

Election, Israel's Past – Part 1

Romans 9:1-13

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We come tonight to a new and very important section of division of the book of Romans. I don't like to belabor the background or the overview, but when you're studying a book of the Bible, it's always good to keep the big picture in mind; you don't want to lose the forest for the trees. I recommend that when you undertake a study of the Bible, you read it through without stopping in one setting and consult a division outline to get a picture of the whole book. It's kind of the book of Romans at 30,000 feet so you can see how masterfully the Holy Spirit laid out this whole thesis through Paul the apostle.

By way of reminder we had the Introduction (1:1-17). Then, we moved to the first main division which was at the section we called: Condemnation (1:18-3:20) - The Wrath of God Revealed. Secondly, we moved to the division called: Salvation, and for the last many Wednesday nights we have been dealing with that section (3:21-8:39). At the end of that chapter we see, The Righteousness of God Revealed. First we saw the Wrath of God Revealed, and then The Righteousness of God Revealed. We talked about justification, sanctification, and preservation—kept securely in Christ.

Tonight we come to the third main division, I want you to catch and understand this, Vindication. Now, you can give different titles to the different divisions, but I think very clearly these are the sections that we need to understand in the book of Romans. Condemnation—we're all sinners. We are all under the wrath of God. Salvation—God provides that we can be saved through faith in Jesus Christ, and the central topic there is justification by faith. God declares us righteous based on the finished work of Jesus Christ who died for us upon the cross.

Tonight we move to Vindication - The Wisdom of God Revealed. So, we have The Wrath of God Revealed, The Righteousness of God Revealed, and for the next several weeks we're going to be looking at the Wisdom of God Revealed. Now, what do we mean by that? Well, in Romans 9, 10 and 11, it would seem that Paul is anticipating an argument that the Jews would set forth to the concept that God saves us by His grace and by His elective purposes because in the Jewish mind God saved them because they were of a certain race. They were the children of Abraham. Paul pointed out that God saves us by His grace and has extended that grace to the Gentile world. This would not exactly excite the Jew. The Jew would say, "Well, what about the promises God made to Israel? Are they of none effect? What about the covenants that God made with Israel? Are they disannulled? Has God forgotten Israel? Has God taken Israel, as far as His purpose and plan is concerned, and set the Jewish people aside; and is God now working with the church alone with no future for Israel?"

You might say that Romans 9, 10 and 11 deal with the question of the Jew. It deals with the question of Israel. If Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah, why did not the Jews accept Him? If Jesus Christ came as the Mashiach, the anointed of God, fulfilling Old Testament

prophecy, why for the better part did the nation of Israel and these Jewish people reject Jesus Christ? Let me say this quickly as a footnote—not all Jews rejected Jesus Christ. Paul the apostle was a Jew. As a matter of fact, the very first Christians were entirely Jewish. When people say that Christianity is for the Gentiles and Judaism is for the Jews, the first Christians were Jewish. By the way, people will also say that Christianity is a Western religion when it started in the East. It didn't start in the West, it's not a Western religion. God gave His Son for the whole world, but it was birthed out of the middle east, obviously. The question still remains, has God abandoned His people? Has God forgotten Israel?

A lot can be said by way of introducing this chapter, and we won't be able to finish tonight if I don't get going here, but basically, it's really cool. I want you to get this. I want to make it as simple as I can. Romans 9 deals with God's elective purposes in Israel's past. Romans 10 deals with God rejecting Israel in the present. Romans 11, (they all go together, don't stop with chapter 9 or 10 you have to read the whole section) deals with Israel's restoration in the future. The only nation in the history of the world where God has a past, a present, and a future is for the nation of Israel. It certainly doesn't apply to America, okay? As I watch the goings on in the political scene, I don't know that there's any future for America right now. I say that tongue and cheek kind of jokingly, but Israel has a past, a present, and a future, and guess what? God made promises that He will keep.

Do you believe God keeps His promises? I believe God keeps His promises. If He doesn't, we're in trouble, right? Because He promised to save me and take me to heaven. I hope He keeps His word. That is what's at stake in these chapters, can God be trusted? Paul said at the end of Romans 8 that we are secure in Jesus Christ, that the salvation by faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone is a sure thing; but the Jew would say, "Well, if God had a plan for Israel and they've been set aside, how do you know that God won't set the church aside? Or, God won't set you Gentiles aside? How do you know if God hasn't been faithful to keep His promises for the nation of Israel? How do you know that God will be faithful to keep His promises for you, the church?" Now, some of you are saying, "Yeah, that's a good question." That question is going to be answered over the next several weeks. He's going to show that God's elective purposes have always been that He chooses by grace, that even the children of Abraham weren't all spiritual Israel. There were only an elect group within that group that are really the spiritual children of Israel.

These chapters form what is termed a theodicy, which means a vindication of God. What Paul is going to do in Romans 9, 10 and 11 is vindicate God. You ask, "God needs vindicating?" Not really, but if He's going to be attacked, Paul is going to defend Him. The one theme that runs through all three chapters is the sovereignty of God. What does that mean. It means that God is ruling and reigning in the entire universe. I like that, don't you? I don't have any problems with that. One of the problems we have in America today is we get uptight when somebody says that God is ruling, God is reigning, and He is sovereign. We want to have a democratic vote about that; we want to have a committee meeting about that. God created all things. You can think about it pretty simply—before anything existed, there was who? Nothing existed and there was God. Everything came from God. He's the source, He's the sustainer, and He's the

goal of all things. On that premise alone, on that truth alone, God can do whatever He wants with whatever He wants. We're going to read in Romans 10, who is it that can shake their fist at God and say, "Why have You made me thus?" We can't blame, indict, or vindicate God for anything. God is sovereign. He created everything, He brought it into existence, and He can take it out of existence, and we can't say, "That's not fair."

Have you ever heard people say, "God's not fair." Nothing can be more absurd. I love what J. Vernon McGee said. He said, "If you want to create your own universe and move out of this one and live in that one, then you can do what you want. But, as long as you are in God's universe, you're under the sovereign rule of God." I like that. We can't really object. We also know that God is righteous, God is just, God is love, and that whatever God does, He does righteously, perfectly, justly, fairly, and lovingly. Paul told us God's grace will keep us, but Paul anticipated someone might ask, "What about Israel? They were chosen by God, yet now you tell us that they are set aside and God is building His church? Did God's promise to Israel fail? Has God's Word failed?" The answer is no. There would be a series of questions where Paul anticipates someone who would indict or accuse God of not keeping His Word or keeping His promises, and Paul is going to answer that very systematically as you go through that.

If God was not faithful to the Jews, how can we know that He will be faithful to us the church? Simply stated, there are two reasons why Paul wrote these chapters as well. One was personal as well as theological because Paul was a Jew and he was preaching to the Gentiles. He was the apostle to the Gentiles, and he was preaching that we're saved by grace. The Jews hated Paul. They opposed and persecuted him because he told them we're not saved by the law of Moses, we're saved by God's grace. At the beginning of each chapter, he is going to affirm his love for the fellow brethren in the flesh, the Jews or the nation of Israel.

In vindicating God's faithfulness, I want to point out three things tonight from verses 1-13 that Paul says. The first is in verses 1-3, where we see Paul's love and passion for the Jewish nation of Israel. Beginning in verse 1, Paul says, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, 2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart." Notice his heaviness is great, his sorrow is continual, and it's in his heart. Then he says, verse 3, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh....," that was the Jewish nation of Israel. He says, "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; 5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." (I read a little further than the first three verses, but that is actually one section, verses 1-5.)

In chapters 9-11, Paul focuses on the sovereignty of God, but it's interesting that he opens with the sorrow of man. What a contrast. Paul's theme is going to be the sovereignty of God, but he opens with the sorrow of man, verse 1. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, 2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. 3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my

kinsmen according to the flesh...," I want to point something out, go to Romans 10:1. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." He makes a personal statement at the beginning of chapter 9, again at the beginning of chapter 10, and now look at Romans 11:1. "I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." So, you see how at the beginning of chapters 9, 10 and 11 he affirms his love for the Jewish nation and for the people of Israel.

Paul begins with a strong threefold affirmation of his love for Israel, and I want you to notice in verse 1, Paul says, "I say the truth in Christ..." he says, "I don't just speak the truth, I speak the truth in Christ." It's impossible to be in Christ and not speak the truth because He is truth. Paul just wants to affirm here, "Yeah, I'm preaching to the Gentiles; yes, we're not saved by the law of Moses; yes, Gentiles can be saved, but I want you to know that what I'm saying is true." Secondly, notice in verse 1, "...I lie not..." he says, "I'm speaking the truth in Christ, and I'm not lying." Do you think that Paul is trying to convey this sincerity here? Nor does he say, "I'm exaggerating." "I'm not lying and I'm not exaggerating," which often people do. Thirdly, he says in verse 1, "...my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost..." he has a clear conscience. "I'm speaking the truth in Christ, I'm not lying, and my conscience is clear." What is the truth that Paul wanted to convey? Here it is in verses 2-3. He wanted them to know that, "I personally have a great heaviness and a continual sorrow in my heart." Those are two very strong words for deep emotional pain, hurt, and anguish of soul. I wish to God that I had half of the love, compassion, and concern for the lost that Paul the apostle possessed. These words amaze me. He goes on to say, "For I could wish that myself were accursed..." the Greek word is anathema, "...from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Someone said, "Paul was willing to stay out of heaven for the saved." In Philippians 1, Paul said, "I would much rather go to heaven, but it's more needful for you that I stick around to teach you." Would you give up heaven to stay around and help people on earth? I don't know. If the Lord said, "John, would you like to go to heaven right now?" "Yes!" I realize when push comes to shove you might have a wife that needs you and children that need you and a church that needs you and other people that need you and that's a wonderful thing, but I want to go to heaven, don't you? I'm ready to go to heaven. Paul was ready to forego heaven for the saved and, catch this, he was willing to go to hell for the lost. What do you do with a guy like that? He's willing to stay out of heaven for the saved and go to hell for the lost. I mean, how do you stop somebody like that? What a dynamic Paul was in his love for the lost, the people of Israel. Would to God that we had half the sincere love, the sorrowing love, and the sacrificial love that Paul had.

A couple of things I want to mention is that when Paul says, "I could wish myself accursed," Paul knew good and well that was not possible and grammatically it's indicated in the statement that he made. When he said, "I could wish myself accursed," it's in the imperfect tense where he is actually saying, "I know it can't happen, I know it's not possible, but if it were possible, I would wish this." Paul realized that he was secure in Christ. He just finished saying that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, and now he's saying, "If I could condemn myself that my brethren according to the flesh would be saved, I would do it." Is that love or what? Would you go to hell for somebody so that they could go to heaven? Would you be

willing to spend eternity in hell so that your family members, your friends, your co-workers could go to heaven? That's a pretty heavy statement I have not yet attained, I'll tell you that. How about when Moses was interceding for the people of Israel, and Moses said, "God forgive them, and if you don't forgive them then blot my name out of your Book." Think about that, that's pretty heavy. He stood in the gap and interceded for the nation. Paul had that kind of sincere, sacrificial, and sorrowing love. Have you ever actually wept for lost souls? Have you ever got on your knees, prayed and cried saying, "Lord, save my husband, save my wife, save my kids, save my grandkids, save my boss." You say, "No. I don't pray for my boss," or a neighbor that bugs or irritates you. He had a real compassion for the lost. What an amazing man Paul the apostle was.

We move quickly, and this is just introduction verses 1-3, into verses 4-5 where what pained Paul's heart more than anything else was that this nation, these Jewish people that he loved, had such great privileges. God had blessed them so amazingly, yet they had rejected their Messiah, Jesus Christ. So we move, in verses 4-5, to Paul's passion and pain for Israel's privileges. He says, "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; 5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." Paul anguished over unbelieving Israel. He wanted them to realize they had these blessings, these privileges, and you're not seeing them, you're not understanding them. Paul mentions eight of them. I want you to look at them one at a time with me, and we'll just unpack and briefly explain what they are. In verse 4, theirs is the adoption as sons. They were adopted by God. In Exodus 4:22, God said, "Israel is my...firstborn." The firstborn was the son of choice. It was the son of inheritance, so the nation of Israel was actually chosen by God. No other nation—not Egypt, not Syria, not Babylon, not Greece, not Rome, some debate about America—no other nation has a chosen status like the nation of Israel. They were adopted and chosen by God.

Secondly, verse 4, theirs was the divine glory. That means that God showed up in their midst. They had the visible splendor of the shekinah glory of God which filled the first tabernacle and their temple. God's presence was there. God dwelt among them. That's a pretty special thing! When they would make camp in the wilderness, God was in the middle of them in a pillar of cloud by day and the flaming fire by night.

Notice this third blessing in verse 4, theirs were the covenants. God made a covenant with Abraham and renewed the covenant with Isaac and Jacob. We have the Mosaic covenant, the Davidic covenant, and the Palestinian covenant. God made all of these covenants and promises with the nation of Israel. In Jeremiah 31, God gave them a new covenant which, by the way, we celebrate next Wednesday in communion, and we Gentiles (we will see this in this section of Romans) are wild olive branches, to use an analogy, and we're grafted in and we become partakers of the root, which is Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Do you know the new covenant was made with Israel? It wasn't made with the Gentile church; it was made with Israel, but we get to be grafted in, and we become fellow heirs and partakers with them of that covenant promise. That's why Paul says to the Gentiles, "Don't be haughty, don't be high-

mindful, but be humble and fear. If God was able to break off the natural branches and graft in wild branches, what makes you think that He can't do that to you? So watch it." Theirs is the adoption, the divine glory, the covenant and, number 4, God gave them the law—the giving and the receiving of the law.

Only one nation on planet earth was ever given God's Word, and that is the nation of Israel. The unique revelation of God was spoken in His voice and written with His finger on stone. Can you dig it? I can! You know, when I meet a Jew sometimes I'll say, "Thank you." They say, "Why are you thanking me?" "For my Bible." I say thank you for my Bible, thank you for my Savior, thank you that I get to be grafted into your plan. That freaks them out, and they don't know what I'm talking about. Your Bible was written by Jews. Your Savior is a Jew. Jesus said to the woman at the well in John 4, "Salvation is of the Jews." Now, that doesn't mean (this just popped into my brain) that you try to become Jewish to be more spiritual. This is a popular thing today. People try to become Jewish to be more spiritual. Paul was a Jew, and he became more Christian to be spiritual. In the church there is neither Jew or Gentile, bond or free, we're all one in Christ. You don't become more spiritual because you have a menorah in your house or you have Shabbat and you do some of these Jewish things. Those are all fine and dandy, but Judaism without Christ is just a Christless religion like any other. Christianity is a fulfillment of the prophecies made to Israel. It's a completion of that purpose and plan that God had, but the amazing thing is that God actually gave them His Word.

We have the Bible today, the New Testament, but in the Old Testament, really it started with the Pentateuch and you have the ten commandments. I mean, how cool is that? Moses just got two tablets of stone and comes cruising down the mountain and says, "Hey, check out what God just gave us!" Isn't it amazing today that we want to reject the ten commandments. They were written on stone with the finger of God! I want to hear what they have to say. What kind of a world would we live in if we didn't have thou shalt not lie, thou shalt not murder, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery. What if God hadn't written that down and gave it to Israel and we didn't have it today? We'd be in big trouble, wouldn't we! If God hadn't given us His Word, we wouldn't know what's right and we wouldn't know what's wrong. We'd be like a ship without a rudder or a sail drifting on a sea. By the way, that's what has happened to our nation right now. The United States of America is like a ship on a dark sea at night with no light, no compass, no rudder, and we don't know where we're going because we've abandoned God's Word. George Washington said, "It's impossible to govern a nation without God and the Bible." That's what is happening with us today. God gave His Word to the Jews, and they were to be custodians of His Word. They did. They translated it and they passed it down very carefully. You know what? There is a sense in which we as the church today have been given God's Word. Many of you have Bibles with you (you brought your Bible). You have the Old and New Testaments. Guess what? You're a custodian of this revelation from God—to learn it, to know it, to pass it on to other people, and to live it. Don't take your Bible for granted. It is sent down from heaven. It's a word that comes directly from God, and it started with the nation of Israel.

Number 5 is they had the service of God in the temple, seen in verse 4, where they had the services of God. That would be in the tabernacle and in the temple. They would have the

priest and the process of sacrificing animals to be able to enter into the very presence of God.

Number 6, they had the promises, and the promises included the promise of the coming of Messiah who would be their prophet, priest, and king.

Number 7, they had the fathers or the patriarchs, which started with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That's pretty good, right? We think we're hot because we have Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, and John Adams. Clapping Wow, that's awesome, and it is. We can be thankful for our founding fathers, but can you imagine if we could look back to Father Abraham? We can, in a spiritual sense. It's interesting that Christianity, Islam, and the Jews all look back to Abraham, but in a very special sense (we're going to see it tonight, we're just kind of getting our feet wet) we're going to see how even from Abraham there was an election that took place. Not everyone that came out of Abraham was chosen by God. That has been God's method and plan as He chose the church. It doesn't mean that God has failed in any way, shape, or form, but they had Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Every time I study the book of Genesis, and I read about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—how God came to them, talked with them, made promises with them, protected and guided them, I think, "Man, this is heavy-duty! This is radical!" This nation could look back and say, "We have Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and we have the patriarchs."

Last but not least, number 8. What an interesting number too in Biblical numerology. We have the eight blessings there which goes beyond the number of completion to new beginnings. Above all, they had Christ. Notice it in verse 5. It says, "Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh..." that is, from Abraham, the human side, "...Christ..." or Messiah, Mashiach, "...came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." An amazing statement that is made in that fifth verse. So, through their lineage came the Messiah. He was that promised Seed that the whole world would be blessed by. Isn't it funny that we see this growing anti-semitism in the world again today? I believe that's part of the last days' scenario, and it's going to increase until the tribulation period. God chose them, God blessed them, and through them the Savior of the world, the Messiah, came. I want you to notice in the fifth verse that there is an affirmation of Christ's humanity. "... of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came..." that's His humanity, "...who is over all, God..." that's His deity. Some people say, "Well, nowhere in the Bible does it say Jesus is God." I guess they haven't read Romans 9:5 because it says it right there. It says that He is God and He is blessed forever. I believe the NIV actually translates this accurately when it renders this, "...who is God over all, forever praised!" It's referring to Jesus Christ who is God over all forever to be praised. In Philippians 2:11, Jesus is called Lord, the equivalent of the Old Testament Jehovah, and we see in Colossians 2:9 that all the fulness of deity dwells in Him in bodily form. In Hebrews 1:8, "But unto the Son he Saith, Thy throne, O God..." by the way, you should've written those verses down because you're going to have a Jehovah's Witness knock on your door, and those are the verses you want to share with them. Jesus Christ is God—they reject the deity of Jesus Christ.

In light of all these wonderful blessings and privileges, how can we explain the mystery of Israel's blindness and hardening? Peak over again in Romans 11:25, "For I would not,

brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” Now, if you’ll stick with this series on Wednesday nights, you’re going to be able to put the pieces of the puzzle together prophetically on God’s plan for Israel, the church, and the last days. “... blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” All these privileges, all these blessings, and yet they were blinded. There were blinders over their eyes. I want you to notice two things in Romans 11:25. It’s only partial blindness. That’s why Paul, himself being a Jew, was saved, and it was only temporary—“until.” “In part” and “until,” two words that indicate that it’s only partial and temporary. God is going to restore Israel, and God is going to begin to work with them once again. Do you know a lot of Jews have come to Jesus as their Messiah? There are a lot of Christians that are Jewish in their nationality. They call themselves completed Jews or they found the Messiah, but not all Jews are blind. Many of them, by the grace of God, have come to knowledge of the Savior, Jesus Christ. Go back with me to chapter 9.

Paul now explains the mystery by asking four questions. We are going to look at each one of them over several weeks, but tonight we only get the first one, verse 6. This is my third and last point, that is, God’s purposes. You go from Paul’s passion or pain, to Israel’s blessings and promises, to God’s purpose. Follow with me, verses 6-13. He says, “Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect.” There’s the issue right there, the anticipated argument from the Jews would be, “Well, God’s Word didn’t work, God’s promises failed, God’s promises were of none effect, and His Word was ineffective.” He said, “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.” Don’t freak out, we’ll go back and explain that. “What do you mean they’re not all of Israel who are of Israel?” Verse 7, “Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8 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. 9 For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son. 10 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac: 11 (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;) 12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” Do you see why people don’t want to study these verses? “...Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” Most preachers would think I’m crazy for ending on a verse like that tonight. I think when you fully understand what is going on here, it will humble your heart and cause you to worship your Sovereign God who elected you by His grace. Now go back with me to verse 6.

“Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect.” Have God’s promises failed? This phrase “taken none effect” literally means failed or to be taken off course. It means to go off course or off the path. Have God’s promises gone awry is what it would translate to. The answer is no. God is faithful. No matter what men may do, God still keeps His promises. Israel’s failures were their own failures and was not due to the failure of God’s Word. Just because Israel rejected Jesus Christ, just because Israel didn’t understand doesn’t mean that God failed or His promises were not sure.

I want you to note two things in closing. Paul explains God's purpose in divine election. Why does he do that? He does that because that's what he just got through teaching, and the Jews would object to that. He is defending God's method of saving sinners by divine election. Let me also say this. After tonight's study, you've got to come back for the next several weeks or you're going to think that I'm a flaming Calvinist, okay? If you just stay in one chapter and don't move to chapter 10, you're going to have an imbalance. The Bible is a balanced book, and though the focus in chapter 9 is sovereign election, the focus in chapter 10 is man's responsibility—the Bible teaches both. Just because God saves you by His grace doesn't mean that you don't have a responsibility to repent and to believe in Jesus Christ, so you're not off the hook. I know you can't reconcile that. It doesn't matter. God is smarter than we are, it's reconciled in a higher unity, and I just leave it with God. Right now, we're dwelling on the sovereign elective side of the coin, and you've got to be careful that you don't become imbalanced by that.

Here's the point in verses 6-9. If you're taking notes, you've got to write this down. Election transcends birthright. He's writing to Jews that made a real big deal about their birthright, "I am a Jew." The Jews believed that no Jew would go to hell. The Jews believed that Gentiles were only made by God to be fuel for hell. Isn't that awesome! The only reason why God made you Gentiles was because He needed something to burn in hell, and Abraham stands at the gate of hell and won't let any Jew go in. He turns them away. That's what they believed. What Paul is saying is election trumps or transcends birthright. It was not of natural descent. Just because you came from the lineage of Abraham doesn't mean that you're truly saved or you're truly an Israelite or you're truly going to go to heaven. Notice verse 6, he says, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." What does he mean by that? He means that there is a spiritual Israel. They are not all Israel who are just physically descendants of Abraham. There is a circumcision of the heart. There is an issue of the heart, and Paul has already talked about this. Turn with me back to Romans 2:28. This is not a new topic. Paul says, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." The word Jew came from Judah, and it means praise. He is basically saying, "Look, it's not a matter of outward physical genealogy, it's a matter of a heart relationship. It's a spiritual experience, so they are not all Israel who are of Israel." Then, he illustrates this from the Old Testament on how God always saved by sovereign election. It's important that you understand that.

This is a point where, even as I read those verses a moment ago, some of you are saying, "I don't even know whose who or what's what." It's probably because you've never read the Old Testament, so get busy. Go home and stay up all night reading the book of Genesis. Begin to read the Old Testament. You can't really understand the New until you have a comprehension of the Old, and you can't really fathom the Old until you've understood the New. They both go together. So, he goes back to the book of Genesis and begins to talk about Abraham. I want you to look at it with me there in verse 7. He says, "Neither..." now, he's explaining what he said in verse 6, "...because they are the seed..." the word is sperma, we get our word "sperm." It means the seed, the physical children, "...of Abraham, are they all children..." that word

“children” is the word teknon. They are sons and daughters or children of Abraham. “...but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh...,” which is Ishmael, the other son of Abraham by his handmaid, Hagar, “...these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise...,” the children who came through Isaac by Sara, “...are counted for the seed.” Then he makes it more clear when he quotes from Genesis 21:12. He says, “For this is the word of promise, At this time I will come, and Sara shall have a son.”

Just to give you the quick story, Abraham was called by God. He was told by God that he was going to have a son. Abraham and his wife were very old. Abraham said, “It ain’t gonna happen. I’m really old, way past the childbearing age. It ain’t gonna happen.” And, God said, “Yes it is gonna happen.” They didn’t really believe it, and finally Abraham got impatient when Sara encouraged him, “Take Hagar this Egyptian handmaid. If God wants to give us this child, He’ll give us a child through Hagar.” So Abraham went in unto Hagar, and Hagar bore Ishmael. He was born and Abraham was like, “Cool! This is awesome! I got a boy!” God showed up and said, “No no no no no no no no.” As a matter of fact, we really screw things up when we try to help God out. God wants to give me a son, “Okay, God. I’ll take care of it. You just sit back. I’ll get myself a son, and then we’ll see how this all works out.” God is covering His eyes, “I don’t want to watch.” Finally, through all these different experiences, God says, “No no. Sara’s going to have a son.” She laughs, and God says, “Yeah, that’s his name, laughter. You’re going to call him Isaac. He’s going to be called, Ha ha ha ha ha, and every time you look at Isaac, you’ll laugh because you remember that it was the promised son.” Then Hagar and Ishmael had to be sent away—they are representatives of the flesh and the law. They would be sent away, but the promise would not come through Hagar and Ishmael. The promise would come through one whom God had chosen, that God had elected. God had chosen Isaac.

Paul moves from the image of Isaac and Ishmael and His elective purposes with them to a second point, that is, election is not of human merit nor moral virtues. Write this down in your notes, election supersedes works. Election transcends birthright and election transcends or supersedes works. Now, he moves to two other individuals in the Old Testament, Jacob and Esau. Notice verse 10. “And not only this; but when Rebecca...,” Rebecca was the wife of Isaac, “...also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; 11 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil...,” they weren’t even born yet, “...that the purpose of God...,” and this is a key phrase, “...according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) 12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.” We all know the story of Esau and Jacob born to Rebecca, and when these two boys were in the womb, before they were even born, God chose Jacob over Esau.

Now, here’s a little fine point that you’ve got to get. The Jew could argue at this point, “Well, you know as far as Isaac and Ishmael are concerned, they came from two mothers, two separate mothers—one was an Egyptian and one was promised to the wife, Sara. “No wonder God chose Isaac, he came from Sara and God rejected Ishmael.” Okay, so that’s a good argument, but now he really puts it to them. He says, “I’m going to show you two boys from the same mother, out of the same womb, and before they were even born, before they did anything good or bad, God picked one and didn’t pick the other.” Now, remember when I opened tonight,

people want to accuse God of not being fair, right? Some of you are already starting to do that. "Wait a minute! That's not right! Poor Esau. I feel sorry for big red." Before anything else existed, there was God. If God wants to pick Jacob over Esau, I ain't gonna argue with Him. Do you know why? Because He's God, duh! When we get to heaven, we're not going to be, "Hey God! Why did You..." We aren't going to be challenging God. We're going to fall on our faces in worship is what we're going to do! This is an amazing example here, that the purpose of God is according to election that it might stand.

Esau was born first. He was the oldest. He came out all hairy and bright red. Can you imagine what a shocker that was? You know you're having twins and you say, "I hope the second one looks a little nicer than this one." When Jacob came out of the womb, he was hanging on his brother's heel—heel catcher Jacob. As the boys grew and matured, Esau was a man of the field. He liked to hunt. He was a man's man, and his dad really liked him. Isaac thought he was awesome, and they went on hunting trips and all that stuff. He was the oldest, but God had a plan that the younger would actually rule over the older. That day was set when Rebecca tried to connive and scheme the whole thing—again, trying to help God out. Esau was out hunting and brought back his venison. Jacob was a mom's boy. He was at home cooking with his mom. He had an apron on and was cooking in the kitchen. He was making some stew and stuff like that. She put special ingredients in it, and Esau was coming in. "I've been out hunting for three days, and I'm hungry!" SNIFF SNIFF "Man, that smells good!" Jacob says, "Yeah, all you gotta do is sell me your birthright and you can have it." The guy was so carnal and so worldly he said, "What good is my birthright if I'm dead. Give me that stuff, yeah, you can have it." He signed on the dotted line and starts eating his chili, licking his fingers and burps, you know. It was like, "You done just lost your blessing, dude!" You just forfeited your blessing.

The point that Paul is trying to make in this passage is that before either one of them did anything good or bad, God chose one. How does that relate to you and me? God didn't choose you because you did good things. God didn't choose you because you looked good or He liked you or you had a Christian haircut or because you were talented. God chose you by His sovereign love and grace. God operates according to the principle of election and He always has. Before these boys ever did anything good or bad...it's the same today. Salvation is not of works, it's not by natural descent, you're not saved because your Jewish or because your Italian or because you're a Frenchman or German or American. It's not of human merit or moral virtue. Jesus said in John 15, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." Our salvation is due entirely to the mercy, the grace, the will, the initiative, the wisdom, and the power of God. Amen?

What about this closing statement? I know. For the first time tonight I just looked at the time, and fear as stricken my heart! What about verse 13 where it says, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Let me quickly tell you, that's what's called a Hebrew idiom, and it could be rendered preferred—Jacob have I preferred over Esau. It's comparative. It doesn't mean that God actually hates Esau because God doesn't really hate anyone. God loves the world. Amen? "...that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." But, when Jesus said that if you're going to follow Him, you're

to hate your father and your mother, He didn't mean that we actually hate them. He meant that we love Him so supremely that they come second to these other loves by comparison. It's the love of comparison, but the phrase is a Hebrew idiom for God's elective purpose, and it's taken from the Old Testament book of Malachi. In Malachi 1:2-3 it refers to the nation of Israel and to the nation of Edom. The quote originally was nations, not individuals, and it means that God basically chose one over another. But, some people camp right on that statement, verse 13, and come up with what's called double predestination—God picks some to go to heaven and God picks some to go to hell. I don't believe that's taught in the Bible. I believe the Bible says whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. Jesus said, "Whoever comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out. No one can come to Me unless the Spirit draw them, and whoever comes to Me I will not cast out." So, you come to God because the Spirit is drawing you, and when you come to God He will not cast you out.

Let me just close with this point to us as believers. Going back to the beginning of the chapter—may God give us a sincere love, may God give us a sorrowful love, and may God give us a sacrificial love for the lost. Let's commit ourselves to spending time on our knees for the salvation of lost souls. Amen?