

--in addition to the inherent equality between Jacob and Esau, Jacob was chosen to be the heir of the promise God made to Abraham before he was even born and before "having done any good or evil..." (9:11) thus undermining the Jewish argument of God choosing people for salvation based on good works.

--Esau was born before Jacob (Genesis 25:26) and therefore the birthright naturally belonged to Esau, but in spite of this God told their mother Rebecca before they were born – "the older shall serve the younger." (9:12)

--Genesis 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.'"

--"one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger" signified that the promise God made to Abraham would be fulfilled through Jacob's descendants.

--Esau's descendants, the Edomites, were repeatedly subjugated by Israel throughout history.

--"As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.'" (9:13)

--just as the preceding verse about "the older serving the younger" related to Jacob and Esau's descendants, this quote from Malachi 1:2-3, which was written over 1000 years after Jacob and Esau lived, also relates to their descendants.

--in quoting Malachi 1:2-3 Paul is summarizing his point in the previous verses... when Jacob and Esau lived, God not only saw their individual lives but He also saw the lives of their descendants... as He told Rebecca "two nations are in your womb" (Genesis 25:23). God didn't hate Esau as a person, but He hated the idolatrous ways of the nation that his descendants would become.

--these examples may seem like a small part of the bigger picture of Israel, but they are the very roots of Israel.

## II. "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! ..." (9:14-24)

--Paul addresses another question that the Jewish religious leaders would likely raise about his statement on God choosing Jacob... If God didn't choose Jacob based on his good works or any inherent value then wasn't His choice of Jacob over Esau merely arbitrary? And if so then salvation isn't fair and God is unrighteous. Paul's answer to such reasoning is the same emphatic term he used elsewhere in Romans – "certainly not!"

--all passages in Scripture about God choosing people for salvation ("election" as it's called in Romans 9:11) can't be fully understood by our finite understanding and must be studied in light of the sovereign nature of God (the omniscience and omnipotence of God) and the dependent nature of man...

--in Romans 9:15-24 Paul wrestles with the mysterious and profound subject of the sovereignty of God...

--"For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." 16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." 18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. 19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" 20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? 22 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, 24 even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" (Romans 9:15-14)

--beyond the limits of our finite understanding...

--Paul's words in Romans 9 about God choosing us for salvation almost make it sound like our will is not a part of the equation of salvation, but other passages in the Bible speak about the role of our will as being independent of God's will...

--Matthew 23:37-38: "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!**"

--This passage speaks of God being willing yet man being unwilling

--"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, **not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**" (2 Peter 3:9)

--God is not willing that any should perish, yet many do because they are not willing to turn to God for salvation.

--through dimensions of reality beyond our comprehension, God choosing us coexists in perfect harmony with us choosing...

--the sovereignty of God...

--saying that God chooses some people to be saved could simply be another way of saying that God, in His unlimited power, ensures the salvation of those who He knows, through His foreknowledge, will one day turn to Him in faith.

--Romans 8:29-30: "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined... Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."

--or in even more simple terms, saying that God chooses us to be saved could simply be another way of saying (in terms of God's perspective) that our salvation is not left to random chance.

--dependent nature of man...

--the concept of election naturally stems not only from the omnipotence and omniscience of God but also the dependent nature of all creation...

--Colossians 1:17: "He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

--Acts 17:28: "for in Him we live and move and have our being..."

--there is a profound sense in which God is involved in all that we do.

--Paul's concluding words in this section (chapters 9-11) about the sovereignty of God are fitting:

--Romans 11:33-36: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 34 "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" 35 "Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" 36 "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen."

**III. "What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; 31 but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. 32 Why? Because they did not seek it by faith... ..." (9:30-10:4)**

--in Romans 9:30-10:4 Paul again touches on the central theme in Romans of salvation by faith alone... while on the one hand people's salvation can be explained on a profound spiritual level by God choosing them to be saved, on a practical level people's salvation is explained simply by faith or the absence of faith.

--Romans 9:30-10:4: "What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; 31 but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. 32 Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. 33 As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." (Romans 9:30-10:4)

--Romans 3:19-24: "21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus..."

--through faith the righteousness of Christ is "credited" to our account. (Romans 4:21-24)