


God's Choice

Romans 9

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Part of Paul's Letter to the Romans Romans 9-11

May 26, 2024

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God's Choice

If God's love, offered to us through the Jewish Messiah Jesus, is so amazing, why were the Jews rejecting Jesus in the time of Paul?

The failure of the Jews to respond to the Gospel is breaking Paul's heart.

1I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—2that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3For 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. 4They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. 5To them

belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

—Romans 9:1-5 (ESV)

Paul is both sad and perplexed how his “kinsmen,” the Jews, the people of the Messiah, missed what God was doing.

3concerning his [God’s] Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord

—Romans 1:3-4 (ESV)

In vss. 6-29 Paul is going to go back to God’s Word, which he believed could not be wrong, and explain what God had always had in mind.

Paul wants to show his readers that God’s plan has never been only about physical descent, through ancestors, but that God’s selection of individuals has been vital to the whole process.

6But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, 7and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” 8This 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. 9For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.” 10And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, 11though 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—12she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” 13As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

—Romans 9:6-13 (ESV)

Before the boys were born, before they had done anything to make one of them stand out over the other, including even being born first, God told Rebekah “The older will serve the younger,” and selected Jacob.

...the practice of selection, of God working his purposes through some and not others, was intended to continue past Jacob and on into the subsequent history of Israel. It had continued, in fact, right down to the point where the Messiah had carried Israel’s destiny all by himself. When Paul arrives at 10.4 [Romans 10:4 (NLT): “For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God.”], the central point of the argument of these chapters, we realize that this was where the whole story had been heading. God’s purpose was to act within history to deal with the problem of evil, but this could only be done by employing a people who were themselves part of the problem, until the time was ripe for God’s own son to emerge from their midst and, all alone, to take their destiny upon himself.

—N.T. Wright

Scripture reveals all through the process of God’s selection that God chose individuals to carry forward His plan, regardless of their moral character.

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 3but Esau I have hated...”

—Malachi 1:2-3 (ESV)

What we’re seeing here is a Jewish idiom where a comparison is being made, with a comparatively big difference between love and hate.

God chose Israel and more specifically Jacob because He chose them, for His own reasons, and, honestly, we don’t really know any more than that.

14What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! 15For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." 16So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. 17For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." 18So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

—Romans 9:14-18 (ESV)

All human beings sin and deserve death, and so anytime God acts with mercy when people have sinned, He is giving them/us more than they/we deserve.

Neither here nor anywhere else is God said to harden anyone who had not first hardened himself.

—Dr. Leon Morris

God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart in his encounters with Moses was simply abandoning him to his own stubbornness, allowing him to reap the full consequences of his initial sin and hardening.

Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done.

—Romans 1:28 (NLT)

Life is a gift from God, and if we can pause and reflect on our lives, we can find a lot to be thankful for.

The enemy loves to encourage our pride and smugness, that we're doing ok, that we're pretty good, compared to everyone else, and that we don't need God all that much, but those are all deceptive lies.