

# Is it really that simple?

Romans Series

Message 37

9.28.25

Romans 9:6–16 (CSB)

<sup>6</sup>Now it is not as though the word of God has failed, because not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. <sup>7</sup>Neither is it the case that all of Abraham's children are his descendants. On the contrary, **your offspring will be traced through Isaac.** <sup>8</sup>That is, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but the children of the promise are considered to be the offspring. <sup>9</sup>For this is the statement of the promise: **At this time I will come, and Sarah will have a son.** <sup>10</sup>And not only that, but Rebekah conceived children through one man, our father Isaac. <sup>11</sup>For though her sons had not been born yet or done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to election might stand—<sup>12</sup>not from works but from the one who calls—she was told, **The older will serve the younger.** <sup>13</sup>As it is written: **I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau.**

<sup>14</sup>What should we say then? Is there injustice with God? Absolutely not! <sup>15</sup>For he tells Moses, **I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.** <sup>16</sup>So then, it does not depend on human will or effort but on God who shows mercy.

## Intro. Romans 9 isn't simple.

A. One big takeaway for us is this:

1. God's involvement in the life and purposes of humanity is a beautiful thing.
2. God has been involved in our lives since the beginning.
3. God made us by the works of His hands, so why would He stop working in us now!

B. Romans 9 began with Paul declaring all that God had done for his people, the Jews.

1. God adopted them, gave them glory, covenants and promises, and the privilege of leading the world in worship.

2. But, as Paul reflects upon this, he sees how his people have rejected and thrown it away.

a. They have rejected Jesus and stand cursed and cutoff from all that God had given them.

1. If they don't repent, they will miss out on God's presence.

2. If they don't change, their future and eternity is death and destruction.

3. And it doesn't have to be this way!!!!

b. Paul would willingly give his own life if that meant that the Jewish people would be reconciled back to God through Jesus.

3. But he can't do that.

a. Paul cannot die for their salvation.

b. Paul can give his life for the cause of Jesus.

1. Paul was beaten, abused, imprisoned, and executed for the cause of Christ.

2. He gave his life and suffered a martyr's death so that others might be saved.

3. But Paul could not save them; only Jesus can do that.

c. There is no salvation apart from Christ.

d. We can and should be willing to give our lives for the cause of Christ.

e. But we are not Christ, and we cannot save those who are not willing to confess and proclaim Jesus as Lord.

C. It would appear from some perspectives that God's glorious plan has failed.

1. It would seem reasonable for some, especially Gentiles, to declare that God's word has failed.

2. The Jews were lost because they rejected Jesus, and the mission to the Gentiles is proof that God has started over and is moving in another direction.

## God's Word has not failed—verse 6.

A. Sometimes we look at what is happening around us and it appears that God has failed.

1. Just like the audience of the book of Malachi, God doesn't look like He has been faithful.
2. They couldn't see God's successes because they were looking for His failures.
  - a. We do this too.
  - b. We become so focused upon trying to find examples where God didn't do something, we actually miss what He did do.
  - c. Our world and flesh has trained us to focus on the mess and miss the glory.
3. Paul boldly declares, God's Word has not failed.
  - a. But the answer looks different than what you thought it should look like.
  - b. God hasn't failed, you just missed it.
4. The Apostle Paul has to properly define who the children of God are.

B. This is good news: this is the Gospel.

1. Because the old school definitions of Paul's day said that only those who are physical descendants of Abraham are God's children.
  - a. Lineage and possession became the keys of the Kingdom.
  - b. If you were born a Jew, then you possessed the promises, the covenant, and the Torah.
  - c. Therefore, I must be one of God's children.
2. But if this narrow view were true, what would become of the Nations?
  - a. Why should anyone minister to the Romans, or Germans, or Britons, or Americans if only the physical descendants of Abraham are saved?
  - b. Must we all become Jewish to be saved?
    1. Must all males be circumcised, grow out their beards, and worship on the literal Sabbath?
    2. Should we move to Israel, learn Hebrew, and keep all the Commandments in hopes that we might be called one of Abraham's children and be saved?
  - c. That doesn't sound like good news to me.

Notice what Paul says:

Romans 9:6–8 (CSB)

<sup>6</sup>Now it is not as though the word of God has failed, because not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. <sup>7</sup>Neither is it the case that all of Abraham's children are his descendants. On the contrary, **your offspring will be traced through Isaac.** <sup>8</sup>That is, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but the children of the promise are considered to be the offspring.

## Not a new message, a new understanding.

A. This was not a new message, but it was a new understanding.

1. The Jews believed they were something special because Abraham was special.
2. They believed they were good because the Torah was good.
3. What they failed to grasp was this: The family of God is a family of faith.
  - a. All through the Old Testament, unexpected, unlikely, and unqualified people are added to the family of God.
  - b. Prostitutes and abused women show up in the lineage of Jesus.
  - c. Outsiders are welcomed as insiders.
  - d. Second-born sons receive the blessing reserved for the first-born.
  - e. Barren women conceive, and old men are given new life.
  - f. Every salvation story is the story of someone who is saved and doesn't deserve it.

B. Jesus preached the necessity of being “born-again.”

1. It wasn't enough to be born into a Jewish family.
2. I submit to you that it isn't enough to be baptized as an infant or grow up in a good, moral home.
3. We must be born-again as people of faith.
4. Faith is the only way to enter the kingdom and the family of God.

C. Paul gives a couple of Old Testament examples to prove that this has always been true.

1. The first example is the birth of Isaac.
2. Abraham and Sarah had been given an impossible promise:
  - a. Even though you are too old for children, you will have a son, and through him, the blessings I promised will be continued.
  - b. The promises of God are always impossible for us to achieve on our own.
  - c. But Abraham and Sarah get impatient, and Sarah convinces Abraham to make a baby with her much younger slave girl, Hagar.
  - d. This child, Ishmael, was a child conceived out of desperation, not faith.
    1. Even though he was built with the DNA of Abraham, his life was lacking the one component that mattered:
    2. faith.

D. This feels incredibly harsh, but this is how Scripture interrupts the life of Ishmael.

- a. Yes, he was a child of Abraham, but not a child of faith.
- b. He was Abraham's solution to the problem, not God's solution.
- c. When we try to achieve God's plan outside of God's means, we create problems instead of fulfilling promises.

E. Consider this: One of the reasons God may not show us His full plan is that He knows we will try to fulfill it ourselves.

1. **Illustration:** HVAC for this addition.
2. I had done all my homework, and when it was time to finish this part, the HVAC companies said we needed a \$60,000 solution.
3. We didn't have \$60k.
  - a. *I felt like the Lord challenged me: Don't tell the people until you are willing to tell them with faith instead of fear.*
  - b. If I had known ahead of time, I would have tried to budget for what God wanted to fulfill miraculously.
4. There are times when God doesn't show you the whole plan because the solution is beyond what we can grasp.

- a. Just look at Abraham.
  - b. God promised Abraham a son through his wife, Sarah.
    - 1. Instead of sleeping with Sarah, he slept with Hagar.
    - 2. Ishmael wasn't the son of promise, Isaac was.
    - 3. Ishmael was the result of human effort.
    - 4. Isaac was the result of faith.
  - c. God invites all of us to become people of faith.
5. Could it be said that when we get ahead of God, we conceive and birth what God didn't intend?
- a. Often, we get a glimpse of God's plan and start running as hard as we can to where we think He is going.
  - b. We have just enough information to make us feel like we are on the right path, but don't realize we are completely turned around.
  - c. Sometimes God doesn't show us the full itinerary because He knows we would be tempted to fulfill it all in our own way.

## God works in ways contrary to our thinking.

A. The second example Paul uses is from the children of Isaac and Rebekah.

- 1. Isaac and Rebekah also struggled to conceive.
- 2. In Genesis 25:21, Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife and God answered.
- 3. Not only did she conceive a boy, but she also conceived twins.

B. But these twins were challenging from the beginning.

- 1. And to make it even more challenging, God chose the younger son (Jacob) to be the leader instead of the older, Esau.
- 2. This was NOT the way it was supposed to be.
- 3. But as Malachi writes, "I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau."
  - a. The word hate means "not chosen."

b. God chose Jacob to be the recipient of the promise, not Esau.

C. Sometimes God makes choices that we wouldn't.

1. He anoints people we would have rejected.
2. He heals people that we wouldn't have touched.
3. He calls people that we hadn't considered.
4. He blesses people we would have ignored.

D. The Good News of the Gospel is precisely this truth.

1. God CHOSE us.
2. Not because we are born in the right family, not because we have earned a second chance, not because we are good or anything special.
3. God chose us because He loves us through Christ.
4. The great thing about love is that love doesn't require a reason.
5. Love doesn't have to make sense.
6. Through Christ, God's love has a plan and a purpose.

Romans 9:11–12 (CSB)

<sup>11</sup>For though her sons had not been born yet or done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to election might stand—<sup>12</sup>not from works but from the one who calls—she was told, **The older will serve the younger.**

## God's purpose might stand.

A. Everything God does has a purpose.

1. During the middle of the English Civil War, Parliament called together a group of over 150 men to help establish theological standards for England.
2. They gathered at Westminster (picture from my trip) and discussed and debated for several years.
3. From this came the Westminster Confession, and it begins with the most important question and answer humans can ask:
  - a. "What is the chief and highest aim of man?"

b. "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever."

B. Everything God does has a purpose, and that ultimate purpose is that God is glorified.

1. People of faith enjoy seeing God win.
2. People of faith delight in seeing God praised and exalted.
3. So when God chooses people He shouldn't, like Jacob, God is glorified.
  - a. He uses the weak to confound the wise.
  - b. He uses the poor to embarrass the rich.
  - c. He uses the less thans to prove that God is more than enough.
4. When God uses us, even though we are imperfect, God is glorified.

C. This is why our salvation cannot be from works.

**Romans 9:16** <sup>16</sup> So then, it does not depend on human will or effort but on God who shows mercy.

1. For the Jews, the works of the Law were commandments such as Sabbath keeping, circumcision, and obeying the commandments.
2. For Catholics, works are the sacraments necessary for salvation, such as baptism and the Last Rites.
3. I don't know if it's a Missouri thing or a Pentecostal thing, but it feels like most of us spend our whole lives trying to justify God's love for us.

## Apply: Moving from Works to Faith

A. This is the Gospel, and I don't understand it.

1. Vs. 16: Not human effort but on God...
2. I'm comfortable with works.
3. If I do this, then God does this.
  - a. I'm good with transactional relationships.
  - b. You give me this, I give you something in exchange and as long as we are close to even, then we are good.



c. But that is not the Gospel.

4. The Gospel says that only Jesus is good.

a. And this Jesus came from heaven, lowered himself to our level, and died a criminal's death for crimes WE committed.

b. The Gospel says that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

c. Philip Melanchthon said it like this, **the only thing you contribute to your salvation is the sin that makes it necessary.**

d. The only thing I've contributed to my salvation is my sin.— Paul Washer

B. The Christian life has many components.

1. God's children are called to be obedient.

2. God's children are called to radically root out sin, all works of the flesh, from our lives.

3. We are called to faithfulness, dedication, and service.

4. But none of these things come before the simple recognition that God loves me, and has called me according to His purpose.

C. When we confess that God loves me, even in my sin, then we begin to walk in faith.

1. When we recognize that God loves me not because of anything I've done, but in spite of it, we start walking in faith.

2. When we live our lives out of recognition that God loves me and has a purpose for me, then my obedience, faithfulness, and stewardship are rooted in faith and love, instead of works.

3. I cannot make God love me any more than He already does.

D. I can lead us into prayer with this really simple message: God loves you.

1. Is it really that simple? YES.

2. It doesn't matter how you were raised, the color of your skin, whether you worship on Saturday or Sunday, eat pork, or don't eat meat at all.

3. The number of days you fast or don't fast, whether you celebrated Rosh Hashanah this week, or have Yom Kippur on your calendar.

4. None of these things can increase God's love for you.
  5. And if you are waiting for the other shoe to drop, no one is keeping track of shoes.
- E. We will talk more about faith next week, but let's start simply.
1. Faith is our response to the reality that God loves us.
  2. We are saved by grace through faith, lest any man should boast.
  3. What comes first: God's grace.
  4. Our faith is the response.

## Prayer Time:

A. I want to lead us for a few minutes in prayer for one area:

1. Jesus, help me to realize how much you love me.
2. Maybe you feel knocked around lately by life and wondering if Jesus is real.
3. Maybe sickness has you doubting God's love for you.
4. Maybe your focus has been on fulfilling God's plan for your life instead of enjoying God's presence.

B. The next few minutes, I want us to pray.

1. And when you are done praying for yourself, would you pray for a family member or friend?
2. How do I pray for them?
3. Lord, let them know how much you love them!
4. Show them your love and compassion, and help them respond in faith.
5. Pray for that person all week and invite them to come to church with you next week!