

What Our Election Is Based On Romans 9:6-15

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St. Paul's Lutheran, North Freedom

It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son."

Not only that, but Rebekah's children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger." Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy. (Romans 9:6-15 NIV)

Dear fellow believers in Jesus Christ, our only Savior:

Turn on the TV. Open your mailbox. Check unwanted messages on your phone. All of them are advertising the upcoming election a month and a half from now, telling you to vote for this person or that person. On November 3, we the people will decide who gets to be the next Wisconsin governor, U.S. representative of our district, and state senators and legislators.

Our text mentions an election. Who gets elected? We do! To what? Citizenship in his kingdom. Who decides, who does the electing? God does. And on what basis does God elect us? Let's learn from Paul's inspired words from God **What Our Election Is Based On.**

Let's first understand what led Paul to write this portion of Romans that serves as our text. To the Christians in Rome, Paul just expressed his sorrow over his people, the Jews, that so many of them rejected Christ and were lost. "For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel," he wrote (Ro. 9:3,4a). Paul and others had preached the gospel of Jesus to them, and a few of them believed, but so many of them rejected the gospel and even persecuted Christians.

Why did they reject? Was it because the message didn't have enough power to convert them? Paul wrote, "It is not as though God's word had failed." Paul had stated this as the theme of his letter, Romans 1:16, that the gospel "is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." God's Word has the power to convert and save!

But Paul noted that "not all who are descended from Israel are Israel." Paul explained, "In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring." Paul pointed out that promise to Abraham and Sarah: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son," who would be named Isaac. The line of the Savior would come through Abraham and his son Isaac. But the Jews couldn't automatically think, "God elected Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the ancestors of the Messiah, so that means God elected me." The true children of Abraham are "children of the promise," those who believe the promise, not those who trace their lineage back to Abraham.

Here is a reminder for all of us. Don't think God has chosen you to be his child, simply because you and your family have been members of this church for ages, or because you belong to the Lutheran church. Don't think you've got a special "in" because "My grandfather or great-

grandfather helped build this church.” Your lineage and your outward church membership have nothing to do with God’s electing you into his kingdom.

From Abraham and Sarah, Paul goes to the next generation of patriarchs: Isaac and Rebekah. The two of them were blessed with twins whom they would name Esau and Jacob. “Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad,” Rebekah was told in a dream while pregnant, “The older will serve the younger.” Jacob, the younger one, would be the chosen one who would get the blessing of the Messiah coming through his line, though Esau was the first-born of the twins.

That was carried out through history. Paul quoted the prophet Malachi, who wrote to Jacob’s descendants, known as Israel, how God said, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” Wait a minute. I didn’t think God hated anyone! “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son...,” we recite. But those who reject God, as Esau and his descendants did, the nation of Edom, will get punished with God’s wrath and anger—and you could even call it his hatred. Edom was under a curse, while the Israelites were blessed and the Savior would come through Israel.

Does that mean that God elected Jacob because he did what was right and Esau didn’t? Note carefully what Paul wrote: “[B]efore the twins...had done anything good or bad—in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: Not by works but by him who calls.” The Lord had chosen Jacob before he was born. God elected Jacob. But he didn’t elect Esau, and not because he didn’t want him to be saved; the Bible is clear on this point, “God our Savior wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). God’s election covers believers; his election does not cover unbelievers—they are condemned only because of their sins, and not because of God’s choosing. But when it comes to our being chosen, we had nothing to do with it. Paul wrote to the Ephesians (1:4), “For he chose us in [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight, in love.” Just as a baby doesn’t choose to get born, so we didn’t decide to belong to God or choose Jesus as our Savior. Our election is not based on our efforts or anything we did.

“What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all!” God is just, but in addition to being just and fair, he is also a merciful God. Paul quoted what the Lord spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai: “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” Old Testament Israel back then, and we who are God’s children today, should always bear that in mind. Our being elected into God’s kingdom is not based on God’s justice, for then we would all have to die eternally for our sins. No, our election “does not...depend on human desire or effort, but on God’s mercy.”

God’s mercy was given to us fully and abundantly in his Son Jesus Christ. What mercy God had to give his one and only Son to us! What mercy God the Son showed when he gave himself up for our sins! His grace, undeserved love, and his mercy, his love that pities and spares us, are what saves us all from sin and the punishment we deserve. His mercy also gives us the Holy Spirit, coming to us at baptism, when God called you and made you his child, and also through God’s Word, giving you faith through the gospel message. What mercy we see at the Lord’s Supper, which communicants will receive today: The very body and blood of Christ, given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins—all by his mercy! In mercy God gives you these gifts to keep you in the faith, through that precious word of promise.

When candidates win the election, they celebrate, and then they dedicate themselves to serve the ones who elected them. God has elected you, not by your efforts, but by his mercy. Celebrate it! And thank the one who elected you by dedicating yourself to the Lord’s service. Amen.