

God's Plan for His People # 32

Romans 9: 6-13

Again we have come to a passage that has created much debate and division over the years. I will agree this passage has been difficult to discern, and I certainly do not possess the ability to address every question that arises within these verses. However, all Scripture is given of God through the Spirit for our benefit. We must never treat the Bible as we would a buffet in a restaurant, taking what we like and leaving the rest.

Some approach this passage solely from a physical and national perspective regarding Israel. This passage does address God's past, and future dealings with Israel, but they also reveal deep spiritual truths for Israel and all who read these words. If we only see a physical or natural application, we have missed the heart of what Paul seeks to convey. These verses follow Paul's compassionate discourse in the opening verses, revealing his willingness to perish throughout eternity if that had been a possible means to reach his fellow men. It seems absurd that Paul would be willing to make such a sacrifice for temporal, physical or national agendas.

As we move through this passage, I pray the Lord will open our eyes, enlightening our minds and hearts to the truths He left us in His Word. We serve a sovereign God who is sovereign in His dealings with all people. I want to consider the particular [aspects](#) of His dealings revealed here as we think on: [God's Plan for His People](#).

I. The Sovereign Precepts of God (6-7) – Paul turns his attention to the very Word of God and the truth it reveals. Concerning God's sovereign precepts, we discover:

A. They are Infallible (6a) – [Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect](#). Bear in mind the audience to whom Paul is currently speaking. He is addressing the Jewish people at this time. We have discussed these same disputes and misunderstandings in previous verses. [Rom.3:3 – For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?](#) [Rom.3:31 – Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.](#) [Rom.7:7 – What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.](#) Every Jew who heard the Gospel had not received it. Most of them rejected Jesus as the Christ, refusing to embrace Him as the promised Messiah. All had not believed, but some had. The rejection of many did not nullify the Word and promises of God however. Although many had refused to embrace the Gospel, some had and were saved. The unbelief and rejection of some will never make God's Word of none effect or alter its infallibility.

B. They are Inescapable (6b) – *For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.* Paul reveals a simple yet profound precept: all Jews could claim biological and national association with Israel, but all could not claim association with the Israel of God's eternal plan, those who had embraced Jesus as the Christ, receiving Him in salvation. Many Jews depended on their lineage through Abraham to secure entrance into heaven, but Paul knew this would never prove worthy in God's plan. They may have rejected the truths of Scripture, but they could not escape the means of salvation God had set forth through the sacrificial atonement of Christ the Son. Many may have decided to reject the Gospel, but they could not escape it. Many may have been Jews by biological birth, but that never translated to becoming heirs of God through Christ.

- The same truth applies to all people, not just the Jewish race. There is no other way of acceptance to God except through salvation in Christ. One may have been born into a family which enjoys a long line of Christians. They may have joined the church and been baptized. By all outward appearances, they belong to the church, but they have never been born into the family of God and brought into the true church. These truths are inescapable, regardless of the perceptions or practices of men.

C. They are Indisputable (7) – *Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called.* We will deal with this thought and precept further in a moment, but Paul reveals God's plans and purposes are indisputable. He set forth His sovereign decrees and man cannot alter or change them. Their association with Abraham was precious to every Jew. He was the father of their nation. They all traced their lineage back to him, but that alone wasn't enough even to claim identity with Israel. Abraham had several sons, but Israel came through Isaac. In order to be an Israelite, one had to come through the lineage of Isaac. These facts could not be disputed. This was in accordance with God's sovereign plan for Israel.

- We see a great principle here for all people. We are all created of God, and some would say we all are His children since we are the product of His hand. However, one must know the Son to become part of the family. Simply being born in this life and acknowledging God is not sufficient. One must know Christ as Lord and Savior to be accepted of the Father.

II. The Sovereign Purposes of God (8-13) – After speaking of the sovereign precepts of God, Paul offers greater clarity as he speaks of God's sovereign purposes. Consider:

A. The Distinction (8) – *That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.* Paul again speaks of the other sons Abraham had. Ishmael was born through Hagar, the handmaid of Sarah. After the death of Sarah,

Abraham married again and had several more sons. These were all Abraham's sons in the flesh, but they were not the promised son, Isaac. God had set the bounds and made a clear distinction between the sons of Abraham. Isaac was ordained of God as the son of promise. We know the details behind Ishmael's birth. He was born of the desires of the flesh through impatience. Isaac was given of God through supernatural means, fulfilling the promise He made with Abraham.

- Again, Paul wanted the Jews to realize there was more involved than being a descendent of Abraham. The Arabs and Edomites would come through the lineage of Abraham, but they were not Israelites. So it is with faith and the clear distinctions God set forth. Just being part of the human race, created by God, does not make one righteous and accepted of God. We must come through the way of salvation provided by the promised Son, Savior of the world.

B. The Determination (9) – *For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son.* Abraham and Sarah grew impatient, waiting on the Lord. They took matters in their own hands, and a son was born to Abraham, but this was not within God's plan for Israel, the people God had promised through Abraham. The sovereign will of God was fulfilled as He had planned, through Isaac for Israel, and it continued throughout the generations to come, leading to the birth of Christ. Paul wanted them to fully understand that God's determinate will cannot be thwarted by the actions or desires of men.

- There were many occasions throughout history when it seemed the lineage of Abraham through Isaac would cease to exist, leading to the birth of Christ: the murder of children in Egypt during Moses' day, times of captivity and brutality against the Old Testament Jews, the slaughter of babies by Herod, and even Jesus being assaulted in the Garden of Gethsemane, but God preserved the bloodline that lead to the birth and sacrificial atonement of the Son for our sin! God's determinate purpose for Israel and the redemption of humanity was fulfilled just as He had planned.

C. The Divinity (10-11) – *And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac.* ^[11] *(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)* Here Paul speaks of the divine, sovereign plan of God further being carried out through the sons of Isaac, Esau and Jacob. God made a sovereign choice as to whom the bloodline would flow prior to the birth of Esau and Jacob. Neither of them had been born yet, thus never having done anything, good or evil, and God chose Jacob to bear the lineage of Christ. This decision was not based on the worth, merit, or deeds of either, but by the sovereign decree of God alone.

- These verses create contention and fear for some, but they shouldn't. I am convinced we serve a sovereign God, and He is never bound by the desires or dictates of men. He is God and He always acts in accordance to His sovereign will and righteous ways. We will never fully comprehend the essence of God with our feeble minds and understanding. In fact, we have no right or authority to challenge the will or decisions of God.
- Rather than allowing these verses to disturb us, consider the grace they reveal. God's favor was not tied to the works or perceived worth of Jacob and Esau. Through grace He chose to extend favor to one who was undeserving and could never earn such favor. Rather than being angry, I rejoice that saving grace is offered to any of us. God could have left us in our sin and allowed us to suffer the righteous judgment we deserved, but He made a means of salvation through the suffering of His Son!

D. The Discernment (12) – [It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger](#). Paul continues to emphasize and confirm the sovereign wisdom of God. Prior to their birth, God revealed that Jacob would be heir to the covenant, although he was not the first-born. According to traditions widely held there, Esau being the eldest son, should have been heir to the inheritance, but God chose Jacob. Again, His ways are not the ways of men. God saw beyond mere tradition as He knew the lives the men would lead. Granted, both men had their flaws, as we all do, but clearly Jacob's character and desire for the Lord exceeded that of his elder brother. God's plan was right, as it always is. Paul assures the Jews they can trust the wisdom of God in every area of life, whether it is physical, emotional, or spiritual.

- It is good to know we serve One who possesses unhindered wisdom. He provided the means of our salvation and He guards and guides our lives daily. We must learn to fully trust His leading, regardless of what we perceive or how those around us react. His ways are always right and just. You will never go wrong following the Lord.

E. The Declaration (13) – [As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated](#). People are often accused of saving the best for last, and I suppose that accusation could be applied here. This is the verse within this passage that has caused the greatest confusion and debate. Paul actually is quoting [Malachi 1:2-3](#). One must consider the entire context of the lives of Jacob and Esau, as well as the complete record of Scripture, before coming to a conclusion. There is no reference in Genesis to reveal that God possessed a personal hatred for Esau. The words of Malachi were written over a thousand years after Esau's life. The logical conclusion would relate to the idolatrous and rebellious ways of the descendants of Esau. The descendants of Isaac and Jacob loved the Lord, while following and worshiping Him. The descendant of Ishmael and Esau rejected the Lord and chose their own path and gods.

- I am convinced Paul is revealing a common theological truth illustrated by the lives of those who deny the Lord's plan and purposes while seeking to make their own way and earn their own righteousness. Many of the Jews, although direct descendants of Jacob, were behaving like their distant cousins, the Edomites. They had refused to embrace Christ as their Savior and continued to seek righteous acceptance through personal effort or merit. God loves those who submit to His plans and purposes for salvation, but rejects those who seek an alternative path to Him.
- This simple truth has not changed and it never will. The names continue to change and the various paths continue to appear, but there is only one way of salvation and eternal life. The ecumenical movement in recent years desires to promote a view of universal acceptance. Many people are very sincere in their religious practice and worship, but they are sincerely wrong. There will be many in Hell who were very sincere, but they were sincerely wrong when it comes to salvation. Jesus is the only means of salvation. Apart from Him there is no hope of acceptance to God or reconciliation from sin. I know many regard that point of view as harsh, and even heartless, but it remains true. God has set the bounds for salvation and acceptance to Him and we have no right or authority to challenge His sovereign decree! Good works and good intentions will never translate into salvation. God loves those who embrace the Son by faith and rejects those who deny Him.

Conclusion: I will admit, this too has been a difficult passage to discern. I prayed earnestly prior to and during the preparation of this message. I hope you have been enlightened by our time together and your faith has been increased. These verses were given for our benefit, even though they were written in regard to God's dealings with Israel. The common principles apply to us as well. Works of the flesh and human merit will never obtain salvation. Being born into a particular family or being accepted as a member of a local church will not reconcile one's sin. Only salvation through faith in Christ will accomplish that. If you have rejected Him or are depending on any other means of salvation, you remain in sin, rejected of God. If you have never received Christ by faith, resting solely in His finished work on the cross, you remain in sin. Why not respond to His call for salvation and be saved today!