

Romans part 36

“Sovereign or Savior”

So, I have a question, does God love all people or does He love some and hate the others?

But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, ⁷ nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “In Isaac your seed shall be called.”⁸ That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. ⁹ For this is the word of promise: “At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.”¹⁰ 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.” Romans 9:6-13

This passage that we are in, is the passage that people will turn too as they try to prove God loves some but not others. Now bear with me, that doctrine says that the most important thing about God is His sovereignty, meaning He is in control of everything and teaches that if people have any choice in their eternal destiny, then God isn't sovereign.

That means that repentance is not necessary for salvation because it involves humans making a choice. Even faith in Jesus is discounted because according to this doctrine, God gives you faith AFTER He regenerates them, because people can't choose to believe the gospel. God chooses us, we don't choose

Him, according to this doctrine. They say, the decision of who and who will not be saved by God before you were even born.

If you take this passage out of context, you can make it say that, but the God you end up with is different than the God who is loving and sent His son so that NONE would perish...

This may sound like pointless debate, but what is at stake is nothing less than the character of God, so it is more than worth talking about and understanding!

1. What does Paul say?

So the problem that Paul is dealing with in chapters 9-11 is this, why have so few Jews responded to the gospel? Does the problem lie with the gospel we are preaching? Is it untrue?

And then he answers his own questions, the problem is not with the gospel but that the gospel has revealed the problem, not all the physical children of Abraham are the spiritual children of Abraham.

There are those that have the physical DNA of Abraham and those that share the faith of Abraham.

It even goes back to Abraham's own physical children, Isaac and Ishmael; one had his father's faith and the other had only his blood. The issue is not the works of the flesh but faith...

Look at it this way, Jacob and Esau, God foresaw Jacob's faith and loved him, and also foresaw Esau's willingness to sell his birthright, or position for some stew and would not serve by faith... God knew the beginning from the end...

2. God's purpose.

For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."

¹⁰ 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), Romans 9:9-11

As I said last week, when we do not understand who Paul was speaking to, we make this very complicated, but look at this and let's recap God's purpose.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. Romans 8:28-30

- **Foreknew:** God knew each person who would come to Him before the beginning of time.
- **Predestined:** God decided what kind of people we would become, that we would be conformed or changed to Jesus so that in the age to come, He, Jesus, would become the head of a resurrected family, and He purposed to accomplish this goal by three major actions:
 - a. **Called:** He would offer salvation by sending the gospel.
 - b. **Justified:** He would send His son to atone or pay for the sin so that those who would repent and believe would be free from judgement.
 - c. **Glorified:** Believers would be filled with the Holy Spirit and one day be resurrected in glorious bodies.

3. Not because of works.

(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), Romans 9:11

Look at this, God chooses who He will save based on nothing we do or don't do. He only chooses based on our faith, He doesn't give salvation as a reward based on how good you are or how bad you have been...

For grace to be grace, God must make His decision based on nothing but His decision to call all and to offer salvation on all who will call upon the name of the Lord...

4. God's sovereignty.

So can God be both loving and sovereign at the same time? I think sometimes people point to His sovereignty like it is a bad thing, like He reserves the right to be mean and harsh without being love and merciful...

But in reality, He is both. But the real question that we work on today is, has He limited His sovereignty to the point that we can make free and moral choices. Do I in fact have the choice to choose to bomb my own life? Can I knowingly choose to say no to Jesus? Can I violate God's laws with full knowledge of what I am doing?

The "God is sovereign crowd" would have to say no: He has chosen us out of all the people in the world, He cast His "holy dice" and our number came up and we are chosen whether we like it or not...

But the "God is savior" crowd would say yes. God has limited His sovereignty so that we get to make our own choice, to determine our own eternal destiny. We literally get to choose heaven or hell, not by earning heaven by doing enough "good works" but by responding to His call to follow Him.

5. Paul's conclusion.

The whole meaning and subject of Romans chapter 9 is all about one thing, why did so many Jews reject the gospel while at the same time so many gentiles receive salvation through faith in Jesus?

And while so many are focused on the sovereignty, when in fact the answer had nothing to do with a choice that was made before people were even born, it was because the gentiles believed and repented when they heard the message of the gospel but most of the Jews refused because they were determined to earn salvation by observing all the rules of the law of Moses.

Now notice something, Paul does not say God chose gentiles instead of Jews, He says one group chose God's righteousness by faith, and the others didn't.

Romans 10:12-13 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. ¹³ For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

And in fact later on in chapter 11, Paul says that if those Jews who had rejected Christ, changed their minds, God would gladly restore them. The entire impact of Romans 9-11 of Paul's language is to declare that God wants to save and He will if we only call on Him.

You too, if you have never called on God to save you and give you eternal life through the death and resurrection of His son, can today, call on Jesus and have eternal life... God would that all would come to the saving knowledge of His grace and mercy...

Paul's open invitation to come to Jesus sounds a lot like this;

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. John 3:16-17

So, the question remains, which God is He? Is He a sovereign Lord who chooses or is He loving savior who invites everyone? Do we end up in hell because, before we ever even born, He chose us to die, or do we end up in hell because we refused His grace?

I submit to you, that He cannot be both.