

ROMANS



*HIS
PURPOSEFUL
CALL*

9:6-13

ROMANS

9:6-9



**Children of
the Flesh
and of the
Promise**

[6-9]

⁶However, [it is] by no means that the Word of God has failed. For not all who [are] of Israel, these [are] Israel. ⁷Neither [is it] that all children [are] seed of Abraham; rather, “in Isaac will you be named offspring.”

⁸That is, not the children of the flesh, [are] these the children of God; but the children of promise are regarded as offspring. ⁹For if [the] promise word [is] this: “At this the time, I will come, and there will be to Sarah a son.”

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9:6



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After the preceding doxology (the Amen), St. Paul begins a new section. The very best way for us to understand is to break the verse in half and look at the first half; then the second!

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The first half of v.6 is a transition from vv.1-5 and moves the reader into the primary discourse of Romans 9-11. This will encompass a large portion of St. Paul's argument that is concerned with declaring a truth about God. Recalling Paul's grieving (2-5a), he makes it very clear that the fault does not reside with *"the Word of God."* Paul emphatically asserts that there has not been a failure (*"...by no means..."*) on the part of God whose Word endures forever.

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In the second half of verse 6, Paul established a principle, which appeared to be very contradictory; however, it's the foundation of chapters 9-11. You'll be reminded of this once we reach Romans 11:26! Notice that Paul uses Israel with two different referents: "For not all who [are] of Israel, these [are] Israel." With the opening "not all" (οὐ πάντες), asserts that belonging to the larger set of people, in an ethnic sense, does not all-inclusively equate with being "Israel" in terms of their relationship with God.

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9:7



**Children of
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Promise**

[6-9]

*⁷Neither [is it] that all children [are] seed of Abraham;
rather, “in Isaac will you be called offspring.”*

Paul will now clarify v.6 by rephrasing his assertion in v.7. This verse is a little difficult since Paul is using a subset within the large group. What Paul is getting at is that not “*all children [are] seed of Abraham*” and Paul will identify them in v.8 as “*children of flesh.*” His word for “children” is “τέκνα” meaning the biological children of Israel, that is, the ethnic Israelites in the OT and the Jews of Paul’s day. And that the true children, which will follow in v.8, are those who will “*be called offspring*” “*in Isaac.*”

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9:8, 9



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Paul makes it abundantly clear that just because the Israelites are ethnic Jews, that doesn't make them “children of God.” Paul is applying this verse to Gen. 21:12. This is Paul's meaning:

+ An Israelite equates with the children of Abraham in v.7; these are the physical or fleshly children; and,

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**Children of
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(6-9)**

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+ Israelites who are BOTH children of God and of the PROMISE; these are “counted” or “regarded” (λογίζεται) as “offspring” (or seed) (σπέρμα). The Greek verb λογίζεται is very important for us, since it is a passive verb and, once again, it is pointing to the fact that this group is made, declared offspring or seed by Divine declaration through faith in God’s Word of Promise!

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9:8, 9



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[6-9]**

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Please note that Paul is clearly emphasizing the fact that it is God’s action by His calling (v.7) of Isaac as the one through whom He would fulfill His promise to Abraham; and, His crediting their offspring as seed. God’s Word has not failed and is not fallen! Instead, His Word of Promise accomplishes what He promises; this was true then and IS true today!

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9:8, 9



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[6-9]

⁹For if [the] promise word [is] this: “At this the time, I will come, and there will be to Sarah a son.”

In verse 9, Paul reinforces his main point about the enduring effect of God’s Word. Notice the introductory clause: *“For if [the] promise word [is] this....:”* This phrase reiterates the Word of Promise from v.8. The word *“promise”* is in the emphatic position that further highlights the certainty of God’s Holy Word! Then Paul states the precise promise: *“At this the time, I will come, and there will be to Sarah a son.”* The prophecy is found in Gen 18 and its fulfillment in Gen 21; as Paul illustrates...God’s Word did not fail!

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9:10-13



God's
Purposeful
Call
[10-13]

¹⁰Not only then, but also Rebekah, by one conception, having Isaac the father of us [all]. ¹¹For having not yet been born, nor having done anything good or evil—so that the purpose of God according to election might stand, ¹²not from works, but of the [One] calling, it was said to her, “The older will serve the younger.” ¹³As it has been written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

This section of Romans is difficult to translate and, to add to the difficulty, the verse divisions are misplaced and rather disruptive. Paul uses broken syntax and in actuality, v.10 is incomplete. Then vv. 11-12 are parenthetical, with v.12b serving as a completion of both verses.

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9:10-13



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What is Paul's purpose? He gives us a hint in vv.11-12 and then he will give further details in v.30 continuing through ch. 10.

To expand upon the coming hint, we should remember that many in Israel, instead of faith in the promise, relied upon their physical ancestry, of which John the Baptist convicted them of in St. Luke 3:8 -

“Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones” (NKJV).

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9:10-13



God's
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[10-13]

¹⁰*Not only* then, *but also* Rebekah, by one conception, having Isaac the father of us [all]. ¹¹For having not yet been born, nor having done anything good or evil—so that the purpose of God according to election might stand, ¹²not from works, but of the [One] calling, it was said to her, “The older will serve the younger.” ¹³As it has been written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

So then, Paul introduces an expression that we will see eleven more times in the remainder of his Letter to the Romans: “*Not only...but also.*” And yes, Paul doesn’t provide the full context! Which means that you, as with his readers in Rome, would require an understanding of Gen 15-25 in order to fully grasp Paul’s point!

What do we see Paul doing here? He is highlighting the comparable roles of two mothers: Sarah and Rebekah! What are their points of comparison?

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¹⁰Not only then, but also Rebekah, by one conception, having Isaac the father of us [all]. ¹¹For having not yet been born, nor having done anything good or evil—so that the purpose of God according to election might stand, ¹²not from works, but of the [One] calling, it was said to her, “The older will serve the younger.” ¹³As it has been written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

- + Both were barren;
- + Sarah and Rebekah’s inability to become pregnant was overcome by Divine Intervention;
- + And a major point made by Paul is that both of their respective sons (Isaac and Jacob) were called by God to be the heirs of the covenant promises.

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¹⁰Not only then, but also Rebekah, by one conception, having Isaac the father of us [all]. ¹¹For having not yet been born, nor having done anything good or evil—so that the purpose of God according to election might stand, ¹²not from works, but of the [One] calling, it was said to her, “The older will serve the younger.” ¹³As it has been written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

Note that Paul calls Isaac “the father of us [all]”. This is unusual, but not wrong. True, Abraham was called “our father” (cf. 4:1); however, the line also ran through Isaac! You may have also noticed that Paul does not separate himself from his fellow-countrymen by the use “of us [all]” that will be “fleshed out” in 11:1.

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¹⁰Not only then, but also *Rebekah, by one conception*, having Isaac the father of us [all]. ¹¹For having not yet been born, nor having done anything good or evil—so that the purpose of God according to election might stand, ¹²*not from works, but of the [One] calling, it was said to her*, “The older will serve the younger.” ¹³As it has been written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

“...Rebekah, by one conception...,” is an idiomatic expression that Paul uses to illustrate that the conception of Esau and Jacob were at the same time (Gen 25:19-26). Then he adds another dimension by stating: *“...having not yet been born, nor having done anything good or evil...”* which reflects that God’s declaration was spoken prior to their conception, birth, and before Esau or Jacob could do anything good or evil: *“...not from works, but of the [One] calling.”*

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¹⁰Not only then, but also Rebekah, by one conception, having Isaac the father of us [all]. ¹¹For having not yet been born, nor having done anything good or evil—so that the purpose of God according to election might stand, ¹²not from works, but of the [One] calling, it was said to her, “The older will serve the younger.” ¹³As it has been written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

What does this mean? Paul’s point is that in regard to both Jacob and Esau the initiative was God’s, without any reference to Jacob or Esau’s deeds. However, Jacob will be the child through whom the promise would continue...not his elder brother, Esau. Since, “*The older will serve the younger*” in which God, by His Divine prerogative changes the birth order!



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9:10-13



God's
Purposeful
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[10-13]

¹³As it has been written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

“Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” (τὸν Ἰακώβ ἠγάπησα, τὸν δὲ Ἡσαῦ ἐμίσησα) (Mal. 1:2, 3).

We should be very careful with the word “hated.” Malachi uses the Hebrew word, **an4c2** (saw-nay’) - to hate; to detest; esteeming less (with the implication of Divine mercy still extended). We see an example of this in Gen 29 (the relationship between Leah and Jacob). Moses uses the same Hebrew word shown above to describe Jacob’s attitude toward Leah. Jacob was “**esteeming Leah less**” that Rachel. Yes, Jacob’s treatment of Rachel went well beyond proper bounds of mere favoritism; yet, he did not “**hate**” Leah, after all, she had six sons fathered by Jacob!

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God's
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[10-13]

¹³As it has been written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I **hated**.”

“Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” (τὸν Ἰακώβ ἠγάπησα, τὸν δὲ Ἡσαῦ ἐμίσησα) (Mal. 1:2, 3).

So, in regard to Yahweh's treatment of Esau, according to Holy Scripture, Esau was still an object of God's mercy! In that:

- 1) Esau was blessed by Jacob;
- 2) Jacob and Esau did reunite; and,
- 3) God was merciful to Esau by granting him an extensive genealogy and Esau being the father of a nation, Edom (cf. Dt. 23:7).

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Conclusion

This section illustrates for us how one cannot read Romans 9 and conclude that the whole matter of God's relationship with Israel is set in stone apart from hearing the entire discussion through Romans 11. We should not and cannot jump to conclusions, until we do reach the end of chapter 11. Therefore, chapters 9-11 must be read as a whole; their sections cannot be separated one from another or taken out of context (which, sadly, happens all too often by those with an agenda, which, again, we will discuss in Chapter 11).

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9:14-18



Next
Week

Hence, it's now time to press on toward Paul's goal as we will study next week the "*content*" of God's purposeful call in Part One (vv.14-18) of "*God's Word of Mercy Calls Us*" (14-24).

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