

# Paul's Epistle to the Romans

LESSON **XXIII** : "WHAT COUNTS IS GRACE, NOT RACE" — CHAP 9 VERSES 6-13

**THE SITUATION BEHIND ROMANS 9-11** — *“According to the typical understanding of Jewish Christians in Paul’s day, salvation history had taken an unexpected turn. Most of the people of Israel to whom the promises of salvation had been given refused to recognize the fulfillment of those promises. At the same time Gentiles, who were considered to be excluded from the covenant, were embracing the one in whom those promises had come to fruition. Paul insists, however, that this turn of events, though unexpected, does not violate the integrity of God’s word and his promises. Paul justifies that claim by showing what God’s word itself says about becoming a member of God’s true spiritual people (The qualification ‘true spiritual’ is needed because Paul recognizes that national Israel remains, in a different sense, the people of God — see 11:1-2 and 9:6b.... Paul does not in 9:6ff argue that the privileges named in 9:4-5 have been forfeited; he is beginning to show in what way they still apply.). If the OT teaches that belonging to physical Israel in itself makes a person a member of God’s true spiritual people, then Paul’s gospel is in jeopardy. For were this the case, the gospel, proclaiming that only those who believe in Jesus Christ can be saved (cf. 3:20-26), would contradict the OT and be cut off from its indispensable historical roots. Paul therefore argues in vv. 6b-29 that belonging to God’s true spiritual people has always been based on God’s gracious and sovereign call and not on ethnic identity. Therefore, God is free to ‘narrow’ the apparent boundaries of election by choosing only some Jews to be saved (vv. 6-13; 27-29). He is also free to ‘expand’ the dimensions of his people by choosing the Gentiles (vv. 24-26).... [P]aul is engaged here in a discussion of the Jewish doctrine of election. Mainstream Jewish teaching held that all Jews were elected to salvation by virtue of their inclusion in that people with whom God had entered into covenant relationship. Only by apostatizing did the Jew forfeit that salvation. The implication of vv. 6-23, then, that salvation for Jews as well as Gentiles depends on God’s call and not on Jewish identity contradicts Jewish theology.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 568f]*

*“Since Israel is the real heir of God’s promises which include personal, eternal salvation (9:4,5), how is it that most of the Israelites of Paul’s day are accursed and cut off from Christ (9:3)? Why are only ‘some’ being saved (11:14)? Has God’s word fallen? We must stress very heavily that the problem Paul is grappling with is the condemnation of many within Israel. Most of his kinsmen are incurring ‘the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord’ (2 Thes 1:9), while only ‘some,’ the remnant of 11:5, have the hope of sharing the eternal blessings of Christ. The reason this must be stressed is that correctly understanding Paul’s question in Rom 9:1-5 will guard us from impertinent and imaginary reconstructions of the first part of his answer in 9:6-13. Many commentators give little evidence that they are holding Paul’s precise question in view as they interpret the first part of his answer in 9:6-13. One common result is that Paul is made to prove things that are of no use in answering his precise question.” [Piper, *The Justification of God*, pg 47]*

**OVERVIEW** — *“God’s ‘calling’ of a spiritual ‘people’ is therefore the topic of the passage, a topic Paul characteristically highlights at both the beginning (v. 7) and end (vv. 27-29) of the section. Verses 6-13 and 24-29 contain the brunt of Paul’s argument, while vv. 14-23 form an excursus in which Paul deals with certain questions that his teaching about the freedom of God in election raises. Throughout, Paul argues from Scripture, seeking to convince both his Jewish and Gentile Christian readers that his viewpoint is rooted in the OT.... Paul’s distinction between a broader, ethnic, Israel and a narrower, ‘spiritual,’ Israel (v. 6b) is his basic defense of the proposition that ‘the word of God has not failed.’ He justifies the distinction in two parallel arguments (vv.7-9 and 10-13). In each, Paul quotes the OT twice to contrast two brothers. God’s choice of Isaac rather than Ishmael and Jacob rather than Esau reveals a pattern in God’s creation of his spiritual people that Paul applies to the problem of widespread Jewish unbelief in his own day. **For these stories about the founders of the Jewish people demonstrate that the reason why some were included in the people of God and others were not was that God freely chose some and did not choose others. Physical descent, these stories show, was not the crucial qualification. In the same way, Paul implies, belonging to the New Covenant people of God is based on God’s free choice and is not a birthright. Thus it should be no surprise, and certainly no threat to the integrity of God’s word, if many Jews have failed to trust Christ and to be saved.**” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 569ff]*

**IS PAUL ADDRESSING NATIONS OR INDIVIDUALS?** — *“[W]e take issue with an increasingly large number of scholars who are convinced that Paul in this paragraph, and in the succeeding ones (9:14-18, 19-23), is implying nothing about the salvation of individuals. Rather, they urge, Paul is describing the way in which God has used some individuals rather than others in the furtherance of his plan: salvation—historical roles, not eternal destinies, is the issue. Moreover, as the quotation of Mal. 1:3 in v. 13 suggests, Paul may not be thinking of individuals at all, but of peoples: Israel (Isaac), Edom (Esau), and Egypt (Pharaoh in v. 17). These scholars have a point: the OT verses Paul cites do not clearly refer to the eternal destiny of the individuals concerned. Yet three points suggest that Paul, however he understands the original meaning of these texts, applies them here to the issue of individual salvation.*

*“(1) His argument requires such an application. Paul must explain why some Israelites in his own day are being saved and why others are not (vv. 3-5); to justify his assertion that only some from ‘among Israel’ are truly Israel (v. 6b). A discussion of the roles of individuals or peoples in salvation history simply does not meet the point Paul needs to make.*

*“(2) Key words in the paragraph — ‘children of God’ (v. 8), ‘descendants’ (vv. 7 and 8), ‘counted’ (v. 8), ‘children of*

*promise* (v. 8), *'name' or 'call'* (vv. 7, 12), and *'not of works'* (v. 12) — are consistently applied by Paul elsewhere to the salvation of individuals.

*“(3) The continuation of vv. 6b-13 in vv. 24-29 shows that Paul’s point is to demonstrate how God has called individuals from among both Jews and Gentiles to be his people and that those Jews who are called (the ‘Israel’ within Israel of vv. 6b-13) constitute the ‘remnant’ that will be ‘saved’ (v. 27).”* [Moo, *Romans*, pg 571f]

*Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.* (Rom 9:6-13 KJV)

*It is not as though God’s word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. 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.” 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. For this was how the promise was stated: “At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son.” Not only that, but Rebekah’s children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad — in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls — she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”* (Rom 9:6-13 NIV)

*And it is not possible that the word of God hath failed; for not all who [are] of Israel are these Israel; nor because they are seed of Abraham [are] all children, but — ‘in Isaac shall a seed be called to thee;’ that is, the children of the flesh — these [are] not children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for seed; for the word of promise [is] this; ‘According to this time I will come, and there shall be to Sarah a son.’ And not only [so], but also Rebecca, having conceived by one — Isaac our father — (for they being not yet born, neither having done anything good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to choice, might remain; not of works, but of Him who is calling,) it was said to her — ‘The greater shall serve the less;’ according as it hath been written, ‘Jacob I did love, and Esau I did hate.’* (Rom 9:6-13 Young’s Literal Translation)

**V 6** — “The first half of v. 6 is the transition between the introduction and the ‘body’ of Paul’s exposition in chaps. 9-11. Paul makes clear that the problem of Israel is at the same time the problem of God’s word and, ultimately, of God himself. For God has adopted Israel, revealed himself to her, bound her to him with his covenants, and given her his law, the temple service, and his promises. Do these now mean nothing? Has God revoked these blessings and gone back on his word to Israel? Many Christians, both Jewish and Gentile, in Rome and elsewhere, must have thought that this was the logical implication of Paul’s radical critique of the Jewish assumption of guaranteed salvation (cf., e.g., Rom. 2). And, if God had indeed reneged on his earlier word, the consequences were dire for more than Jews. For how could Christians trust such a God to fulfill his promises to them?” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 572]

**THEME VERSE** — “What Paul has said in vv. 1-5 is certainly not to be understood as implying that the present unbelief of the great majority of Jews has succeeded in making the word of God ineffectual, in frustrating God’s declared purpose of grace. This half-verse is the sign under which the whole section 9.6-29 stands — in fact, the sign and theme of the whole of chapters 9-11.” [Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pg 473] “The verse is therefore thematic not only for the next paragraph or two but for the whole section (chaps. 9-11).” [Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, vol 2 pg 539]

**IT IS NOT AS THOUGH ...** — Paul uses a common idiom of the day to express the thought “*it is not that ...*” or “*it is not as if ...*”. “Paul wishes to exclude what might seem to be the implication of what he has just said in vv. 1-5. We might paraphrase thus: ‘But what I have just said about my grief for my fellow-Jews is not to be understood as meaning that ...’.” [Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pg 472]

**THE WORD OF GOD** — “[T]he sequence of thought requires that the ‘word of God’ mentioned in v. 6 is that word which contains the privileges just listed (vv. 4-5) and to which Paul makes reference throughout this chapter. Moreover, ‘the word of God’ here is somewhat parallel to ‘the oracles of God’ in 3:2. Therefore ‘the word of God’ is God’s OT word, with particular reference to his promises to Israel.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 572f] Piper takes a more general view: “The ‘word of God’ has been variously construed as God’s promises to Israel (the most common view), or more broadly as all God’s words of revelation, or more narrowly as ‘the proclamation of the Gospel’ in Paul’s ministry, or as ‘an expression of the intention and will of God.’ ... [I believe the ‘word of God’ is the] intention of God, the plan of God, the revelation of God, we might say, which found expression in all these benefits [of 9:4,5] — this has not fallen. This interpretation of ‘the word of God’ finds support in the probability that Rom 9:11c says positively what 9:6a says negatively. In Rom 9:11c Paul says that God elected Jacob and not Esau ‘in order that the purpose of God according to election might remain.’ The remaining of God’s electing purpose is the opposite of the falling of God’s word.” [Piper, *The Justification of God*, pg 49]

**FAILED** — “ἐκπίπτω [ekriptō] means literally fall off or from — so of flowers (as in Job 14:2; 15:30, 33; Isa 28:1, 4; 40:7; James 1:11; 1 Pet 1:24), but also of chains falling off (Acts 12:7) or a boat failing to hold its desired course or position (Acts 27:17, 26, 29). But the sense was sufficiently broad for the word to be used in a range of meanings, and the derived sense of ‘fail’ is also well enough known (1 Cor 13:8).” [Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, vol 2 pg 538]

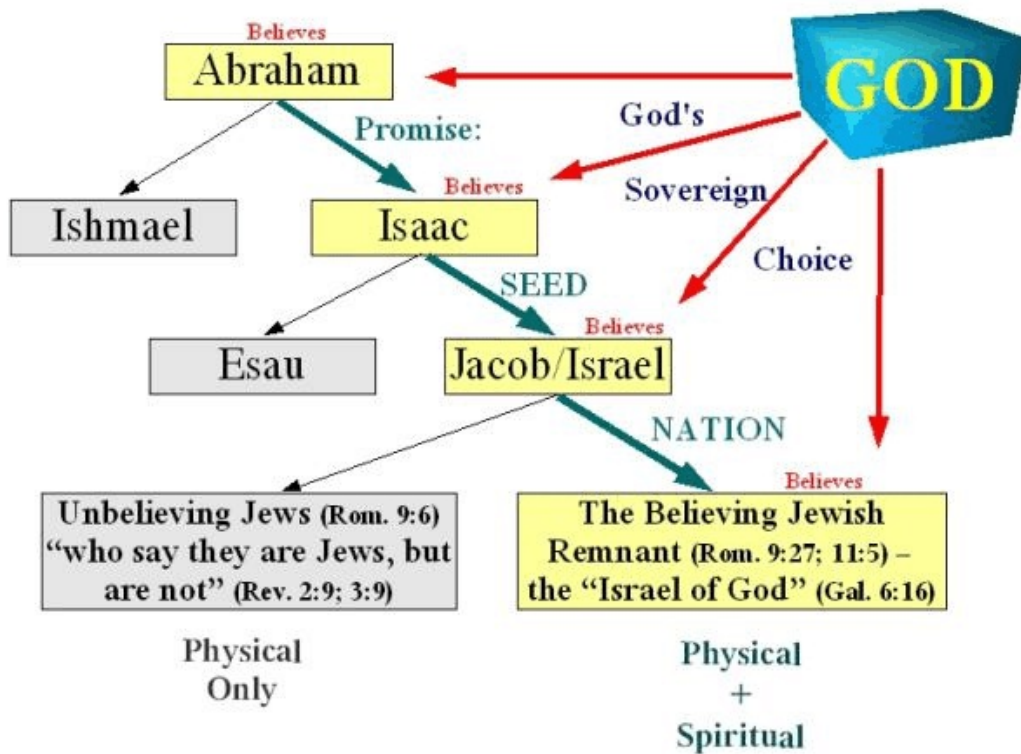
**THEY ARE NOT ALL ISRAEL, WHICH ARE OF ISRAEL** — “Paul now introduces his first justification for the denial that Israel’s unbelief nullifies God’s promises to Israel, a justification that gets to the heart of the matter: Who constitutes the ‘Israel’ to whom God’s promises of salvation have been given? The standard view among Paul’s Jewish contemporaries was that this Israel was made up of all those physically descended from Jacob, the heir of Abraham and Isaac, who was himself named ‘Israel.’ Only those who had refused their inheritance by outright apostasy would be excluded from this Israel to whom the promises belonged. Paul does not deny that ethnic Israel remains God’s people, in some sense (cf. 9:4-5; 11:1-2, 28). But he denies that this corporate election of Israel means the salvation of all Israelites; and he insists that salvation has never been based on ethnic descent (see 2:1-29; 4:1-16). Therefore the people of Israel cannot look to their birthright as a guarantee of salvation. This is the point that Paul makes by asserting that ‘all those who belong to Israel (in a physical sense) do not belong to Israel (in a spiritual sense).’ [Moo, *Romans*, pg 573] “Or, more precisely, ‘for all those from Israel, these are not Israel.’ ... There was a natural tendency, on the part of some at least, to regard descent from the patriarchs as guarantee of salvation (attested in Matt 3:9 || Luke 3:8).” [Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, vol 2 pg 539] “The meaning is, *But, in spite of my grief, I do not mean to say any such thing as that the Word of God has come to nothing. For not all they that are of Israel, i.e., born of the patriarchs, are Israel, i.e., the people of God.* This is merely an application of our Lord’s words, That which is born of the flesh is flesh. It is not what we get from our fathers and mothers that ensures our place in the family of God.” [Denney, *Expositor’s GK NT*, vol 5 pg 659]

**PAUL IS NOT DISCOUNTING CORPORATE ISRAEL** — “The point Paul is making is that not all who are included in the comprehensive Israel are included also in the selective, special Israel. But this does not mean what it has so often been taken to mean — that only part of the Jewish people is the elect people of God. Paul is not contriving to disinherit the majority of his fellow-Jews, to write a charter of Christian anti-semitism. This explanation of his meaning is ruled out by vv. 1-5; for it is clear that the Jews he is referring to in those verses are the unbelieving ones (for the others he has no need to grieve), and that he recognizes these unbelieving ones as his brethren and acknowledges that they are still (εἰσιν, eisin), even in their unbelief, Israelites to whom the privileges belong. Paul’s meaning is rather that within the elect people itself there has been going on throughout its history a divine operation of distinguishing and separating, whereby ‘the Church hidden in Israel’ has been differentiated from the rest of the chosen nation. All Jews are members of God’s elect people. This is an honour — and it is no small honour — of which no member of this race can be deprived. They are all members of the community, which is the environment of Jesus Christ. They are all necessarily witnesses to God’s grace and truth. But not all of them are members of the Israel within Israel, which is the company of those who are willing, obedient, grateful witnesses to that grace and truth. But, if God’s purpose of election has, from the very beginning, included a process of distinguishing and separating even within the elected people, then the present unbelief of many Jews is no proof that that purpose has failed, but may be understood rather as part of its working out.” [Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pg 473f] “It is important to note that by the second [Israel] Paul does not mean believers over against national Israel. Hence the inadequacy of any talk of a transfer of the name and blessings of ‘Israel’ to ‘the church’, as though Paul saw them as distinct entities. *Nor will it be Paul’s concern to argue that God always had in view ‘only an elect part of Israel,’ rather to explain how the election of Israel works.* ... ‘The Israel of God’ is still God’s covenant people, the character of whose covenant some Israelites have misunderstood and into whom believing Gentiles are being incorporated. There are no grounds for (far less expression of) anti-Semitism here.” [Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, vol 2 pg 539f]

**INTERESTING THOUGHT: WHO COMPRISES THE SPIRITUAL ISRAEL IN v. 6?** — “What does Paul mean by this ‘spiritual Israel’? He may be referring to the church, the messianic community composed of both Jews and Gentiles. Paul has already in Romans claimed that Abraham’s true descendants are composed of all who believe (4:1-16; cf. Gal. 4:28, where Paul calls Christians ‘children of promise, like Isaac’). He can elsewhere claim that Christians are ‘the circumcision’ (Phil. 3:3) and uses the title ‘Israel’ to denote the church (Gal. 6:16). These texts show that Paul was quite capable of transferring language and titles applied to God’s Old Covenant people Israel to his New Covenant people, the church. Moreover, in v. 24, which resumes the topic of vv. 6-13, Paul emphasizes the inclusion of Gentiles in the new people of God. These points make it quite possible that Paul includes Gentile Christians in his second reference to ‘Israel’ in v. 6. But we must finally reject this interpretation. (1) Verses 1-5 establish the parameters within which Paul’s language of Israel in Rom. 9-11 must be interpreted, and these verses focus on ethnic Israel. Throughout these chapters, Paul carefully distinguishes between Israel and the Jews on the one hand and the Gentiles on the other. Only where clear contextual pointers are present can the ethnic focus of Israel be abandoned. (2) Paul explains v. 6b in vv. 7-13 with examples of God’s selection of his people from within ethnic Israel. (3) Verses 27-29, which, as we have seen, relate closely to vv. 6-13, feature OT quotations that focus on the idea of the remnant — again, a group existing within ethnic Israel. *Paul is not saying ‘it is not only those who are of Israel that are Israel,’ but ‘it is not all those who are of Israel that are Israel.’*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 573f]

# Children of the Promise (Rom. 9:6-13)

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## ILLUSTRATION #1 — Abraham / Sarah and Isaac / Ishmael (9:7-9)

### V 7 — NOT EVERYONE WHO IS PHYSICALLY DESCENDED FROM ABRAHAM IS OF THE SEED OF ABRAHAM

— “Paul supports this distinction between ethnic and spiritual Israel and explains its basis in vv. 7-13. His argument falls into two sections, vv. 7-9 and vv. 10-13, in each of which he cites and comments on Scripture to prove his point. *Paul begins where anyone seeking to define ‘Israel’ must begin: with Abraham.* God’s call of and promises to Abraham were the basis for both physical and spiritual Israel (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-5, 18-21; 17:1-8, 15-16, 19-21; 18:18-19; 22:17-18). Jews therefore looked to their descent from Abraham as the source of their spiritual benefits: they were the ‘children’ or ‘seed’ of Abraham (see Matt. 3:9 = Luke 3:8; Luke 13:16; 16:24, 30; 19:9; Acts 13:26; Rom. 4:1, 12; 2 Cor. 11:22; Gal. 3:7, 29; Heb. 2:16; Jas. 2:21; and esp. John 8:33-58. Jews believed that one could forfeit one’s spiritual benefits by deliberate apostasy — refusal even to attempt to keep the law.). It is this assumption that Paul calls into question: *‘Not all of Abraham’s children are his seed.’ To be a child of Abraham in a physical sense, Paul is saying, is not necessarily to be his descendant in a spiritual sense. Salvation is not a Jewish birthright.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 574f]

**IN ISAAC SHALL THY SEED BE CALLED** — “Paul finds support for the distinction between physical and spiritual descent from Abraham in Gen. 21:12: ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called.’ These words of God to Abraham come in response to his reluctance to follow Sarah’s advice to banish his son Ishmael and Ishmael’s mother Hagar. They remind Abraham of a crucial distinction between his two sons. *The ‘calling’ of descendants ‘in’ Isaac therefore involves more than the promise of physical offspring. For God promised that he would give many descendants to Ishmael as well as to Isaac (Gen. 17:20; 21:23). The advantage of Isaac lies rather in the spiritual realm: it is with Isaac, and not Ishmael, that God promises to establish his covenant (Gen. 17:21). It is from among Isaac’s descendants — not Ishmael’s — that God will call individuals to become part of his covenant people.* ... Some commentators seek to minimize the spiritual implications of God’s choice of Isaac rather than Ishmael by noting that God blesses Ishmael (Gen. 17:20; cf. 21:20), promises to give him many descendants and to make of him a great nation (Gen. 16:10; 17:20; 21:13, 18), and causes him to receive the ‘sign of the covenant,’ circumcision (Gen. 17:23). *But the text Paul quotes focuses, as we have seen, on the clear distinction drawn in Genesis between Isaac and Ishmael in terms of the covenant. Isaac is the heir who receives and through whom are transmitted the spiritual blessings of the covenant.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 575f] “Nor because they are Abraham’s seed, are they all [children], i.e., children in the sense which entitles them to the inheritance, iv. 11, viii. 17. God from the very first made a distinction here, and definitely announced that the seed of Abraham to which the promise belonged should come in the line of Isaac — not of Ishmael, though he also could call Abraham father.” [Denney, *Expositor’s GK NT*, vol 5 pg 659]

**PAUL USED A SIMILAR ARGUMENT IN ROMANS 4** — “Better therefore to render: ‘nor as if all his children are Abraham’s seed.’ *The argument is the converse of 4:13-18, where the point is that Abraham’s ‘seed’ is much more extensive than his physical or ‘legal’ descendants (by the customs of the day, of course, Ishmael was a legitimate son of Abraham; cf. Gen 30:3, 9). But in effect the central point is the same: the true heirs of Abraham are to be reckoned in other than national (physical or legal) terms.*” [Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, vol 2 pg 540]

**“SEED” – SINGULAR** — “Because σπέρμα [sperma, ‘seed’] is singular, some commentators think that the reference is to Isaac as the ‘true seed’ of Abraham. But σπέρμα [sperma, ‘seed’] is clearly collective in the first part of the verse, and this sense probably carries over into the quotation.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 575]

**V 8 — PAUL’S COMMENTARY ON v. 7** — “Verse 7 in itself provides little support for Paul’s assertion in v. 6b that ‘not all those who are of Israel belong to [spiritual] Israel.’ *To claim that covenant blessings descended only through the line of Isaac was no more than what all Jews acknowledged — indeed, insisted on. But it is the conclusion Paul draws from his quotation in v. 7b that distances Paul’s view from that of his Jewish compatriots and buttresses his assertion in v. 6b.* The opening phrase of v. 8 resembles a formula used by some Jews to introduce interpretations of Scripture, suggesting that v. 8 is Paul’s ‘commentary’ on his quotation of Gen. 21:12. *This commentary contrasts the ‘children of the flesh’ with ‘the children of the promise,’ and asserts that only the latter can be truly considered ‘the children of God.’ The immediate reference is to Ishmael — tied to Abraham only by natural descent (‘the flesh’) — and Isaac — tied to Abraham by both natural descent and God’s promise.... Paul distinguishes here between God’s promise and election in a way impossible for a Pharisaic Jews, for whom election and ancestry cohered.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 576]

“It signifies that not mere bodily descent from Abraham makes one a child of God — that was never the case, not even in Abraham’s time; it is the children of the promise who are reckoned a seed to Abraham, for the word in virtue of which Isaac, the true son and heir, was born, was a word of promise. He was born, to use the language of the Gospel, from above; and something analogous to this is necessary, whenever a man (even a descendant of Abraham) claims to be a child of God and an heir of His kingdom. From Gal. iv. 28 (Now we, brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise) we see that the relation to God in question here is one open to Gentiles as well as Jews: if we are Christ’s, then we too are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to promise. *The argumentative suggestion in vers. 6-9 is that just as God discriminated at the first between the children of Abraham, so He is discriminating still; the fact that many do not receive the Gospel no more proves that the promise has failed than the fact that God chose Isaac only and set aside Ishmael.*” [Denney, *Expositor’s GK NT*, vol 5 pg 659f]

**BUT THE CHILDREN OF THE PROMISE ARE COUNTED AS SEED** — “*God did promise to make Ishmael a great nation (Gen 16:10; 21:13,18), but never said to him, ‘I will be your God’ (Gen 17:7,8), or ‘I will give you the land of your sojournings’ (Gen 17:8). By this election of Isaac instead of Ishmael God shows that physical descent from Abraham does not guarantee that one will be a beneficiary of the covenant made with Abraham and his seed. Something more must be true about a physical descendant if he is to be an heir of the covenant. What that something more is is described in Rom 9:8,9. One must be a ‘child of promise’ (9:8b) not just a ‘child of the flesh’ (9:8a). A child of promise is a descendant of Abraham whom God freely designates by his own sovereign design to be a beneficiary of the covenant promises. The miraculous birth of Isaac by the Lord’s free exercise of power (‘Is anything too hard for the Lord! ... I will come!’ Gen 18:14 = Rom 9:9) illustrates that God is free in designating the beneficiaries of his promises; he is never trapped into making any particular physical descendant (like Ishmael) the heir of his covenant.*” [Piper, *The Justification of God*, pg 60f]

“This second half of the verse opposes to the children of the flesh, to whom the first half of the verse referred, ‘the children of promise.’ Contrasted with Ishmael is Isaac. Like Ishmael, he was also Abraham’s ‘child of the flesh’; but the decisive thing about him was not this, but the fact that he was the object of the divine promise to Abraham. It was because of the promise, as the child of the promise, that he was Abraham’s seed in the special, selective sense, the one who (rather than Ishmael) should be the father of those who should be recognized as Abraham’s descendants.” [Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pg 475f]

**RECKONED** — “The verb λογίζεσθαι [logizesthai, ‘reckoned’] is used of God’s reckoning in the royal freedom of His grace in 2.26 and ten or eleven times in chapter 4. Here too it is used of God’s reckoning.” [Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pg 476] “*The strong echo of the argument in chap. 4 is no accident: [promise] (4:13, 14, 16, 20; 9:4, 8, 9), [reckoned] (4:3-6, 8-11, 22-24; 9:8), [seed] (4:13, 16, 18; 9:7-8).*” [Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, vol 2 pg 541]

**IS PAUL SPEAKING OF NATIONS OR INDIVIDUALS?** — “It is possible that Paul intends his commentary to apply only to those salvation–historical privileges enjoyed by Isaac and his descendants. But that Paul intends something more than this is evident from the principal nature of Paul’s assertion (note the present ‘are reckoned’) and from his choice of vocabulary. ‘Children of God’ in Paul always denotes people who belong to God and thus partake of his salvation (Rom. 8:16, 17, 21; Eph. 5:1; Phil. 2:5). The phrase ‘reckoned as’ likewise translates a Greek phrase that Paul elsewhere uses only when referring to Gen. 15:6, a text that Paul quotes to prove that Abraham’s faith brought him into righteous relationship with God (Rom. 4:3, 5, 22; Gal. 3:6). And the reference to ‘promise,’ while applicable immediately to the promise expressed in Gen. 21:12, also harks back to the argument of Rom. 4 (cf. vv. 13, 14, 16, 20), where Paul discusses the means by which God brings people into relationship with himself. *Thus God’s words to Abraham in Gen. 21:12, according to Paul, imply a principle according to which God acts in bestowing his covenantal blessings; as N. T. Wright puts it, ‘what counts is grace, not race.’ And the language Paul uses to express that*

*principle implies that he includes within those covenantal blessings the new life experienced by believers in Christ.*” [Moo, Romans, pg 577]

**PAUL’S REFERENCES ARE “SALVATION” DESCRIPTIONS: CHILDREN OF GOD ... CHILDREN OF PROMISE ... SEED ... RECKONED** — “Besides the immediate context, three other texts in Paul (Gal 3:26-29; 4:21-31; Rom 2:25-29) offer valuable evidence for interpreting this sentence. *It is clear from the parallelism of ‘children of God’ and ‘seed,’ in 9:8 that ‘seed’ here (unlike 9:7a) refers to the same spiritual group within Israel as ‘children of God’ in 9:8a and the second ‘Israel’ of 9:6b.* The sequence of thought in Gal 3:26-29 confirms this identification of ‘children of God’ and ‘seed of Abraham.’ In Gal 3:26 Paul argues that ‘in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith’ and concludes in 3:29, ‘And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise.’ *This text confirms, therefore, not only the identity of ‘children of God’ and ‘seed of Abraham’ but also confirms our contention earlier that Paul’s reference in 9:8 is not to a group with theocratic or merely historical privileges (i.e. physical Israel) but rather to persons who are heirs of eternal salvation.*

Such persons are called ‘children of promise’ (9:8b) as opposed to ‘children of flesh’ (9:8a). The term ‘children of promise’ occurs only one other place in Paul, Gal 4:28. Since the subject matter of the Galatians context, like the Roman context, is the implication of the births of Isaac and Ishmael for Paul’s contemporaries, it would be very unlikely that the rare term ‘children of promise’ would carry significantly different meanings in these two contexts. In Gal 4 Paul sees an allegorical (4:24) lesson for his contemporary situation in the ancient fact that Ishmael ‘the son of the slave [Hagar] was born according to the flesh but [Isaac] the son of the free woman [Sarah] was born through the promise’ (4:23). Paul’s application goes as follows: ‘Now we, brothers, like Isaac are children of promise. But just as the one born according to the flesh persecuted the one born according to the Spirit, so it is also now’ (4:28f).

The meaning of the term ‘children of promise’ become clear when we compare Gal 4:23 and 4:29. In 4:23 the contrast is between the child born ‘according to the flesh’ and the child born ‘through promise.’ In 4:29 the contrast is between the child born ‘according to the flesh’ and the one born ‘according to the Spirit.’ Note that ‘according to the Spirit’ stands in the place of ‘through promise.’ *Two inferences may be drawn: first, the term ‘children of promise’ does not mean ‘promised children’ or ‘children who are heirs of the promise,’ but rather ‘children born by or through promise.’ A ‘child of promise’ is a child whose existence is owing to ‘the creative power of the divine promise.’ Second, the term [according to Spirit] in Gal 4:29 signifies that the power of the promise is the power of the Spirit. To be born ‘through promise’ involves being born ‘according to the Spirit.’ Thus ... Paul understands God’s promise as a word which effects its own purpose.*

Note that in Gal 4:28 Christians are ‘children of promise.’ That is, the correspondence is not exact. The birth spoken of concerning Isaac was his actual physical (though miraculous) birth; the birth spoken of concerning Christians (Gal 4:29) is their conversion (their adoption through the Spirit to be sons of God, Rom 8:14). In a similar way the ‘children of promise’ in Rom 9:8b need not correspond exactly to Isaac (9:7b). But there is a real and decisive correspondence: *just as Isaac was a child of promise in that God willed in advance for him to be the heir of the covenant promises and then worked sovereignly (‘I will come!’ 9:9) to fulfill his will, so also God wills in advance for particular individuals within Israel to be his ‘children’ and then by his Spirit sovereignly begets them anew. Thus the principle of unconditional election, evident in God’s choice of Isaac to be heir of the covenant, is applied now to Paul’s contemporaries to explain how it can be that only ‘some’ (Rom 11:14) Israelites are saved and yet the promissory word (9:6a) or purpose (9:11c) of God has not fallen. God’s promissory word has not fallen precisely because it is an ‘electing purpose’ which does not depend at all on human ‘willing’ or ‘running’ and which therefore irresistibly accomplishes its goal by itself alone.*

Besides the immediate context and the analogous texts in Gal 3:26-29 and 4:21-29, we will look at one other text to confirm our interpretation of Rom 9:8. Romans 2:25-29 is linked to Rom 9:8 in three ways: subject matter, vocabulary and grammatical structure. Each text refers in its own terms to the fact that not all Israel is Israel (9:6b) or not every Jew is a Jew (2:28). The vocabulary link is the word λογίζομαι [logizomai, ‘reckon’]. Romans 9:8b says that ‘children of promises are counted as seed.’ Romans 2:26 says, ‘If the uncircumcised man keeps the just requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?’ It is the same paradox in both texts: being (truly) circumcised does not depend on being circumcised; being a (true) seed does not depend on being a seed. The saving spiritual reality depends on a ‘counting’ or ‘reckoning’ which God performs, not man...

*We may conclude, therefore, from the logical structure of Rom 9:6b-8, its vocabulary and other analogous texts in Paul, that Paul is by no means concerned only with nations or merely with the historical destinies of persons and peoples. The evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of the view that Paul’s concern is for the eternal destinies of those within the nation Israel who are saved and who are accursed.*” [Piper, *The Justification of God*, pg 68ff]

**v 9 — CONNECTIVITY WITH THE PREVIOUS VERSE** — The verse begins with “for,” relating back to the previous verse to explain the nature of God’s promise.

**THE SUPERNATURAL INTERVENTION OF GOD** — “Paul now explains his use of the word ‘promise’ to describe Isaac (and others like him) in his commentary on Gen. 21:12 (v. 8). Isaac, though like Ishmael a natural son of Abraham, was born in unusual circumstances as a direct act of God in fulfillment of his promise. The promise that Abraham and Sarah, despite their advanced age and the latter’s barrenness, would have a child is first made in Gen. 17:15-16 and then reiterated in 18:10 and 14.

Paul's quotation appears to be a loose paraphrase of one or both of the latter two verses. **Paul emphasizes again God's initiative in creating his covenant people: not by natural generation but by God's supernatural intervention is the promise to Abraham fulfilled.**" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 577f] Note the use of the first person singular verb, "I will come" which focuses on the direct, personal intervention of God.

## ILLUSTRATION #2 — Isaac / Rebecca and Jacob / Esau (9:10-13)

**v 10** — "In vv. 10-13 Paul moves down one patriarchal generation to develop further his distinction between an ethnic and a spiritual Israel (v. 6b). In fact, God's choice of Jacob rather than Esau illustrates particularly clearly the principle of 'grace rather than race' developed in vv. 7-9. Three particulars in the scriptural story about God's choice of Jacob over Esau provide Paul with powerful support for his insistence that covenant participation comes only as the result of God's call.

- First, Jacob and Esau shared the same father and mother. This silences the objector who might argue that Isaac was preferred over Ishmael simply because they had different mothers.
- Second, God promised that Jacob would be preeminent before the twins were born, implying that it was God's will alone, and not natural capacity, religious devotion, or even faith that determined their respective destinies.
- Third, Jacob's being the younger of the two makes it even more clear that normal human preferences had nothing to do with God's choice." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 578]

**NOT ONLY THIS ...** — This makes it clear vv. 10-13 is taking the argument of vv. 7-9 one step further.

### SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN THE TWO EXAMPLES —

Similarities	Differences
Both Sarah and Rebecca were barren.	Isaac was the half-brother of Ishmael while Jacob was the full brother (twin) of Esau.
Both overcame being barren by divine intervention.	Ishmael was the son of an Egyptian handmaiden while both Jacob and Esau had the same mother.
Both had sons called to inherit the promise.	Although both Isaac and Ishmael had the same father, Jacob and Esau were born out of the same "seminal emission."
Both sons had a rival.	God's (revelation of) differentiating between Isaac and Ishmael was made after Ishmael was born, while God differentiated between Jacob and Esau prior to either of them being born.

"Since Paul highlighted Sarah's role in giving birth to the heir of the covenant promises in v. 9b, it is natural that the next step of this argument focuses on the matriarch of the next generation: Rebecca. Paul sees an important similarity between Sarah and Rebecca. The point of comparison is obvious: Rebecca, like Sarah, was barren; Rebecca's barrenness, like Sarah's, was overcome by divine intervention (Gen. 25:21); and, especially important for Paul's argument, Rebecca's son, like Sarah's, was called by God to become the heir of the covenant promises (see v. 12). In addition, both of the sons who so inherited the covenant promises had a rival. But it is at this point that the critical difference in the two situations exists: Isaac's rival was but a half-brother, the son of a different woman, while Jacob's rival was his own twin. It is this difference to which Paul is probably alluding in v. 10b. Most translations (e.g., NRSV; NIV; NASB) suggest that Paul is simply referring to the birth of both Jacob and Esau from the same father, 'our ancestor Isaac.' This point fails, however, to advance Paul's argument, for the essential situation is then no different than it was in the case of Isaac and Ishmael, who were both children of Abraham. It is therefore attractive to interpret Paul's Greek as a reference to the one act of conception that produced the twins Jacob and Esau. **Paul would then be highlighting the utter lack of natural distinguishing characteristics separating Jacob and Esau. Born of the same mother, sharing the same father, and conceived at the same point in time, neither of the twins had a better claim to the divine promise as a birthright than the other.** ... The Greek is ἐξ ἑνὸς κοίτην ἔχουσα [ex henos koitēn echousa, 'having conception out of one']. κοίτη [kōitē], meaning originally 'bed' (cf. Luke 11:7), came to refer especially to the 'marriage bed' (e.g., Heb. 13:4) and hence to sexual intercourse (Lev. 15:21-26; Wis. 3:13, 16; Rom. 13:13). It can also refer to the semen itself (Lev. 15:16-17, 32; 18:20; 22:4; Num. 5:20), and this may be its meaning here. Despite the fact that this is a relatively rare meaning of κοίτη [kōitē] (even in the LXX only Num. 5:20 uses the word absolutely; in the other occurrences, there is a phrase, κοίτη σπέρματος [kōitē spermatis], the ἐξ [ex, 'out of'] may suggest that it is what Paul intends: **Rebecca 'had semen out of one'; i.e., Rebecca conceived both sons through one seminal emission.**" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 579f] Cranfield agrees with this interpretation: "The words ['Rebecca having conception out of one'] indicate that in this case there were for both children the same mother, the same father, and the same moment of conception.... We take it that by ['having conception out of one'] Paul means to indicate, not just that Rebecca had intercourse with only one man, but that from one man she received but one emission of semen to become the mother of both her sons." [Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pg 477] Douglas Moo translates the verse as follows: "And not only this, but also Rebecca, when she conceived children in one act of intercourse with Isaac, our ancestor." C. E. G. Cranfield: "But not only this, there is also the

case of Rebecca who conceived both her sons at one time by one and the same man, our father Isaac.” James D. G. Dunn: “Not only so, but also in the case of Rebekah who conceived by the one act of sexual intercourse with Isaac our father.”

**V 11 — PARENTHETICAL EXPLANATION?** — Most of the commentators I have read take this verse to be a parenthetical interruption to the flow of thought: “This verse interrupts the flow of Paul’s argument, leaving v. 10 syntactically incomplete. The sense (but not the syntax) of v. 10 finds its continuation in v. 12b: ‘it was said to her [that is, Rebecca, “when she conceived”; v. 10] that ‘The greater shall serve the lesser.’ The beginning of v. 11 describes the circumstances in which this prophetic word was spoken to Rebecca: ‘when they [Jacob and Esau] had not yet been born or done anything good or evil.’ The purpose clause in v. 11b and its further modifier in v. 12a then belong together as a parenthesis, explaining why it was that this word about her children was spoken to Rebecca when it was. The awkwardness of the syntax reflects Paul’s concern to emphasize that there was nothing within the persons of Jacob and Esau that could have been the basis for God’s choice of the one over the other. This is evident, Paul points out, from the situation in which God’s promise about Jacob’s primacy (v. 12b) was uttered. For it was before Jacob and Esau were born and before, therefore, they had done anything, whether good or evil, that God predicted to Rebecca that ‘The greater shall serve the lesser.’ This lack of any human reason for differentiation between Jacob and Esau, which Paul reiterates in other terms at the beginning of v. 12, is the basis for the purpose clause in v. 11b — ‘so that God’s purpose according to election might remain.’ For God’s purpose in election is established not simply by virtue of God’s prediction of Jacob’s prominence over Esau, but by the fact that this prediction was made apart from any basis in the personal circumstances of Jacob and Esau.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 580] “By the end of this verse Paul has already made it clear that his second example is free from the weakness of his first. But at this point the sentence is interrupted by what seems to have begun as a parenthesis and then been continued so as to complete the thought, though not the grammar, of the original sentence.... This thought — it may be assumed to be the recognition that the present example is not only free from the weakness of the first but also exhibits very clearly a characteristic of the divine distinguishing which has not yet been mentioned, namely, its independence of all human merit — would be a kind of unexpressed parenthesis, and the rest of vv. 11-13 is really its explanatory continuation, which takes the place of a grammatical completion of the sentence begun in v. 10.” [Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pg 477] Piper is the lone exception that I have come across: “Romans 9:11-13 is one sentence.... I see no reason to construe verse 11 as a parenthesis.” [Piper, *The Justification of God*, pg 51] Involved in the discussion is a lot of Greek grammar and syntax, way beyond my capabilities to make a decision.

**PURPOSE OF GOD** — “‘Purpose’ (Greek, πρόθεσις, prothesis) is one of those many words that connect Paul’s argument here with his teaching about the children of God in 8:18-39. In 8:28, it denotes the ‘plan’ or ‘design’ according to which God calls people to belong to him, a plan whose steps Paul unfolds in vv. 29-30. Here, similarly, the word denotes a predetermined plan that God would use to bring covenant blessings to a people, Israel, and eventually to the world.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 580f]

**ELECTION** — “ἐκλογή [eklogē], ‘election,’ is used in the NT elsewhere by Paul only in 1 Thes. 1:4; Rom. 11:5, 7, 28 (other NT occurrences are Acts 9:15 and 2 Pet. 1:10; it is not used in the LXX). The word can refer to the act of ‘electing’ (1 Thes. 1:4; Rom. 11:5, 28) or to those who are elected (Rom. 11:7). Two other words from the same root are important for Paul: ἐκλέγομαι [eklegomai], ‘choose’ (1 Cor. 1:27 [twice], 28; Eph. 1:4); ἐκλεκτός [eklektos], ‘one chosen’ (Rom. 8:33; 16:13; Col. 3:12; 1 Tim. 2:10; Tit. 1:1). Outside of Rom. 9-11, Paul always uses these terms of Christians (with the exception of 1 Tim. 5:21, where the reference is to angels).... Paul’s use of the word ‘election’ to characterize this plan reflects his purpose in this part of Rom. 9: to demonstrate that God’s plan has unfolded in the OT by a series of free ‘choices’ that he has made. Isaac was chosen; Ishmael was not. Jacob was chosen; Esau was not. By these choices God has seen to it that his plan to bring into existence a people who would be his ‘peculiar possession’ would ‘remain.’ If God’s plan depended on the vagaries of sinful human beings for its continuance, then, indeed, God’s ‘word’ would have fallen to the ground long ago (see v. 6a). But God’s purpose in history is fulfilled because he himself ‘elects’ people to be part of that purpose.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 581]

“God’s purpose to save men, and make them heirs of His kingdom — a purpose which is characterised as [according to election], or involving a choice — is not determined at all by consideration of such claims as the Jews put forward. In forming it, and carrying it out, God acts with perfect freedom.... It is the sovereignty of God, and God is not *exlex*; He is a law to Himself — a law all love and holiness and truth — in all His purposes towards men.” [Denney, *Expositor’s GK NT*, vol 5 pg 660]

**MIGHT STAND** — μένη [menēi]: ‘abide’ in the sense of standing firm, being accomplished, not failing. As used here, it is the opposite of ἐκπίπτειν [ekpíptēin] as used in v. 6. God’s distinguishing of Jacob from Esau before ever they were born was a step toward the ultimate triumphant fulfilment of His saving purpose.” [Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pg 478] Note how this compares with v. 9:6a, “Not that the word of God has failed...”

**PREDESTINATION** — “The clause in 9:11c ... gives the aim or purpose of God in making this prediction before the birth of Esau and Jacob, namely, ‘in order that the purpose of God according to election might remain.’ The divine words ‘The elder will serve the younger’ (from Gen 25:23), must, therefore, be more than a wish or even a statement of foreknowledge. If these words have as their *aim* (ἵνα, hina) to secure and establish God’s purpose, then they must express a decision on God’s part to intervene in the lives of Jacob and Esau in such a way that those words come true. The word *pre-destine* is an apt description of the divine act expressed in the words ‘The elder shall serve the younger.’ It is an act of *pre-destination* because it happened ‘before Esau and Jacob had been born or had done anything good or evil’ (9:11a,b). It is an act of *pre-destination* (rather than *pre-recognition*) because *by means of it* (ἵνα, hina) the purpose of God according to election remains rather than falls (9:11c). **No matter how one conceives of the distinction God will actually make between Esau and Jacob, it is clear that he has pre-determined what that**



*distinction will be; that is, he has decided and promised so to act that the distinction will definitely come about. That the destinies of Esau and Jacob were predetermined was sufficiently proven by the words [for not yet being born] (Rom 9:11a). But Paul wants to say more about this determination than that it took place before the birth of Esau and Jacob. Hence he adds [nor having done good or evil] (9:11b). With this additional clause Paul is not stressing that God's determination of Esau's and Jacob's future is prior to their behavior (that was already said in 9:11a), but rather that it is not based on their behavior.... Paul makes [it] explicit that God's decision to treat Esau and Jacob differently is not merely prior to their good or evil deeds but is also completely independent of them. God's electing purpose (Rom 9:11c) and his concrete prediction (9:12c) are in no way based on the distinctives Esau and Jacob have by birth or action. This rules out the notion of the early Greek and Latin commentators that election is based on God's foreknowledge of men's good works.... [In addition to this,] Rom 9:12b enlarges on 9:11b by going beyond the negation of human distinctives as the ground for God's predestination of Esau and Jacob. It makes the positive affirmation that the true ground of this election is God himself, "the one who calls." [Piper, *The Justification of God*, pg 51f]*

**v 12** — “The first part of this verse repeats and generalizes what Paul said in v. 11a about the circumstances in which God’s promise pertaining to Rebecca’s sons was given. God’s choice of Jacob over Esau came before either had ‘done anything good or evil’; therefore, Paul now concludes, this choice must not have been based on works but on God’s call.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 581]

**NOT OF WORKS** — The connection between v. 12a and v. 11a makes clear that ‘works’ has general reference to human activity and cannot be restricted to any particular category of ‘works.’ At the same time, this new assertion advances Paul’s argument by making it clear that the temporal relationship between Jacob’s and Esau’s works and God’s choice mirrors a causal relationship as well: God’s choice not only came *before* they had done anything but also was not *based on* anything they had done. The particular phrase Paul uses here — ‘[not] on the basis of works’ — is prominent in Paul’s discussion of Abraham’s justification in Rom. 4 (cf. vv. 2-8). The use of this phrase, along with the general way in which Paul states the matter, suggests that he has more in mind here than the situation of Jacob and Esau per se. As Paul in v. 8 drew from the history of Isaac and Ishmael a principle about the way God bestows his covenant blessings, so he now derives another principle about the basis for God’s election from the history of Isaac’s sons.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 581f]

**BUT OF HIM WHO CALLS** — “The phrase ‘not from works but of the one who calls’ does not allow the smallest crack through which one could slide in any sort of human participation.... God’s choices are not grounded in or constrained by anything outside his own creative purpose.” [Piper, *The Justification of God*, pg 53] “Contrasted with ‘works’ as the basis for God’s election is ‘the one who calls.’ Highlighted again is the activity of the God of creation and history whose own word powerfully and irresistibly brings about what he chooses.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 582]

*“To avoid misapprehending this, however, it is necessary to keep the Apostle’s purpose in view. He wishes to show that God’s promise has not broken down, though many of the children of Abraham have no part in its fulfilment in Christ. He does so by showing that there has always been a distinction, among the descendants of the patriarchs, between those who have merely the natural connection to boast of, and those who are the Israel of God; and, as against Jewish pretensions, he shows at the same time that this distinction can be traced to nothing but God’s sovereignty. It is not of works, but of Him Who effectually calls men.” [Denney, *Expositor’s GK NT*, vol 5 pg 660]*

*“The fact that the divine distinguishing between Jacob and Esau (v. 12b) preceded their birth excludes altogether the possibility of its being in any way dependent on the works of the one who is preferred. God’s purpose of election is wholly dependent on God Himself who calls. The divine call is that which gives effect to the divine election. It is the call to a positive relationship to God’s gracious purpose, and so, characteristically, the call to faith and obedience.” [Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pg 478f]*

“Paul contests the contemporary dominant view among his fellow Jews that the election of Israel depends for its maintenance on Israel’s faithfulness to the law. This is the crux of the whole argument with his fellow kinsfolk (and with his own past): that the continuation of God’s purpose (as in Jacob), not just its initial expression (as in Isaac), depends on nothing the elect can do, but only on God’s continual call.... *Paul’s point in v. 11 therefore is not that God chose Jacob instead of Esau before either had opportunity to prove himself worthy of election or to disqualify himself from election. It is rather that God made his choice of Jacob and not Esau without reference to their subsequent conduct, whether it was conduct he approved or disapproved of. Since he made his choice before they were born, their subsequent conduct is unrelated to God’s choice. Israel of all people must recognize that the selection of their eponymous forefather had nothing at all to do with the way he conducted his life — an appropriate point in the case of ‘supplanter’ Jacob (contrast Deut 21:15-17). So too, by implication, the children of Israel should recognize that their own selection as God’s people was solely a matter of God’s free choice, and that his purpose continues to unfold solely in terms of what God determines.” [Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, vol 2 pg 543, 549]*

**THE ELDER SHALL SERVE THE YOUNGER** — “The point that Paul has been qualifying throughout vv. 10a-12 is now finally expressed: ‘She [Rebecca] was told, “The greater shall serve the lesser”’ (Gen. 25:23b). As Paul has already made clear, God makes this prediction about the relationship between Esau (the elder) and Jacob (the younger) after the twins are conceived but before they are born.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 583f]

**DOES GOD ELECT BECAUSE HE FORESEES FAITH?** — “Earlier in Romans Paul sets ‘works’ in contrast with another

kind of human response — faith (e.g., 4:2-8). Some commentators suggest that this antithesis is implicit here also, and that Paul's denial that God's election is based on works does not mean that he would exclude faith as a basis for election. *But the contrast between human activity and God's activity suggests rather that Paul wants to base election in what God does and not in anything that the human being does. Surely, if Paul had assumed that faith was the basis for God's election, he would have pointed this out when he raised the question in v. 14 about the fairness of God's election. All he would have needed to say at that point was 'of course God is not unjust in choosing Jacob and rejected Esau, for his choosing took into account the faith of one and the unbelief of the other.'* Paul's silence on this point is telling. While, therefore, the phrase 'not by works' does not in itself exclude faith as a basis for God's election (for Paul carefully distinguishes works and faith), I believe 'on the basis of the God who calls' does. ... Wesley argues that Paul's point here is simply that God has the right to accept and reject any that he chooses; but the apostle is not here indicating the basis on which God might make that choice. Many of the early Fathers of the church went much farther in attaching God's election to human response, arguing that Paul here is excluding only *past* works from election; foreseen works may still be a basis for God's choice.... Augustine, who at one point in his life allowed for foreseen faith as a basis for God's election, later, as a result of the Pelagian controversy, denied that God's election was based on anything in the human being." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 582f]

**V 13 — THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN JACOB AND ESAU WERE BASED UPON GOD** — "Paul's quotation of Mal. 1:2-3, introduced with one of Paul's favorite formulas ('just as it is written'), restates v. 12b and expands on it by making clear that the contrasting destinies of Jacob and Esau were not simply seen in advance by God but were also caused by him. Jacob's preeminence was the result of God's love for him; Esau's servitude was the results of God's 'hate' for him." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 584]

**SUMMATION: GOD'S WORD HAS NOT FAILED** — "*The final quotation of Mal 1:2-3 rounds off the first stage of the argument introduced by v. 6 — 'the word of God has not failed.'* It has not failed, it has simply been misunderstood — misunderstood by the people whose scriptures they are! The word of God was always in terms of election, of God's purpose fulfilled through his free choice, never in terms of the natural kinship of blood ties, never in terms of a community characterized and bounded by particular ritual acts (works of the law). The word of God has not failed (as the success of the gospel shows); it is Israel according to the flesh who have failed." [Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, vol 2 pg 549f]

**IS PAUL ADDRESSING NATIONS OR INDIVIDUALS?** — "*If, as we have seen, God's purpose is to perform his act of election freely without being determined by any human distinctives, what act of election is intended in Rom 9:11-13 — an election which determines the eternal destiny of individuals, or an election which merely assigns to individuals and nations the roles they are to play in history? ... It is a remarkable and telling phenomenon that those who find no individual predestination to eternal life in Rom 9:6-13 cannot successfully explain the thread of Paul's argument as it begins in Rom 9:1-5 and continues through the chapter. One looks in vain, for example, among these commentators for a cogent statement of how the corporate election of two peoples (Israel and Edom) in Rom 9:12,13 fits together in Paul's argument with the statement, 'Not all those from Israel are Israel' (9:6b). One also looks in vain for an explanation of how the pressing problem of eternally condemned Israelites in Rom 9:3 is ameliorated by Rom 9:6-13 if these verses refer 'not to salvation but to position and historical task.'*" [Piper, *The Justification of God*, pg 56, 58]

"What Paul means by this depends on the referents of the names 'Jacob' and 'Esau.' For, in addition to denoting individual persons, both names are also used in the OT to designate the peoples, or nations, descended from each of them. As the father of the twelve men who gave their names to the 'tribes' of Israel, Jacob was given by God himself the name 'Israel' (Gen. 32:28). Correspondingly, then, 'Jacob' can refer to the nation of Israel (cf., e.g., Num. 23:7; Ps. 14:7; Isa. 41:8; note esp. Isa. 59:20, quoted in Rom. 11:26). In the same way, Esau gives his name to the people of Edom who are his descendants (Gen. 36:8: 'Esau is Edom,' cf. vv. 1 and 43; note also Deut. 2:4, 5, 8, 12, 22, 29; Jer. 49:8, 10; Obadiah, *passim*).... Advocates of the corporate interpretation of these verses make a strong case.... Nevertheless, for all its strong points, I think that a corporate and salvation-historical interpretation of vv. 10-13 does not ultimately satisfy the data of the text....

- First, Paul suggests that he is thinking of Jacob and Esau as individuals in vv. 10b-11a when he mentions their conception, birth, and 'works' — language that is not easily applied to nations.
- Second, several of Paul's key words and phrases in this passages are words he generally uses elsewhere with reference to the attaining of salvation; and, significantly, they occur with this sense in texts closely related to this one: 'election' (see esp. 11:5, 7); 'call' (see esp. 8:28); and '[not] of works' (see esp. Rom. 4:2-8 and 11:6). These words are therefore difficult to apply to nations or peoples, for Paul clearly does not believe that peoples or nations — not even Israel — are chosen and called by God for salvation apart from their works.
- Third, ... a description here of how God calls nations to participate in the historical manifestation of his salvific acts runs counter to Paul's purpose in this paragraph. In order to justify his assertion in v. 6b that not all those who belong to 'physical' Israel belong also to 'spiritual' Israel, and thus to vindicate God's faithfulness (v. 6a), he must show that the OT justifies a discrimination within physical Israel in terms of the enjoyment of salvation. An assertion in these verses to the effect that God has 'chosen' Israel rather than Edom for a positive role in the unfolding of the plan of salvation would not contribute to this argument at all.

For these reasons I believe that Paul is thinking mainly of Jacob and Esau as individuals rather than as nations and in terms of their own personal relationship to the promise of God rather than of their roles in carrying out God's plan." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 584ff]

**LOVING JACOB AND HATING ESAU** — The concept of God "hating" is difficult to embrace and is interpreted in several different manners (some of which overlap):

- **"Jacob = Israel, Esau = Edom nationally** — "Romans 9:13 is a reference to Malachi 1:2-3 and refers to nations (Israel and Edom) and not individual sinners. God does not hate sinners. John 3:16 makes it clear that He loves sinners. *The statement here has to do with national election, not individual.*" [Wiersbe, *Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol 1 pg 543f] "The Apostle's argument is confirmed from the prophecy of Malachi, which was uttered centuries after the original choice, and after centuries of opposition between Edom and Israel. *The reference is, of course, to Jacob and Esau in their national capacity, and not to any 'hate' of Esau while yet unborn.* It is shown that ages of history had but confirmed the original choice. The phrase, 'Esau I hated,' should be compared with Luke xiv. 26 for its meaning of 'loving less' (cf. Matt. vi. 24). There is no question of personal feeling, but a deliberate decision in favor of one rather than of the other." [Griffith-Thomas, *Romans*, pg 251f]
- **"God loved Esau less than he loved Jacob"** — "This interpretation finds in the contrast of 'love' and 'hate' a Semitism in which the two contrasting elements are not directly opposed but put in a relative relationship with one another. *Examples of love and hate in such a relative contrast are Gen. 29:30-33; Deut. 21:15; Matt. 6:24; John 12:25; see also Luke 14:26.... He bless both, but Jacob was used in a more positive and basic way in the furtherance of God's plans.*" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 587] "This language sounds a bit harsh to us. It is possible that the word [hate] did not always carry the full force of what we mean by 'hate.' See Matthew 6:24 where these very verbs (*miseō* and *agapō*) are contrasted. So also in Luke 14:26 about 'hating' one's father and mother if coming between one and Christ. So in John 12:25 about 'hating' one's life." [Robertson, *Word Pictures*, vol 4 pg 382]
- **"Love = chosen, hate = passed by"** — "[One approach] is to define 'hatred' here by its opposite, 'love.' *If God's love of Jacob consists in his choosing Jacob to be the 'seed' who would inherit the blessings promised to Abraham, then God's hatred of Esau is best understood to refer to God's decision not to bestow this privilege on Esau.* It might best be translated 'reject.' 'Love' and 'hate' are not here, then, emotions that God feels but actions that he carries out. In an apparent paradox that troubles Paul (cf. 9:14 and 19 following) as well as many Christians, God loves 'the whole world' at the same time as he withholds his love in action, or election, from some... '[L]ove' and 'hate' in Mal. 1:2-3 reflect the covenant: God has chosen Jacob and 'not chosen,' or rejected, Esau. Only here in the NT is God said to hate anyone; in the OT, see Ps. 5:6; 11:5; Jer. 12:8." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 587] "The force of [hate] should not be exaggerated; its meaning is determined by the fact that it stands as the antithesis of [love] — a familiar antithesis in Jewish writing (Deut 21:15; 22:13; 24:3; Judg 14:16; and regularly implied in the wisdom literature — e.g., Prov 13:24; 15:32). *What is meant is not so much an emotion as a rejection in will and deed.*" [Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, vol 2 pg 544f]

Of the interpretations presented, I find the "national identity" explanation most difficult to accept. As we have seen throughout these notes Paul is speaking of individuals in his argument, therefore it is inconsistent to escape the difficulties of this verse by running to that which we have been arguing against. Of the other two arguments, I find both equally acceptable and no scriptural reason to reject either of them.

Having said that, allow me to introduce another explanation which has enough merit to be considered. To put a name on it, let us label this interpretation the **"love = electing grace, hate = righteous wrath of a holy God."**

Before introducing some quotes from expositors / theologians, allow me make a few statements and ask a few questions to stimulate and guide our thinking:

- **We must remove from our thinking any sinful connotation of hate prior to beginning** — The Bible describes God as love, yet how unlike our human love is the love of God. The Bible describes God as a jealous God, yet jealousy with God is not a sin as is often the case with our sinful, petty jealousy. The Bible tells us to be angry and sin not, therefore there is a proper place for righteous indignation. Even our Lord Jesus got angry while on earth, yet without sin. If this is all true, can it not be possible that God can even hate in a holy manner, unlike much of our emotion of hatred which is often motivated by sin?
- **Is "love the sinner but hate the sin" too simplistic?** — I understand there must be some manner by which we as believers maintain our sanctification while at the same time reaching out to the lost, most of who revel in sin. Perhaps "loving the sinner but hating the sin" is the closest we as imperfect humans can come to being obedient to all the commands of scripture. But must we confine God to such a simplistic response? Is it not possible God is more complex than a common cliché?
- **Cannot a complex being such as our God love yet at the same time hate?** — Building on the last question: even we as humans are capable of loving and hating at the same time; how much more should that be applicable to the One in Whom we are made in His image?
- **If it is repugnant to think of God hating the non-elect, is there ever a time when God hates?** — If God cannot

hate (in a holy sense; see the first point), then does God love Satan? Does he love the other fallen angels? Will God continue to love his fallen creatures, angelic and human, after they are eternally cast out at the final judgment? Will God never hate? But if God is capable of hate at some future eternal point or if he is capable of hating Satan, then why is it impossible to think of God “hating” rebellious, fallen sinners?

• **Is it truly possible to love without having hate?** — Can we truly love holiness if we do not hate sin? Is it possible to have one without the other?

I do not have all the answers but I tend to think there may be more to God “hating” than what we wish to allow. We know God is love and that should not be renounced; yet have we become imbalanced in our thinking when we refuse to allow a holy God to “hate” (in whatever holy sense God is capable of hating) fallen, rebellious sinful creatures who fully hate him?

Now for comments by others. Whether we agree or disagree with the following, I believe it important for us to think on these matters and at least consider the possibilities. First, **A. H. Strong:**

“‘Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?’ (Gen 18:25 KJV) ‘He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.’ (Deut 32:4 KJV) ‘The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.’ (Ps 5:5 KJV) ‘Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins. My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart. God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.’ (Ps 7:9-13 KJV) ‘With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright; with the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.’ (Ps 18:25,26 KJV) ‘Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.’ (Matt 5:48 KJV) ‘And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil’ (Rom 2:3-9 KJV) ‘Be ye holy; for I am holy.’ (1 Pet 1:16 KJV)

“These passages show that God loves the same persons whom he hates. It is not true that he hates the sin, but loves the sinner; he both hates and loves the sinner himself, hates him as he is a living and wilful antagonist of truth and holiness, loves him as he is a creature capable of good and ruined by his transgression.

“There is no abstract sin that can be hated apart from the persons in whom that sin is represented and embodied. Thomas Fuller found it difficult to starve the profaneness but to feed the person of the impudent beggar who applied to him for food. Mr. Finney declared that he would kill the slave-catcher, but would love him with all his heart. In our civil war Dr. Kirk said: ‘God knows that we love the rebels, but God also knows that we will kill them if they do not lay down their arms.’ ***The complex nature of God not only permits but necessitates this same double treatment of the sinner, and the earthly father experiences the same conflict of emotions when his heart yearns over the corrupt son whom he is compelled to banish from his household.*** Moberly, Atonement and Personality, 7 — ***It is the sinner who is punished, not the sin.*** ...

***“Justice in God, as the revelation of his holiness, is devoid of all passion or caprice [whims, illogical change of feelings]. There is in God no selfish anger. The penalties he inflicts upon transgression are not vindictive but vindicative. They express the revulsion of God’s nature from moral evil, the judicial indignation of purity against impurity, the self-assertion of infinite holiness against its antagonist and would-be destroyer. But because its decisions are calm, they are irreversible. ...***

“Anger, within certain limits, is a duty of man. Ps 97:10 — ‘Ye that love Jehovah, hate evil’; Eph 4:26 — ‘Be ye angry, and sin not.’ The calm indignation of the judge, who pronounces sentence with tears, is the true image of the holy anger of God against sin.... Jesus’ anger was no less noble than his love. The love of the right involved hatred of the wrong. Those may hate who hate evil for its hatefulness and for the sake of God. Hate sin in yourself first, and then you may hate it in itself and in the world. Be angry only in Christ and with the wrath of God.... To be incapable of moral indignation against wrong is to lack real love for the right....

“The moral indignation of a whole universe of holy beings against moral evil, added to the agonizing self-condemnations of awakened conscience in all the unholy, is only a faint and small reflection of the awful revulsion of God’s infinite justice from the impurity and selfishness of his creatures, and of the intense, organic, necessary, and eternal reaction of his moral being in self-vindication and the punishment of sin; see Jer. 44:4 — ‘Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!’ Num. 32:23 — ‘be sure your sin will find you out.’ Heb 10:30,32 — ‘For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.’” [Strong, *Systematic Theology*, pg 290f, 294f]

**Robert Haldane:** “Jacob was loved before he was born, consequently before he was capable of doing good; and Esau was hated before he was born, consequently before he was capable of doing evil. It may be asked why God hated him before he sinned

personally; and human wisdom has proved its folly, by endeavoring to soften the word hated into something less than hatred: but the man who submits like a little child to the word of God, will find no difficulty in seeing in what sense Esau was worthy of the hatred of God before he was born. *He sinned in Adam, and was therefore properly an object of God's hatred as well as fallen Adam. There is no other view that will ever account for this language and this treatment of Esau. By nature, too, he was a wicked creature, conceived in sin, although his faculties were not expanded, or his innate depravity developed, which God, who hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and hardeneth whom He will, and who giveth no account of His matters, did not see good to counteract by His grace, as in the case of Jacob, who originally was equally wicked, and by nature, like Esau, a child of wrath and a fit object of hatred.* ... If God's love to Jacob was real literal love, God's hatred to Esau must be real literal hatred. It might as well be said that the phrase, 'Jacob have I loved,' does not signify that God really loved Jacob, but that to love here signifies only to hate less, and that all that is meant by this expression, is that God hated Jacob less than he hated Esau... *[T]he expression, 'Esau have I hated,' is not stronger than what the Apostle applies to all men when he says that by nature they are the children of wrath, dead in trespasses and sins, and consequently objects of the hatred of the holy and just God. All of them are so in their natural state, as considered in themselves, and all of them continue to be so, unless delivered from that state by the distinguishing grace of God. To be hated on account of Adam's sin and of their own corrupt nature, is common to all men with Esau who are not of the elect of God; and in Esau's case this is exhibited in one instance. Nothing, then, is said of Esau here that might not be said of every man who shall finally perish.*" [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 455ff]

**A. W. Pink:** "But, it may be asked, 'Surely you do not deny that God loves the entire human family?' We reply, it is written, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated' (Rom. 9:13). If then God loved Jacob and hated Esau, and that before they were born or had done either good or evil, then the reason for His love was not in them, but in Himself....

'Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.' The 'therefore' announces the general conclusion which the Apostle draws from all he had said in the three preceding verses in denying that God was unrighteous in loving Jacob and hating Esau, and specifically it applies the principle exemplified in God's dealings with Pharaoh. It traces everything back to the Sovereign will of the Creator. He loves one and hates another. He exercises mercy toward some and hardens others, without reference to anything save His own Sovereign will....

One of the most popular beliefs of the day is that God loves everybody, and the very fact that it is so popular with all classes ought to be enough to arouse the suspicions of those who are subject to the Word of Truth. God's Love toward all His creatures is the fundamental and favorite tenet of Universalists, Unitarians, Theosophists, Christian Scientists, Spiritualists, Russellites, etc. No matter how a man may live — in open defiance of Heaven, with no concern whatever for his soul's eternal interests, still less for God's glory, dying, perhaps with an oath on his lips — notwithstanding, God loves him, we are told. So widely has this dogma been proclaimed, and so comforting is it to the heart which is at enmity with God we have little hope of convincing many of their error. That God loves everybody, is, we may say, quite a modern belief. The writings of the church fathers, the Reformers or the Puritans will (we believe) be searched in vain for any such concept. Perhaps the late D. L. Moody — captivated by Drummond's 'The Greatest Thing in the World' — did more than anyone else in the last century to popularize this concept.

It has been customary to say God loves the sinner though He hates his sin. But that is a meaningless distinction. What is there in a sinner but sin? Is it not true that his 'whole head is sick' and his 'whole heart faint,' and that 'from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness' in him? (Isa. 1:5, 6). Is it true that God loves the one who is despising and rejecting His blessed Son? God is Light as well as Love, and therefore His love must be a holy love. To tell the Christ-rejecter that God loves him is to cauterize his conscience as well as to afford him a sense of security in his sins. The fact is, the love of God is a truth for the saints only, and to present it to the enemies of God is to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. With the exception of John 3:16, not once in the four Gospels do we read of the Lord Jesus, the perfect Teacher, telling sinners that God loved them! In the book of Acts, which records the evangelistic labors and messages of the Apostles, God's love is never referred to at all! But when we come to the Epistles, which are addressed to the saints, we have a full presentation of this precious truth — God's love for His own. Let us seek to rightly divide the Word of God and then we shall not be found taking truths which are addressed to believers and mis-applying them to unbelievers. That which sinners need to have brought before them is the ineffable holiness, the exacting righteousness, the inflexible justice and the terrible wrath of God. Risking the danger of being misunderstood let us say — and we wish we could say it to every evangelist and preacher in the country — there is far too much presenting of Christ to sinners today (by those sound in the faith), and far too little showing sinners their need of Christ, i.e., their absolutely ruined and lost condition, their imminent and awful danger of suffering the wrath to come, the fearful guilt resting upon them in the sight of God: to present Christ to those who have never been shown their need of Him, seems to us to be guilty of casting pearls before swine.

If it be true that God loves every member of the human family then why did our Lord tell His disciples '*He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father ... If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him*' (John 14:21, 23)? Why say '*he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father*' if the Father loves everybody? The same limitation is found in Proverbs 8:17: '*I love them that love Me.*' Again; we read, '*Thou hatest all workers of iniquity*' — not merely the works of iniquity. Here then is a flat repudiation of present teaching that, God hates sin but loves the sinner; Scripture says, '*Thou hatest all workers of iniquity*' (Psa. 5:5)! '*God is angry with the wicked every day*' (Psa. 7:11). '*He that believeth not on the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*' — not '*shall abide,*' but even now — '*abideth on him*' (John 3:36). Can God '*love*' the one on whom His '*wrath*' abides? Again; is it not evident that the words '*The love of God which is in Christ Jesus*' (Rom. 8:39) marks a limitation, both in the sphere and objects of His love?

Again; is it not plain from the words ‘*Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*’ (Rom. 9:13) that God does not love everybody? Again; it is written, ‘*For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth*’ (Heb. 12:6). Does not this verse teach that God’s love is restricted to the members of His own family? If He loves all men without exception then the distinction and limitation here mentioned is quite meaningless. Finally, we would ask, Is it conceivable that God will love the damned in the Lake of Fire? Yet, if He loves them now He will do so then, seeing that His love knows no change — He is ‘*without variableness or shadow of turning!*’” [A. W. Pink, *Sovereignty of God*]

**SUMMATION** — “*In answer to the question how it can be that many individuals within Israel are accursed, cut off from Christ (Rom 9:1-5), Paul says it is not because the word of God has fallen (9:6a); on the contrary, God’s expressed purpose remains firm (9:11c). The reason this situation does not mean the failure of God’s word is that his purpose expressed in that word never has been to guarantee the salvation of every Israelite. It is an ‘electing purpose’ by which God aims to preserve his complete freedom in determining who will be the beneficiaries of his saving promises, who will be the ‘Israel’ within Israel (9:6b). It is therefore a purpose maintained by means of the predestination of individuals to their respective eternal destinies.*

*The interpretation which tries to restrict this predestination or unconditional election to nations rather than individuals or to historical tasks rather than eternal destinies must either ignore or distort the problem posed in Rom 9:1-5, the individualism of 9:6b, the vocabulary and logical structure of 9:6b-8, the closely analogous texts elsewhere in Paul, and the implications of 9:14-23. The position is exegetically untenable.*

*Paul’s solution to the problem of 9:1-5 is that ‘all those from Israel are not Israel’ (9:6b). Within the context of Rom 9 this means that God maintains his sovereign purpose of election by determining before they are born who will belong to the ‘saved’ among Israel. And this determination is not based on what any man is or wills or does (9:11,12,16), but solely on God whose word or call effects what he purposes (9:12b). For this reason Paul is confident that God’s word has not fallen but is in fact working out God’s sovereign purpose even in the unbelief of Paul’s kinsmen.” [Piper, *The Justification of God*, pg 73]*

**CLOSING THOUGHTS** — *Prior to leaving this section, Douglas Moo wrote the following concerning the paradox of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility. I thought it worthwhile to reproduce his statements:*

“As the attentive reader will realize, I have argued that this passage gives strong exegetical support to a traditional Calvinistic interpretation of God’s election: ***God chooses those who will be saved on the basis of his own will and not on the basis of anything — works or faith, whether foreseen or not — in those human beings so chosen.*** Attempts to avoid this theological conclusion, whether by leaving room for human faith in v. 12 or by restricting the issue to the roles of nations in salvation history, are, I think, unsuccessful. But if we exclude faith as a basis for God’s choice here, what becomes of Paul’s strenuous defense of faith as the means of justification in Rom. 3:21-4:25 and again in the following section of the letter, 9:30-10:21? It is precisely in an attempt to do justice to these texts that many interpreters insist on finding room for faith in this text also: God’s choice, they argue, is a choice to bestow his salvation on those who believe. Faith, then, in this traditional Arminian perspective, becomes the basis for God’s choice.

*I can only reiterate that the introduction into this text of any basis for God’s election outside God himself defies both the language and the logic of what Paul has written. The only logical possibility, then, would seem to be to reverse the relationship between God’s choosing and faith; as Augustine stated it: ‘God does not choose us because we believe, but that we may believe.’ This way of putting the matter seems generally to be justified by this passage and by the teaching of Scripture elsewhere. But it comes perilously close to trivializing human faith: something that many texts in Romans and in the rest of the NT simply will not allow us to do. We need, perhaps, to be more cautious in our formulations and to insist on the absolute cruciality and meaningfulness of the human decision to believe at the same time as we rightly make God’s choosing of us ultimately basic. Such a double emphasis may strain the boundaries of logic (it does not, I trust, break them!) or remain unsatisfyingly complex, but it may have the virtue of reflecting Scripture’s own balanced perspective.*

At stake in all this, as Paul makes clear in 11:5-7, a text that takes up the argument of these verses, is the grace of God. As we have seen, Paul rules out any human claim on God as a violation of his grace. Perhaps, as my Arminian friends and colleagues insist, foreseen faith, as the product of ‘prevenient’ grace, need be no threat to God’s freedom and grace. But by making the human decision to believe the crucial point of distinction between those who are saved and those who are not, and thus making God’s election a response to human choice, this perspective seems to me to minimize Paul’s insistence that election to salvation is itself an act of God’s grace (cf. 11:5): a decision he makes freely and without the compulsion of any influence outside himself.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 587f]

Charles Hodge: “*The doctrine of the sovereignty of God in the choice of the objects of his mercy should produce, (1) The most profound humility in those who are called according to his purpose. They are constrained to say, ‘Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory.’ (2) The liveliest gratitude, that we, though so unworthy, should from eternity have been selected as the objects in which God displays ‘the riches of his glory.’ (3) Confidence and peace, under all circumstances, because the purpose of God does not change; whom he has predestinated, them he also calls, justifies, and glorifies. (4) Diligence in the discharge of all duty, to make our calling and election sure. That is, to make it evident to ourselves and others, that we are the called and chosen of God. We should ever remember that election is to holiness, and consequently to live in sin, is to invalidate every claim to be considered as one of ‘God’s elect.’” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 325]*