



St. Paul's Lutheran Church
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The Epistle of Romans

The Justification of the Ungodly

Chapter 9 Verses 6-33

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – these are the Fathers of our faith. The promised Messiah was connected to their lineage. So, does this mean that salvation is linked to those of the physical descent of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? If someone is born in this family lineage, are they automatically a recipient of salvation?

Paul's argument in verses 6-8 is that the promise of God is not bound to a physical family tree. Sure, God works to bring salvation to the world 'through' Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; however, this salvation received by faith.

You see, not all of Paul's Jewish brothers and sisters believed. And so, if they did not, was it the fault of the promise? If salvation came through the Jewish people, should not all Jewish people have salvation in Christ? Yes, if salvation was tied directly to the physical family tree. But it isn't. Salvation came through the lineage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and it is for all nations! And so, we are all a part of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by

'by faith' when we receive the promise of Jesus! We are a part of the family of Abraham by faith!

The story of everything in the Old Testament is everyone's story. Our history – as Christians – is the whole Old Testament. We are all grafted into the one-true-faith.

Again, as previously mentioned, the Apostle Paul is showing us in these verses that our faith, by the laws of inheritance based on physical descent. But rather, it is based upon the gift of Christ for all the nations and received by faith.

Paul goes on in verses 9 and following that we must keep in mind that God does not play by our rules. He does His plan of salvation His way. God selects and moves history as He will, to the fulfillment of His promises. He will not be bound to observe our human laws, or to uphold our ethnic origins or human deeds. God is not in a box. He is not on a

leash. He selects and does things His way to bring forth salvation for humanity.

Toward the end of our selected pericope, Paul summarizes his point again: God graciously worked through the people of Israel to bring forth the promised Messiah. However, even though Israel rejected the Messiah, this does not mean that the promise was ineffective.

And so, what we are learning throughout chapter 9 can be summarized in with the following points:

1) Salvation is not linked to inheritance laws of physical/ethnic descent. Salvation is received not by birth but by faith.

2) The point of the Old Testament (the end) is to lead us to Christ. The end of the Torah is Christ and Christ-crucified for all nations.

3) Just because many in Israel rejected the promise that was worked through them and their history, it does not make the promise of Christ void!

4) God acts the way God wants to act. He is not bound to our ways of doing things. He selects and acts through history according to His own will. We are not in charge of God. Our rules of fairness do not apply to God. In other words, let God be God.

5) Chapter 9 of Romans is not about God's spiritual election but God's 'historical selecting' throughout history.

Summary:

Just when we think that our lineage, works, righteousness, and brownie points can manipulate and control God, chapter 9 of Romans destroys this illusion. God cannot be bought. He is like C.S. Lewis' lion character, Aslan. Aslan is not tame or safe but he *is* good. The same is with the Lord God. He isn't tame. He does not act the way we think in human history; however, His selecting, acting, and work were done for the end goal of salvation for all mankind in Christ. Indeed, He is good but in being good, He will not be bound to mankind's aspirations. He is free; in His freedom, He freely chooses to redeem mankind.

