

Genesis 25:19–26

God's Glory in Election and Prayer

Main idea: God's glory in election (which is free, according to His mere pleasure and promise; and gracious over-against our) and prayer (wherein His knowledge, power, and goodness are worshiped).

¹⁹This is the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham begot Isaac. ²⁰Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian.

²¹Now Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived. ²²But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If all is well, why am I like this?" So she went to inquire of the Lord.

²³And the Lord said to her:

"Two nations are in your womb,
Two peoples shall be separated from your body;
One people shall be stronger than the other,
And the older shall serve the younger."

²⁴So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb. ²⁵And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. ²⁶Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

Introduction

For many of us, this is a precious Scripture, even if we don't yet quite remember how/why. The Holy Spirit Himself applies it to election in Romans 9:10–12. Believers who begin—whether by theological tradition, or merely by our own wicked flesh—believing some form of synergism about our conversion will often come to Romans 9 and have what is almost like a second conversion. Jesus again applies His salve to our eyes, and suddenly we can see His glory in our salvation not fuzzily like trees walking, but crystal clear. We begin to see how entirely it is all of His grace! We begin to see how entirely it is all unto His glory! And that which we see in His electing us, we also begin to express more and more in our praying to Him. The essence of prayer is dependence upon God's grace unto the praise of His glory, and that is why true believers are never "Arminians" when they are on their knees. And it is God's glory in just these two things—election and prayer—that we see in this passage this morning.

1. God's Glory in Election

a. Completely free: for no good thing in us.

- i. Same mother, same father, same womb, same time... "for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls"
- ii. "according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph 1:5); according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself" (Eph 1:9); "according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will" (Eph 1:11)
- iii. "to the praise of the glory of His grace" (Eph 1:6); "to the praise of His glory" (Eph 1:12); "to the praise of His glory" (Eph 1:14)
- iv. What is the difference between you and someone else who has not believed? Nothing at all in you. Nothing at all in you! The only difference is mercy. Absolutely free mercy that God was pleased to give, simply because He decided to (cf. Deu 7:7–8, etc.). Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! He is full of this mercy! And, when you have done so, acknowledge that it was only His mercy that enabled you to believe!

b. Completely gracious: over-against how wicked we will be

- i. The hideous myth of "election by divine cheating." What would God know by His foreknowledge? What Rom 3 (quoting Ps 14, Ps 53, etc.) says: "there is none righteous, no not

- one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God; they have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one, etc.”
- ii. And this is exactly the point of Jacob’s original name. Truly, he is related to “Laban the Syrian” (v20)! What was the first thing that he did, when he came from the womb? Grasp the heel! Deceiver! Manipulator! Always calculating how to turn the situation to his own advantage! Despite the good purposes of God toward him in v23, which overshadow v26.
 - iii. Do you say, “he didn’t know what the purposes of God were.” Even not knowing, he ought to have trusted that they are good. And so must you! Duty is ours; events are God’s. We come from the womb, mistrusting Him, depending upon ourselves, devoted to ourselves, and sinning as a result!
 - iv. Yes, we begin “dead in our trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1); “we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of the flesh and the mind” (Eph 2:3a—totally corrupted; every single part of us dead in sin); “we all were by nature children of wrath” (Eph 2:3b).
 - v. “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love” (Eph 2:4) ... “that He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us” (Eph 2:7)

2. God’s Glory in Prayer

a. Glorifying His Power

- i. “Now Isaac pleaded with Yahweh for his wife, because she was barren.” Rebekah is barren. She can’t do anything about it. She cannot open her own womb—how often in our modern age we act as if we can open and close the womb, as if it is our province and our prerogative to activate and deactivate the ability to bear children. This is the province and prerogative of God! Rebekah cannot open her own womb.
- ii. And Isaac cannot do it either. We are powerless. God’s strength is made perfect in our weakness. When we pray, we are turning 2Cor 12 back to Him and saying, “Your grace is sufficient for me, for Your strength is perfected in my weakness—glorify Your strength, O God!”
- iii. In what are you weak? Powerless? There is something in your life now. There will be something in your life soon. It is showing you the greatness of your weakness. It is showing you that any strength that you might think or feel that you have in yourself is an illusion; worse, a *delusion*. And so, you must pray, and keep praying. “Your grace is sufficient! Your strength in my weakness!” And, as you pray, you find that it is not in just that one great thing that you have no strength, but that your weakness is everywhere all the time.
- iv. Everyone you pray for suffers from this weakness. How you should pity them! How you should plead for them! Surely, this is a means by which God inclines your heart toward them in pity instead of hostility or bitterness or contempt. How weak they are! And surely, this is a means by which God inclines your heart toward Himself in His strength. How great and perfect is His strength! And how wonderful that in Christ He has made it yours! (Illustration of the man shot and bleeding out and 30s to tell him the gospel).
- v. Husbands, pray for your wives! They will disappoint you. Those moments are actually the most perfect opportunities to love them as Christ loved the church. And what is one of the great ways that He has done so, that He still does so? He prays for her! He pleads for her! Thus He loves her in her weakness. Does not Scripture command you to dwell with her according to knowledge—in an understanding manner (1Pet 3:7)? And He warns you that if you do not, your prayers will be hindered. You will be kept from prayer. You will struggle when you pray. Your prayers will be refused in heaven. Why? Because you did not pity your wife. Well, turn that upon its head and take every moment of disappointment, and plead for your wife, as Isaac did through 20 years of disappointments! We will soon see him stumble in ways that his father had done, but at least this he did not do. He did not try with one of Rebekah’s maidservants. How easily we fall into

sin, when we indulge hardness of heart against our wife when she disappoints us. But Isaac is, here, a picture of Christ unto us—he pleads for his wife! And so must you.

b. Glorifying His Knowledge

- i. “If it is thus, why am I?” It’s very confusing to Rebekah. God’s providence is often very confusing. And we are not often like that weaned child of Psalm 131. God uses prayer to get us there, where we will be cured of a haughty heart that insists that it knows all of the “whys” of life; He uses prayer to cure us of the “lofty eyes” that attempt to peer into the secret will of God, those secret things that belong only to Him rather than those revealed things that are for us and our children to obey. Duty is ours. Events are God’s. Prayer reminds us of this. It reminds us that there is much that we simply do not need to know, and it reminds us that even of that which we do need to know, we actually know very little; we need God to give it to us.
- ii. Praying for wisdom—we are to consider it all joy when we encounter many trials of many different kinds. This requires wisdom that we do not have. Not so much wisdom to know the immediate purposes of the trial; God does not always give that. He did not give Job that. (He does give it to Rebekah—she perhaps wasn’t surprised to know that two nations were at war in there!—but He does not always give us to know the immediate purposes of the trial). But God does give us to know the ultimate purposes of the trial: that we who believe in God would be perfectly holy and perfectly happy forever (Rom 5, James 1). And so James says, “if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God!”
- iii. We do not know what to pray for as we ought. Prayer teaches us not only dependence upon the Father *to Whom* we must come. It teaches us dependence upon Christ, *through Whom alone* we can come. And it teaches us dependence upon the Spirit, who must intercede for us because we do not know what to pray for as we ought. Indeed, we don’t even know how to groan correctly, so the Spirit must intercede even for our groaning!

c. Glorifying His Goodness

- i. Prayer assumes that God cares; it lays hold of His willingness (like next week’s leper in Luke 5:12–15).
- ii. Prayer recognizes that God has not only intended to do us good; He has intended to listen to us. He reveals Himself as the God who loves to hear and respond to His children in compassion and mercy. “You have not because you ask not” is true, because God means to be glorified by working all things together for your good not only according to the wisdom of the counsel of His will but also according to the goodness of His compassion in responding to your cries!

Conclusion

The passage begins “what was begotten of Isaac”—what came of Isaac. Yes, Esau whom God would justly and righteously hate and damn came of Isaac. Yes, Jacob whom God would graciously and mercifully love and save came of Isaac. But here is what ultimately came of Isaac: God’s glory. God’s glory in saving election that is free and gracious. God’s glory in the prayers of Isaac and Rebekah, prayers that worshiped God’s power, God’s knowledge, and God’s goodness.