

Musing #63: Romans 9:9–10:4

Paul was instructing his Jewish audience with teachings from the Scriptures that they had not previously encountered, which caused them considerable discomfort. He pressed on with parallels between Esau and Jacob.

Romans 9:9-13 For God had promised, “I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.” This son was our ancestor Isaac. When he married Rebekah, she gave birth to twins. But before they were born, before they had done anything good or bad, she received a message from God. (This message shows that God chooses people according to his own purposes; he calls people, but not according to their good or bad works.) She was told, “Your older son will serve your younger son.” In the words of the Scriptures, “I loved Jacob, but I rejected Esau.”

Paul was showing the Jews from the Scriptures that their coveted membership in the Jewish physical line, and its traditions, wasn't enough and that God had made that very clear at the beginning of His calling of a people.

The final confrontation between Jacob and Esau is recorded in Scripture! The lines were chosen early on. Herod, for example, was an Edomite... **a descendent of Esau**. Jesus was, of course... **a descendent of Jacob**. In Rebecca's womb... Esau and Jacob were neither good or bad, yet God chose the younger Jacob for His plan and purpose. —**1 Samuel 16:7 The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. —Proverbs 21:2 People may be right in their own eyes, but the Lord examines their heart. Jeremiah 17:10 I, the Lord, search all hearts and examine secret motives.**

A woman once said to Charles Spurgeon... "I can't understand how God hated Esau. Spurgeon replied... "My trouble is understanding how God could love Jacob."

Rom. 9:14-15 Are we saying, then, that God was unfair? Of course not! For God said to Moses, “I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose.”

John 6:37 (Jesus speaking) **However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them.**

Q — Why do many people, including many Christians have difficulty with the sovereignty of God?

It is somewhat common to associate sovereignty with tyranny. We naturally resist those who possess such power, as it is challenging to trust individuals with absolute authority. The United States Constitution is based on the principle that no one can be entrusted with complete power. Our system of government incorporates checks and balances to prevent such a situation. This is why adversaries of our nation seek to dismantle the Senate, the Supreme Court, and even the office of our Presidents. Checks and balances effectively hinder their attempts to gain control.

As Christians, we submit our faith and trust to our sovereign God, who possesses the security to grant us “free will.” Only God is a sovereign with the fullness and purity of

love, mercy, and grace. In fact, His sovereignty serves as our hope. God chose Moses, a murderer! God chose Paul, a murderer who was persecuting God's people. God frequently places the most unlikely individuals and women in positions of significant power for His purpose and plan.

Daniel 4:15-17 Msg — **Let him be soaked in heaven's dew and take his meals with the animals that graze. Let him lose his mind and get an animal's mind in exchange, And let this go on for seven seasons. The angels announce this decree, the holy watchmen bring this sentence, So that everyone living will know that the High God rules human kingdoms. He arranges kingdom affairs however he wishes, and makes leaders out of losers (lowly, inferior) men.**

9:16-18 So it is God who decides to show mercy. We can neither choose it nor work for it. For the Scriptures say that God told Pharaoh, "I have appointed you for the very purpose of displaying my power in you and to spread my fame throughout the earth." So you see, God chooses to show mercy to some, and he chooses to harden the hearts of others so they refuse to listen.

Similarly, as God hardened Pharaoh's heart in Exodus 4:21, He could have prevented Pharaoh from resisting, but He did not. He permitted him to engage in the same behavior that all of us exhibited before our spiritual rebirth—we resisted God.

9:19 Well then, you might say, "Why does God blame people for not responding? Haven't they simply done what he makes them do?"

Many blame God for all evil. Paul knew that was a common response to problems. Yet, the Scriptures tell us that God is indeed the force behind much that we might consider evil. In fact in the King James Version of our Bible, Isaiah 45:7 clearly states... **I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.** Many of our modern translations seems to prefer words like disaster, doom, calamity, woe, and misery. Some versions like the Young Life and Wycliffe versions hold to the King James Version. I have no problem with the word evil. Throughout the Scriptures God destroys humans, thousands at a time, He brought "disaster" to the nation of Israel and their enemies over and over. I believe He wants us to understand the ultimate effects of sin on the human condition—apart from Him.

9:20-21 No, don't say that. Who are you, a mere human being, to argue with God? Should the thing that was created say to the one who created it, "Why have you made me like this?" When a potter makes jars out of clay, doesn't he have a right to use the same lump of clay to make one jar for decoration and another to throw garbage into?

Who are we to question? God made us exactly the way we are for a distinct and specific purpose.

II Timothy 2:19-22 But God's truth stands firm like a foundation stone with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and "All who belong to the Lord must turn away from evil." In a wealthy home some utensils are made of gold and silver, and some are made of wood and clay. The expensive utensils are used for special occasions, and the cheap ones are for everyday use. If you keep yourself

pure, you will be a special utensil for honorable use. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master to use you for every good work. Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts.

Many individuals struggle with God because they perceive Him as merely an enlarged human being. We often attribute to Him our own erroneous motives! Ray Stedman did an exceptional job paraphrasing God's response to Job as an illustration...

"All right, Job, you wanted a chance to argue. You wanted to ask me some questions... go ahead... but before you begin....let me ask you a few questions to verify your qualifications to run this investigation on me....Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Where were you when the morning stars sang together, and I flung the heavens into space? Were you there? Can you enter into the secrets of the sea? Do you understand how rain works, and how lightning appears? Can you order the course of the stars? Can you handle the universe Job? How about Satan? Do you understand these things Job? They are simple to me... what about you?"

Job's reply: **"I repent. I cover my mouth!"** — He had nothing to say!!!

9:22-28 In the same way, even though God has the right to show his anger and his power, he is very patient with those on whom his anger falls, who are destined for destruction. He does this to make the riches of his glory shine even brighter on those to whom he shows mercy, who were prepared in advance for glory. And we are among those whom he selected, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles.

Concerning the Gentiles, God says in the prophecy of Hosea, "Those who were not my people, I will now call my people. And I will love those whom I did not love before." And, "Then, at the place where they were told, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'children of the living God.'" And concerning Israel, Isaiah the prophet cried out, "Though the people of Israel are as numerous as the sand of the seashore, only a remnant will be saved. For the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth quickly and with finality."

Clearly, Israel's physical number is great, but their spiritual number is small. God's people, then and now, Jew and Gentile, have always been a minority.

9:29-33 And Isaiah said the same thing in another place: "If the Lord of Heaven's Armies had not spared a few of our children, we would have been wiped out like Sodom, destroyed like Gomorrah." What does all this mean? Even though the Gentiles were not trying to follow God's standards, they were made right with God. And it was by faith that this took place.

But the people of Israel, who tried so hard to get right with God by keeping the law, never succeeded. Why not? Because they were trying to get right with God by keeping the law instead of by trusting in him. They stumbled over the great rock in their path. God warned them of this in the Scriptures when he said, "I am placing a stone in Jerusalem that makes people stumble, a rock that makes them fall. But anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced."

Self-righteous people are offended and stumble over a salvation that is free.

The challenging issue for both Jew & Gentile is—many will be saved, while most will not! Someday, we will better understand.

Chapter 10

Romans 10:1-2 Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire is for Israel's salvation. That's my prayer to God for them. I can vouch for them: they are enthusiastic about God. However, it isn't informed by knowledge.

Zeal isn't the answer. Muslims pray for hours to Allah. Mormons go door to door. Many seem to have more zeal than we do. But...

10:3 ...they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, and have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

They are ignorant of God's gift... in Christ. Grace versus works is nearly always the persistent issue.

10:4 For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God.

Christ perfectly fulfilled the law. Even a Jew can be "dead to the law"—IF they are in Christ. Christ represents the culmination of the law. No one's works can equal that.

Romans 8:33 Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? I Thessalonians 1:4 We know, dear brothers and sisters, that God loves you and has chosen you to be his own people. Titus 1:1 I have been sent to proclaim faith to those God has chosen and to teach them to know the truth that shows them how to live godly lives. II Peter 1:10 ...work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen.

The framers of our Constitution recognized the principle that "all men are created equal." However, it is during the quiet moments of **gratitude** that we come to realize and accept the reality that "some are chosen, while others are not!"