



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

God's Good Grace

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Romans 9:6-18

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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. ⁹ For this is what the promise said: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son." ¹⁰ And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, ¹¹ though 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— ¹² she was told, "The older will serve the younger." ¹³ As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." ¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. ¹⁷ For 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." ¹⁸ So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

(Pastor prays)

Every one of us here lives in the tension of believing that God is good and yet we live with such evil. We trust God's sovereignty and yet wonder how He could let such hurtful things—even evil things— happen. That contrast can create emotional and even spiritual tension.

Tension. That's what you feel in Romans 9 as we hear Paul's anguish for his lost kinsman in verses 1-5 and then read his trust in verses 6-18. It's like he's saying, "I know things look bad, but you've got to get your eyes off these events and be regrounded into the enormity and

unthinkable bigness of our good God.” This passage is glorious for the way it shows and declares and defends the free and almighty power of a good God who always works for His people. So if you are a believer today, If you’ve put your faith in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, this passage is here to put strength into your soul and energy into your prayers. This passage is God putting His hand under your chin and lifting your eyes up to behold his glory and holiness and love and absolute control over all things. So, as you hear these words from the Bible about God today, I hope you will rejoice and be strengthened and wipe your tears because: if you’re in Christ, our God fights for you and He always wins His battles. And if you are not a Christian or if you are a “pretend” Christian, I pray the Holy Spirit will grip your heart in such a way you will renounce your sin and rejoice with faith in the cross of Christ and see that...

Our God is a Good and Trustworthy God

Let’s see what makes him so good and trustworthy.

God’s word is unfailing

We jumped in at verse 6 but what Paul says in verse 6 is based on what he was saying in verses 1-5. There he passionately describes the issue that Israel, the Jews, God’s chosen people, were not being converted to Christ at a high rate.

And Paul has great sorrow because Israel is God’s chosen people and yet they aren’t coming to Christ. He sees how this is a problem and addresses it by saying in verse 6, *“But it is not as though the word of God has failed.”* Israel’s lack of responsiveness does not mean that God’s declared purpose for His people has failed. Paul explains why in the rest of the sentence. *“For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel....”* All those who belong to Israel (God’s chosen people) in the physical sense, do not necessarily belong in a spiritual sense. The true people of God would be (always) a smaller spiritual body. The failure wasn’t in God’s Word, the failure was in the lack of faith in the Israelites. You see, it’s faith not flesh that defines who belongs to God’s people. You see, if people are saved, they are saved by God’s grace, and if they are lost, they are lost by their own decision.

So the first thing Paul establishes is what I say every Sunday. It’s Isaiah 40:8: The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the Word of our God stands forever. Stay in it and claim its promises. Believe its Gospel and devour its contents. God’s Word is unfailing. Now watch Paul expand the argument.

God's promises are unwavering

In verse 6 Paul has made the point and he's going to prove it in verses 7-9 by taking us back to Genesis and to Father Abraham. 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.* ⁹ *For this is what the promise said: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son."*

In verse 9, Paul takes us back to Genesis 18 when the Lord visited Abraham and Sara in their old age and promised them they were going to have a son. And verse 7 is a clearer quote from Genesis 21. Through Isaac shall your offspring be named. The problem is that Abraham already had a son named Ishmael by another woman. And the point is that being a child of Abraham in a *physical* sense is not the same as being a child of Abraham in a *spiritual* sense. Salvation is not a birthright. In fact, verse 8 in the text is very similar to what Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3. *it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise*

Jesus would say it like this: That which is born of flesh is flesh. That which is born of spirit is spirit! Some have said, "It's grace, not race" that matters to God. You see, faith not flesh defines who belongs to Israel. God keeps His promises; His word is effectual. He promised Abraham and Sara a son and He delivered. If that's true, then by grace and in Christ we can trust His promises.

There is the promise of **salvation**. If you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord and believe God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

There is the promise of **security**. I will never leave you. A bruised reed he will not break and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.

And there is the promise of **sustaining**. My grace is sufficient. I lift my eyes to the hills. Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord.

Our God is a good and trustworthy God. His word is unfailing, and His promises are unwavering.

God's love is unconditional

Paul compared Isaac and Ishmael in verses 7-9 and it's like he knows that for some people that wouldn't be enough. So now he brings us to Jacob and Esau to show us how God's purposes prevail over man's desires and how our salvation finds its beginnings in God's love and grace. Look how Paul lays it all out in verses 10-11.

It's two children with the same mother, same father, same womb (they were twins). They had not been born, had not done anything good or bad and yet God told her "the older will serve the younger." Now go back to verse 11 and see the purpose for all this. In verse 11b, see that little phrase "in order that"? That is a "purpose phrase." It tells us why God did this.

Now let's read verse 11 - *in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls*— it's God's purpose. It's unconditional election and not works. It's because of Him who calls. In the example Paul gives us, the promise is applied to Jacob and not Esau. Why? It's to show us that God's unconditional love at the cross of Jesus is given to us, not on the basis of works, but on the basis of God's call.

This is what we mean when we say that we are saved **by** grace **through** faith in Jesus. Think with me through the Gospel. God is Holy. Man is a sinner. Jesus dies in the place of sinners. This act of mercy and grace now calls for a response, a decision. Man is fully responsible to make a decision. It is a response of faith. And if you believe in Christ, the Bible says that you are saved. That's Amazing Grace. This unconditional grace is not only amazing, it's shocking.

Go with me to verse 13 as Paul quotes Malachi. ¹³*As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."* That seems shocking to us. How could it be that God hates anyone? He's supposed to love me, mostly because I'm lovable. And we miss the shocking part. It's not shocking that God hated Esau. He was a sinner like every one of us who offends God's holiness and deserves God's wrath. The shocking thing is *not* that God hated Esau; the shocking thing is that God *loved* Jacob, the conniving, lying, sneaky, trickster Jacob! That's grace. All of us deserve to be Esau, but because God's love is unconditional in Jesus, we can be Jacob.

A woman once said to Charles Spurgeon, "Mr. Spurgeon, I cannot understand how God would say that he hated Esau." Spurgeon replied, "That is not my difficulty, madam! My trouble is understanding how God could love Jacob!" It's all-out unconditional love found at the cross of Christ. God's word is unfailing. God's promises are unwavering. God's love is unconditional.

God's mercy is unrivaled

Paul anticipated our question about fairness in verse 14. ¹⁴ *What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!* And then to prove his point, in verse 15, he takes us back to Exodus 32 in the Old Testament, after Moses was on the mountain getting the Ten Commandments and he was gone so long that the people got restless. They told Aaron, “We don’t know what happened to this Moses,” and Aaron did a little trick with their golden earrings and made an idol. God’s anger burned. He was going to wipe Israel out, but Moses interceded (much like Paul did in verses 1-5) and God relented. Moses then asked to see His glory and that’s where this comes from. ¹⁵ *For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”* It’s God’s great prerogative to save the very worst, undeserving sinners at the cross of Christ. The shock is not that some *aren’t* saved – the shock is that *anyone* is saved.

Then comes the glorious truth in verse 16. ¹⁶ *So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.* Paul is saying that our righteousness is like filthy rags. It’s what Jonathan Edwards said: “You contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that makes it necessary.” This is great news and tremendous hope for any sinner here who may think she doesn’t know enough or hasn’t read the Bible or been religious. You can join the likes of John Newton when he was close to dying when he said, “Although my memory is fading, I remember two things very clearly: I am a great sinner and Christ is a great savior.” God comes in mercy, takes us to the cross and invites us to believe. His mercy is unrivaled.

God’s power is unquestionable

In verses 17-18, Paul takes again to the Old Testament to show us God’s power. Verse 17 takes us to Exodus 9. ¹⁷ *For 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.”* God used an evil man to bring about His own purpose. He raises up kings and He brings down kings. God raised up Pharaoh for His own purpose. He used a bad man in a bad situation to show His power and magnify His name. The most celebrated event was the exodus and deliverance and ended in the last plague, Passover. Today with The Lord’s Supper, we remember what Jesus said at the Passover meal, that He is the Passover lamb.

Our God is a good and trustworthy God. God’s word is unailing. God’s promises are unwavering. God’s love is unconditional. God’s mercy is unrivaled, and God’s power is unquestionable.

(Pastor prays)