

That the Purpose of God Might Stand  
Romans 9

John 15:1-14

John 15:15-27

Responsive Ephesians 1:3-14

This morning we are going to be picking up in chapter 9 of Romans, in which Paul makes a few rather profound statements. Before I get ahead of myself here, let's go ahead and read our passage for this morning, starting in verse 1 and going to 13. ( **read 9:1-13** ) The next few chapters here that Paul writes is they key to understanding Paul's arguments about election and salvation. Over the years many scholars have felt that these few chapters seemed a bit out of place as Paul seems to abruptly change subjects and begin teaching on something a bit different, but there are many who differ with that thought and believe that these next chapters are the core expressed purpose for Paul's writing here. Everything he had been saying has built up to this conclusion, to this point that he is making here starting in chapter 9. He has argued that the law was of little effect when it comes to standing justified before God. He has argued that it is only through the spirit, by faith that one can see God, and through the works of the spirit that one can know God. It was solely and only by God's grace and mercy that any are saved from his wrath against sin, not of any merit gained by us, but only by Christ's work on the cross.

Paul's teaching here on election, is something that he had been talking about this entire time, but here he is explicitly calling it out and pointing to it. I want to take a moment this morning and sort of go through some of the highlights from the previous chapters, pointing out that Paul isn't switching gears here, but rather diving deeper into the concept he has laid out throughout this entire book. Starting right away in chapter 1:16. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written the just shall live by faith." Paul establishes right away that God's people are a people of faith, who have been justified by God in Christ, through faith. He spends the next few chapters instructing his readers that the law itself has no saving power, but only has the power to condemn, for it is impossible for man of his own power to fulfill it, and please the father because of our intrinsic fallen nature in Adam. Paul hammers this point home in chapter 3, where he quotes and applies various verses from the old testament scriptures, verse 9 of chapter 3.

"What Then? Are we better than they? Not at all, for we have previously charged both Jew and Gentile that they are all under sin. As it is written; There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one." Even the goodness that mankind attempts, is born out of a selfish, self seeking nature of pride, arrogance, or self preservation, tainting that good work in the eyes of God making no good work capable of justifying mankind before God. Verse 21 of chapter 3, "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe for there is no difference. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by his blood, through faith, to demonstrate his righteousness because in his forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time his righteousness that he might be the just, and justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

So far, you can see how Paul is leading into this subject of Election can you not? Pointing out, that justification comes by faith, not by works. Paul is quite adamant that faith does not come by any works look at chapter 4 “What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt, but to him who does not work but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. And if it is only by faith that one is justified before God, that brings up the question where does faith come from? The answer can be found in Ephesians 2:8 “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are his workmanship create in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared before hand that we should walk in them.” Faith has been given, by God to his chosen people, it is not of ourselves, it is not something that we muster up enough of, but merely it is God who gives it.

Or again in Philippians 1, verse 27, “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. And here it is, “For to you it has been granted on behalf of Jesus Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake.” The faith required for belief, is a given gift of God, to whom he freely gives by his grace and mercy on behalf of his Son. And since we have been given this gift and are justified by faith in Christ, just as Abraham was looking to the promised deliverance, as Paul says in chapter 5, “having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” No longer is there a fearful expectation of punishment, but instead there is peace between us and God, a peace brought about by Christ's sacrifice on our behalf, as Paul continues on to say in verse 8 of chapter 5, that he did so While we were yet sinners, he did not die for us because we were faithful, we do not gain the merit of his blood because of anything that we have done, but only, and solely upon the one who died for us while we were yet lost in sin and without hope, so that we may be given this gift of faith and hope.

And it is this reality that governs our life, that we who were once estranged, separated from God, have by his mighty and sovereign mercy and grace brought us near, for we have been justified, made righteous through the death of Christ. Verse 5 of chapter 6, “for if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.” That is our hope, and that is the governing factor in the lives of the believer, our sin has been nailed on the cross, and is no longer attributed to our account, we are no longer slaves in it, but have been freed. So we find ourselves now, having been given faith to believe, justified by the one who came to reconcile his people to himself, and dead to our sinful flesh and alive in the spirit by the grace of God, chapter 8 rings true, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.” And it is a guarantee, for those who walk in the spirit, are those who love God, and those who love God are as Paul writes in verse 29 of chapter 8, “are those for whom he foreknew, he predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, that his son might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he predestined, these he called, whom he called, these he justified, and whom he justified these he also glorified.

As we can see, Paul's logical flow of thought leads into the necessity, and the inevitable outcome of the doctrine of election, for without it, none would be justified, none would be saved, all would be lost under the curse of Adam but God in his mercy chose to save some of the mass of humanity, or as Paul worded it later in chapter 9, out of one lump of clay God made some vessels for honor, and some for dishonor wanting to show his wrath and his mercy to his glory. This reality is at the center of Paul's lament here in chapter 9, understanding that his people, that is the Jewish nation who having every advantage, as he says in verse 4, "who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises, of whom are the fathers and from whom according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God." Who in the end, rejected Christ and gave him up to be crucified. But it isn't as through this was not God's plan, their unbelief became the vehicle that brought about the necessary death of Jesus Christ, fulfilling God's redemptive plan not for the Jews only but the whole world. So that whosoever believes on him may have eternal life for their sins have been paid, their debt wiped free, and through Christ have been adopted into the kingdom and family of God.

Though Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles, he himself was a Jew, and their rejection of the gospel bore a special weight of sadness and anger for him. As Tom Holland wrote in his Commentary, "Paul's experience can easily be understood by those who have been rejected by the people they love. He was not alone in having this experience. David is considered by some to have composed Psalm 22 after fleeing from Jerusalem to escape the tyranny of his son, Absalom. He describes this emotion of rebellion and rejection by his own son as, "being poured out like water, all my bones are out of joint, My heart has turned to wax it has melted away within me." From Paul's own letters, and from the book of Acts we learn of Paul's intense suffering by the hands of his own people, he was stoned, left for dead, publicly misrepresented, beaten, and whipped multiple times." But through it all, Paul understands that this was God's plan of bringing salvation to the world, the Israel's rejection of the Messiah was already understood from the beginning and in the next few verses Paul goes on to explain this reality. Verse 6, "But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect, for they are not all Israel who are of Israel." God's people are not the promised people of the flesh, but the promised people of the Spirit, those promised people are made up of a combination of Jews and Gentiles, both who are made righteous by the death of Jesus. The true Israel of God are the people for whom Christ died, both Jews and Gentiles being grafted into the family of God through the new covenant which is sealed in Christ's blood.

Paul goes on to show, that history and lineage mean little in the grand scheme of God's salvific plan, going all the way back to Abraham, the patriarch, the father of the Jews Paul points out that it isn't being Jewish that justifies, it isn't the lineage, or heritage that makes one right before God, but it is the promise of God that through Isaac the Messiah will come. Verse 7, "They are not all children because they are the seed of Abraham, but in Isaac your seed shall be called. That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of promise are counted as the seed." Paul is pressing home the truth that being the physical descendant of Abraham does not mean automatic justification and redemption, it does not give an automatic membership into the new covenant community that is bound in the blood of Christ.

At Pentecost, which happened in Jerusalem there was a large number of Jews brought into the faith, at first look it likely looked like God was fulfilling his promises to Abraham bringing in the Nation of Israel to rest in the Messiah but as we know that reality never fully came into fruition and instead the gospel also went out to the Gentiles in which is spread like wildfire across the nations.

This created a massive schism in the early church about the qualifications and requirements for those Gentile believers, many seeking to impose Jewish law on those who have never been under such regulation. And there were many Jews who likewise could not fully move on from the law and traditions that made up such a large part of their day to day life into the total security of the completed work of the Messiah. They were trying to straddle both camps which created an ongoing problem for those who sought to welcome the uncircumcised Gentiles as equals in the faith. From the human view, it likely looked like God's promises to Abraham had failed, or were failing for the people of Israel had rejected the Messiah, and even those who came to follow Christ, could not fully rest in the work that he had done and clung to their laws and traditions. But as we see in Paul's statements here, he refused to believe that God had failed, so he rightly concludes that "not all who are Israel are Israel." The true descendants of Abraham are not those of the flesh, but those of the spirit. The Gentile converts were just as much children of promise as were the Jewish converts, therefore together fulfilling the promises given to Abraham, through faith.

In verse 7 Paul makes an appeal to logic in his argument, again saying that not all who are the physical descendants of Abraham are the Children again for "in Isaac your seed shall be called." The logical conclusion here is that if being the offspring of Abraham amounted to anything in the faith, then it would be through all of his offspring, but it is the children of promise who are counted as the seed as he says in verse 8. It is not about the physical heritage of Abraham, but it is about the promise line in which the Messiah shall come. In the book of Galatians Paul argues even further pointing out that scripture says that all nations shall be blessed through Abraham's seed, as in one, not as many pointing to the fact that there shall be one, specific descendant to whom these promises foretell, which is Christ the one who came to bring peace between God and man. This statement that Paul is making would be a controversial and profound statement, remember, he is writing largely to the Jewish church in Rome. Paul is cutting right to the point here, showing that the gentiles who are among them are just as much the promised children of Abraham as they are. But he doesn't stop there, and pushes even further showing God's sovereign hand in the surety of salvation for his people, through the line of promise, verse 10 "When Rebecca had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac ( 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 ) it was said to her, the older shall serve the younger, as it is written. Jacob have I loved, but Esau I have hated."

Esau being the older son, would be the descendant in which the blessings and family line would continue, but God in his sovereign election chose Jacob, the younger brother to be the bearer of the family inheritance and promises made to Abraham. Paul concludes that God did this merely to show his sovereignty and power, again showing that it is not about heritage and and the physical descendants but rather God is working something greater, something bigger that makes way for all nations, and all peoples to be grafted in to these promises, both Jews and Gentiles. Tom Holland also makes an assertion here that I think is interesting and worth talking about as well, in the statement Jacob have I loved, and Esau I have hated, is not necessarily as we today would understand hatred. Apparently such a statement was a rather common and familiar Hebraism in speaking of one who is "loved less." Therefore it doesn't necessarily imply that Esau is a hated enemy of God, it just simply means that he was not chosen to be the bearer of the promises made to Abraham. Jesus himself uses this same idiom recorded in Luke chapter 14, when he says, "unless a man hates his father, mother, wife, and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he can not be his disciple." Jesus is not calling for his followers to despise and hate their families, but to again "love less"

We are to love Him above all else. In Matthew chapter 10, Jesus is quoted saying that same thing but worded different, “He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” Paul says that he chose Jacob, before the 2 were born, before any had done good or evil, and he did so merely out of his sovereign will for his purpose and glory. And I think that this stands as an example to us as well of God's sovereign control and nature in the calling of his adopted children as well. Verse 11, calls back to verse 29 in chapter 8. “For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be confirmed to the image of his son. Moreover whom he predestined, these he called, whom he called, these he also justified, and whom he justified these he also glorified.” Paul is not done hammering home this reality yet, and we will continue on this train of thought as we continue through chapter 9, but the main takeaway this morning is, that it is those who are of faith, in Christ that are the descendants and heirs to the promises given to Abraham, and to be a descendant is to be predestined, called, and justified by the Just, Holy, and Righteous God, the creator of all in who and through who all things exist for his glory.