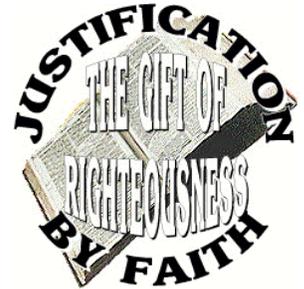




The Epistle to the Romans

Lesson Number 30



PROMISE WILL PREVAIL

^{9:6} But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, ⁷ nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “In Isaac your seed shall be called.” ⁸ That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. ⁹ For this is the word of promise: “At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.” ¹⁰ And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac ¹¹ (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), ¹² it was said to her, “The older shall serve the younger.” ¹³ As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.”

– Romans 9:6-13 ^{NKJV} –

INTRODUCTION

Paul has just finished bearing his heart concerning the Israelites, his “kinsmen according to the flesh.” He has shown he is in accord with the Living God, who chose this nation, granting them most remarkable benefits and advantages. His “*great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart*” was not mere fleshly sympathy or concern. Nor, indeed, was it a fleeting fancy, which came and went like a bout of melancholy. As we will see, it blended perfectly with the revealed purpose of God. One of the marks of legitimate feelings is that they can be expounded by, and integrated with, the purpose of God.

As with the believer’s sorrow related to death (1 Thess 4:13), Paul’s sorrow for Israel is not one with “*no hope*.” He is not overcome by his sorrow, so as to lose all spiritual rationality, or cease to live by faith. He is able to turn from his deep sorrow to the will of the Lord, gathering the harvest of hope and peace.

He will not leave his readers pondering his own view, but will quickly turn them to “*the God of hope*” (Rom 15:13). In order to nourish hope for Israel within the hearts of believers, Paul does not linger upon their present condition.

He rather goes back to their origin, which was solely traceable to the Lord. **Divine origins are where we gather our bearings and adjust our focus.** If we want to develop a proper view of mankind, we must go back to his creation and the revealed reason for it. When we seek a proper view of Israel, we must also go back to its origin, and to the Divine utterances related to that beginning. Our text begins such a process.

Because God does not change, and He cannot lie, His promises are irrevocable. Our theology must not

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. THE WORD IS NOT INEFFECTIVE (9:6a)
- II. ISRAELITES INDEED (9:6b)
- III. SPECIAL CHILDREN (9:7)
- IV. CHILDREN OF THE FLESH VERSUS CHILDREN OF THE SPIRIT (9:8)
- V. THE WORD OF PROMISE (9:9)
- VI. NOT JUST ONCE (9:10)
- VII. JACOB AND ESAU (9:11-13)

leave us embracing a God that changes or vacillates. While it may be done unwittingly by preachers and teachers, much of what is said of God concerning Israel leaves men with a completely erroneous view of Him. He is seen as altering His purpose, and abandoning His promises. Whatever explanations may be given for this approach, it cannot spark hope in the believer. It will not contribute to a strong and aggressive faith.

This is precisely why the Spirit moves Paul to begin this most remarkable line of reasoning. What appears to the flesh to be utterly hopeless is seen quite differently by faith. Taking us back to the foundations, the Spirit will lift up our heads, confirming there is good reason to be *“strong in faith, giving glory to God”* (Rom 4:20).

It is essential that we note the manner of the Spirit’s reasoning. He does not point us to the disobedience of Israel, or to their sure unworthiness of the least of God’s mercies. At this point, He will not expound their unbelief at Kadesh-Barnea, their murmuring in the wilderness, or their discontent with a Divinely provided diet. Instead, He will take us back to Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Rachel. He will not tell us what they said or did, but what the Lord said to them. This will focus around four statements made by God.

- “In Isaac shall thy seed be called.”*
- “At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.”*
- “The elder shall serve the younger.”*
- “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”*

These are Divine commitments are based upon an eternal purpose. They are nowhere represented as being temporary. None of them are based upon human works. Not one of them were sought by the individuals to whom they were spoken.

The covenant made with Abraham has not failed! The commitment of God to Rachel has not fallen to the ground! God’s statement concerning Jacob and Esau has not been rendered obsolete! These words from God fueled Paul’s hope for Israel. They are why he was willing to wish himself accursed from Christ for their sake. He knew God cannot lie, and that his purpose, like Himself, changes not.

The line of reasoning that follows is unusually strong, but it reflects both the nature and purpose of God. It is food for faith, not fodder for the intellect. While the mind can spend profitable time pondering these statements, it is essential that the heart first grasp them, by faith. There can be no question about their truth, or the intellect will not be able to handle them, thereby causing unbelief to enter. This is a principle of spiritual understanding that is both liberating and edifying. **The truth must be believed before it can be profitably pondered.** Thinking must start with *“God cannot lie.”*

Our text begins an extensive passage of spiritual reasoning. It will confirm that Paul is justified in having *“great heaviness and sorrow of heart”* over Israel. Through the conclusion of the eleventh chapter, the following reasons to have hope for Israel will be added.

- It is not as though God’s word has failed (9:6a). There is an accepted people within natural Israel (9:6b-13).
- God will have mercy on whom He wills to have mercy (9:15a).
- God will have compassion on whom He wills to have compassion (9:15b).
- Acceptance does not depend upon man’s effort, but on God’s mercy (9:16-18).
- God is the Divine Potter who can make vessels of mercy from the *“lump”* of Israel (9:20-24).
- The remnant of Israel will be saved, according to prophecy (9:27).

- The Lord has left survivors in Israel, else they would have disappeared like Sodom and Gomorrah (9:28-29).
- Paul’s heart’s desire and prayer to God is that Israel may be saved (10:1).
- Moses prophesied God would make Israel envious by those who were not a nation (10:19).
- Emphatically, God did not reject His people Israel (11:1a).
- Paul himself was an Israelite, confirming God did not reject them as a whole (11:1b).
- Again, confirming God has not repudiated the nation as a whole, He did not reject His people whom He foreknew (11:2).
- At this present time, there remains a remnant according to the election of grace (11:6).
- God has given them a spirit of stupor, accounting for their obstinance (11:8-9).
- They have not stumbled so as to fall beyond recovery (11:11).
- If their transgression brought riches for the world, how much more will their fulness bring? (11:12).
- Paul magnified his ministry by preaching to the Gentiles, in order to provoke his countrymen to jealousy (11:13-14).
- If their rejection meant reconciliation for the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (11:15).
- If the part of the dough offered to God was holy, then the whole batch is holy (11:16a).
- If the root is holy, so are the branches (11:16b).
- Gentiles should not boast against the natural Jewish branches that were broken off, for their root supports us, we do not support the root (11:17-18).
- The Jewish branches were not broken off to be replaced by the Gentiles (11:19-21).
- If they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in again (11:23a).
- God is able to graft them in again (11:23b).
- The Jews can more readily be grafted into their own tree than we Gentiles, who were wild by nature (11:24).
- Israel has experienced hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in (11:25).

- ❑ All Israel will be saved (11:26a).
- ❑ The Deliverer will come out of Zion and turn ungodliness away from Jacob, by which name the church is never called (11:26b).
- ❑ God's covenant with Israel is to take away their sins (11:27).
- ❑ Although presently enemies on the account of the Gentiles, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (11:28).
- ❑ God's gifts and callings are irrevocable (11:29).
- ❑ Just as we Gentiles were once disobedient, yet have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they have now become disobedient

that they too might receive mercy as a result of God's mercy upon us Gentiles (11:30-31).

- ❑ God has bound all men over to disobedience that He may have mercy on them all (11:32).

There are thirty-four arresting reasons for refusing to believe Israel is in a hopeless situation, or that they have been written off and replaced by the Gentile church. Such a thought is ludicrous to faith, offensive to a renewed heart, and evidence of remarkable ignorance. It is most unreasonable for Gentiles, whose acceptance by God is a great token of His mercy, to boast

themselves against the Israelites by affirming they have been repudiated and forgotten. The Spirit will not allow us to think in this way without challenging us with overwhelming proofs of God's love and intentions for Israel, Paul's "*kinsmen according to the flesh.*"

In this section of Scripture (chapters 9-11), the Holy Spirit will pile proof upon proof, appealing to our hearts, and justifying the attitude of Paul toward the Jews. When He is finished, a great chorus of praise will erupt, giving unquestionable glory to God. The purpose of the passage is to provoke both faith and hope in our hearts.

THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT INEFFECTIVE

^{9:6a} ***But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect.*** "Because it is the tendency of men to take the exceeding great and precious promises of God and reason incorrectly with them, the Spirit will now give us examples of right reasoning. After telling us that "*the promises*" belonged to Israel, He will now show us how firm those promises really are. Religious flesh, which is the worst of all flesh, will not be able to receive this, but the Spirit affirms it anyway.

The sophist will reason that if such firmness is attached to the promises of God, it will promote laxity in the household of faith, moving them to withdraw from the work of faith and the labor of love.

I myself once thought in this manner. It is quite true that flesh seeks to exploit the promises, using them as an occasion for slothfulness and a lack of involvement in the will of the Lord. However, this tendency is not produced by the promises, but by the failure to believe them. It is "*through faith and patience*" that we "*inherit the promises*" (Heb 6:12).

The promises are dulled by vigorous attempts to blend them with Law, or argue why they are not to be trusted. The fact that some of those to whom the promises "*belonged*" did not believe them has taken nothing from the promises

themselves. Nor, indeed, will they be withdraw because "*some did not believe.*"

THE WORD OF GOD

Here, "*the word of God*" refers to His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He

The sophist will reason that if such firmness is attached to the promises of God, it will promote laxity in the household of faith, moving them to withdraw from the work of faith and the labor of love.

is not referring to the promises that attended the Covenant made at Sinai (Deut 28:3-9), for that covenant was "*added*" to the Abrahamic promise "*because of transgression*" (Gal 3:19). The great redemptive work of God never revolved around that "*first covenant,*" and that redemptive work is the context within which Israel is being considered.

The "*word of God,*" in this case, is nothing less than the Gospel which was first preached to Abraham. As it is written, "*And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by*

faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed'" (Gal 3:8). That word belongs "*to the Jew first*" (Rom 1:16), although it is not exclusively to them.

The Abrahamic promise took a variety of forms through the prophets. It was iterated and reiterated. The firmness of these promises is quite evident. Our text encompasses these commitments; i.e., to whom (Israel) "*belong . . . the promises.*"

- ❑ "*I will restore your judges as at the first, And your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.*" (Isa 1:26)
- ❑ "*Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.*" (Isa 41:10)
- ❑ "*For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand, Saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you. Fear not, you worm Jacob, You men of Israel! I will help you,' says the LORD And your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.*" (Isa 41:13-14)
- ❑ "*I will bring the blind by a way they*

did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, And crooked places straight. These things I will do for them, And not forsake them.” (Isa 42:16)

- *“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in your place. Since you were precious in My sight, You have been honored, And I have loved you; Therefore I will give men for you, And people for your life.” (Isa 43:3-4)*
- *“For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, And floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, And My blessing on your offspring.” (Isa 44:3)*
- *“I will rejoice in Jerusalem, And joy in My people; The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, Nor the voice of crying.” (Isa 65:19)*
- *“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” (Jer 31:31)*
- *“Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.” (Ezek 11:19-20)*
- *“I will accept you as a sweet aroma when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered; and I will be hallowed in you before the Gentiles.” (Ezek 20:41)*
- *“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to*

walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.” (Ezek 36:26-27)

These are only a sampling of the hundreds of commitments God made to Israel. The number of such promises are staggering, and cannot be brushed aside with a casual sweep of the theological hand. They are “*the word of God*,” and thus cannot be regarded as some temporary word, or one that was strictly contingent upon the people themselves.

Who is the person who will step forth and say these words have been ineffective? However men may choose to assess God and Israel, a word from heaven comes back to us: “*But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect*,” or, as the NIV reads, “*It is not as though God’s word had failed*.” Like God Himself, the word of the Lord “*lives and abides forever*” (1 Pet 1:23). God’s word is an accomplishing word. If none of Samuel’s words “*fell to the ground*,” what shall we say of the words of the God of Samuel, whom he served (1 Sam 3:19)?

God “*cannot lie*,” and an unkept commitment is a lie. A stipulation of the Law was, “*When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee*” (Deut 23:21). One of the comely reactions of those who respond to the great salvation of God is this: “*I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people*” (Psa 116:14). Is God less righteous than those whom He saves? Will He declare a promise, swear by Himself, then fail to do what He has promised?

For those who are tempted to brush these words aside with a finely tuned theology that writes Israel off, it is well to remember this. This is the Holy Spirit’s reasoning on the matter. He speaks of the

effectiveness of God’s word when dealing with the continued identity of God with Israel. Whether or not this blends with the preconceived notions of men is entirely without significance. The sure consequence to be realized by seeking to minimize this text of Scripture is that God will be justified in all of His sayings at the expense of those who contradicted them.

ITS EFFECTIVENESS

God makes a point of speaking of the effectiveness of His Word. “*For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven,*

For those who are tempted to brush these words aside with a finely tuned theology that writes Israel off, it is well to remember this. This is the Holy Spirit’s reasoning on the matter. He speaks of the effectiveness of God’s word when dealing with the continued identity of God with Israel.

And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it”^{NKJV} (Isa 55:10-11).

With great power, the Sovereign God proclaims, “*Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, And He who formed you from the womb: ‘I am the LORD, who makes all things, Who stretches out the heavens all alone,’ Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself; Who frustrates the signs of the babblers, And drives diviners mad; Who turns wise men backward, And makes their knowledge foolishness; Who confirms the word of His servant, And performs the counsel of His messengers; Who says to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be inhabited,’ To the cities of Judah, ‘You*

shall be built,' And I will raise up her waste places; Who says to the deep, 'Be dry! And I will dry up your rivers'; Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure,' Saying to Jerusalem, 'You shall be built,' And to the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid'" (Isa 44: 24-28).

And who will dare to place the accomplishment of the salvation of God beneath the frustration of babblers or making diviners mad? Is the promise of God to Israel to be held with less regard than turning wise men backward or confirming the word of His servants? If God says to Jerusalem, "You shall be inhabited," and to the cities of Judah, "You shall be built!" what form of reasoning constrains men to imagine it will not be done? Furthermore, our text is dealing with something of infinitely greater value than those things. That means His word is even more sure, for the greater the promise, the more sure is its fulfillment.

Illustrated In Israel Possessing Canaan

The particular issue before us is aptly illustrated in the account of Israel coming into Canaan. From the outset, their deliverance from Egypt was in order to their possession of the land of Canaan. God affirmed, "I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex 3:17). His word declared He brought the people "up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I sware unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it" (Ex 33:1).

When the people drew back in unbelief, they provoked Him to anger. Yet, He did not withdraw His promise, but rather excluded those who refused to believe. The nation was not written off, even though the majority of them refused to believe God. Of the footmen, over 600,000 in number, only two would come into the land: Joshua and Caleb (Num 14:30). Their little ones would outlast the forty year journey in the wilderness, while the entire generation of unbelievers died

out. Then they would inherit the land, according to the Lord's promise (Num 14:31-33).

Thus, the promise of God was not voided, nor were the children of Israel written off. Only those who were unbelieving were "broken off." It is not God's manner to destroy the righteous with the wicked (Gen 18:23-32). The word of promise to Abraham, which was confirmed to Isaac and Jacob, was not ineffective.

In precisely the same way, the promises of a new heart and spirit have not become ineffective to Israel. Only those who have not believed have been removed. Both the root and the tree remain, a source of both hope and nourishment.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

Cutting Down the Tree

Some may object to this reasoning, declaring that the tree has been cut down, not merely some of the branches removed. After all, did not John the Baptist announce, "And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt 3:10; Lk 3:9).

Note, John did not say the ax was laid to the tree, but to the **TREES!** He traces this activity to individuals, not to the nation of Israel. In this case, the "trees" parallel the "branches" of Romans eleven. John spoke these words to "many of the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism" (Matt 3:7). He did not speak of the removal of the nation, but of the rejection of its pretenders.

The House Left Desolate

Others might well site Christ's sharp denunciation of unbelieving Jerusalem. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is

left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Lk 13:35).

This spoke of Divine judgment upon Jerusalem, not the removal of Jerusalem, to say nothing of the removal of the nation of Israel. The door of hope was left ajar in His words, "I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"^{NIV} Later, Jesus affirmed "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Lk 21:24). He clearly referred to the punishment of the nation, not its total

In precisely the same way, the promises of a new heart and spirit have not become ineffective to Israel. Only those who have not believed have been removed. Both the root and the tree remain, a source of both hope and nourishment.

rejection. Had the Lord completely renounced the children of Israel, His word would have been of "none effect." However, such a condition is impossible. The nation remains before God because of the remnant within it—all Jews. More precisely, that remnant remains for the sake of "the fathers."

The rejection of Israel as a people would not only result in the promise of God becoming of none effect. It would require the abandonment of the Lord's commitment to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It would decimate both covenants, for "the Law was ADDED" to the original commitment (Gal 3:19).

The whole Gospel enterprise postulates the existence of the Jews, Paul's "kinsmen according to the flesh." Remove them from the Gosapel context, and the thread of reason unravels. The Gospel is God's power unto salvation "to the Jew first" – not in sequence, but in both promise and principle. The reasoning that follows is built upon these

unwavering realities. They provide an excellent example of God fulfilling His promises with precision.

ISRAELITES INDEED

^{9:6b} **For they are not all Israel who are of Israel . . .** "Other versions read, "For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel," NASB "For not all Israelites truly belong to Israel," ^{NRSV} "For all are not Israelites that are of Israel," ^{Duway-Rheims} "No, for not everyone born into a Jewish family is truly a Jew!" ^{NJB}

Here is an elaboration of Divine foreknowledge, "for whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom 8:29). **God made promise to Abraham in full recognition of the future.** That promise was a declaration of "the end from the beginning," not of a mere possibility (Isa 46:10).

AN EXPLANATION

This is the Spirit's explanation for the effectiveness of the promise of God: i.e., "for . . ." The reasoning supporting this affirmation is lofty, and will not satisfy the flesh. It will, however, fully satisfy the believing heart.

NOT ALL

There is an Israel within Israel, a special nation within the general nation. Wicked men like Korah (Num 16:1-32), and Balaam (Num 22), together with those who rejected and provoked God at Kadesh Barnea (Num 14:11-23) were within Israel, yet did not truly belong to Israel. In the case of the latter, only two of those who were twenty years old and upward (603,550, Ex 38:26) believed God. Even so, God did not repudiate the army of Israel nor the nation of Israel. The remnant, who truly belonged to Israel, were the means of preserving the nation.

A TRUE ISRAELITE

Early in Christ's ministry, while He was in the process of calling His disciples, he found and called Philip, who was from the city of Bethsaida, a citadel of unbelief (John 1:44; Mk 8:22-23; Lk 10:13). Philip, elated with his call, found Nathaniel and

said to him, "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Being familiar with Nazareth, Nathaniel replied, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip did not engage him in a lengthy conversation, but simply said, "Come and see." As Nathaniel approached Jesus, the Lord "saw him coming toward Him, and said of him, 'Behold, an **Israelite indeed**, in whom is no guile'" (John 1:46-47). Other versions read "a true Israelite," ^{NIV} and "a true son of Israel." ^{BBE} This is the relationship declared in our text.

Being able to trace ones fleshly lineage

house of Judah" (Jer 31:31; Heb 8:8), only those with faith realized the fulfillment of the promise. The believers have always been the true Israel. Those who "believed not," though in the fleshly lineage of Abraham, were not reckoned as "of Israel."

What If Some Did Not Believe?

The line of reasoning being developed in our text was introduced in the third chapter. "What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness?" ^{NIV} (3:3). The New Living Translation paraphrase expresses the sense of this expression well: "True, some of them were unfaithful; but just because they broke their promises, does that mean God will break His promises?"

This is the Spirit's explanation for the effectiveness of the promise of God: i.e., "for . . ." The reasoning supporting this affirmation is lofty, and will not satisfy the flesh. It will, however, fully satisfy the believing heart.

It is true that the "some" were mathematically the greater number. Yet, those who believed carried a greater weight, thereby sanctifying the nation. Their presence kept the nation from being destroyed. Because of them—particularly Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the promises to them remained in tact. Because of this, at any time, should any member of this chosen race choose to believe the promises given to their nation, they would realize the benefit of them.

This is the lowest view of this truth, yet it is a vital one. If God would spare Sodom and Gomorrah for the sake of ten righteous souls, much more He will preserve the people He Himself chose for the sake of the faithful among them.

From Another Point of View

Our text expresses this truth from another point of view. Rather than justifying the existence of the nation because of those who believe, it shows why God was righteous in cutting off those who did not believe. They were not "Israelites indeed," and thus provided no reason for God to withdraw His commitments to "the house of Israel and

back to Abraham does not make one a "true Israelite." Neither, indeed, does it invalidate being an Israelite according to the flesh. Paul did not refer to himself as a former Israelite. Rather, he said, "I also **am an Israelite**, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (Rom 11:1). He was speaking of his fleshly pedigree, for the spiritual one cannot be traced to "the tribe of Benjamin." With Paul, as well as with Nathaniel, being a "true Israelite" did not invalidate being a member of one of the twelve tribes.

The promise, or "word of God," was never fulfilled independently of faith. Although it was addressed to the nation of Israel, or "the house of Israel and with the

the house of Judah.” Judgment may come upon a nation because the majority of its constituents do not believe. However, wherever a remnant is found, the promise of blessing remains close enough to be realized.

Those who insist on contending Israel

has been cut off must do so with our text ringing in their ears. Their position cannot be successfully defended. It contradicts both the word and spirit of the promises of God.

A CONSIDERATION

If fleshly identity with Israel did not

make a person a “*true Israelite,*” it is elementary to observe the bodily affiliation with a good and godly assembly does not make one a Christian. Without laboring the point, much can be learned from this informative text. An astounding amount of contemporary religion is nothing less than polished Pharisaism.

SPECIAL CHILDREN

“⁷ . . . *nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called.’*” This may appear to be a redundancy, but care must be taken not to jump to that conclusion. Verse six declares that fleshly identity with the house of Israel was not sufficient to be accepted by God—i.e., group identity. This verse deals with personal pedigree, or lineage.

LINEAGE CAN BE ESSENTIAL

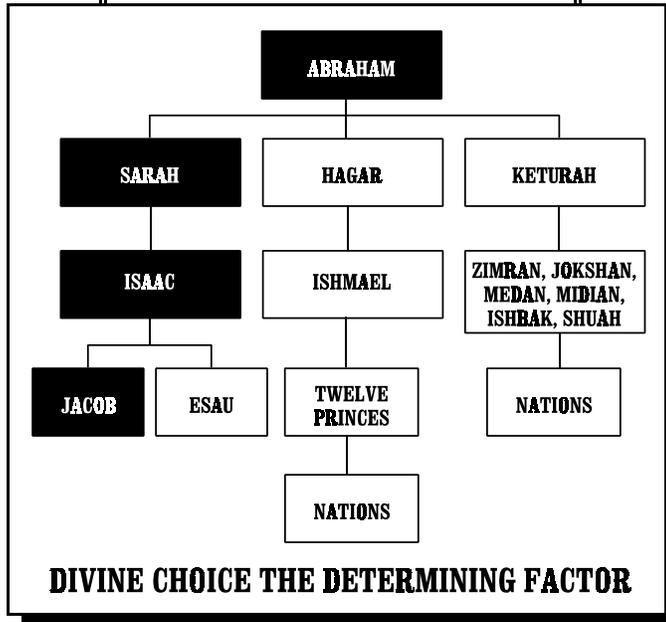
Fleshly lineage **can** be important. Take, for example, the matter of the Messiah. His blood line had to be traced back to Abraham, for He was the true “*Son of Abraham*” (Matt 1:1; Lk 19:9). This is why the genealogy of Jesus is precisely traced back to Abraham (Matt 1:1-16).

Direct relation by blood was also necessary for Isaac and Jacob, who stand among “*the fathers.*” To the Jews returning from the Babylonian captivity, precise fleshly genealogy was also important (Ezra 8:1-15).

WHEN FLESH AND BLOOD DO NOT COUNT

However, when it comes to the matter of salvation, the final word is not found in fleshly genealogy. In fact, believers are told to disregard genealogical thrusts. “*Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do*” (1 Tim 1:4). “*But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law;*

for they are unprofitable and vain” (Tit 3:9). That would include such matters as



Our text will now show us that flesh is not an arena where critical spiritual distinctions can be made. This is one reason why Jesus said “*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment*” (John 7:24). Because “*flesh and blood*” are an area of contamination, qualifications for entrance into the kingdom of God cannot be found there. As it is written, “*flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*” (1 Cor 15:50). Neither appearance (circumcision) nor earthly lineage (sons of Abraham) can qualify one to be the child of God. Nor, indeed, is flesh and blood something that can be “*conformed to the image*” of the Son of God.

DIVINE CHOICE THE DETERMINING FACTOR

generational curses, concerning which a renewed emphasis has arisen in some circles.

The Jews gloried in their blood-line, and John the Baptist rebuked some of them for it. Although they could boast of being Abraham’s generation according to the flesh, John called them a “*generation of vipers*” (Matt 3:7). He challenged them with these words, “*and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones*”^{NKJV} (Matt 3:9).

When some Jews boasted that they were “*Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man,*” Jesus replied “*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do*” (John 8:37-44).

The Spirit will confirm this to be the case by showing that God made a choice between those with an identical earthly father – and, in one case, an identical mother as well. If the truth of this statement can be substantiated, our confidence cannot be “*in the flesh*” (Phil 3:3), for it is a realm where Divine rejection can be experienced, even though a proper fleshly genealogy is found. No one, upon the basis of fleshly distinction, can claim a right to Divine acceptance.

OTHER CHILDREN

Abraham did have other children, yet all of them did not inherit the blessing promised to him. **Through Hagar, he begat Ishmael** (Gen 16:15). Twelve princes and nations came from Ishmael (Gen 17:20; 25:16). Although the precise nations are not all named in Scripture,

Ishmael's progeny included Arabians, Hagarenes, Saracens, Turks, Iturians, Midianites, and even Canaanites. They were all, furthermore, consistent enemies of the people of God, and remain so to this very day—even though they are technically the offspring of Abraham.

Through Keturah, Abraham begat six other sons: Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah (Gen 25:2). Many of these also beget Arabian nations, one of whom were the Sabeans, who stole Job's belongings (Job 1:15).

A "father of many nations," in deed! And that does not include the greatest nation of all, those who believe (Rom 4:16). Now we will see that tracing the bloodline back to Abraham was not sufficient. If it was, the Arabians and Turks, exceedingly large nations, as well as multitudes of others, could claim right to Abraham's spiritual birthright. Every one coming from him was **not** "a son of Abraham" (Lk 19:9). In the words of our text, "neither are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants."

ISAAC

"... but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called." This quotation is taken from Genesis 21:12, and is again quoted in Hebrews 11:18. The occasion was the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael from Abraham's home; "for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman" (Gen 21:10; Gal 4:30). Even so, the Lord said concerning Ishmael, "Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he is your seed" (Gen 21:13).

Prior to the births of both Ishmael and Isaac, when he was yet Abram, the patriarch reasoned with the Lord, "Lord

GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? Then Abram said, 'Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!'" (Gen 15:2-3). Twenty years had passed since the initial promise of Genesis twelve. However, this was not satisfactory, for the promise was bigger than Abraham's

at the "set time," the Lord visited Sarah, and she "received strength to conceive seed" (Gen 18:14; Heb 11:11). Divine appointments cannot fail.

The phrase "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned,"^{NIV} narrows the promise. It does not make the other offspring of Abraham any less his

Now we will see that tracing the bloodline back to Abraham was not sufficient. If it was, the Arabians and Turks, exceedingly large nations, as well as multitudes of others, could claim right to Abraham's spiritual birthright.

ability. Even though Eliezer was born in his house, along with many other servants (Gen 14:14), he was not the suitable heir, and could not be called Abraham's "seed." The answer of the Lord therefore came to him, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come **from your own body shall be your heir**" (Gen 15:4).

When Ishmael was born, Sarah still remaining barren, Abraham reasoned that Ishmael would be heir of the promise. Nearly eleven more years had passed, and thus Abraham besought the Lord, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" (Gen 17:18). The answer of the Lord returned, "**Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him . . . But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year**" (Gen 17:19,21). Shortly after that, and just before Sodom and Gomorrah suffered the destruction of "eternal fire,"

natural children, but it does exclude others from the promise given to Abraham. Isaac was the result of Divine working. **The reason for Isaac was the promise of God! The promise of God was not because of Isaac.**

A Child Among Children

Isaac was THE son of Abraham among other sons of Abraham. He was the appointed heir of the promise—the one through whom the Messiah and the promised blessing would come. In this, the Lord is showing that a particular household can exist within a greater one.

Others may make a claim to the promise, but only Isaac will receive it. Others may reason that the promise belongs to all of the offspring, but only Isaac will obtain it. Only those coming through Isaac will be reckoned as "children." The edict is clear: "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." The Lord announced it ahead of time, then meticulously brought it to pass.

CHILDREN OF THE FLESH VERSUS CHILDREN OF THE SPIRIT

"⁸ That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed." It is important to remember that the Israelites, Paul's "kinsman according to the flesh," are the consideration. The

reasoning set before us does not exclude them from the promise, but explains why they have NOT been excluded from it. Within them are a people who are true Israelites.

Because the pillars of reason being put

into place by the Spirit are of such strength, it is especially important that we give due heed to them. This is no series of statements developed by the paltry wisdom of men. The Lord is establishing why the promises of God are sure. He is showing why having great heaviness and

sorrow of heart are not to be equated with hopelessness. He is confirming why Israel has not been rejected as a nation. *“Some did not believe,”* and *“some of the branches have been broken off.”* Notwithstanding, the tree remains!

THE CHILDREN OF THE FLESH

The *“children of the flesh”* are those born in the energy and wisdom of the flesh. They are like Eliezer, in whose birth Abraham had no immediate part. They are also like Ishmael, who was fathered by Abraham, yet was a purely natural child.

More particularly, *“the children of the flesh”* are those Israelites who did **not** *“walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham”* (Rom 4:12). The promises were given to them, but they did not take hold of them. They were isolated from other peoples, yet chose to remain identified with and the tied to the world. In their essential persons, they are not the product of Divine working. They are part of a miraculous nation only outwardly, or *“in the flesh.”*

Is This Relevant to Us

Some people are driven by a *“relevant- to-me-now”* mentality. They discard this whole line of reasoning because they imagine it has nothing to do with them. How wrong they are!

This very truth is briefly expounded by the Spirit in the first chapter of John. There, it is not limited to the Jews, corroborating that we are speaking of a principle that is operative in our salvation. Here is what the Spirit says. *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”* (John 1:12-13). Note that *“receiving”* Christ did not of itself make the people *“sons.”* Rather, because of their reception of the Son, they were given ***“the right to become children of God.”***

NIV

Their spiritual birth was as miraculous as that of Isaac. It could never

have happened without the Lord. They were *“begotten of God”* through *“incorruptible seed”* (1 John 5:18; 1 Pet 1:23). Lest men take too much upon themselves, James confirms, ***“In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures”*** ^{NASB} (James 1:18). The New Jerusalem Bible reads, ***“By His own choice He gave birth to us by the message of the truth so that we should be a sort of first-fruits of all His creation.”***

The *“children of the flesh”* are those not born *“by the will of God.”* These are **not** the ones foreknown by God (8:29).

It should be apparent that no mature individual is accepted by God because of their godly parents. Much less can people be approved of God because of the religious institution to which they belong, or the creed they have adopted. All of that is on the “flesh” side.

They are not the result of His working. They are only natural children.

The nation of Israel was related to God in a sense enjoyed by no other nation. Yet, only a part of them were recognized as the *“true Israel.”* That elite group sanctified the nation as a whole, thereby justifying God in not completely renouncing them.

Let it be clear that *“the children of the flesh”* possess no qualification outside of nature. Their sole assets belong to the realm of nature, not that of the Spirit. Even when the *“flesh”* begetting these children is *“our father Abraham”* (Rom 4:12), that cannot of itself qualify a person to be the child of God. Such a condition does not mean the promises of God will come to the individual because of superior family lineage. They surely will not come because of organizational affiliation.

It should be apparent that no mature individual is accepted by God because of their godly parents. Much less can people be approved of God because of the religious institution to which they belong, or the creed they have adopted. All of that is on the *“flesh”* side.

THE CHILDREN OF GOD

Relation to God--i.e., *“the children of God”*--is not reckoned upon the basis of nature--even the **best** nature. The *“children of God”* not only trace their origin back to Him, they have been especially blessed by Him, and are uniquely the work of His hands. It is said of them, *“we are His workmanship”* (Eph 2:10). While there is a general sense in which all of Adam’s progeny are *“the offspring of God”* (Acts 17:29), that condition does not make people *“the children of God.”*

“The children of God” have a supernatural origin as well as a natural one. They are born *“of the will of God,”* not merely of the will of man.

THE CHILDREN OF PROMISE

“The children of the promise” are the children that God promised. The example under consideration is Isaac. **Were it not for the promise of God, he never would have been born.** It was not possible for Isaac to be produced by natural powers alone. Sarah *“received strength to conceive,”* else she never could have had any children, much less Isaac.

The children of promise, as Isaac, are the result of faith in the ability of God. Concerning the birth of Isaac, it is written, *“And being not weak in faith, he [Abraham] considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform”* (Rom 4:19-21). That condition made Isaac a *“child of promise.”*

While there is a breakdown of precision in the application of this to all of

the “*children of God*,” the principle remains the same. In our case, for example, we are not God’s children because of Abraham’s faith, but because of our own. As it is written, “*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*” (Gal 3:26). Whether it is Israelites living prior to Jesus, or our own generation, it is our faith that truly

speaks of Divine recognition of the people. The Psalmist spoke of such a counting, relating it to where a person was born. “*And of Zion it will be said, ‘This one and that one were born in her; And the Most High Himself shall establish her.’ The LORD will record, When He registers the peoples: ‘This one was born there.’ Selah*” (Psa 87:5-6). Among the people God will

Counting, or tallying up, “the seed,” speaks of Divine recognition of the people. The Psalmist spoke of such a counting, relating it to where a person was born.

relates us to Abraham, thereby making us “*the children of promise*.” As it is written, “*Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all*” (Rom 4:16).

“*The children of the promise*,” therefore, are those with the faith of Abraham.

COUNTED AS THE SEED

God is very particular on this point. “*The seed*,” in this case, are those who become the recipients of the promised blessing of God. They are numbered much as Israel was in the early times. They were counted according to their tribes, all of which could be precisely traced back to Abraham through Isaac.

Counting, or tallying up, “*the seed*,”

register, or count, will be those believing Jews within Israel “*according to the flesh*.” It will also include those who have been truly born again within the professing church. Those who did not live by faith will not be counted, even though they may have lived amidst an approved people, and among those in Christ.

Whether it be Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or you, the “*children of God*” are individuals. They are not acknowledged because of national distinction, but because of their faith.

CONTRADICTION???

All Of this may appear to be contradictory. After speaking at length about the Israelites and their advantages, why does the Lord now reason that only “*the children of promise*” are considered as true offspring? Does that not confirm that God has repudiated the nation of Israel, no longer acknowledging it?

Not at all! He is showing that there could be no such thing as genuine “*children of God*” within this nation if it had been written off. This is precisely the point made by the Spirit in Isaiah 1:9. “***Unless the LORD of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, We would have become like Sodom, We would have been made like Gomorrah.***”

NKJV No remnant was left in Sodom or Gomorrah! God removed Lot and his family, then destroyed those ancient cities with “*everlasting fire*” (Jude 7). The reasoning here is powerful! The remnant that remained was not the result of mere human activity. The remnant was “**LEFT**” BY God Almighty! These were the faithful who were left like Noah. They remained after judgment, like Lot. The scathing wrath of God did not touch them, any more than the fiery furnace touched the three Hebrew children.

The fact that God left “*a very small remnant*” substantiates that He did not remove the nation from the tablet of eternal purpose. He is not finished with it, as will be powerfully declared in the eleventh chapter.

Confirming that Israel’s situation is the same since Christ’s exaltation as it was in the days of Isaiah, the Spirit declares, “*Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace*” (Rom 11:6). The word of God, then, has not been ineffective, even though the larger part of Israel has not yet believed. The existence of the remnant justifies God in refusing to remove the nation from the face of the earth. It also confirms the surety and effectiveness of the promise.

THE WORD OF PROMISE

“⁹ ***For this is the word of promise: ‘At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.’***” God plants and tills his garden in the field of impossibility! The Lord has declared that “*the children of promise*” are “*counted*,” or reckoned, “*for the seed*.” Now He will effectively show us what that means. These are the children GOD promised, not children who measured up to a series of

demands.

THE WORD OF PROMISE

Here is a unique thing. The world was created by a Divine fiat, or spoken command: i.e., “*Let there be . . .*” (Gen 1:3,6,14). **But when it comes to His children, they are begotten by a promise, not a commandment!** This is the kind of “*word*” that already has been

declared to be effective: i.e., “*it is not that the word of God has taken no effect*” (v 6).

Let me be clear about what is being said. Israel remains to this day, not because it has arduously fulfilled all of the commandments delivered to it, but because God made a promise to Abraham! He confirmed it to Isaac and Jacob, and later to David. It is “*the word of promise*”

that beget this nation and will fulfill the good pleasure of God concerning it. This will be done without ignoring the rampant unbelief that swept over the nation. Those who refused to believe were, and will continue to be, broken off. But those unbelievers will NOT nullify the promise of God. As it is written, *“For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar”*^{NKJV} (Rom 3:3-4). And again, *“If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself”* (2 Tim 2:13). Let it be clear, God will not overlook unfaithfulness, and that is not the meaning of these sayings.

What the Lord IS saying is that God’s purpose is bigger than individuals. Those who are unfaithful, or faithless, forfeit the blessing for themselves, but they do not cause the promise of God to be retracted. Now the Spirit will show us the outworking of Divine commitment in the birth of Isaac, the *“child of promise.”*

AT THIS TIME

The promise to Abraham was specific, not general. It was not that some time somewhere Abraham would beget a son through Sarah. It was *“At **this** time.”* The record in Genesis is even more specific. *“But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at **this set time** in the **next year**”* (Gen 17:21). Again it is written, *“At the **time appointed** I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son”* (Gen 18:14). When Isaac was born, his birth was referenced in this manner: *“For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at **the set time** of which God had spoken to him”* (Gen 21:2).

Times and seasons are strictly in God’s control, not that of man. They are things God has *“put in His own power”* (Acts 1:7). He can cause things to happen when He determines, as when Noah entered into the ark by which he would be saved on *“the selfsame day”* (Gen 7:13), and the deliverance of Israel from Egypt on *“the selfsame day”* (Ex 12:41).

Actually, God’s promises assume His control, else they could not be made. First,

faith is convinced of this, that what God has promised He is also *“able to perform”* (Rom 4:21). Second, God has gone on record concerning His commitments: *“Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it”* (Isa 46:11). This is precisely why He can, by promise, make appointments.

I WILL COME

The *“children of promise”* are the direct result of Divine involvement! In the

promise.” It was spoken with both omniscience and omnipotence.

In regards to our text, Israel has not been written off because God has spoken words of promise concerning her. *“And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God”* (Jer 24:7). Again, *“Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob*

What the Lord IS saying is that God’s purpose is bigger than individuals. Those who are unfaithful, or faithless, forfeit the blessing for themselves, but they do not cause the promise of God to be retracted.

case of Isaac’s birth, God did not merely set natural laws in motion, but came in a power transcendent to the law of nature. Nature had passed the verdict of *“barren”* upon Sarah. However, when God came, that verdict was struck down to the ground. As soon as God shows up, the enemy is vanquished. There is no resistance or battle on the part of the foe, only retreat. The glory of the Lord blasts away all inhibition, and will be confirmed at the coming of the Lord.

Just as surely as God promised Sarah would bear Isaac, God has also promised Israel will turn to Him with their whole heart. *“And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart”* (Jer 24:7). Just as surely as Rebekah conceived though barren, the Deliverer will yet come roaring out of Zion to turn away ungodliness from Jacob!

SARAH WILL HAVE A SON

The power of nature and the wisdom of the world agreed that Sarah could NOT have a child, much less one through whom the whole world would be blessed. But the word of God negated both of them. **“SARAH WILL HAVE A SON!”** That word is what made Isaac a *“child of*

shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished” (Jer 30:10-11).

Even though, from the human point of view, their *“bruise is incurable,”* and their wound *“grievous;”* even though there is *“none to plead”* their cause, and God has Himself wounded her with *“the wound of an enemy,”* and the *“chastisement of a cruel one,”* yet the Lord has promised: *“For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD”* (Jer 30:12-17).

That word is as sure as the one spoken to Abraham concerning Sarah giving birth to Isaac. When God fulfilled His word to Sarah, the *“child of promise”* was born. When God fulfills His word concerning restoring health to Israel, it will be clear that within her circumference are a people who are *“Israelites indeed!”*

Unbelief can write Sarah off because she is barren. Unbelief can also write off Israel because they are presently

unbelieving. **But unbelief is wrong on both counts.** It has judged prematurely

and according to appearance. Furthermore, Divine commitments have

been specifically addressed to Israel as well as Sarah. Such words are sure.

NOT JUST ONCE

¹⁰ **And not only this, but when Rebekah also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac.**”The Scriptural record is written in such a way as to build hope. There are, therefore, constant reaffirmations of the power of promise and the surety of God’s word. In the first case, children were born with the same father, Abraham. However, they had differing mothers: Sarah, Hagar, and Keturah. The “*child of promise*” came

promises are brought to fruition. He is showing us why Israel has not been written off, and why it is in order to seek her salvation (Rom 10:1). If we will not quench Him, He will ignite the flame of faith and hope.

The Significance

There is significance in bringing up Rebekah. In the case of Ishmael, one might argue that he was the son of a

21:16). “*The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia*” to rebuild Jerusalem, which Nebuchadnezzar destroyed by His command (2 Chron 36:22). He also “*stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people*” to come and work in His house (Hag 1:14). God does have access to the spirits of men!

In the same manner, the heart of Isaac was stirred to pray for Rebekah, rather than give up on God’s promise because she was barren.

Here is the lawful wife. She bears two sons from the same father, the “*child of promise*.” Yet, one of the sons is chosen, and one is not. That choice will be traced back to Divine preference, not to the works of either son.

Why should it be thought incredible that God could again stir the hearts of the Israelites? Who is the person that will dare to affirm He has no remnant among them, or that He cannot “*allure*” them into a place where He can speak comfortably to them (Hos 2:14)?

God’s promises bear children! They produce results! Furthermore, “*the promises*” pertain, or belong, to Israel. It stands to reason, therefore, that even though she presently appears as barren as Rebekah, yet we can beseech the Lord for her in expectation of our prayers being answered – not because we prayed them, but because they are based upon His promises to the ancient people.

OUR FATHER ISAAC

Isaac is “*our father*” upon the same basis as Abraham – because of our faith. In the case of we Gentiles, we have been grafted into the Jewish tree “*contrary to nature*” (Rom 11:24). Notwithstanding that condition, and because of the great power of God, Isaac is still “*our father*.”

We have become part of an “*eternal purpose*” which was announced in Eden (Gen 3:15), declared to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3), and confirmed to Isaac (Gen 27:29). The promise of God could not be thwarted! God has not forgotten Isaac, and neither can we.

through a specific mother by the will of God. Now the Lord will show another “*the child of promise*” was distinguished from a child born of the same mother, and at the same time—a twin brother.

THE CASE OF REBEKAH

As with Sarah, Rebekah was also barren. In the case of Abraham, Isaac was selected from the children of three mothers: Hagar, Sarah, and Keturah. In the case of Rebekah, multiple children were conceived “*by one man*.” In these precise situations, God worked all things together for good, fulfilling His promise under impossible circumstances.

Isaac knew of the promise received by his father. When confronted with the barrenness of Rebekah, he did not lose heart. The Scriptures tell us, “*Now Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived*” (Gen 25:21). Because God had promised the blessing of the world through Abraham’s offspring, we are not to conclude Isaac’s petition was a mere human work. Remember, in these examples God is showing how His

bondwoman, not the legal wife of Abraham. Therefore, flesh reasons, he was rejected upon the basis of law, not Divine choice. That reasoning, of course, is not true. **Ishmael was rejected because he was not the son that was promised.** Notwithstanding, in order to show that promise is hinged to Divine choice, not human works, the Spirit cites the case of Rebekah. Here is the lawful wife. She bears two sons from the same father, the “*child of promise*.” Yet, one of the sons is chosen, and one is not. That choice will be traced back to Divine preference, not to the works of either son. God is showing HOW the children of promise are brought into the world.

Satan Could Not Stop It

I have no doubt that Satan was working to thwart the fulfillment of God’s promise. He knew full well that “*the seed of the woman*” was destined to bruise his head, and thus energetically sought to stop that seed from being born, as pictured in Revelation 12:4. However, the Lord can stir up people to fulfill His will. He “*stirred up an adversary against Solomon*” (1 Kgs 11:14). He “*stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians*” (2 Chron

The Spirit will again show us that the promise of God does not extend to all of the children in the flesh. Even though

they all have the same father AND the same mother, yet a distinction is made among them. That distinction is not made

because of works, but in order that the purpose of God might stand according to His election.

JACOB AND ESAU

“¹¹ . . . (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),¹² it was said to her, ‘The older shall serve the younger.’¹³ As it is written, ‘Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.’”

This is one of most provocative expressions of Scripture. It is not to be mitigated by preconceived notions or stereotyped theologies. This is a Divine statement. It is also the reasoning of the Holy Spirit. It is given as an explanation for why Israel has not been repudiated by God. It is also a confirmation that the promises of God will not fall to the ground, even though contradicted by both circumstance human reasoning.

Eventually, every knee will bow to the One declaring these things. It is on the part of wisdom to bow the knee now, humbly acknowledging that the wisdom and power of God can carry out His purpose when everything seems against it.

THE CHILDREN

In this case, *“the children”* are Jacob and Esau. They had the same father and the same mother. They were born at the same time, after been together in the same womb. If Divine privileges are based upon what is generated within the womb, both of *“the children”* will be accepted by God. If having the same parents is the criteria, both will be received by God.

In the case of Ishmael and Isaac, there was a difference in between them as natural children. They had different mothers. One was free and one was a slave. One was born of the will of the flesh, the other by the will of God. One might suppose, therefore, that God’s choice of Isaac was based upon these

conditions. That is not the case, however, for Isaac was chosen because he was promised.

This will now be confirmed to us, for no such distinctions existed in Jacob and

Eventually, every knee will bow to the One declaring these things. It is on the part of wisdom to bow the knee now, humbly acknowledging that the wisdom and power of God can carry out His purpose when everything seems against it.

Esau. They had the same mother, and were both conceived and born as a result of Divine working. Yet one was chosen as a child of promise, and other was rejected. Both were the seed of Isaac, yet one is loved and one is hated.

We must be careful not to allow these affirmations to confuse us, or lead us to question our own salvation. God is showing us why Israel remains as a nation before Him. He is confirming why there is hope for them.

The Lord is opening His *“purpose”* to us, showing that when we are called in accordance with that purpose (Rom 8:28), He WILL work all things together for our good. If we see that we have no merit of our own, He will show us His workings in us are not based upon our merit. His purpose and His calling are the preeminent matters in this discussion. Elsewhere, the matter of the response of faith is the critical matter, but that is not the subject here.

BEFORE THEY DID ANYTHING

“ . . . for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil.” The purpose is not merely to establish WHEN the Divine choice was made, but WHY it was made. It is to be acknowledged we are now in waters that are deep. Yet, faith can walk on these waters, and safely navigate through them without harm. Because it is the Spirit that is speaking, we are to *“hear”* what He is saying.

The words that are here referenced were spoken to Rebekah. They confirmed Divine intent to her. After she had conceived by Isaac, Rebekah had an unusual experience. The Scriptures inform us that *“the children struggled within her.”* Apparently, the sensations she experienced were most unusual. We have no indication that she realized twins were in her womb. Thus, when they struggled with each other, it may have appeared as though an untimely birth was about to occur. Perhaps thinking the miraculous conception was about to be thwarted, she reasoned within herself. Then she took the matter to the Lord. It is written, *“But 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”* ^{NKJV} (Gen 25:22). Our text expounds the answer given to her by God Himself.

The answer was not based upon the foreseen conduct or works of the children. The fact that they had not yet been born confirms the determination of WHO would continue the lineage of Abraham was independent of human merit. Esau was not yet profane, and Jacob was not yet believing. Esau had not yet despised his birthright, and Jacob had not yet prevailed with God.

The Manner of Reasoning

I must continually come back to the reason for this passage. It is the Spirit's extended commentary on Israel "according to the flesh." He is showing this nation was strictly chosen and developed by God. It was done in strict accordance with His own choice, and without regard to human merit. Israel's distinction was not the result of its conduct, but of God's choice. They were favored above other nations because God chose to do so. They did not deserve it.

In this passage, the Lord is expanding on the manner in which He chose and developed Israel. He made critical distinctions between the fleshly offspring of Abraham, "to whom the promises were made" (Gal 3:16).

The point is that He has not done anything to lead us to believe nothing further can happen in this nation. The Prophets delivered words concerning them as a nation that have not yet been fulfilled. There is not a word in Scripture that suggests these promises have been withdrawn from that nation, or that God is even capable of making a promise only to withdraw it.

Although appearance seems to belie the possibility, there is still a preserving remnant in this nation, just as surely as there was a Joshua and Caleb during Israel's rejection of the promised land. That sanctifying remnant remains just as surely as it did on the day of Pentecost, or as surely as it was found within the womb of Rebekah.

PURPOSE ACCORDING TO ELECTION

God did not announce His intentions AFTER Jacob and Esau were born, but while they were yet unborn. The reason for this is, "... **that the purpose of God according to election might stand.**" Other versions read, "in order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand,"^{NASB} "in order that God's purpose in election might stand,"^{NIV} "so that God's purpose of election might continue,"^{NRSV} "in order that God's purpose and his selection might be effected,"^{BBE} and "but in order that it should be God's

choice which prevailed."^{NJB}

Purpose might not Fail

The "purpose" of God is to be a cornerstone in our thinking. That purpose was conceived independently of the achievements of men, and before the world was created. It is in this sense that "the works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Heb 4:3). Thus it is referred to as "His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself" (Eph 1:9). For this reason, it is called "His OWN purpose" (2 Tim 1:9), and the "counsel of His own will" (Eph 1:11). That purpose determined the formation of Israel (Deut 7:7-8). It is the basis for our calling (Rom 8:28; 2 Tim 1:9).

Isaiah referred to the firmness of God's purpose in this manner. "The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely

The "purpose" of God is to be a cornerstone in our thinking. That purpose was conceived independently of the achievements of men, and before the world was created. It is in this sense that "the works were finished from the foundation of the world"

as I have **thought**, so shall it come to pass; and as I have **purposed**, so shall it **stand**" (Isa 14:24).

The words that follow were not merely foretelling what was going to happen. They are not an analysis of human conduct. Rather, they are the cause for the continuation of Abraham's seed. They are the reason why the nation did not disappear, or was expunged by the devil.

Implemented By Choice

While "choice" is normally ascribed to men (and, indeed, they are to choose), the Scriptures place the greater emphasis upon Divine choice. It is really God's choice that makes the difference.

- God chose the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Deut 4:37; 10:15).
- He chose David, taking him from the sheepfolds (Psa 78:70).
- He chose Israel to be a special people (Deut 7:6).
- God chose the priests of Israel (Deut 18:5; 21:5).
- The Lord chose Solomon (1 Chron 29:1).
- He chose Saul to be king (1 Sam 10:24).
- He chose Solomon to build the temple (1 Chron 28:10).
- God chose who should bring the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 15:7).
- God has chosen us in Christ Jesus before the world began (Eph 1:4).
- The Thessalonians were from the beginning "chosen unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth" (2 Thess 2:13).
- Those in Christ are a "chosen generation" (1 Pet 2:9).
- Jesus chose the Apostles (Luke 6:13).
- Paul the Apostle was a "chosen vessel," separated from the womb (Acts 9:15; Gal 1:15).

The fact of Divine choice cannot be questioned. There are simply too many declarations of it to allow such doubts.

Our text tells us WHY God chooses. It is in order that His purpose according to election might stand. In other words, **God causes His purpose to come to fruition.** If an enemy arises to thwart that purpose, God will cause the enemy to fail. If, through faith, a person embraces that purpose, God will "make him stand" (Rom 14:4). If his purpose is unknown to Rebekah, He will announce to her what is going to happen with the children in her womb. The purpose of God is why she was enabled to conceive, and the purpose of God would be served by the fruit of her womb.

A Practical Application

If you wonder what the outcome of believing God will be, find what God has declared concerning faith. Search out what word He has given concerning those

who believe. Become knowledgeable of His revealed purpose for believers. See what He has determined for those who believe the record He has given of His Son! When you have acquainted yourself with those “*exceeding great and precious promises,*” then believe that “*God cannot lie!*”

NOT OF WORKS

“... *not of works but of Him who calls.*” When it comes to the “*purpose*” of God, the works of men play no foundational role. **God’s “election” is not determined by what men do, but by what God wants!** I understand that men have taken the word “*election*” and developed cold and calculating doctrines. Some of them have created doubts and fears in tender hearts. But these abuses do not remove the fact that God is an electing God!

There are choices He makes that have nothing whatsoever to do with what you have done, just as surely as God’s choice of Jacob was not based upon what he had done! In fact, the promise was given before he was even born, or had done anything. The meaning of the text is that God made his choice without regard to what either Jacob or Esau would do. He was motivated by something higher.

I am quick to again add that this is not speaking of the means through which salvation is wrought. Rather, this is the explanation for the presence and continuance of the nation of Israel, Paul’s “*kinsmen according to the flesh.*” This is a critical distinction to make, lest we make the election of God a stumbling stone instead of a rock of hope.

In Salvation

There is a sense in which this principle applies to salvation, but it must be declared with wisdom. In “*eternal salvation,*” believing is the principle thing. Strictly speaking, believing is not a work of man. In fact, Jesus categorically referred to believing on Him as “*the work of God*” (John 6:29).

Elsewhere we are told that salvation, or justification, is “*not of works*” (Eph 2:9; Tit 3:5). In fact, righteousness is imputed

to us “*without works*” (Rom 4:6).

This does not mean the individual does not work, but that human activity is not **the basis**, or foundation, of Divine acceptance. God’s purpose is the determining factor, not our works. When, by faith, we embrace the salvation He presents to us, He begins to work in us in strict accord with His purpose. As it is written, “*Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.*”

She was carrying twins, and did not know it. But they were no ordinary twins. Two different bodies of people were represented by them. They would be two different kinds of people. One nation would be a stronger and more aggressive than the other.

Amen ^{NKJV} (Heb 13:20-21).

A Brief Explanation

The cursory reader may imagine that I am merely rambling about on this point. These rather lengthy explanations are necessary because of two extreme conditions that exist in the church. First, vast segments of God’s people never hear a single word about Divine choice, election, or the purpose of God. Second, large bodies of believers have adopted a view of Divine choice, election, and the purpose of God, that stifles faith and awakens fear. In some, it even produces lethargy and slothfulness.

When the Spirit justifies the work of God upon the basis of His election, we had best give heed to His words. When the nation of Israel is associated with God’s

election and purpose, we had better take care how we speak of them. It is in order to bring our thoughts into conformity with what God chooses and designs.

THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER

“... *it was said to her, ‘The older shall serve the younger.’*” When Rebekah “*inquired of the Lord*” concerning the activity in her womb, she received an answer. “*Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger*” (Gen 25:23). She was carrying twins, and did not know it. But they were no ordinary twins. Two different bodies of people were represented by them. They would be two different kinds of people. One nation would be a stronger and more aggressive than the other. It would have more of a military bent. The same father, the same mother, yet two manner of people! With Abraham, contradicting children were in the same house. With Rebekah, they were in the same womb at the same time.

Esau became the father of the Edomites (Gen 36:9). Over thirty dukes, or chiefs, came from Esau, and they were all noted for their aggression (Genesis 36). They were the enemies of Israel, even though they descended from Isaac. They were “*stronger than other people.*” Notwithstanding their strength, in the days of David, “*all the Edomites became David’s servants*” (2 Sam 8:14). Their strength gave way to Israel whom God made the “*stronger people.*”

The Elder Will Serve the Younger

The Lord added one other distinctive word. “*And the older shall serve the younger.*” This is a most unique promise. It doubtless refers to the passing of the birthright from Esau to Jacob. Under ordinary circumstances, the family inheritance went to the firstborn. The Scriptures provide the details of the birth of Jacob and Esau, confirming Esau to be the firstborn son. “*And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there*

were twins in her womb. And **the first came out red**, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them" (Gen 25:24-26).

Throughout their lifetime, Esau certainly did not serve Jacob. In fact, as soon as the birthright, in accord with the Divine promise, had been gained by Jacob, he left the home, fleeing from Esau. We have a record of Joseph's brothers bowing to him, fulfilling the dreams God gave him. But there is no record of Esau bowing to Jacob. Instead, Jacob bowed "seven times" to him (Gen 33:3).

The service of Esau to Jacob was not revealed during their lives—at least not outwardly. In the purpose of God, the desires of Esau had to give way to the desires of Jacob when he sought to gain back the inheritance. Isaac told him that was not possible. "And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother" (Gen 27:40). 996 years later, king Nebuchadnezzar put the mountains occupied by the inhabitants of Esau to ruin (Jer 49:16-18; Ezek 25:13-14; Joel 3:19; Mal 1:2-3). All of this was done in the interest of the children of Jacob. Truly, the elder did serve the younger! The benefits of the covenant made with Abraham passed through Jacob and evaded Esau!

All of this was in direct contradiction of the flesh, and even of rules of inheritance established by God. Under the Law, the firstborn could not be disinherited (Deut 21:15-17). Yet, Esau the firstborn lost his inheritance and could not gain it back. It is quite true that he "despised his inheritance" (Gen 25:34). Yet the answer of God to Rebekah was given before Esau was born, or had committed any evil.

JACOB HAVE I LOVED

" . . . As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved.'" This quotation is taken from Malachi 1:2, and is a most powerful consideration. "I have loved you," says

the LORD. Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Says the LORD. 'Yet Jacob I have loved.'"

This is another form of Divine reasoning that makes no sense at all to the flesh. First, it is important to note that Jacob and Esau, while individuals, are not here considered as individuals, but as progenitors and representatives of races: "two nations, and two manner of people." The Spirit is showing us how God made a distinction within the offspring of Abraham, confirming "they are not all Israel who are of Israel."

Malachi's prophecy shows God's preference of Israel, descendants of Jacob, over the Edomites, descendants of Esau. God affirms His love to Israel, and they questioned the affirmation. "I have loved

said, 'We have been impoverished, But we will return and build the desolate places,' Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'They may build, but I will throw down; They shall be called the Territory of Wickedness, and the people against whom the LORD will have indignation forever. Your eyes shall see, And you shall say, 'The LORD is magnified beyond the border of Israel'" (Mal 1:3-5).

Briefly stated, God's hatred for Esau is seen in the Edomites inability to recover themselves from the devastation Nebuchadnezzar brought upon them. They might built, but God would throw down what they raised up. His indignation against them was "forever," and Israel would see it. The phrase "beyond the border of Israel" signifies that God protected Israel's border, while decimating that of Edom.

God's hatred for Esau is seen in the Edomites inability to recover themselves from the devastation Nebuchadnezzar brought upon them. They might built, but God would throw down what they raised up.

Thus God's love for Israel is confirmed by their recovery!

There was a remnant among them, and they rebuilt the waste places. As Isaiah declared, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; **but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee**, saith the LORD thy Redeemer" (Isa 54:8). **But Esau He hated!** Although impoverished by the enemy and grievously chastened by the Lord, yet He cried out to them, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Again **I will build thee, and thou shalt be built**, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry" (Jer 31:3-4). **But Esau He hated!**

GET THE MESSAGE!

God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew! Israel's present condition is anything but good, but it is not hopeless! Some of the cities against which Israel came were so cursed it was said of them, "and it shall be a heap for ever; it shall not be built again" (Deut 13:16). Of the ancient city of Tyrus God said, "And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I the LORD have spoken it, saith the Lord

you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us?" (Mal 1:2a). The people had been judged by God, and therefore concluded He had abandoned them. They had concluded "Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off" (Ezek 37:11). They were living in the aftermath of Nebuchadnezzar's devastation of Jerusalem and the consequent seventy-year Babylonian captivity. How could God love them? The Lord confirms His love for them by comparing them with the Edomites.

ESAU HAVE I HATED

" . . . As it is written . . . but Esau I have hated." The additional words of Malachi cause the text to come alive. "But Esau I have hated, and laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness. Even though Edom has

GOD” (Ezek 26:14).

Such things were never said of Jerusalem! Though judged, sacked, and decimated, it was rebuilt! Israel was taken out of their land, then bought back to it.

God said of the Amalekites, “*thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven*” (Deut 25:19). Concerning the nations that occupied the promised land, the Lord said through Moses, “*And He shall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven*” (Deut 7:24). Again, it is said of the heathen, “*Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever*” (Psa 9:5). But no such word has ever been declared against Israel!

The Lord once threatened to do this—blot out the nation. After Israel behaved themselves wickedly at Mount Sinai, the Lord said to Moses, “*Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation*” (Ex 32:10). In recounting this event to Israel, Moses declared God said He would “*blot out their name from under heaven*” (Deut 9:14). Moses stood in the gap at that time, pleading that He would consider the effect of such a destruction upon the Egyptians, and calling upon Him to remember “*the fathers,*” and the promises He had made to them. In one of those rare occasions, it is written, “*And the LORD repented of*

the evil which He thought to do unto his people” (Ex 32:14). God never again made that threat!

Throughout history, there have been generations of Israelites who were not known for their faith. There have been multitudes of them who have rejected Christ. The word of God has come to pass: “*And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead*

Why was not Jerusalem judged like Tyrus? Why did He not rain “*eternal fire*” upon them as He did upon Sodom and Gomorrah? Why did God not pledge Himself to blot out their name like that of the Amalekites? The tender heart wants to know the answer to these questions.

There are at least two reasons Israel remains until this day. First, it is for the farther’s sake—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Second, it is for the sake of the remnant

There are at least two reasons Israel remains until this day. First, it is for the farther’s sake—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Second, it is for the sake of the remnant that lingers among the people.

thee” (Deut 28:37). Yet the Lord says of this judged nation, “*I will gather the remnant of My flock*” (Jer 23:3). “*I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you*” (Jer 29:14). “*Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath*” (Jer 32:37). “*I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted*” (Mic 4:6).

How is it that God speaks so differently of Israel? Why does He not speak to them as He did to the Edomites?

that lingers among the people.

It is no wonder Paul had such a concern for this people—why he refused to let them go. Like Moses, he knew the promises of the Lord, and His unfailing recognition of the sanctifying remnant. He knew God and the purpose of God. Thus, he remained in the gap, refusing to be moved away from the hope generated by God’s promises. There is no reason why we cannot join in that concern mingled with optimistic hope. It makes more sense for God to receive Israel than that He received the Gentiles.

CONCLUSION

Academically speaking, this passage is difficult to teach. It does not lend itself to the cold approach of human logic, and contains assertions that do not blend with a stereotyped theology. Yet, that condition makes this a most profitable text, for by its very nature, it draws us upward. It gives a lot of glory to God, accentuating His faithfulness, and confirming His power to implement His eternal purpose.

If you have ever fell beneath the crushing hand of the chastening God, this

passage will bring hope to you. Israel stands before you as an example of enduring the chastening of the Lord without being destroyed. It has been unparalleled chastening, extending over a period of two thousand years thus far. Yet, the embers of promise still send forth the spark of hope. Nestled in their multitudes there is a remnant who have seen and embraced the promise. Their very existence is owing to the grace of God. His faithfulness has kept the floods of Divine indignation from drowning

them.

When things loomed very dark at Sinai, and the people turned to idolatry, drunkenness and revelry, Moses stood for the people. When the people fell away from the Lord and asked Samuel to pray for them, he replied, “*Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way*” (1 Sam 12:23). When Elijah thought no one remained but himself, the Lord

replied, *"I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal"* (1 Kings 19:18; Rom 11:4).

I do not know how many powerful intercessors are pleading for Israel in our time, but we do well to aspire to be such. They were the means through which we obtained the Law. Through the prophets, they were custodians of sustaining promises. Through them we have learned of the blessedness of being directed and fed by the Lord. And, above all, our blessed Lord came from them. Who among us does not have a heart for them? They have given us such notables as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. The holy Prophets have come from

their ranks, with such spiritual dignitaries as David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. John the Baptist came from their number, as well as the twelve Apostles, and Paul who labored more abundantly than they all. Who can forget the remarkable women that this nation has yielded: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Miriam, Debra, Elizabeth, Mary, and Anna.

We have no cause for shame in having a heart for them, and no need to imagine we have replaced them. Let no person look upon them with disdain, or consider them irrevocable!

There remains a people who are loved of the Lord. They are the ones He has chosen, and to whom He holds out the

scepter of righteousness and promise. While we do not condone sin, and even hate *"the garment spotted by the flesh,"* we refuse to abandon hope. It extends to the Israelites, as well as to the whole world, which God has pledged will be covered with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Isa 11:9; Hab 2:14). If God can stretch forth His hands to them *"all the day,"* why cannot we?

Wherever there is a promise of God, apply your heart to believe and embrace it. God cannot lie, and you cannot be ashamed if you will believe Him! **The star of hope can shine at the peak of the day, as well as in the depth of the darkness of night.** As our blessed Lord said, *"Have faith in God!"*

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 3/23/2001. Continuing in our overview of the book of Romans, we will be covering verses 14-29 of the ninth chapter. The theme will be, **"GOD'S RIGHTEOUS WORKING."** The determinations of God do not always meet with the approval of men, but they are always righteous. The inscrutable righteous workings of God are found among men. Though many of them are controversial, they are always in accord with both God's purpose and nature. They are also fully acceptable to faith. Our meeting will convene at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

The Blakely Family: Given, June, Benjamin, Jonathan, and Eva
406 South Sergeant Street, Joplin, MO 64801

A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

Telephone: (417) 782-3063, Email: Given (GivenB@aol.com) June: (JuneE01@aol.com)

ADAH's Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/adah.htm> -- EVA's Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/Eva.htm>

Benjamin (Bensvison@aol.com), Jonathan (Jonstalk@aol.com), Eva (Evablakely@aol.com)
Adah/Jason Hutchcraft (Email Temporarily disabled)

WORD OF TRUTH Website: <http://wotruth.com>

WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP Website: <http://wotruth.com/wotf/wotindex.htm>
COMMENTARY on Romans: <http://wotruth.com/Romans.htm>