

Series: God Saves #1435

**Title: Romans 8.29b; Romans 9
When God Made His Choice**

Thank you for joining me from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. Today we are in the New Testament Book of Romans at chapter 9. Yesterday I introduced to you an alternative way to think of God's foreknowledge and predestination and our free will and how the two might go together. This is different than how I look at it, but I want to mention this approach because it is popular, yet I do not find it to be biblical. The view is basically this.

There was God, all the way back in eternity past, and since God possesses perfect knowledge what He did was to look down the corridor of time, that is down through human history and by doing so He identified certain individuals that *will* believe in Jesus for salvation from sin. God sees this is the choice certain individuals will make. Knowing then who will choose Christ, God chooses them. God predestines the ones He knows will believe in Jesus, He then predestines them to believe in Jesus. Those who are predestined from before the foundation of the world are those who will freely choose Christ long after the foundation of the world.

That's the alternative view in summary. But can we find this in the Bible? No, we cannot. But what do find is a passage in which *if* this view were biblical, then surely the Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, would have mentioned it. And this is Romans chapter 9, verses 10 and following. Let's dig in so you can see what the Bible says. I have my Bible open to Romans 9, and I will begin reading at the second half of verse 10 as Paul gives a case in point to an argument he is making regarding a choice God has made. The Apostle says, **"There was Rebekah also, when she had conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac..."** Let's pause right there.

So that we understand who Rebekah and Isaac are, and so that we can meet these twins, I want to read briefly in Genesis chapter 25. I hope you will have already read this after the little assignment I gave you at the end last time. If you have, imagine me giving you an A+ for a job well done. If you have not, you'll hear now the connection between Genesis 25 and Romans 9 with Paul being the historian. Genesis 25, beginning in verse 19, **"Now these are *the records of the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham became the father of Isaac;* ²⁰ *and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah...to be his wife.* ²¹ *Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived.* ²² *But the children struggled together within her; and she said, 'If it is so, why then am I *this way*?' So she went to inquire of the Lord.* ²³ *The Lord said to her,***

'Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples will be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger.'* ²⁴ *When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.* ²⁵ *Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau.* ²⁶ *Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them."

This is a very important development in the life of God's chosen people. Isaac, who is the son of Abraham, marries Rebekah. He does so at the age of forty. So in case you are getting worried that you are aging but remain as yet unmarried, do relax. Isaac marries Rebekah but she is barren and so Isaac prays to the Lord. And God answers and Rebekah conceived, as it were, twins! The twin boys struggle within the womb and so Rebekah does what her husband does, she too prays. There is a lesson there. Husbands and wives ought to pray together for God to meet their needs. And sure enough, the Lord answers Rebekah in a very interesting way. In verse 23 of Genesis 25, God says, "The older shall serve the younger." Mark that. You will hear that again when we go back to Romans 9. God prophesies to Rebekah that her older twin – the one who is first to enter the world - will serve the younger, the second boy to enter this world.

This is strange. In their culture the younger served the older. That will not be the case here.

And notice the first to be born is Esau. Esau is the older. And the second to be born is Jacob. He is the younger. Even though he was born holding onto Esau's heel. If you know anything about Jacob, this fits his personality perfectly. And, by the way, notice Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born. If you are an older man who fathers young children, take heart, brother! It has been done before.

Now let's cross over back to Romans chapter 9 and I will continue to read beginning again in the second half of verse 10. Romans 9, verse 10, **"There was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; ¹¹ for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, ¹² it was said to her, 'The older will serve the younger.' ¹³ Just as it is written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.'"**

Let's pause again here at the end of verse 13. And do get this on your mind: the point Paul is making is that God has made a choice. God chose Jacob. God did not choose Esau. Verse 11 talks about "God's purpose according to [God's] choice." Verse 12 quotes Genesis 25 and God, which we read, "The older will serve the younger," meaning Esau will serve Jacob. And in verse 13 Paul quotes God again, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." Those words are found in Malachi chapter 1. (That's Malachi 1.) Taken together we know that God has made His choice. And He chose the younger of the two twins, Jacob.

Now the key question we want to ask is: *when* was God's choice made? *When* did God decide to choose Jacob over Esau? And the answer is given by Paul. In verse 11 he says, quote, "though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad..." Mark this down as well. Highlight this in your copy of God's Word. When did God make His choice? It was a) before the twins were born and b) therefore before the twins had done anything good or bad. Ah ha, interesting, right? The point Paul the Apostle makes is that God chose in eternity past. Before their birth, before Esau or Jacob could do anything good or bad, before then God chose Jacob.

With that in mind, here is my question to those Christians who hold the alternative view under discussion. If God chose Jacob because God had looked down the corridor of time and saw that Jacob would choose Him, then why doesn't Paul the great Apostle and theologian say that? Instead, Paul says the opposite. Paul adds, "though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to [God's] choice would stand..." He specifically tells us that in the mind of God, when holy God made His choice, the decision was made as if God did not know what the boys will do. Paul is silent on presenting this alternative view of predestination and human free will here in Romans chapter 9. And it is right here where the alternative view would fit, but it is never mentioned.

Actually, Paul presses this further than I just did. Another big problem for proponents of the alternative view, as we are calling it, is at the end of verse 11, quote, "not because of works but because of Him who calls..." It is not because of the good works of Jacob that God chose him. No! It is because of God who will call Jacob. And verse 12 takes this even further. Note: *before* the boys were born it was God who said to their mother Rebekah, "The older will serve the younger." That indicates that God's choice of Jacob has already been made. This is why I read directly from Genesis 25, so that you could see *when* God said this to Rebekah.

Let me pause here and ask if you follow? Do you understand why Romans 9 fits with our discussion on a certain view many Christians have for the interplay between their human free will and God's foreknowledge and predestination? Are you beginning to see how Paul, the historian and theologian, fails to uphold this alternative view? I hope that you will carve out some time to think this over. And I welcome your comments and feedback; questions and criticisms.

You have the weekend to ponder this. And when we return, Lord willing, on Monday I want to follow Romans 9 further because Paul will have more to tell us that will be pertinent to our current discussion. We want to know what the Bible says and what it means by what it says, so we do the work of interpretation. I hope I am not boring you! Enjoy the weekend and join us again on Monday because God Is.

---END---