

Exegetical Notes - Romans 9:6-33

“The Rock That Causes Men to Stumble”

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Romans 9:6-33

Verses 6-9

It is not as though God’s word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. ⁷ 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.” ⁸ 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. ⁹ For this was how the promise was stated: “At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son.”

- Has God’s word failed because many Jews have rejected Jesus Christ? No, because not all Jews, descended from Jacob, are the nation of Israel. Not all people who are born Jewish are the people of God.
- The first proof of this bold statement is found in Abraham. Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. However, the promises of God regarding the covenant of faith was extended only to the Isaac and his descendants. While God cared for Ishmael and provided for him, the sacred privileges of the covenants were made only with the descendants of Isaac.
- A division occurred between the natural descendants of Abraham and those who were the Children of God (see Genesis 21 through 25).

Verses 10-13

Not only that, but Rebekah’s children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac. ¹¹ Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: ¹² not by works but by him who calls—she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” ¹³ Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

- A second division occurred within the family of Isaac. Isaac had twin sons, Esau & Jacob. But by God’s sovereign election, the blessings of the

covenants were passed through Jacob, whose name was changed by God to Israel (see Genesis 26-36).

- The word translated, “hated,” in this passage seems harsh. It means passed over or rejected. God passed over Esau and chose Jacob for His own reasons. As sovereign Lord, it is God’s right to choose and reject. Because he is righteous and just, His choices are always correct even if we do not understand the reasoning behind them.

Verses 14-18

What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”

¹⁶ It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God’s mercy. ¹⁷ For Scripture says to Pharaoh: “I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” ¹⁸ Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

- “Is God unjust” in passing over some and choosing others. No! God’s choices reflect his sovereign will as creator. They are just because He is just.
- God’s choices reflect his mercy on his people.

Verses 19-21

¹⁹ One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?” ²⁰ But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? “Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’” ²¹ Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?

- God is sovereign Lord! While we may think we know better than does God, He is the one who made us. He has the right to shape that which He has made in accord with His will and His plan.
- That which he has made must submit. It has no right to argue with the choice of the one who forms it.

Verses 22-31

What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for

destruction? ²³ What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory— ²⁴ even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? ²⁵ As he says in Hosea:

***“I will call them ‘my people’ who are not my people;
and I will call her ‘my loved one’ who is not my loved one,”***

²⁶ and,

***“In the very place where it was said to them,
‘You are not my people,’
there they will be called ‘children of the living God.’”***

²⁷ Isaiah cries out concerning Israel:

***“Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea,
only the remnant will be saved.***

**²⁸ For the Lord will carry out
his sentence on earth with speed and finality.”**

²⁹ It is just as Isaiah said previously:

***“Unless the Lord Almighty
had left us descendants,
we would have become like Sodom,
we would have been like Gomorrah.”***

³⁰ What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal.

- Another moment of division had come in God’s timing. Now, the promises of the covenants were to pass through Jesus Christ. Only those who followed Jesus would be the Children of God, the true Israel.
- As before, the creatures had no right to object to the sovereign will of the Father. They could only submit to it as being His will.
- Though this new direction may have been long in coming, this new direction was of God. Paul quotes passages from the Old Testament to show that God had forewarned His people that the moment was coming and that the non-Jews of the world would become part of his kingdom through this act of his grace and mercy.
- Paul quotes several passages: Hosea 1:10, 2:23, Isaiah 10:13:19, 10:22-23, Jeremiah 44:14, 50:20, 50:40, Joel 2:32. However, he is quoting these passages from memory. He does not have a written copy of the text before him against which to check the exact wording of these verses for the text.

He is writing in Greek not in Hebrew. This means that he can make translational adjustments to the exact wording of the text. The wording of the text found in Romans may not match the wording in any Old Testament translation for these reasons.

- Paul's conclusion is that salvation is by faith alone and is offered by God to those who believe in Jesus. Those who seek salvation through any other means have failed to find it because salvation is by God's grace received through faith.

Verses 32-33

Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone.³³ As it is written:

"See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame."

- Salvation is lost to those who seek it by means of the Law of Moses. Those seeking salvation through works of the flesh, stumble over Jesus. He is the rock which causes men to fall. There is no way to the Father except through him!
- Paul quotes Isaiah 8:14 and/or 28:16 from memory (see note above.)

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Rock That Causes Men to Stumble*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Interim Senior/Lead Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship* & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)