

Romans 9:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

Analysis

They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God—Paul explicitly interprets the Ishmael/Isaac typology. *Tekna tēs sarkos* (τέκνα τῆς σάρκας, 'children of the flesh') refers to natural descent apart from promise. *Tekna tou theou* (τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ, 'children of God') are those born by divine promise and Spirit (John 1:12-13). Natural generation doesn't produce spiritual life.

But the children of the promise are counted for the seed—the verb *logizetai* (λογίζεται, 'reckoned/collected') is Paul's favored term for forensic justification (4:3-5). God imputes covenant status to promise-children, not flesh-children. This demolishes Jewish presumption based on Abrahamic descent. Birth privileges mean nothing without new birth. Election operates through promise received by faith, not through genetic inheritance.

Historical Context

This principle reappears throughout redemptive history: Cain/Abel, Ishmael/Isaac, Esau/Jacob, Saul/David. God's choosing doesn't follow primogeniture or human expectation. The pattern establishes that covenant membership depends on divine call, not human lineage—crucial for Gentile inclusion (v. 24).

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does John 1:12-13 ('born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God') reinforce Paul's argument?
2. What privileges of 'flesh' (family heritage, church background, baptism) might you wrongly trust for salvation?
3. How does the promise/flesh distinction explain why evangelism within covenant families is still necessary?

Interlinear Text

τοῦτ'	ἔστιν	οὐ	τὰ	τέκνα	τῆς	σαρκὸς
G5124	G2076	G3756	G3588	is They which are the children	G3588	of the flesh
				G5043		G4561

ταῦτα	τέκνα	τοῦ	θεοῦ	ἀλλὰ	τὰ
these	is They which are the children	G5043	G3588	of God	but
G5023				G2316	G235

τέκνα	τῆς	ἐπαγγελίας	λογίζεται	εἰς
is They which are the children	G5043	G3588	of the promise	are counted
			G1860	G3049
				G1519

σπέρμα
the seed
G4690

Additional Cross-References

John 1:13 (References God): Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Romans 8:14 (References God): For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Psalms 87:6 (Parallel theme): The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there. Selah.

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