

Romans 9:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)

Analysis

For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil— the temporal clause is emphatic: *mēpō...gennēthentōn mēde praxantōn ti agathon ē phaulos* (μήπω...γεννηθέντων μηδὲ πραξάντων τι ἀγαθὸν ἢ φαῦλον). The double negative underscores that no works—good or evil—preceded God's choice. This demolishes merit-based election and also undermines foreknowledge-of-faith views. God didn't foresee Jacob's faith or Esau's unbelief; he chose before either existed to act.

That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth—*hē kat' eklogēn prothesis tou theou* (ἢ κατ' ἐκλογὴν πρόθεσις τοῦ θεοῦ): 'the according-to-election purpose of God.' Election (*eklogē*, ἐκλογή) is God's sovereign choice. Prothesis (*πρόθεσις*) is 'purpose/plan.' God's electing purpose operates *ouk ex ergōn all' ek tou kalountos* (οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦντος): 'not from works but from the one calling.' The ground is in the Caller, not the called.

Historical Context

This verse became central to Reformed theology's doctrine of unconditional election. God's choice precedes human response, ensuring salvation is of grace alone. Paul echoes Deuteronomy 7:6-8: God chose Israel not for their righteousness but for his love and covenant faithfulness.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does pre-birth, pre-works election ensure that salvation is entirely of grace?
2. Why is it important that election is 'of him that calleth' rather than him who foresees response?
3. How does understanding election as God's 'purpose' (prothesis) comfort believers in trials?

Interlinear Text

μήπω γὰρ γεννηθέντων μηδὲ πραξάντων τι ἀγαθὸν ἢ
not yet (For born neither having done any good or
G3380 G1063 G1080 G3366 G4238 G5100 G18 G2228

κακόν, ἵνα ἢ κατ' ἐκλογὴν τοῦ θεοῦ πρόθεσις
evil that G3588 according to election G3588 of God the purpose
G2556 G2443 G2596 G1589 G2316 G4286

μένη οὐκ ἐκ ἔργων ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦντος
might stand not of works but of him that calleth
G3306 G3756 G1537 G2041 G235 G1537 G3588 G2564

Additional Cross-References

2 Peter 1:10 (Parallel theme): Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

2 Timothy 1:9 (Parallel theme): Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

Revelation 17:14 (Parallel theme): These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

Isaiah 14:24 (Parallel theme): The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand:

Romans 4:17 (References God): (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

1 Peter 5:10 (References God): But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

Titus 3:5 (Parallel theme): Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Psalms 51:5 (Parallel theme): Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.