

The Word of God Has Not Failed
Romans 9:6-9
February 24, 2021

Review and Context

Theme of Romans: The gospel of God (1:16-17)

1:18-3:20 The universality of sin and condemnation (the universal need for the gospel)

3:21-4:25 The gospel as the righteousness of God by faith

Chs 5-8 The gospel and the sure hope it gives

Chs 9-11 The gospel and Israel

- In 9:1-5, the apostle in a very personal way introduced the problem (from the human standpoint) of Israel's unbelief (rejection of the Messiah)

- *Thesis:* 9:6a "But it is not as though the word of God has failed."

The big idea: The word of God has not failed (6a)

Question: When Paul says, "But it is not as though the word of God has failed," what specifically in the word of God does Paul have in mind?

The OT contains numerous promises to the nation of Israel, of spiritual salvation through the Messiah, such as...

Deut. 30:6 "And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live."

- Context is a prophecy of what God will do for Israel after He scatters them in judgment, when He then restores them

Ezek. 36:24–28 "I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God."

- cf. references to the Lord's servant "David" (the Messiah) in 37:24-25

God has given the nation of Israel great promises, including promises of spiritual salvation through the Messiah (9:4-5), yet Israel has rejected the Messiah and Israelites are perishing.

1. Raises a question, Has the word of God failed?
2. If God's word has failed, the consequences are dire for both Jews and Gentiles

The apostle will prove that the word of God has not failed, using several arguments that center on the following:

1. God's sovereign election of some individuals and not others (9:6b-29)
2. Israel's reliance on works rather than faith (9:30-10:21)
3. The remnant of believers within Israel (11:1-10)
4. God's temporary rejection of Israel (11:11-24)
5. Israel's future salvation (11:25-32)

Sovereign election of individuals as a reason God's word has not failed: The example of Isaac (6b-9)

2:28-29 taught that Jews are to be Jews not only outwardly (through physical circumcision, etc.) but also inwardly (through circumcision of the heart by the Spirit). Only if they are a Jew inwardly do they have a right standing with God.

Paul is now saying in verse 6b, not all who belong to Israel physically also belong to Israel spiritually.

- There is a smaller, spiritual Israel within national Israel

Similarly, Paul says in verse 7a, Abraham's physical offspring are not all included in Abraham's spiritual children.

- 4:12 taught that Abraham's physical offspring only share in the blessing of imputed righteousness (justification) if they like Abraham believe

The apostle proves what he says about Abraham's children by quoting Genesis 21:12

- **Gen. 21:12–13** "But God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for **through Isaac shall your offspring be named**. And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring.'"
- *Question:* What was different between Ishmael and Isaac?
- The Lord's choice of Isaac was revealed to Abraham and Sarah before Isaac was even conceived (Gen 17:15-21)
- The Lord's choice of Isaac, and neither Ishmael nor Abraham's six sons later born to Keturah (Gen 25:1-2), demonstrates what Paul say in verse 7a

Verse 9 quotes a promise the Lord repeated in Genesis 17:19-21; 18:10, 14

Isaac is an example of a child of the promise, while Abraham's other children are examples of children of the flesh.

Mere fleshly descent from Abraham does not make an Israelite a recipient of God's promises of salvation blessings. Being a recipient originates in the mind of the God who has promised.

Since God's plan from the beginning of Israel involved sovereign election of individuals, the present unbelief of the majority of Israelites does not mean God's word has failed.

It was never God's intention to save all the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in all times.

Application

The point that Paul is establishing, that God's salvation promises have not failed, means...

1. We can easily be deceived by appearances
2. The gospel-promises in God's word are absolutely sure and trustworthy
3. As believers in Jesus Christ, we can trust the gospel-promises in Scripture
4. As believers, we should thank God for the grace by which He chose us