

## ROMANS 9:9-13 "Jacob I Loved, But Esau I Hated"

Up to this point in chapter nine Paul has been trying to explain to both Jew and Gentile that God's Sovereign choice of people for His Kingdom is something that has nothing to do with natural descent.

It's not as though natural descent can't be a blessing from God's hand, as was the case with Israel who enjoyed the blessings of "the adoption as sons; the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises.....the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised!" (Rom.9:4-5)

But even in Israel's case those things did not earn them a right to the heavenly blessing which was eternal life with their God.

1Co 15:50 "I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable."

The flesh, (which intimates the natural sinful man), cannot inherit the Kingdom, nor the things of the flesh which try to earn such favor, including the boasting of natural descent; as in the case of Israel boasting in Abraham as their father.

Well, if Israel claims Abraham as their father and yet that doesn't guarantee them eternal life, what does it mean to be a child of Abraham in the saving sense?

Gal 3:6-7 "Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." [Gen. 15:6] 7 Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham."

This would include both Jew and Gentile.

Paul's point is that such a blessing of eternal life, which is spiritual in nature, must come from the Spirit exclusively. That which is of the Spirit involved a promise from the Spirit who declared that such a relationship with God must be God's doing, not man's.

And so in verse 8 Paul says, "In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.

To put it another way, since Paul is describing all of this in the context of Israel receiving the promises and covenants, he is essentially saying, 'it is not the natural children of Abraham who

are Israel, but the children of promise who are considered Israel; true spiritual descendants of Abraham.'

This promise involved the hope that God would send a Savior to redeem or buy back man who owed God his very life in the form of eternal punishment because of man's sin before a holy God.

Man's response to this promise was to be one of faith. This promise was given to many O.T. saints who were instructed to believe God at His word. And so, as we continue our text Paul explains how this promise of God was not through any fleshly attempt to gain access to His favor, as was the case with Abraham conceiving Ishmael to carry on the promise, but the scriptures say, "through Isaac your descendants will be named."

And Paul gives the rundown of how God's plan was going to work itself out as He sovereignly directed the path through which the Messiah would come.

Rom 9:9-13 "For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son." [Gen. 18:10,14] 10 Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. 11 Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad--in order that God's purpose in election might stand: 12 not by works but by him who calls--she was told, "The older will serve the younger." [Gen. 25:23] 13 Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." [Mal. 1:2,3]

This portion of scripture has given more headaches to Christians over the years because it goes against everything of our understanding of how God chooses to bring some people into the Kingdom and leave others outside.

The key phrase is "our understanding".

Isa 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Simply because we may not understand something of God's ways does not mean He is unjust because we are also told in Deu 32:4 "He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he."

And so, when we come to a portion of God's word like our text in Romans 9, we don't have to cringe and cower at such language and truth, but on the contrary we should rejoice that God is who He says He is and works so wondrously in the hearts of people who are hell-bent.

It starts with a promise from God. Verse 9..... "For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son."

Abraham's wife, Sarah, was barren. She physically couldn't have children. And yet Abraham was told by God years before that he would be the father of a multitude of people who would follow God.

Well, if Sarah couldn't have children how would Abraham be a father of a multitude? God's solution? Sarah will have a son and God will be the One to make it possible as He makes a barren Sarah, now 90 years old, fertile.

The one thing I've learned is that when God makes a promise, more often than not, He impresses on us the impossibility of man being able to bring about something which only God intended to do. The reason for this is to show how utterly impossible it is for man to accomplish in the flesh what was only intended by God to be accomplished in the Spirit.

Sarah hoped and trusted in God and she did have a son who was part of the line through whom Christ would come.

Isaac was that son born to Sarah and "through Isaac your descendants will be named." Hodge states that "Isaac was not only born in virtue of a promise, but was, on that account, heir of the promised blessing."

In other words, before he was ever born, God chose him to fulfill a promise and to receive of the promised blessings, not the least of which was eternal life.

This whole idea of the natural versus the Spirit is what Paul has been trying to show us in regards to our salvation and this is exactly what the apostle John records for us.

Joh 1:12-13 "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

This is why you and I can't boast in our decision of receiving Christ. We can only boast in Christ who fulfilled His promise, and by His Spirit enabled us to see our sin problem and gave us the faith to embrace and trust in the salvation of God found in Christ.

Well, God not only gave a promise to Sarah and fulfilled it, He also gave a promise to Rebekah, the wife of Isaac. And here is where we begin to see that God's sovereign choice is God's alone.

Rom 9:10-13 "Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. 11 Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad--in order that God's purpose in election might stand: 12 not by works but by him who calls--she was told, "The older will serve the younger." 13 Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

There are those who might argue that since Abraham had two children to two different women it only stands to reason that God would choose Isaac instead of Ishmael because Hagar, the Egyptian woman, could not be the mother of the promised seed because she was a pagan. However, Rahab the harlot, who became part of the line of the Messiah, would prove that theory as no good, but that's for another time.

But in our text Paul shows that simply because Abraham had two children to two different women is not the basis for God's choice. In fact, in Isaac and Rebekah's case the two children have the same father, and the same mother, and yet God's sovereign choice excluded one of them.

They weren't even born and God had already made a choice. In fact, Paul goes so far as to say that God's choice had nothing to do with whether or not their behavior, which by implication is present and future, was good or bad.

In other words, God didn't decide based on some performance, because in their case, they didn't even have the chance to perform in the womb. God's choice was based not on who Jacob and Esau were or who they would be, but rather His choice was based entirely on His own will and pleasure as to who He would choose.

It pleased Him according to His will to choose Jacob, who had done neither good or bad. And He chose not to choose Esau who had done neither good or bad.

The reason that God inspires Paul to use this illustration of Jacob and Esau is given in our text.

Rom 9:11-12 "Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad--in order that God's purpose in election might stand: 12 not by works but by him who calls...."

God's purpose in election is not based on the object of His choice but is based entirely on His own good will. Again, this seems to go entirely against everything we as human beings would reason as the basis of choice.

When you and I were kids we found ourselves on the playground where teams were being chosen for baseball or football or some other such game. Do you remember who was chosen first?

It was always the kid who was best and everyone knew who that was. When someone applies for a job and they submit their resume for consideration, what is the employer looking for? He's looking for the best candidate. It's always based on performance and the abilities of the one being considered for the chosen position.

God's says that's not the way I choose. I choose in spite of your abilities. If I chose according to your abilities no one would be chosen. Why? Because all of your good works are as filthy rags before Him.

Paul drove this point home earlier in this letter.

Rom 3:9-12 ..... "We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. 10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." [Psalms 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Eccles. 7:20]

If that's the case then God's choice can't be based on performance. And it can't be based on the possibility of our hearts somehow longing after God on our own and God seeing that and choosing us based on that longing in our hearts. No, our hearts, or our natural inclination, as it pertains to God will always be the same.

Jer 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"

This was not a new problem. In fact, it was the reason God wiped out mankind with a flood.

Gen 6:5 "The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time."

Is there something good in man whereby God feels obligated to choose one over the other according to that goodness whether real or potential? Again, we go back to Paul..... "Both Jews and Greeks are all under sin."

This is the beauty of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Despite ourselves and our sinful heart, God chooses to place His love on us and pluck us out of the pit of destruction. The choice is God's, is the point Paul is making. "In order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls.."

This is exactly what Paul conveyed to Timothy.

2Ti 1:8-9 "So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,...."

Before the beginning of time God chose the Messiah, Jesus, to be brought through the line of Isaac and not Esau. Both had the same parents, both were born the same day. And though Esau was born first, that did not guarantee him the blessing according to God.

Rebekah was told by God "The older will serve the younger." He said to her in Gen 25:23 ..... "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."

The reason God told this to Rebekah was that in all fairness, according to their customs, Esau should have been the one who would have the privileges of being the favored one. God knowing the heart of Rebekah told her that this would not be the case. 'My choice is the younger one, Jacob.'

The older would serve the younger. This had two senses. Though we're not given many instances in the Scriptures where Esau would actually serve Jacob we do know that Esau did in fact submit to Jacob, the most obvious one being where Esau gave us up his birthright to Jacob.

**Gen 25:27-34** "The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. 28 Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob. 29 Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. 30 He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" 31 Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." 32 "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?" 33 But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. 34 Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright."

And so the older did serve the younger in submitting to him. But there is another sense of this prophecy being fulfilled, and that is as a nation. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau.

2Sa 8:11-15 "King David dedicated these articles to the LORD, as he had done with the silver and gold from all the nations he had subdued: 12 Edom and Moab, the Ammonites and the Philistines, and Amalek. He also dedicated the plunder taken from Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah. 13 And David became famous after he returned from striking down eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt. 14 He put garrisons throughout Edom, and all the Edomites became subject to David. The LORD gave David victory wherever he went. 15 David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people.

The older (the Edomites) became subject to the younger (Jacob, whose descendant was David). God's choice remained and Esau's descendants fulfilled what was spoken of by God.

But why was Jacob chosen and not Esau? Paul gives us this startling answer.

Rom 9:13 "Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

But how can this be if they had not done anything good or bad in the womb? Again, God is Sovereign and His choice is based on His will and good pleasure, not on anything related to the flesh.

A lot of people have trouble with this verse. And the reason is that they can't conceive of a loving God hating anybody. But before we accuse God of acting out of accord with His nature let's read what Moses wrote.

Deu 32:39-41 "See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand. 40 I lift my hand to heaven and declare: As surely as I live forever, 41 when I sharpen my flashing sword and my hand grasps it in judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries and repay **THOSE WHO HATE ME.**"

In regards to those who hate God the scriptures say in **Psa. 5:5-6** "The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; you hate all who do wrong. 6 You destroy those who tell lies; bloodthirsty and deceitful men the LORD abhors."

The question is who are those who hate God that He should hate them and pour out His wrath on them? If I may I'll let Paul answer that one more time.

**Romans 3:12-18** <sup>12</sup> ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE." <sup>13</sup> "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS"; <sup>14</sup> "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS"; <sup>15</sup> "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD, <sup>16</sup> DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS, <sup>17</sup> AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN." <sup>18</sup> "***THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.***"

The answer is all of us hate God by our very nature. This too Paul addresses in Eph 2:3 "All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature [Or our flesh] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath."

It's not as though God is indiscriminately hateful. Rather all of us deserve His wrath because of our hate for Him. But, He has graciously decided to deliver those whom He chooses to partake of His grace and mercy.

Jacob deserved what Esau received. And yet God chose Jacob to share in His blessings. Why? Simply because He chose to love Jacob. Amazing grace is the answer. It can be the only answer.

Now, while the word "hate" in our text is valid it can carry with it a less repulsive meaning to our ears. Charles Hodge makes this



comment: "God preferred one to the other, or chose one instead of the other. As this is the idea meant to be expressed, it is evident that in this case the word hate means to love less, to regard and treat with less favor."

In other words since God gave something to Jacob he didn't deserve, His very choice to do so for him and not Esau meant that God chose to treat Esau with less favor than He did with Jacob.

This idea of the word hate is biblical. Jacob had two wives. Leah and Rachael. He always wanted to marry Rachael, the younger of the two sisters, but Laban, their father, wanted him to marry the older one, Leah first. Laban tricked Jacob into marrying Leah.

Leah knew that Rachael was Jacob's first choice. She describes Jacob's relationship with her in Gen 29:33 She (Leah) conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Because the LORD heard that I am *not loved*, he gave me this one too." So she named him Simeon. [Simeon probably means one who hears.]

The word "not loved" in the Hebrew is literally hated. And yet in a preceding verse the relationship is described this way.

Gen 29:30 "Jacob lay with Rachael also, and he loved Rachael more than Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years."

It's not as though Jacob didn't recognize Leah's need and even met those needs to some extent. But he did love Rachael more than Leah and he chose to extend that love in a way that was recognized as special.

It is true with God that in His sovereignty He chooses to extend a special love on some who deserve it no more than anyone else. None of us deserve it and yet God freely gives it. This is the Sovereignty of God. And yet all men are still encouraged by God Himself to flee from their hate of God and seek His face.

Isa 55:7 "Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon."

Some would say that to extend such an invitation without the real possibility of having the ability to respond would be cruel. But God can put out a general call to all men, though none are naturally able to respond, simply to place heaping coals on their heads, in the way of judgment, as they continue to demonstrate their hatred for God as children of wrath.

In fact, God makes it clear that we should extend love to all men even if they hate us, knowing that they will continue to hate us.

**Romans 12:19-20** <sup>19</sup> Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath *of God*, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. <sup>20</sup> "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD."

In the very act of placing love on the mountain top for all to see, even as Christ was raised up on the cross, is not an empty invitation to those whom Christ has chosen out of the world who would otherwise not choose Him.

Calling all men to repent is one more indication of what God expects of His creatures and yet we know that men will not repent thus demonstrating that even when God Himself extends such a call, it only proves how sinful men really are as they reject Him. The invitation is real and so is the hatred of men who will not respond without a supernatural birth from above

God's sovereign choice of men should never quench our desire to reach out to all men with the gospel of Jesus Christ that they might be saved. The love given to us should be extended to all. And the love given to us should always be viewed with thankfulness as we live in that love as responsible children who love the Lord because He first loved us.

Let's follow the Holy Spirit's advice given to David in Psa 119:2 "Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart."

God has turned our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit who has regenerated us, from hating Him to loving Him through the love shed abroad in our hearts by the shed blood of Christ. He is worthy to receive honor and we are children who are called to live lives worthy of the calling we have received from Him.

Let's bless Him and thank Him with all of our lives, giving Him our all in the power and love of the Spirit working in and through us to His glory.