

Preaching Copy: Romans 9:6-8 God's Mysterious Choosing

Proper 13-9th Sunday @ Pentecost

Sunday, August 2nd, 2020

Text: Romans 9:6-8

⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." 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.

⁶ For is it not such kind of thing that the Word of God has been fruitless. For not all those from out of Israel are Israel. ⁷ Nor are all children of Abraham because they are descendants; but in Isaac your descendants will be named. ⁸ These are the children of God, that is they are not the children of the flesh, but the children of the promise are regarded as offspring (seed).

Exegetical Statement

Paul has just finished telling us that God works in all things for the good of those He has chosen to be a part of His eternal kingdom and that those who have received and hold fast to His love granted by faith cannot be separated from Him by anything in this world. But that leads him to consider the state of His fellow countrymen: the Jews. God chose them to be His special people from of old. He built them from the humble beginnings of one-man Abraham and worked throughout history to present them as His special set apart people. He redeemed them from slavery, made His Covenant agreements with them, gave them in written form His will and commands, gave to them the template of Tabernacle Worship including the Sacrificial System to grant them His grace and mercy when they disobeyed Him. He showed them a physical representation of His glory. He gave to them His promise of the Messiah who was to be the Savior of the whole world. God worked through history and the will of mankind to present them as His special Old Testament people. Yet they fell away, refusing to believe in Him when He came in the flesh. The fault is not with God's temporal or spiritual choosing. The fault is not in the power of His Word to bring about all that He sends it to do.

Focus Statement:

God's sovereign choices are event in temporal things and spiritual eternal things. Both are based on His reasons and choices that are not always revealed to men. All those who hold faith in Christ until the end do so because of God's choosing them from the beginning and His working out of that choice throughout history and in their lives. God chooses no one to be eternally damned. His desire is that all be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

We hear God's promises in Romans 8 that He works all things for the good of His chosen, and that no one can separate Him from those He loves. This makes us look around and wonder then why all are not saved and come to a knowledge of the truth? Does God really choose some to believe and not others? Why are some saved and others not?

What the hearer should do as a result:

Refuse to peer behind the veil of what God has not revealed to mankind. He does not explain why some are saved and others are not. We are to be content to know that if we die with saving faith it was His choosing and His doing. Those who die without faith cannot blame God for not choosing them or of not presenting the Gospel to them. They are totally at fault for refusing to believe.

Subject Sentence: God Chooses to Salvation but not damnation

Introduction: How We Choose is Not How God Chooses

Last week in our Epistle Lesson Paul explained that if you are a believing Christian, and bound for eternal life, it is because God chose you from before time began. He worked in your life every inch of the way so that you would be His precious child of faith. Paul declared that God works through all things in your life and mine for our eternal good. And God promises that nothing in all of Creation can separate us from the love of Christ given to us by faith. But then comes the question, if this is true of me; why is it not true of all people? Why doesn't God work to bring all people to faith the same way He did for me? Is it because I'm better than them in some way? Does He really choose some to be His precious children and yet choose others not to be so?

Part of the problem with this subject is that we regard God's choosing to be on the same level as our own. Think back to those days when you were a kid and you chose who was going to be on your baseball team, or football team. Or you got to choose who would come to your birthday party. There were some you actively chose. You invited them to be a part of the team. You sent them invitations to the party. Maybe you even called them or made sure to ask them in person. But there were other kids you skipped over. You may not have said anything, but in your mind, you were saying "Definitely not him. Not her. They can't hit, pitch or catch. We'll definitely lose with him on the team. Besides that they hog the ball. They don't play nice!" When you were making out invitations for your party you Mom may have said, "What about Cindy Lou?" And you responded, "No way Mom! She's not nice! She smells! She eats her own boogers! Don't ruin my party by inviting her." You actively chose to invite some and not to invite others.

God makes choices too. But He doesn't choose according to the same standards we do. If He did, He would never choose any of us. None of us are good enough to be on His team, or in His family, His kingdom. He chooses not because of who we are in and of ourselves. Not because of who are parents were, or what we would or would not do. He choice is based solely on who He is as a loving, forgiving and redeeming God. As God explained to His chosen people of the Old Testament-Israel in **Deuteronomy 7:7-8** **⁷It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.** Our God, as the God of love, chose them, chose you, and chose me simply because of the love He has for us. This is an unconditional love, not based on who we are or what we can or would do. It's based on who He is.

We also need to discern between the way God chooses in a temporal/earthly sense, to further the work of His Church on earth, and the way He chooses in a spiritual/ eternal sense-His electing to salvation and eternal life; the way He fills His spiritual eternal Church. Paul is going to discuss both of these senses in our Epistle Reading today as He looks at God's choosing the nation of Israel to be His Old Testament people.

Paul Discusses God's Choosing of Israel

As Paul concludes his testimony in Romans Chapter 8 that God predestined us to faith and that **(Romans 8:39b)** no one or no thing “**will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**” his thoughts in Chapter 9 then turn to His own people. He considers the plight of the Jews, His fellow kinsmen. While the early church was comprised first of 12 Jewish men called by Jesus, and then expanded to 3,000 Jewish souls called to faith on the day of Pentecost, by and large the Church of Paul's day is becoming mostly Gentile. As he goes from town to town, Paul begins his testimony and Gospel witness in the Jewish synagogues, but that usually doesn't last long. By and large they refuse to hear how Jesus is the promised Messiah, and they throw him out; sometimes violently. Not to mention how Jerusalem, the capital of the Jewish people, persecuted the Church so badly that it fled the city. Paul understands what this means to the Jewish nation as a whole: they have become apostate; they are no longer part of the kingdom of God and are facing eternal damnation. How could this happen? Why did this happen?

God had chosen this people-Israel, out of all the other people groups in Old Testament times to be His special people. He chose them in a temporal, earthly sense to be His and in doing so did not choose other people groups such as the Egyptians. God nurtured and cared for His people Israel. He built them up from one man, Abraham, who was too old to have children, yet through the miraculous work of God did. From this humble beginning He built them into a mighty nation. He redeemed them out of slavery in Egypt, and in doing so showed them and the rest of the world how mighty He was. He proved to the world that He alone is the one and only God. He saved them from the mightiest army around, the Egyptians at the Red Sea. He brought them to His holy mountain and gave them His laws, explaining to them His holy will for them and how they were to act as His chosen people. He showed them an earthly representation of His glory in the pillar of fire by night and cloud by day. He allowed a physical manifestation of that glory to rest in the Holy of Holies in His temple above the Ark. He gave them the template of how to worship Him and the Sacrificial System so they could seek and receive His grace and forgiveness for when they disobeyed. And when they turned away, He lovingly kept calling them back. He chose the Messiah, the Savior of the world to come from them. And when He did, when that Savior appeared, they chose to deny Him. They refused to believe in Him.

Here we see that God's temporal choosing did not result in eternal salvation. As Paul explains in **Romans 9:6** **But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel.** Not all who are Israel by birth, connected by blood relationship to Abraham, are actually part of God's spiritual Israel, His eternal kingdom.

That's because God's choosing to eternal salvation is something different. The temporal choice of those who would make up Israel, those who were circumcised, those who were given and kept the kosher laws; these were not the same as the spiritual Israel: The Church, those saved by grace through faith. Eternal salvation is based solely on faith in God's promises. It was true for Abraham. It was true all along in the Old Testament. And it is true for us today. You are saved by faith in God's promise that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior. To be a member of the spiritual Israel, God's Church, His kingdom, His family, you must be declared perfect with no sin that would disqualify you. Faith in Christ removes all that sin that would disqualify you. Faith so uniquely and intimately unites you with Jesus and His death on the cross that there, He took from you and removed all the sin that would disqualify you from being a part of His family, His Church. He removes it from you forever. All your sinful acts are blotted out from the record of your life. And instead, as the resurrection gives witness to, in place of all your sinful disobedience, you receive the credit for all Jesus obedience. All the times and ways He was perfectly obedient to His heavenly Father now become your obedience. He earned for you and for me the gift of eternal life. He was always in right standing with the Father and gives that right standing to you in your baptism. He chose you to receive it and made it happen. God's word didn't fail you and it never will. He will use it to keep you in faith until life everlasting. That is God's eternal spiritual choosing at work. And it is at work in you right now.

What God's Temporal and Eternal Choosing means to You

When we look at God's choices in a temporal sense, we see that He does choose some and not others. As Paul mentions in our text God chose only one of Abraham's sons: Isaac, and not Ishmael to be the Patriarch of His special people Israel. God chose only one of two twin boys born to Rebecca to be the Patriarch of God's chosen people. He chose Jacob and did not choose Esau. This is similar to God choosing me to be your Pastor here at Lamb of God and yet did not choose any of my other classmates. In a temporal and earthly sense, as God works to build and equip His Church on earth to do ministry, He does choose some and not others to play certain roles in His kingdom. But His choice for eternal salvation is a whole different thing.

God didn't choose Ishmael to be a part of Israel. But He never chose Ishmael to be damned to hell forever. **Genesis 17:20-21** ²⁰ **As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation.** ²¹ **But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year.**" In a temporal earthly sense God chose to make His nation Israel out of Isaac and not Ishmael. But God still blessed Ishmael promising to give him a fruitful life and make a great nation out of him. God extended His promises to Ishmael so that he too might have the same eternal salvation that his stepbrother Isaac had.

Paul references God's choosing Jacob over Esau in **Romans 9:13** **As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."** This verse should never be taken to mean that God chose to damn Esau or his descendants to hell. This verse is a Jewish rhetorical expression meaning that God chose Jacob over Esau to be his chosen one in the line of Israel. Jesus also uses this expression **Luke 14:26** **"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.** Here Jesus is not saying that you have to hate your mom and dad and family. It is a rhetorical expression that means you must love Jesus more than even your own family. You must choose to serve Jesus over serving them. In the same manner God chose Jacob to be the Patriarch. But he never chose to damn Esau to eternal hell. Jacob did his brother wrong and then took off without asking forgiveness. But when they meet up again as grown men Esau has nothing but love and compassion for his brother. He had the same kind of forgiving heart that God has for those who do him wrong. God may not have chosen Esau in a temporal sense but did not choose for Esau to be lost spiritually.

When it comes to God's choice for His eternal kingdom, He does not choose anyone to be shut out of it forever. **2 Peter 3:9** **The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.** **1 Timothy 2:3-4** ³ **This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,** ⁴ **who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.** There is no single person on earth that God does not want to be with Him in everlasting life.

So then, why will so many not make it? Because they, like the multitude of Jews in Paul's day, refuse to believe. God works hard in the life of the lost through His Gospel Message as preached and witnessed to by His Church to bring the message of salvation to all people. We are to preach Jesus death and resurrection to all men regardless of who they are, where they live, what nationality or skin color they are. Whenever the Gospel is preached the Holy Spirit is there with the power to change hearts and lives. But for reasons God doesn't explain to us, men can and do refuse the gift of grace granted to them by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It happens all the time. It happens every day. It's not because God is choosing them not to believe. It's because they are choosing not to believe. And in doing so they are choosing to remain outside His kingdom of grace.

As Paul concludes in **Romans 9:6a** **But it is not as though the word of God has failed.** We cannot blame God or His word for the multitude of unbelievers. We should never think that our loved one does not believe because God has shut the door of eternal life to them. God loves them more than we do and desires them to be with Him forever. The only one to blame is the unbeliever themselves. But as for you who believe, it's all because of God's work in your life. He chose you before you were born. At just the right time, whenever that was in your life, He brought faith in Christ to bear upon your heart. You being a Christian is not by chance or a whim. It's not because you were better than your unbelieving sibling, cousin, or relative. It's all because of His work. He called you to faith. And He continues to work in you to this very day to keep you in faith to life everlasting.

Conclusion

We choose who we want to be our friends, attend our parties, be our partners in sports. God chooses men for different roles in His Church and in doing so does not choose others. But God never chooses anyone to live apart from His eternal kingdom. As you contemplate the faith you've been given and the eternal salvation it brings to you be very glad. Be safe and secure in that faith knowing that the same God who worked so hard to bring you to faith is working just as hard to keep you in faith. He chose you to be in His kingdom and He will not let you go. And what of those loved ones of ours who currently stand outside the kingdom in unbelief? As long as they are drawing air in this world it is not too late. God has not chosen them for eternal damnation. His Spirit is at work through your Gospel witness as well as the witness of others to bring faith to bear on their hearts. He loves them more than even you do. And if anyone can work the miracle of faith in their heart, it is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Just as He did for you. Beyond this God doesn't explain why some are saved and others are not. We are to be content with our eternal salvation. And to be willing tools in His work to call the lost to faith, especially those loved ones in our life. Amen.