

Romans 9 – Part Two

In our last two sermons on the book of Romans we spent some time looking at the control God exerts over his creation. We already went through Romans chapter 9 verses 1-5. In those passages Paul tells of his great love for his fellow Jews. He recounted the many promises and blessings God had given the people of Israel.

So if the people of Israel were God's chosen people, why were non-Jews coming to Christ in droves while the people of Israel were largely rejecting their own Messiah Jesus Christ? Had God's promises and blessing for Israel failed? That is the question Paul addresses in this chapter. Let's pick it up in chapter 9 verse 6.

Romans 9

6But it is not as though the word of God has failed For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;

Ok, now we know why many people of Israel were rejecting their own Messiah. Apparently many people who thought of themselves as people of Israel did not meet all the qualifications to be considered a true Israelite.

Many Israelites thought they were in good shape spiritually because they were distant relatives of Abraham, the founder of Israel. But Paul says it takes more than the right bloodlines to be a true Israelite. Paul continues this thought in verse 7.

7nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED."

Abraham was the founding father of God's chosen nation Israel. Some Israelites thought that because they could trace their family line to Abraham that they were true Israelites. They were people of God's chose to bless. But

according to Paul it is not enough to be physically related to Abraham. That alone does not qualify one to be a true citizen of Israel. Let's zoom in on that point.

Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. Can you name the founding fathers of Israel? The founding fathers of Israel are; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and then the twelve sons of Jacob. Where did Ishmael go? He was related to Abraham. Apparently it has never been enough to simply be related to Abraham in order to be considered a member of God's chosen people Israel.

Why was Israel built through Isaac and not his brother Ishmael? It has to do with the difference in the ways in which Isaac and Ishmael were conceived. The way in which Isaac was conceived says more about believing faith than the way in which Ishmael was conceived and born.

How did Ishmael come about? He came about when Abraham and Sarah did not trust God's promise to give them a son. Years had passed since God promised Abraham and Sarah a son. They became impatient and thought; "hey, maybe God isn't going to deliver his promise through a miracle. Maybe we need to figure out for ourselves how to get a child." After all, Sarah was 90 years old. How could she have children? Thinking they needed to help God deliver his promise Abraham and Sarah agreed that Abraham should sleep with their housekeeper Hagar. Ishmael came about through this plan they thought up.

Ishmael was born from human activity human plans and human works. But God does not need our help to deliver his promises. Ishmael was a child of the flesh but he was not a child of the promise.

Isaac was born as a result of God's promise and God's miracle power.

Abraham and Sarah could not have children. Sarah was over 90 years old when God supernaturally caused Sarah and Abraham to have the son Isaac. Isaac was born because God promised Abraham and Sarah a son. He was born because of God's activity. He was the son of the promise. Isaac was God's answer to how Abraham would become the father of Israel and of all who had faith in God.

Let's continue in verse 8.

8...it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. 9For this is the word of promise: "AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON."

The point is that even though one can prove that he or she is related to Abraham the founder of Israel, it takes more than the right genes to be a true Israelite. A true Israelite is one who relies on God and his promises. Ishmael was related to Abraham but he did not come about by faith in the promises of God. Israel began through Isaac as a result of a miracle and a promise from God.

God's blessing does not come through human activity and human works. God's blessings come upon people through God's choice to bless people and his power to make his blessing work.

In Paul's day many Jewish people thought that they could have eternal life if they did good works. They thought that if they attended synagogue services and avoided certain foods and avoided work on the Sabbath God would owe them a free pass into heaven. Still others thought that because they could claim Abraham as a distant relative they would get a free pass into heaven. Yeah, many of them held grudges and hated one another. Yeah,

many of them did not love God from the heart. But hey, they had the right connections. Not only that, they jumped through religious hoops.

HOW DOES THIS LOOK IN OUR LIVES?

Many people that claim to be Christians are doing more by human activity than by the power and promises of God. Some Christians said a prayer to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior at bible camp many decades ago, but have not walked in God's power and God's promises for years.

Many Christians received Jesus by faith but now everything that happens can be explained by human effort. We attend church, we serve on committees, and we don't get drunk or sleep with people outside of marriage. And that is good.

But when it comes to loving God with all our heart. Or loving other people with all our heart many Christians fall short. When it comes time to trust God and listen to God through prayer, many of us don't take the time to see what God wants to do. We default to the stuff we thought up. Everything some Christians do can be explained by our efforts and human activity.

COULD A NON-CHRISTIAN DO THAT?

Is there anything going on in your life that cannot be explained by human effort? Perhaps the faith God gave you to get through a difficult time. God gave you by his promise and power the faith to be at peace when there was no human way to come up with peace.

If we are children of the promise there has to be something going on in our lives that cannot be replicated by a non-Christian. If we are children of the promise we came to faith in Christ because God through a miracle put saving faith in our hearts.

When is the last time you saw God do something that could only be explained by God's power? When is the last time you asked God what he

wanted you to do and you took the time to listen to him speak to your heart or answer you through prayerfully concentrating on God while you read the bible?

When is the last time you told God; I don't care how old I am or inexperienced I am, or how scared I am, if you tell me to do something I will trust that you will give me the grace and power to do what you told me to do?

God is the one who puts the faith in our hearts to believe. And God is the one who decided that it was time for many non-Jews to believe in the Jewish Savior for eternal life. It is all about God and what he wants to do. And we who believe are sons and daughters of God's power and promise.

16So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

There are many religious teachers that say we are saved by being good people. When talking with people about salvation have you ever heard someone say; "well, I am basically a good person?"

Being a basically good person is trying to earn salvation through human works. Salvation is about God and his decision to show mercy to us. Remember, God's salvation is about God showing off his great mercy. Trying to earn salvation through our good works is about us showing off how good we are by human activity. Salvation is about God.

17For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH."

God chose to harden the heart of Pharaoh so that he could show off his great saving power by rescuing Israel from the greatest nation on earth.

When the armies of the Pharaoh were swallow up in the Red Sea everyone around the earth heard about the greatness of the God of Israel. And this proved that the God of Israel was the One True God. God has a great purpose for everything he does.

18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

In the Old Testament, God generally chose to show himself to the world through Israel. After the day of Pentecost God moved the world into the time of the gentiles. God is choosing right now to show himself to the world through anyone in the world that has saving faith in Jesus Christ.

25 As He says also in Hosea,

"I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,' AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'"

26 "AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,' THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD."

God came up with a plan to spread his fame beyond Israel. God is saving people from every nation on earth. Why? So that more and more people shine a spot light on the glory of God.

30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;

Many Gentiles became righteous. What does it mean to be righteous? It means that God does not hold any of our sins against us. He says that we are innocent of all sin. How do we get into good standing with God? It is through faith. What does that faith look like? True faith means we trust by faith that Jesus Christ went and edited the books of heaven so that it appears

as if we have never sinned. The wages of sin is death. We all have sinned therefore we must pay with our lives. Jesus came and paid that death price by dying in our place.

Saving faith is trusting in God to save us by the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. It is not by straightening up our act. That does not pay for our past sins. Only Jesus can fix the books and white out all of our past sins.

31but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.

32Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works.

Why did you drop a lot of the bad habits you had when you received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? It is because God wrote his law on your heart. He changed your desires. We want to please God because the Holy Spirit put that desire in our hearts. It is by faith and by God's power that we were saved and it is by faith by God's power that we live a godly life.

THE BEST STORIES ARE THE GOD STORIES

Rich Delph quit smoking. How? God delivered him. Another brother was delivered from alcohol addiction. How did he get off the bottle? It was God that delivered the brother to freedom. Why? So that God could show off his mercy and love.

Is there anyway that you are stuck today? Is there anything you know you should start doing or stop doing that you have not been able to do by your human will and effort? If there is, God just might give you the help and power you need to take the next step. He might want to show off his love and power and mercy through you right now. Go to God; seek his will for every area of your life. You will be amazed at what God can do through his promises and his power.

TAKING IT HOME

1. How did you become a Christian? Was it by good works, or was it by faith that God put in your heart?
2. You were saved by faith. Are you now walking by faith? Are you asking God what he wants to do? Do you trust him to come up with all the answers to your questions? Are you acting like sons and daughters of the promise or sons and daughters of human activity?
3. When is the last time you saw things happen in your life that could only be explained as the activity of God?
4. If you are not seeing what God is doing in your life would you ask God to give you eyes of faith so you could see the ways that God is already at work in your life? And would you ask him to give you the faith to let go of trying to control things that he wants to do so that he might receive the full credit and praise he deserves.