

## True and False Believers *Romans 9:6 - 13*

*<sup>6</sup>It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. <sup>7</sup>Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." <sup>8</sup>In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. <sup>9</sup>For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son." <sup>10</sup>Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. <sup>11</sup>Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: <sup>12</sup>not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger." <sup>13</sup>Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."*

**Paul continues his focus on God's dealings with Israel. From the beginning, God worked in and through Israel with global and universal ambitions in mind. God's purpose was to extend the offer of salvation to everyone...Jews and Gentiles alike. In today's lesson, Paul wrote about "true" and "false" Israelites. The "real" Israel, from God's perspective was the new nation being raised up by Him. This new nation was populated by those who had come to faith in Jesus. We call this nation "the church." Paul wrote in verse 6 that "not all who are descended from Israel are Israel." Unfortunately, many Jews in Paul's day continued to trust in their background, heritage and lineage (see verse 7)...oblivious to the new work that God was doing in Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:17).**

**The true descendants of Abraham are those who identify with God by faith and trust and not genetics or biology. Abraham was praised as a pillar of faith (Hebrews 11:8-19). His real descendants are those who identify with and emulate his faith and trust in God. In verse 7, Paul gave an example of his theology by noting that Abraham had two sons: Ishmael and Isaac. But it was only through Isaac that the promises of God were carried forward. If biology or genetics alone was the decisive factor for the perpetuation of God's promises, then both sons would have inherited the same things. God's work among man is never wholly dependant upon genetics or genealogy.**

**Likewise, Paul wanted his readers to see that God was working beyond Israel (and continues to work globally) to build a kingdom people. The Greek word for church is *ekklesia* which means "those who have been called out." The word is not limited to one ethnicity or nation. The word for church can take in members from many different backgrounds who share one thing in common...they have been called away from and out of**

sin and darkness and into the light of Christ. The grace of God alone spares us from a certain eternity apart from Him.

When it comes to the issue of election, two primary camps emerge. Calvinists would argue that God has chosen people for grace and salvation based upon His sovereign will and purposes. On the other side, Arminians say that God foreknew individual man's behavior and actions - that some would accept the gift of salvation while some would not - and made His election choices on that basis. In both camps, genealogy is not a consideration. Faith, trust, grace and God's purposes are paramount.

In the context of today, little attention is paid to the essence of salvation and how God has raised up a new people called the church. David Jeremiah wrote, *"many people believe that being a part of 'cultural Christianity' assures their acceptance before God. They equate attending church with knowing God just as Israel equated being a child of Abraham with knowing God."*

There may be some confusion over verse 13. The verse states that God "hated" Esau. Nowhere in Genesis do we have any mention of God hating Esau. Paul quoted from Malachi, a prophet who was many years and generations removed from Esau's day. The source of God's anger and/or hate was not the individual man Esau. It was the nation that Esau's descendants had become...Edom. God's hatred of Edom was grounded in the nation's propensity to do evil and to engage in idolatry. Edom was also a long-term enemy of Israel.

In essence, all of man falls into one of two camps personified by one of two people. There is the camp of faith and trust in God, symbolized by Jacob. And there is the camp of rebellion and sin, symbolized by Esau.

#### Applications . . .

1. Reread passages from Genesis that deal with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. You can begin in Genesis 12 and read selected stories.
2. Give thanks that God, in His mercy, makes salvation available to us.
3. Read the Bible consistently and pray. These disciplines help you to grow and strengthen an authentic faith.