

Israel's Past Election – Part 1

Romans 9:1-13

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As I've already mentioned, we come to a very important section that we're lifting out of the book of Romans. By the way, if you want to study the whole book of Romans, it's on our website. We titled it, "In The Grip Of Grace." We have a whole series—every chapter, every verse—of the book of Romans. Since I'm lifting out of the book of Romans, the center of the book, chapter 8 comes to the middle of the book and then chapter 12 is the application of the book, so this is a very important section dealing with what sometimes people call the Jewish question, how does Israel relate to the new covenant, to God's purpose and plan for the Church, their blindness, their rejection, their need for restoration? Will there be a literal restoration of Israel in the future? Is God through with Israel? Has the Church become Israel? All those questions are going to be answered for us these next few weeks.

Since I'm lifting these chapters right out of the book of Romans, chapters 9, 10, and 11, I want to give you a little background, and I'm hoping I won't get bogged down in it. I want to give you a little survey and background leading up to where we're at in Romans 8. I want you to turn back with me to Romans 1:14, and I'm going to show you the actual theme of the book of Romans. In Romans 1:14, Paul says, "I am debtor both to the Greeks,"—which are Gentiles—"and to the Barbarians;"—which, by the way, Barbarians are Gentiles as well but the Greeks are the more cultured of the Gentiles—"both to the wise, and to the unwise. 15 So, as much as in me is,"—Paul speaking—"I am ready,"—or eager—"to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also." There are a lot of statements about what is the theme of the book of Romans, and probably the most common one, it's the book that is the gospel. It's the gospel of God's grace. The book of Romans is all about how God saves sinners. So, "I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also."

Notice verse 16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,"—there is the theme of Romans—"for it,"—that is, the gospel of Christ—"is the power,"—the Greek word is *dunamis*, the dynamic—"of God unto salvation to every one that believeth,"—here it is—"to the Jew first, and also to the Greek,"—or the Gentile. Notice these two groups, you have the Jew and you have the Greek or the Gentile. Verse 17, "For therein,"—that is, in the gospel message—"is the righteousness of God revealed,"—that's what the book of Romans does, it reveals the righteousness of God—"from faith to faith: as it is written,"—he's quoting from Habakkuk 2:4—"The just shall live by faith." That's the very theme of the entire book of Romans is summarized in those verses.

You can flip back with me, if you want, to Romans 9. Let me give you how you get from Romans 1:14-17 to Romans 9. The first section of Romans is what we call condemnation or what has been called condemnation. There's different ways to break it up or to title it, but in Romans 1:18-Romans 3:20, I know that it's a little hard to follow when I'm giving you these chapter verses, but I want to get it down for the record. Romans 1:18-Romans 3:20

“Condemnation-The Wrath of God is Revealed.” We saw the whole world guilty before God—every mouth is stopped and all the world becomes guilty before God, both Jew and Gentile, both the moral man and the religious man.

The second section of Romans is Romans 3:21-Romans 8:39, and I would title that, “Salvation.” So, first we have “Condemnation,” the whole world is guilty and stands in need of the gospel; and then we have Romans 3:21-Romans 8:39, the end of the chapter, “Salvation-The Righteousness of God Revealed,” how God justifies the unjust, how God takes wicked sinful men and declares them righteous, and the basis by which He does that, by the way, it’s the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Justification is the act of God where He declares the believing sinner to be righteous based on that finished work of the cross of Jesus Christ. So, we have here the righteousness of God revealed. In “Condemnation-The Wrath of God is Revealed;” in “Salvation-The Righteousness of God is Revealed;” and now we come to Romans 9, 10, and 11, the third section of Romans, “Vindication.”

So, we have “Condemnation,” “Salvation,” and “Vindication-The Wisdom of God Revealed,” Romans 9, 10, 11. These chapters form what is termed by many as a theodicy. Theodicy is the vindication of God and of justification of His dealings with men. What Paul is going to be doing in these three chapters, he’s going to be arguing with himself. He’s going to suppose arguments that would be brought up by the Jews against the idea of God saving Gentiles by grace and what Israel has to do with that Church situation as far as God bringing Jews into the Church and God’s promises to Israel. It’s called a theodicy, an argument of the vindicating God’s righteousness, of justification of how God deals with men.

The overarching theme, and this is what challenges a lot of people, of Romans 9, 10, and 11, is the sovereignty of God. Now, it may be a surprise to some of you, but not everybody likes that doctrine, especially Americans. We’re Democrats. We’re democratic, I should say, we want to vote about things. We want to have a say. We want to have something to do with something. The idea that God is sovereign, “But I don’t understand how anyone can believe that there is a God and He not be sovereign, that there’s something outside His control.”

Do you know before anything else existed, God existed? As a matter of fact, God eternally existed—no one ever made God, God never came from anywhere, God always has been. I know that’s hard to fathom, but that’s God’s nature, He’s eternal and self-existent, and because of that, He is sovereign—He can do whatever He wants and no one is going to be able to shake their fist at God and say, “That’s not fair; that’s not righteous.” And, God is always perfectly consistent with His own nature which is holy and righteous and just and merciful and loving and kind. God will never ever violate His nature. He’s consistent with who He is and what He’s revealed, and if God has revealed Himself as anything in Bible, God has revealed Himself as being a wholly holy righteous God.

I love what Alva J. McClain said about these three chapters. He said, “There’s nothing in all the Word of God in logic itself that can exceed the movement of thought constituting the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of Romans.” I’m going to ask for the outline to be up on the screen

real quick for you of these three chapters in case you want to take it down. This could be expanded upon, but let me point out that Romans 9 is "Israel's Past Election," and we're going to begin that tonight. We will be two weeks in Romans 9. Romans 10 is "Israel's Present Rejection." So, we have this past, God elected Israel, chose Israel; we have their present, God has rejected Israel, blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles come in; and Romans 11 is "Israel's Future Restoration." I don't know if you want to get your camera out and take a picture of that or you can just listen to the audio again, but that's kind of a big panoramic of Romans 9, 10, and 11.

Why would Paul at this point in the letter seek to vindicate God? Well, in Romans 8, Paul had argued that the believer is secure in Jesus Christ and that God's election would stand. I want you to see that. Again, back up with me from Romans 9 into the end of Romans 8:35. We know it well. Paul says, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written,"—he's quoting from Psalm 44:22—"For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Notice verses 38 and 39, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is,"—what?—"in Christ Jesus our Lord." Nothing can separate us as believers from the love of Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is why chapters 9, 10, and 11, because now the Jew would be thinking, Well, what happened to Israel then? Did not God elect Israel? Did not God make promises to Israel? Did not God have covenants with Israel? Why is it Israel has been set aside and they are no longer part of God's purpose or plan in the mind of the Jew? Why, Paul, you being a Jew, would be preaching to Gentiles, saying God would save them? It just didn't make sense to the Jewish people, and even to this day, blindness has happened to Israel. The majority of Jews reject Jesus as being their Messiah. Not all of them, it's only partial and it's only temporary, but the problem is that they would hear about God's grace, they would hear about the security of the believer, they would hear about God saving us by grace, and they would say, "What about Israel? What about the Jew? What about God's purpose? What about God's plan? How do they fit into the whole picture?" Paul anticipated that someone might ask, "What about Israel? They were chosen by God, yet now, Paul, you're telling us that they are set aside and God is building His Church? Did God fail to keep His promises to Israel? Has God's Word failed?"

When we get to Romans 9:6, we'll get there in just a minute, we're going to find the first of a series of questions that appear in Romans 8, 9, and 10 about the Jew questioning God's purpose and plan for Israel. The first question is going to appear in our text tonight, Romans 9:6, has God's Word failed? If God was not faithful to Jews and Israel, how do we know that He will be faithful to the Church? How do we know that God will keep the promise that He just gave us in Romans 8? How do we know that God's good for that, that nothing can separate me from the love of God? If God chose Israel, made promises with Israel, and now they're set aside, how do we know we as the Church, Gentiles, won't be set aside as well? That's what

Paul's going to argue for, so Paul vindicates God's faithfulness in His sovereign election of Israel.

I want you to see three things, if you're taking notes. The first is Paul's passion. Paul is very passionate about this subject. It's very personal to him, and no doubt he was becoming under attack. People saying, "Paul, you don't like the Jewish people. You're anti-Semitic," even though he was a Jew, and he was of the tribe of Benjamin. You couldn't get more Jewish than Paul the Apostle or Saul of Tarsus becoming Paul. Paul's passion is explained in verses 1-3. Let's read it in Romans 9. Paul says, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not,"—notice how personal it is with these personal pronouns—"my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, 2 That I have great heaviness,"—not just a heaviness, but a 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." Let's stop right there.

Paul had a passionate concern and care for the Jewish people. Someone said in verse 1, he had a sincere love; in verse 2, he had a sorrowing love; and in verse 3, he had a sacrificial love for the people of Israel. The focus is on the sovereignty of God, they open with the sorrow of man. The sovereignty of God is going to be the dominant theme in Romans 9. It's going to carry through the whole section, but it starts with the sorrow of man. What a contrast that is. Each of these three chapters opens with a statement of Paul's passion and love for Israel.

I have a dear friend that's a pastor, and he was raised Roman Catholic. Sometimes when he's preaching he'll point out the difference between what he believes to be a biblical teaching in the church of Rome. He always gets letters saying, "You need to go back to the church of Rome, the mother church, and you can be used by God more if you gave up the Protestant church and went back to the church of Rome, and it's obvious that you don't like Roman Catholics." Nothing could be further from the truth. I've often heard him use this verse, "That I have... continual sorrow in my heart," for my brethren, Roman Catholics, and I care about their salvation.

Paul was a Jew converted to Christianity. Read Philippians 3, and you get great insight to Paul's spiritual pedigree, all the things that he had according to the flesh, but said, "But what things were gain to me,"—his Jewishness—"I counted loss...for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them,"—the religious pedigrees from the Jewish side—"but refuse, that I may win Christ, And be found in him." Paul says, "I love the Jewish people. I have a sincere love, I have a sorrowing love, I have a sacrificial love." "For I could wish that myself were accursed...for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Notice Paul says here, in beginning with a strong threefold affirmation of his love for Israel, "I say the truth in Christ,"—then he says—"I lie not," so he's speaking the truth, notice the repetition, and I am not lying. You might add he's also not exaggerating, "...my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,"—and, he says, not only that, but Paul wanted to convey in verses 2 and 3 that he loved them and cared for their salvation.

Look at verse 2. He said, "That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart." Then, he says, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." What an amazing statement Paul makes. Now, Paul's statement about, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh," in the Greek construction of that statement he's just saying, "If I could, I would, but I know I can't."

Did he not just write in Romans 8 that nothing, "...shall be able to separate us from the love of God"? It reminds us of Moses, when he got the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. He came down from Mount Sinai, and the children of Israel were already violating the commandment God just gave to Moses before he even got to them. God actually said to Moses, "Get out of the way, Moses, I'm going to wipe them all out." Moses said, "No, no, don't wipe them out. If You're going to wipe them out, wipe me out also from Your book of remembrance."

What love Paul had for the Jewish people. Someone said, "Paul was willing to stay out of heaven for the saved," Philippians 1, "when he said, 'Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you,'"—to not go to heaven but to stay here to minister to you. He was willing to go to hell for the lost.

I have not yet attained. You know, I love you all very much, but if the Lord said, "John, would you like to go to heaven right now?" I'd say, "Yep, I'm ready to go. Take me, Lord. See you later." I can't imagine the idea of, "Lord, I'm willing to go to hell if these people I love and care for can go to heaven." What a great love and passion Paul had for his brethren according to the flesh.

As I mentioned, each chapter opens with an affirmation of Paul's love. Look at Romans 10:1. He says, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." 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." By the way, in Romans 9, 10, and 11, Paul uses the word "Israel" more than he does in the entire book of Romans in those three chapters. He doesn't use the word "Jews" as much as he did earlier in Romans, he uses the word "Israel" speaking of the nation of Israel and God's plan and purpose for them. What a passion, what a love he had for them.

Would to God that we, like Paul, we like Moses, would have a love for the lost; that we would actually weep for them, pray for them, intercede for them, and get on our knees for them. When was the last time you wept and agonized in intercessory prayer for a friend, a loved one, or an individual that needs Christ? You absolutely just agonized in prayer, "God, save my husband? Save my wife. Save my children. Save my grandchildren. Save my sister, my brother, my friend, my co-workers." Maybe even got up enough love to pray for your employer or your neighbor, one that parties and bothers you at night. Paul had this great passion, this great love.

Here's the second division, Paul gives us Israel's privileges. So, he loved the Jewish people,

the nation of Israel, and he also reminded them that God had given them great privileges. Look at verses 4-5, “Who are Israelites,” now he mentions, verse 3, “...my kinsmen according to the flesh,” so they are physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac and through Jacob. “Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth,”—this is what God blessed Israel with, and when we think about the nation of Israel today, we need to remember the blessings that God and the privileges to them as a nation—“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.” Paul’s anguish over unbelieving Israel was made more painful when he thought of all the unique privileges that they possessed.

Let’s go back over these eight things that God had done for the nation of Israel. Again, we need to keep them in mind. There’s a secondary sense in which, that’s not Paul’s point, that we as Gentiles are also getting these blessings, but not in the sense that He did initially choosing the nation of Israel. First of all, verse 4, notice these eight blessings. Theirs is the adoption as sons. In Exodus 4:22, when God brought them out of Egypt, he said, “Israel is my son, even my firstborn.” He’s referring to the nation of Israel. The “firstborn” is a phrase used for favored son, favored child. “Firstborn” was the one who was the heir of the family, so they had that favored position or that favored spot. In verse 4, they were adopted as the children of God, the people of God. What a marvelous thing that is. No other nation has this blessing.

Now, I’m an American, and I love America. I’m sad that we have lost the understanding of our godly heritage and our founding fathers. I know all that history, but we don’t have this kind of promise in the Bible from God. When we talk about America being blessed of God, yes we are, but we weren’t chosen by God to be His sons and daughters. We didn’t have that privilege. No other nation—not Egypt, not Babylon, not Assyria, not Greece, not Rome, not any other nation—was chosen to be adopted by God.

The second blessing in verse 4, theirs is the divine glory. This is the visible splendor, no doubt, of God which filled the first tabernacle. Think about that. When they would come to the tabernacle and the priest would enter into the holy place, there would be the Shekinah glory of God. Even in the wilderness wandering, when they came out of Egypt for forty years, what hovered over the congregation of Israel? A cloud by day. Now, it gets hot out in that desert, and God actually just had this cloud of His presence just following them wherever they went. Every time they would look up and see this cloud, it was God’s presence manifested with them. That’s pretty doggone cool, eh? And then at night, no need for electricity, a pillar of fire! They could look up, and it would light the camp and light where they were going, so God’s presence manifested with them. And then when they built the tent and had the holy place, God’s presence was there in what was known as the Shekinah glory. So, God’s adoption and God’s glory was with this nation.

The third blessing, theirs was also the covenants, again in verse 4, which God made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and then the new covenant. Again, another important doctrine for Christians to understand when you’re thinking of Israel and how the world views the

nation of Israel and their place and position with God, is God made covenants with that nation. God actually entered into covenant agreements, and a lot of the covenants God made are what are called unconditional—no matter what Israel does, God's going to keep His promise to them in this unconditional covenant.

The new covenant, Jeremiah 31, (we'll get it when we get to Romans 11) was made with Israel, and we as Gentiles in the church are actually just grafted into that new covenant and become beneficiaries of the covenant made with Israel. The new covenant was made with Israel, we were grafted in and become beneficiaries of that new covenant. What a blessing that is. When we take Communion and we celebrate the new covenant, as Gentiles we realize that we should be humbled and that we were grafted into the covenant promises that God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The fourth blessing, verse 4, is the giving or receiving of the Law. Again, only Israel was chosen by God, only Israel had the covenant promises of God, only Israel had the glory of God, and here, only Israel, and this is the one that really, really just stirs my heart, was given the Word of God. We are, as the Church today, given God's Word, but if you ever meet a Jewish person, thank them for your Bible. They'll be a little freaked out. They don't know what you're talking about, "Thank you for my Bible." God actually gave to Israel His Word. Think about God spoke, His voice, He wrote with His finger the Ten Commandments.

Have you ever stopped to think about how amazing the Ten Commandments are? "Thou shalt no lie. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not murder. Thou shalt not covet." We just take it for granted. We just accept that, "Oh, that's part of our jurisprudence, the judge sets into laws." It's because of the Ten Commandments that we have the laws and the standards that we do in our culture, in our world, our society today. How do we know those things are intrinsically wrong and evil? God set it in stone with His very own finger. Is it wrong to lie? Yes. Is it wrong to steal? Yes. Is it wrong to murder? Yes. Is it wrong to commit adultery? Should we not have any other gods before Him? Yes. Should we not take His name in vain? Yes. Shall we respect a Sabbath day unto the Lord? Yes, not to be saved or righteous, but as a principle. You read The Decalogue, and I've done a whole sermon series on the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, one a week. Listen to it on the website.

Where would we be without the Word of God? One of the reasons, I'm trying hard not to get bogged down, I'll move along, but when I think about America today, one of the problems with America today is we've forsaken God and the Bible. We cannot survive without God or the Bible. We are lost without God and the Bible. You wonder, "How can people say that and do that?" and "How can the whole culture be so whacked out and so crazy and so insane?" There's no God. There's no word from God. There's no absolute, transcendent truth. There's no fixed point to judge what is right or wrong, but thank God that He gave His Word, His commandments.

I think about Moses getting the Ten Commandments and writing the first five books of the Bible. Where would we be without Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and

the earth.” The Bible tells us where we came from, why we’re here, and where we’re going. Where would we be without the Word of God? And we should thank Israel for their stewardship and taking care of and transmission of the Scriptures, the Word of God, the giving of God’s Word. We as the Church need to highly esteem and take care of and transmit and preach and faithfully teach and communicate the Word of God to others.

Here’s the fifth, the service of God, it’s the temple worship. They had a priesthood. They had the sacrifices. They had a system of approaching God. They could sacrifice a lamb, the priest could represent them, and come before the holy of holies. They had the service of God, the worship of God.

The sixth, the promises of God, verse 4, of the coming of Messiah, God’s Prophet, Priest, and King. Unto what other nation did God promise, “I’m going to send through your lineage, your nation, the Savior of the world, the Messiah?”

The seventh, they have “the fathers” or the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We have Abraham Lincoln, whoop-ee-de. They have Father Abraham. Can you imagine that? They had Isaac; they had Jacob. We’ll talk about them in just a minute.

Here’s blessing eight. In biblical numerology eight is the number of new beginning, seven-completion, new beginning number eight. Here’s the eighth blessing mentioned, and above all Christ, verse 5, “Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh,”—this is His humanity—“Christ,”—Messiah—“came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.” So, there’s two things said about Jesus here. It says that He is a human being. He is, of the flesh, Jewish. Did you know that Jesus was a Jew? You think about anti-Semitism? People say, “Anti-Semitic? And Jesus Christ was a Jew?” Remember when He met with the woman at the well in John 4? She was the Samaritan, which is half Jew, half Gentile. She said, “How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?” And by the way, Jesus said salvation is of the Jews. You just get to be a beneficiary of it. Jesus was Jewish.

It also says, and don’t miss it at the end of verse 5, “...who is over all, God blessed for ever.” This is in the Bible a direct statement of the deity of Jesus Christ. So many people say, “Well, the Bible doesn’t say that Jesus is God,” they obviously haven’t read Romans 9:5, “...who is over all, God blessed for ever.” I think the NIV actually gets it perfectly right according to the Greek. It would be rendered, “...who is God over all, forever praised!”

Write down a couple verses on the deity of Christ: Philippians 2:11, Jesus is Lord. It’s the Greek word *kyrios* which means lord and master. Also, Colossians 2:9, “...all the fulness of,”—the deity—“the Godhead bodily,”—lives bodily in Him. In Hebrews 1:8, “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness.” He’s quoting from Psalm 45:6-7, Jesus Christ is God. In light of all these wonderful blessings and privileges, how can we explain the mystery of Israel’s blindness and hardening? Good question.

Before we move on in Romans 9, and we will move on, look at Romans 11:25. We’ll get there

in several weeks, but I just can't wait. This is one of the most amazing texts in all the Bible, verse 25. It gives us understanding of a great mystery. Paul says, 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." Peek at verse 26, "And so all Israel shall be saved." We'll get there in several weeks.

Notice two things: Israel's blindness is only partial, and Israel's blindness is only temporary, "...that blindness in part is happened...until." There are Jews that believe in Jesus as Messiah. They are born again. They are Christians. They are Messianic Jews. They believe in Christ, and that's a wonderful thing. I was watching a worship video the other day on YouTube of all these young Jewish people worshipping Yeshua, praising Jesus and worshipping Him. What a marvelous...they were singing the same worship songs we sing in Hebrew. It was so beautiful. So, the blindness is only partial, not all Jews have rejected Christ, and it's only temporary. There's coming a day when, "...the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." That's the Church when it's complete, then the blinders will be taken off of Israel and they will be saved. I believe that happens after the rapture during the tribulation leading into the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. We'll talk more about that in our weeks to come.

Now, Paul explains the mystery by asking four questions. It's so important. The first question we get in verse 6. There's four questions in Romans 9, and we're going to look at just the one tonight as we wrap this up, verses 6-13. The first question is in verse 6, "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." Here's the question that he anticipates in verse 6, that is, has God's Word failed? Is God's Word of none effect? Are God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God's promises to us in Romans 8, are they failed? Have they fallen short? Paul's going to say no. He says, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: 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."

Verse 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."

A lot of preachers would think I'm absolutely out of my mind for preaching these verses—I think I'm out of my mind for preaching these verses—but they're in the Bible, right? These verses are the center of a lot of debate, issues, and controversy. I'm going to try to avoid them and get bogged down, but I want to keep it as simple yet as biblical and tight to the text and close to the text as possible.

Do you know the goal of Bible study? The goal of Bible study is to get to what is said and what it means and then how it applies. You start with observation, interpretation, and application.

What we want to discover is the author's intent—what the original author said and what he meant by what he said—so we don't want to impose into the text what we want it to mean, what we think it says or what it means, that's called eisegesis, putting in our ideas to the text. We want exegesis, which is taking out of the text the meaning of the text. We have, verses 6-13, God's purpose. So, Paul's passion, verses 1-3; Israel's privileges, verses 4-5; and God's purpose, verses 6-13.

I'm going to do an abbreviated covering of this tonight because we're going to have to spend more time again next week, but I don't want to leave us hanging, I want to wrap this up. This is the section when people get real concerned about the sovereignty of God and God's election of Israel. It's what sometime is called predestination or God's sovereign election and predestination. Keep in mind that Paul is answering the question of Israel's purpose and plan in God's saving role with them as a nation. It doesn't mean that God doesn't elect individuals, but this is speaking nationally here, how God had a line that He chose, even from Abraham, a select line through Isaac and through Jacob. That's the seed line that the Messiah would come through which the world would receive the promised Messiah.

So, has God's promise failed, verse 6? The word literally means fallen off or "...taken none effect." It was used as of a ship going off course. It's a word picture of a ship going off course. The answer is no. God is faithful no matter what men do. Israel's failure was her own failure, it was not due to the failure of the purpose, plan, promises of God. Paul explains God's purpose in divine election here. Write these down. First, it was not of natural descent, verses 6-9. Election transcends birthright. Let's go back to verse 6. Has the Word of God failed, "...hath taken none effect." Paul says, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel," so not everyone that can trace their physical lineage back to Abraham is necessarily Israel, "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac, shall thy seed be called."

What Paul's going to do here, he's going to say, 1) God chose Abraham; 2) God chose not Ishmael but He chose Isaac through the seed of Abraham; 3) God chose Jacob, not Esau. He's narrowing down how God chose even within the lineage of Abraham the elect group through which the Messiah would come. The answer is no, it's not natural descent, election transcends birthright. It's so very important.

Go back with me to 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,"—that would be through Ishmael the son of the handmade Hagar, the Egyptian—"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." We won't take the time, but go back to Genesis and read the story of God called Abraham. God then gave to Abraham a promise of a son. Remember, he was past the age of being able to bear children; Sarah was past the age of being able to bear children. So, Sarah finally with Abraham got impatient and said, "Just take Hagar. Just take your handmaid, the Egyptian girl, Hagar. God promised a son, just raise up a son through her." So, Abraham listened to his wife and went into Hagar and we have the Arab nations.

God doesn't need us to help Him out. "Well, God, You made a promise. We were going to have a son. Well, have you seen my wife, and it could happen. Have you seen me? I'm pretty old. So, let me help You out, God. I want to help You keep Your promise. I want to help You fulfill Your promise for a son." After Ishmael was born, Abraham was like, "God, just let Ishmael live before You. He's awesome. I got a boy, this is great." God said, "No, no, no, no, no. Sarah is going to have a child, and this is not the promised seed." When Sarah heard that from the Lord, what did she do? She laughed, and that's why his name was actually called Isaac. Do you know what the name Isaac means? Laughter, so every time they looked at him they'd say, "Hahahahahaha." They'd laugh because they realized how ludicrous this was.

What Paul is basically saying is that God sovereignly chooses the line to which the blessing will come, not just Abraham, but Abraham through Sarah and through Isaac.

It might be easy for you to say, "Well, I'll just dismiss that because Hagar was an Egyptian. No wonder Ishmael is rejected by God," but now he actually uses Isaac and Rebecca and Jacob and Esau to talk about how he went through that one specific chosen line, and we need to wrap this up.

Verses 10-13, that is, election. It's not human merit or moral virtues. Election supersedes works. Look at verse 10. Paul says, "And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac,"—so it starts with Abraham, Sarah, and then Isaac—"(For the children being not yet born,"—which would be Jacob and Esau—"neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election,"—there's the word—"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."

Remember when Rachel finally became pregnant, Isaac prayed for her and she became pregnant. She had twins, and she said, "I don't know why, if God gave me these children, I'm struggling so much in my pregnancy." God said, "You have two nations in your womb," no wonder she was having problems, "And they're warring with each other." When the boys were born, who came out first? Esau, which means red or hairy, so I call him Big Red. Esau came out, and I'm sure when they saw Esau, they thought, Oh my! I hope the second one looks a little better than this one. Esau was the firstborn, so he would've been the chosen one. He should've been the heir. Jacob came out holding his heel, that's what Jacob means heel catcher, and he came out. He was the younger, but God actually chose Jacob over Esau.

Again, we think, Aw, that's no fair! Remember, we're talking about God. That's not right, that's not fair. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" Can we shake our fists at God and say, "That's not fair, that's not righteous?" The fact that God was here before anything else existed, God can do whatever He wants with His creation, right? God will never violate His own nature.

What Paul's saying is He narrowed down the line so that He came through Jacob. Jacob was the younger, but he would actually get the birthright, the whole pottage thing with the soup and

all that stuff, and he would get the birthright. He would be the one.

Now, the thing we have problems with, I realize I've gone quite long tonight, and Lord willing, I won't do this next week, but verse 13, we're troubled and bothered by this, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Very simply stated, remember that this is speaking of nations. Malachi 1:2-3 is the quote, and it's actually the Edomites, the nation of Edom, which came from Esau. Also, it's a Hebrew idiom for not preferred or love less. I like the idea of not preferred, so it's not that God's saying, "I hate him," but "I didn't choose or pick him. I love him less," or "I do not prefer him." Again, who am I to accuse God of being unrighteous or being unjust. Amen?

Be very, very, very, very careful. I'll talk more about this next week. Be very careful not to reject because of what some call Calvinism, the doctrine of sovereign election, because it's in the Bible. Be careful not to go to another extreme and become a flaming Calvinist rather than a biblicist and reject the idea that man has a responsibility that he's free to choose to believe in Jesus or reject Christ. That you must wait for in Romans 10. What I encourage you to do is to go through the whole series. Don't freak out tonight, leave here saying, "John's a flaming Calvinist. Run for your life." Come back when we get into Romans 10 and see that we have Israel's rejection and moral responsibility that they rejected the gospel and that they were set aside and blinded, but God has a purpose and will restore them, Romans 11.

You've got to fit all the pieces of the puzzle together. You have to be careful that you don't become any man's disciple, that you have both doctrines taught in the Bible—that God is sovereign, God chooses, God elects by His sovereign grace, but man is a free agent to either accept or reject Jesus Christ—and John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever,"—don't miss that word—"believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Amen?