

Title: God's Plan for His People Has Not Failed

Text: Romans 9:6–13

Introduction

Attention – My wife makes the most amazing bake goods – yum! She also is a strict recipe follower. There is a definite science to baking. She follows the plan, and in the end, the results are a tasty wonderful, glorious experience.

Need – God is an amazing creator! He has created all that is around us down to the last minute detail. He also has created for himself a people. And he has a certain recipe for the creation of his people. And you know what? There are parts of his recipe that we do not know or understand – but in the end His recipe produces a glorious and wonderful result!

The Jewish Nation thought they understood God’s recipe, but they didn’t and what resulted for them was a horrific perversion of God’s Plan. Paul set out in these verses to clarify God’s plan for his people...

Textual Idea: God’s choice in salvation is through Jesus, not through our heritage or works.

Main Idea: Only God’s Promise Produces God’s People !

Interrogative: What does this mean?

Transition: There are two illustrations Paul uses to prove the point that salvation comes from one place alone - the promise of God = Jesus.

1. **God’s Promise Produces God’s People - Your Heritage Will Not (vs. 6-9)**

Explanation - Everyone wants to know about their heritage. Where they came from is very important to people. Organizations like “23 and Me” and “Ancestry.com” have exploded over the past several years because they answer a lot of questions and help people to understand where they came from.

It’s really cool information to have, but there is one thing knowing and understanding our heritage cannot give us - eternal life.

Romans 9:6 ESV

⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel,

Why would Paul make this statement? Because of what he said in verses 1-5. Do you remember? Just look at verses 2-3 to remember Paul’s dilemma...

Romans 9:2–3 ESV

² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

Paul's heart was broken for his "kinsmen according to the flesh" (not the Spirit).

In other words - He is heartbroken that those who have an ethnic connection to Paul (Jews), but do not have a spiritual connection (through Christ).

And so he wants to make sure the church at Rome understands his point that while he is grieved for the damnation of his unregenerate or fleshly Jewish heritage, God's word has not failed in that...

"not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel."

What does this mean?

It simply means this, just because the Jewish nation was God's chosen people, does not mean every member of the nation were born again believers in Christ and thus saved.

There is a national Israel and a SPIRITUAL Israel. Paul is grieved for the lostness of the national Israel because they have not embraced the Messiah and thus become part of the SPIRITUAL Israel!

Paul goes on to clarify this point in verse 7...

Romans 9:7 ESV

⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."

How is this a clarification? Because of the quote from Genesis.

Genesis 21:12 ESV

¹² But God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named."

Why is the quote from Genesis important? Because Abraham had two sons. Actually, he had eight sons, but in this part of the story there were two sons.

One son came to be through a plan contrived by Sarah his wife to expedite God's promise for them to have a son.

Sarah had her maidservant, Hagar and Abraham have sex so a son would be born. This son was Ishmael...

The promise was that Sarah would have a son, not Sarah's Handmaid.

Ishmael was not the promised son that would be the line of Israel and ultimately God's precursor of redemption. Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah is the promised son!

"Through Isaac shall your OFFSPRING be named."

Offspring is singular and so we make the conclusion that it is through Sarah's promised son would come the Promised Son of God! This son, not born of Sarah, but of Mary!

Matthew 1:21 ESV

²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Friends, Jesus is the big deal of the bible. He is the promised son that will rescue God's people from their sins.

Paul makes clear the distinction in verse 8-9.

Romans 9:8-9 ESV

⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. ⁹ For this is what the promise said: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son."

And do you see the point Paul is making? The true children of God from the Jewish perspective are not the ethnic Jews, but the spiritual Jews. And the spiritual Jews come from the son of Promise, Isaac to the Son of God, Jesus. And the promise from the Son of God is...

Romans 10:13 ESV

¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Salvation has nothing to do with your heritage.

I love our grandchildren.

We get to spend a lot of time with Elliot and he is awesome! I love him so much! I tell him that he's my best pal! And then he responds back, "Your my best pal!" Wonderful!

In mid-august, Angie and I are going to visit our other three grandchildren in Jacksonville, Florida! I can't wait to give them exceedingly long hugs!

But I want to teach you something about the new Heavens and the New Earth.

Did you know there are no children or grandchildren in heaven?! That's right! No children or grandchildren.

And that means when Elliot becomes a follower of Christ, lives his life here and then dies and goes to heaven, I won't be his grandfather there. I will not! I will be his BROTHER in Christ. He and I will be fellow children of God!

Argumentation - So many people think they have an "in" with God because their grandfather was a pastor, or their mom was a Sunday School teacher and a faithful church goer.

LISTEN UP! God does not take this into consideration when it's your time to stand before him and he asks you, "Why should I let you into my heaven?"

There is only one acceptable answer to that question! It's not who I'm related to!

It is only if you have a relationship with Jesus Christ alone! – The only answer you can give to gain entrance into God's heaven is, "The Son of God, Jesus Christ knows me and He said I could come!"

Application - Just like the Jews were not saved by being Jewish, you cannot be saved because you were raised in a Christian home! Or you went to a Christian school, or you had a Christian friend.

You must have a personal relationship with the PROMISED SON OF GOD!

No relationship with Christ, no entrance into His eternal home! PERIOD!

Review - God's Promise Produces God's People

- Your Heritage Will Not

2. God's Promise Produces God's People - Your Work Cannot! (vs. 10-12)

Explanation - Okay, so just like one's heritage does not provide eternal salvation, neither can what you do.

After Paul uses Abraham and Sarah as an example that heritage doesn't save you, he uses another illustration from the Old Testament that makes the point that what you do, doesn't save you!

Take a look at verses 10-12...

Romans 9:10–12 ESV

¹⁰ 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."

Okay, there is a lot in these three verses so let's try and understand what Paul is teaching here...

First notice the comparison between the first example and the second one.

In the first example there were two different women giving birth to two different sons.

In this example, there is one woman (Rebekah) giving birth to two sons.

Why is this significant? The first is an example of God's sovereignty in choice of one woman's son over another. The second example is of God's sovereignty in choice of one twin over another.

In the first case, the first-born son Ishmael was overlooked for the second, Isaac.

In this case the second twin, Jacob was chosen and the firstborn twin, Esau was overlooked.

Why point this out? What is Paul teaching?

God gets to choose. He is in charge. He is God and we are not. And in these cases God chooses unconventionally to prove his sovereignty!

In the first case it was to prove that your heritage doesn't save.

In the second example it is to prove your works don't save.

Look at verse 11 again, this time in the NASB...

Romans 9:11 NASB95

11 for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,

I like the NASB rendering of this verse because it translates "ek-logen" properly as choice to give a clearer understanding of God's action.

By the way, resist the urge to do a beeline to the Calvinism/Arminianism debate here. John Calvin (1509-1564) and Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) wouldn't come along for another 1450 years. Instead let's just try to understand what Paul is driving at. We absolutely can and should learn from these great men, but first let's understand Paul's intent in using these examples.

Do we all agree that God can do whatever He wants?

Do we all agree that God can choose whomever He wants for whatever purpose he desires? Yes, of course we do. He is the Mighty King! He is the Almighty Sovereign! God chose Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau for His good purposes. And we know God is good and trustworthy and therefore we can trust His all-knowing choices.

Jacob and Esau had no opportunity to prove themselves before God and yet God chose Jacob over Esau.

Keep in mind there are two things going on in verses 11-12. Paul is speaking of individuals, Jacob and Esau, but also of the nations that these individuals would become.

This is especially helpful when understanding verse 12.

If you recall the story of Jacob and Esau, Esau (the individual) never serves Jacob that we see in the story.

However, the nation from Esau, AKA Edom does end becoming subservient to Jacob AKA Israel.

Also remember what is said to Rebekah regarding her twins.

Genesis 25:23 ESV

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."

Did this happen? Absolutely!

2 Samuel 8:14 ESV

¹⁴ Then he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And the LORD gave victory to David wherever he went.

The children of Israel have a privileged position for many reasons as we talked about two Sundays ago.

But the greatest privilege they enjoy is that their nation birthed the only ONE who can save the world from eternal condemnation.

And so, I conclude that this is what Paul is teaching here. Salvation - I say this also because of Paul's great sorrow and grief he expresses in verses 1-5 is for the lostness of his Jewish brothers and sisters.

Salvation is of the Lord.

Now admittedly this proclamation gets us into some theological weeds. Of which I will **unskillfully** attempt to address in a few minutes.

The truth be told, I am a continuing novice in comparison to the towering truths of the difficulties of the bible - yet I'll do my best to bring some measure of clarity to the sticky theological issue we are embarking on in this most difficult chapter in the entirety of God's holy word.

(The value of expository preaching)!

But before we get there, please understand what Paul is doing here. Works do not influence God's decision regarding salvation. This is his point!

The only work God is interested in is this.

John 6:28-29 ESV

²⁸ Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" ²⁹ Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

Illustration - *If you could work your way to heaven, you would said look what I did, I got myself here by my good works. The only way you are going to make it is to come to that Cross. — Billy Graham*

Argumentation - If it were works that saved, how much work would be necessary to prove one is worthy of salvation?

One could prove this by "working" the Ten Commandments found in [Exodus 20](#). But we have proven in the past that

1. Following the Ten Commandments perfectly is impossible.
2. They are insufficient to save.
3. Their purpose is to show your need for salvation.

Application - Are you trying to work your way to God? Stop it! Repent of such a prideful action on your part. Stop trivializing God's amazing grace by thinking you could do something to earn His favor.

Instead repent, and trust that He desires to save you and set you free from your sin and your sin debt.

Review - God's Promise Produces God's People

- Your Heritage Will Not
- Your Work Cannot!

3. **God's Promise Produces God's People - Like It or Not! (vs. 13)**

Explanation - We struggle with the concept that God is in charge of all that is. This attitude speaks to our fiercely independent, and even rebellious nature.

I want control. I want to be in charge. I want freedom to choose. I want what I want.

We struggle with the spirit of Invictus...

"I am the captain of my fate, I am the master of my soul." - Ernest Henley, Invictus.

Notice the first two words of Henley's quote - "I AM"

This is the struggle we have and have had since the fall of man in [Genesis 3](#).

Is God, the great **I AM?** *God very God?* Fully in charge? Or **am I?**

First we will address what Paul writes in verse 13 and then I will suggest an understanding of this difficult doctrine.

A difficult statement - Paul quotes an Old Testament prophet here. [Malachi 1:2-3](#)

Romans 9:13 ESV

¹³ As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

Malachi 1:2-3 ESV

² "I have loved you," says the LORD. But you say, "How have you loved us?" "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob ³ but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert."

Specifically, it seems that Malachi is referring not only to the individuals Jacob and Esau, but to the Nations of Israel and of Edom (aka Edomites).

God says he HATES Esau and the Edomites (Esau's descendants).

Wait? I thought God is a God of love???

How should we understand this idea of God's hatred?

The Bible Knowledge Commentary 9:10–13

*God's "love" for Jacob was revealed in His choice of Jacob and God's "hatred" for Esau was seen in His rejecting Esau for the line of promise. **Hatred in this sense is not absolute but relative to a higher choice** (cf. Matt. 6:24; Luke 14:26; John 12:25).*

Higher choice...

Matthew 6:24 ESV

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Higher choice...

Luke 14:26 ESV

²⁶ "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Higher choice...

John 12:25 ESV

²⁵ Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

And it is in this sense that God loved Jacob (bestowed His favor on him and the nation) and hated Esau (rejected him and his nation).

Is this fair? Isn't that the question we automatically want to ask?

And I agree - **It is absolutely not fair!** There is no fairness about this situation whatsoever!

It is NOT fair that God would place his LOVE on Jacob and his heritage. I mean, how could a holy righteous God love and place his favor on such a stubborn and rebellious people?

What would be fair? Their eternal condemnation along with Esau and the entire world! That, my friends, would be fair. The fact that you and I are breathing right now and not writhing in the bowels of hell is an act of pure grace and mercy on the part of our God!

By the way, **don't ever ask God to be fair.**

I far prefer His grace, mercy and love than His fairness.

And folks this chapter will elicit a visceral response on your part. You will be strongly tempted to ask if God is fair.

This is a difficult statement, but aren't you glad God isn't fair? Aren't you glad God is merciful and kind?

The bottom line is God is in charge, this is His world, and He gets to do whatever His character will permit Him to do!

A difficult doctrine - The doctrine of Election is difficult but it is in the bible nonetheless so we cannot simply dismiss it. Some people do and it is not wise.

I have wrestled with this biblical teaching for years trying to get my pea brain around its massive and profound implications.

I do not have time in this sermon to talk about all the books, articles, podcasts, I have read or listened to regarding this truth - The more I learn, the more questions this produces for me.

And for those that think **they** have this doctrine buttoned up and solved in their minds, I offer you the wise words of C.H. Spurgeon.

DO NOT IMAGINE for an instant that I pretend to be able thoroughly to elucidate the great mysteries of predestination. There are some men who claim to know all about the matter. They twist it round their fingers as easily as if it were an everyday thing; but depend upon it, he who thinks he knows all about this mystery, knows but very little. It is but the shallowness of his mind that permits him to see the bottom of his knowledge; he who dives deep, finds that there is in the lowest depth to which he can attain a deeper depth still. The fact is, that the great questions about man's responsibility, free-will, and predestination, have been fought over, and over, and over again, and have been answered in ten thousand different ways; and the result has been, that we know just as much about the matter as when we first began. The combatants have thrown dust into each other's eyes, and have hindered each other from seeing; and then they have concluded, that because they put other people's eyes out, they could therefore see. "Jacob and Esau" - A Sermon (No. 239) Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 16th, 1859, by the REV. C.H. SPURGEON

Amen and amen!

However, you, as a follower of Christ must come to some determination on these difficult doctrines of predestination and election.

You must and we will grapple with them over the next few sermons.

We can't simply skip over them because they are hard.

And they will leave you challenged and a bit unsettled and that's okay. But study, learn and grow, we must.

2 Timothy 2:15 ESV

¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

So, what do I believe about the doctrines of election and predestination?

First, I believe God is sovereignly in charge of this world. There is nothing outside of His purview. He chooses what He wills to accomplish His holy and magnificent will. He chose me to be saved. To suggest anything less would diminish Him and his power and go against what is taught in His Word. And I am eternally humbled and grateful!

Second, I believe in human responsibility. You and I are responsible to choose Christ and be saved. To suggest that you are not responsible to respond to God's gracious offer is contrary to the scriptures. I chose to believe Christ's gospel, and was saved.

Do you feel the tension?

I believe we must not formulate our conclusions based on only one chapter of the bible, but on the whole counsel of the Word of God.

In chapter nine you will see language of God's choice. And certainly, there are other chapters and verses in the bible that talk about the sovereign choice of God. We can't bury our head in the sand about this.

However, in other chapters you will see language of our responsibility. Of our free will regarding our salvation.

The end of [Romans 9](#) and into [Romans 10](#) you will see our responsibility.

And what about John's gospel? Do we not see the critical requirement of our belief in his writings?

John 3:16 ESV

*¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that **whoever** believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

John 3:36 ESV

*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.*

John 6:40 ESV

⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

John 11:25 ESV

*²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. **Whoever** believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,*

WHOEVER BELIEVES

And I think for there to be the legitimacy of choice to believe, there must be freedom to choose. Otherwise, we are automatons playing out God's drama like puppets on a stage.

However, the Bible teaches that we are dead in our sin and in need of spiritual revival. The bible is clear that apart from God we would continuously choose against God and choose for our selfish, evil desires.

To suggest, as some do, that there is a glimmer of goodness within us is the heresy of Pelagianism or Semi-Pelagianism - something we must reject. (Pelagius – an Irish monk from AD 390 – 418)

Feel the tension yet?

Therefore, there must be some working of God on our behalf to enable us to believe because we are dead spiritually thus incapable and in need of the quickening of His Spirit to revive us!

And I believe God does a gracious work that gives us the capacity to believe before salvation takes place. Both Calvinists and Arminians and even those outside these circles believe this – This pre-salvific work is necessary by God, especially considering the reality of total depravity.

God must do a work to give us the capacity to believe.

And we are responsible to believe!

All of this to say, we live in a tension within the Scriptures.

The tension of God's sovereign choice and our capacity to choose. Two parallel tracks taught in Scripture.

Why am I spending time on this with you? I mean this is not good TED talk material, is it?

Well, because our text in Romans 9 demands it!

Modern preaching books warn not to cover heavy theological doctrine from the pulpit because people can't handle it. People don't want it. People reject it.

By the way, all doctrine means is teaching.

And Jesus said in the great commission...

Matthew 28:19–20 ESV

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Perhaps this is why the church in America is anemic?

Perhaps this is why 80-85% of evangelical churches across this country are in decline or closing?

Perhaps it's because preachers are more concerned about attendance and dollars than preaching the whole counsel of God's word?

Friends, you must wrestle through these tough doctrines.

It will stretch you and grow your faith!

It will force you to have challenging discussions.

It will force you back into the word to help you formulate what you believe and why you believe it!

A Comforting Truth -

So how can we understand our God in the midst of this tension?

How do we understand that God determines those who will be saved, yet at the same time says that he isn't willing that any should perish but come to repentance?

I know that our God is the Sovereign King who is somehow able to allow for the each individual's capacity to choose (everyone who has ever lived and is alive now)

and

still is able to accomplish His will down to the most minute of details (every prophecy fulfilled exactly when and where it was and is supposed to).

God accomplishes His glorious, sovereign will PERFECTLY and PRECISELY while allowing you to exercise yours!

How?

I don't know!

I don't fully understand!

But for God to pull off these two concepts simultaneously, shows His power and abilities are endless and beyond our comprehension.

And my awe and admiration for Him only increases as I try to reconcile these thoughts in my mind.

Remember this about our God...

Deuteronomy 29:29 ESV

²⁹ *"The secret things belong to the LORD our God..."*

Isaiah 55:8-9 ESV

⁸ *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Argumentation – God is not obligated to me or you to explain why He does what He does or even How he does it. This puts me in my place and helps me to remember that if I could understand all there is to know about God, He would either cease to be God or I would become God - two actions, thankfully, that will never happen!

Application - So, study this stuff out! Think this stuff through! But also recognize something very important - your eternal life hangs in the balance and you must believe of the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. That's your responsibility!

Review - God's Promise Produces God's People

- Your Heritage Will Not
- Your Work Cannot!
- God's Promise Produces God's People - Like It or Not!

Conclusion

Visualization - God produces His People through His Promise. The church at Rome needed to understand that God did not fail with the Jews and the church then was His plan B. No, the Jews redemption has always been tied to the Christ who would come through them.

Action – Jesus Christ has always been God's plan to unite all of God people for His GLORY! Jew, Greek, slave, free – all equal at the foot of the cross.

The question I leave with you is this – Do you believe it's your family heritage and your works that make you right with God or Jesus? The choice is yours!

Connection Group Reflection Questions