

A Discussion on Romans 9:11-18

I was asked by a Christian if I would work up a lesson on these verses. This is one of the most difficult subjects that I have ever studied. It seems to me that the reason the Apostle Paul taught this lesson was to show all nations were lost without Jesus, and that included the Jews. The majority of the Jews rejected this teaching. Here are the grounds of their rejection: We are the seed of Abraham to whom all of the promises and blessing were given, so how can we now be rejected by God?

So Paul starts in chapter nine in the book of Romans using Old Testament scriptures to point out to them that just being kinfolks to Abraham was not enough to secure the forgiveness of their sins. The Jews then said to Paul, “What about all of our law-keeping? Doesn’t that count for something?” So Paul then set out to show them that God’s plan in offering salvation to the world was purposed only through the grace of God. Man could not do anything to earn this favor from God. Also God has the sole right to choose anyone that He wants to help carry out His purpose, and no one has the right to say that God was unfair in the way that He chose to do things.

Now let’s read these eight verses that we are going to discuss. ¹¹*For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth*; ¹²*It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.* ¹³*As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.* ¹⁴*What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.* ¹⁵*For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.* ¹⁶*So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.* ¹⁷*For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.* ¹⁸*Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.*

To help us have a better understanding of these verses, we need to begin our study at the beginning of chapter nine of Romans. It seems to me the specific problem that is dealt with in chapters nine through eleven of the book of Romans is that God had made promised blessings to the Jewish nation; and, according to Paul’s teachings, the majority of the Jewish nation

had not received these promised blessings. So the question is, how do we harmonize God's faithfulness in what He promised to the Jewish nation with the scriptures which say that the majority of the Jews were cut off from the promises which were made to them?

The Old Testament was written and preserved for our learning, and we have learned from studying it that God had a plan for redeeming fallen man. It was to be brought about by the nation of the Jews. God chose not to use any existing nation to carry out his plan. He elected Abraham to be the father of this new nation called the Hebrew nation. They became known as God's chosen people because they were chosen of God that through Abraham's seed, all nations of the earth would be blessed.

In John 4:22, Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well *22b...for salvation is of the Jews.* We must notice that this is God's choosing. In Romans 3:2 we read where the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. The oracles of God were filled with prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah. Here in chapter nine, Paul says the Israelites are God's adopted ones. We can find this in Exodus 4:22-23, where God told Moses, *22And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: 23And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.* In Exodus 19:4-6, we read where God said to the Jews, *4Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. 5Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: 6And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

Now let's notice something in the very beginning of our lesson which is very important concerning the majority of the Jews being cut off from the promises of God, and that is that they must be obedient to God's will. These protesting Jews had failed to listen to this part of God's command. They believed that they had done enough good works and that God owed them salvation without the blood of Jesus. The book of Deuteronomy gives a lot of the do's and don'ts of the covenant that God made with the Israelites. In Deuteronomy 14:2, God says to the Jews *14For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.* The Jews took this to

mean that they were the exalted ones. The Israelites had the protection of God as they traveled to the Promised Land. They had a cloud over them during the day and a fire over them during the night.

They had seen the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. There had never been an incident like that in the history of the world. What a demonstration of God's power. What joy, and what a privilege this was to the Jews, and what a glorious occasion this must have been to these Israelites. No other nation of people had ever seen such a display of God's power and presence. God's care and provision for the Jewish nation was awesome. Other examples of His provision include manna from heaven, water from a rock, thousands of quails blown into their camps by an east wind, a tabernacle, a temple, and at times the Israelites had seen their enemies fall before them without ever having to lift a hand. We could go on and on about the blessings that God bestowed upon them. The greatest blessing is the fulfillment of God's promise that He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that through the Jews, Jesus would be born and would bless them with salvation.

Yes, Jesus was a Jew and He has been given authority over all nations. I hope there is no one that has a problem with Jesus being a Jew, but it did give the Jews a problem. They thought, how can our own flesh and blood reject us when we are God's chosen people and we have been given all these blessings from Him? They thought, "We are all family, we do not need Jesus to save us, we are the seed of Abraham." We read in Romans 3:5 what the problem was with these Jews concerning the teachings of Paul. They are saying to Paul, "You have said to us that it was all in the plan of God that the Jews would have Jesus killed, and through his death salvation would be made available to all men." Here we can see what the Jews want Paul to explain to them. So they say to Paul, "If our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Wouldn't that make God unrighteous if He takes vengeance on us?"

Question: What are these Jews really saying here in this verse?
Answer: They are saying, "We were only doing what God had willed us to do. Why should He then be so angry with us? Because, if the cross was the means through which God was going to bless the Jews, then we should be receiving a blessing instead of a curse." Isn't this a fair question for the Jews to ask Paul? Yes, it sounds all right to me.

Question: Why did the Jews have this kind of attitude? Answer: It

seems that they failed to realize that just because God had chosen them and had protected them and preserved them so He could fulfill His plan in redeeming fallen man, that then set them apart from all other nations and made them just a whole lot better than anyone else. In fact, they felt so superior to other people that they looked upon others as dogs. They truly felt that they deserved salvation. They had failed to understand that God's plan of salvation was to all men and not just for the Jews. Now let's notice this, God had the right to choose whatever nation of people He wanted to in order to carry out His plan. Someone might be saying, what does all of this have to do with Romans 9:11-18? Everything that the Holy Spirit does, He does for a specific reason. I believe the reason that the Holy Spirit has chosen to put these thoughts before he has Paul write verses 11-18 is this: He wants them to fully understand that God has the right to do anything that He chooses to do and that they do not have the right to question Him in any of His actions.

The apostle Paul wanted the Jews to know for sure that the choosing of a certain nation did not lessen their responsibilities to obey God's will. These Jews that Paul is dealing with in Rome failed to understand that you could be a seed of Abraham and still be cut off from the promises and blessings of God through unbelief. We can read in the Gospels where the Jews would say to Jesus, "We are the children of Abraham and we do not have to listen to you." There is a very important lesson in this study that we all must learn, and that is no one has the right to question or to argue with God's choices (or we could say His elections) because He is the creator and the sole ruler of this universe. He never lies and He never makes a mistake. We should never be guilty of saying to God, "Why did you do this or why did you do that," or "My way seems to be a much better way than yours." This kind of thinking will always bring the wrath of God upon us. We read in Romans 3:4, *Let God be true, but every man a liar.* God has left nothing undone that should have been done. Question: Where does that leave man with all of his schooling and all of his intellect and in all of his wisdom and in all of man's "think so's?" It leaves him lost. He cannot save himself. The truth of God's word is the only thing that can set him free (John 8:32). So why can't we all be content to let God's elections stand exactly like He has chosen?

Through most of Paul's writings we learn that the majority of the Jews literally hated Paul preaching and teaching concerning their unbelief and their condemnation. Paul is a Jew and he wants all Jews to know that he loves them with all of his heart and that he is in constant pain and suffering watching his Jewish brethren wandering in darkness without Jesus when they could so

easily be enjoying what God has promised them. Paul says here that because of the depth of his love and concern for his Jewish brethren, he could even wish himself cut off from Christ if that would secure their salvation.

Can we think of someone else besides Jesus that thought this much of their Jewish brethren? Yes, it was Moses. In Exodus 32:32 we read where Moses was pleading with God to forgive the Jews for making the gold calf and then worshipping it. He said to God, “If you will not forgive them, then just blot my name out of the Book of Life.” So Paul not only tells the Jews, but he is also telling everyone who is living and everyone who will live in the future, that God has the right to choose or select or to elect whomever or whatever He wants to in order to carry out His purpose. If we will keep this thought in our minds while we are studying these verses, it will really help us in understanding the verses that we are studying.

Paul says they are not all Israel that are of Israel. Question: What does Paul mean when he says this? Paul now begins a much-needed lesson on selection, or we could say election. He wants the Israelites to know that within the nation of Israel there are some Israelites who have believed and obeyed the teaching of the Messiah. He is also saying not all of the descendents of Israel have believed and obeyed and they cannot be referred to as the true Israel of God. Question: What would cause anyone to think that the word of God had failed or come to naught? Answer: Because the majority of the Jews were outside of Christ and lost. If these promises and blessings were made to the Jews by a faithful God, then why were they not enjoying salvation? Paul answers this question by saying that it is not as though the word of God has come to naught, because some of the Israelites were really Israel. They are the faithful Jews that God blesses with salvation. The unfaithful Jews are not true Israel. They have the bloodline, but they do not have the faith. Hebrews 11:6 says *“But without faith it is impossible to please him.”* The Jews whom God elected to inherit the promises were the believing Jews, not the unbelieving Jews.

Now the parallel in all of this is when Christ came and died on the cross, salvation was offered to everyone in the entire world based upon their faith and obedience. So Paul’s way of proving to the Jews that God’s promises and blessings to the Jews had not failed was to point out to them that God made a distinction between the believing Jews and the unbelieving Jews and that God was not unfaithful to His word. In verse seven, Paul continues to prove his point by telling the Jews that they were not the only seed of

Abraham, and if the blessings and promises rested solely on the physical kinship with Abraham as the Jews were saying, then what about Ishmael and all of his descendents. They too would receive salvation based on their kinship with Abraham. The Jews did not like this. The truth is that the Ishmaelites had the same privilege of salvation as the Jews had and that was through their faith in Jesus as the coming Messiah.

Question: Now what was God's Plan? Answer: That the promised Son would come through Abraham and Sarah and not through Abraham and Hagar. Question: Was Ishmael ever viewed as Abraham's heir? Answer: No, he was not. Question: When God referred to Isaac as being the child of Abraham and Sarah, how did He refer to him? The answer is found in Genesis 22:2 where God says to Abraham *Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac*. Question: Why does God in this verse refer to Isaac as Abraham's only son? Answer: God was referring to the Son of Promise, and that was Isaac. So Paul makes it very clear that the protesting Jews had lost their argument. The Jews' argument was that physical kinship alone was enough to receive the blessing of salvation.

Now we see that the scriptures have become the Jews' worst enemy because the scriptures agree completely with what Paul had said and that was that the children of the flesh are not the children of God. What does Paul mean by this statement? Answer: That Isaac was more than Abraham's physical child. He was a child of promise. I would like to add a comment here, and that is scriptures will always be the number one enemy against the doctrines of men. Now another question: Did Abraham do anything to earn this promised child? Answer: No, he did not. Wouldn't this make Isaac a seed of Grace? So we can see a great honor was extended to Abraham's seed and not because of anything that Abraham had done. Can we not see what great effort the Holy Spirit is going to so we can more easily understand the verses that are to follow which deal with God's right to make any decisions that He chooses to make? For example, did God have the right to elect the Jewish nation over all the other nations that were in the world to fulfill His plan to bring a savior into the world? Answer: Yes, He did.

Question: Did God have the right to elect Isaac over Ishmael that through Isaac's seed line Jesus would be born? Answer: Yes, He did. Question: How did God show the world that Isaac was the son of His will? Answer: He chose a woman who had been barren all of her life, then He waited until she was about ninety years of age and her husband Abraham was

about one hundred years of age, and then a miracle (in anyone's mind) happened. Sarah conceived and bore a son and they named him Isaac. This is called God's plan, God's purpose, God's choice, God's election, or God's salvation.

Something that I believe is noteworthy here is that this promise of a son was not given to Abraham if he would keep certain laws. This promise was given to Abraham with no do's or don'ts attached. This way it was a sure thing that was going to happen. Let's read Romans 4:13-16 *13For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: 15Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. 16Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.*

Question: What is Paul really saying to these Jews? He is first saying that if God had promised this son to Abraham only if he would keep all of God's laws, then the faith of Abraham would play no part in this son being born. Secondly, Paul is saying if the coming of this son is based upon perfect law-keeping by Abraham and he breaks just one law, it will bring about the wrath of God. But this same Paul says in Romans 3:23 *23For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* This would include Abraham and that would have made void the promised son if His coming was based on law-keeping. But thank God it was not. So it was by faith on Abraham's part that it might be by grace on God's part that the promised son would be a sure thing. This really sheds a lot of light on understanding this 15th verse where Paul says that where there is no law, there is no wrath. This means that God did not give any laws for Abraham to keep for this promise to come about. Abraham could not break a law when there was no law for him to transgress concerning the fulfillment of this promise. Thank God for His wisdom in this matter of the promised son being fulfilled. Isn't it amazing to read how God works all things out so there will be no possibility of Him ever making a mistake on anything? Why would any of us want to question any of God's doing? When we do, we are just manifesting to the world our ignorance concerning our knowledge about the wisdom of God. This should remind us of what Joshua said in Joshua 24:15 *15Choose you this day whom ye will serve;...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* This means that Joshua had no problem with anything that God said or did. If we want to please God, we too will have the same attitude Joshua had. Amen? Yes,

Amen! Surely God, with all of His power and with all of His wisdom, is qualified to do whatever He sees best to do.

Paul is not through with this subject yet. The Holy Spirit knows there will be some of the Jews who will try to get around what Paul has said by saying, “Yes, but Ishmael was an illegitimate son.” That will not get them off the hook because Ishmael was a true son of Abraham. He had the same father as Isaac, so we can easily see that the same two issues are raised again. The issues are: 1) Fleshly connection isn’t the whole issue here; 2) There is a selection made here--God chose one over another, and that should settle the matter.

But Paul still has more to say. Paul now uses twins Esau and Jacob who were both legitimate sons of Isaac. Esau was the firstborn, but God chose Jacob and did not choose Esau. Here we find God choosing between two people from the same family. He rejected one and chose the other. There is something we must remember here and that is the rejection of Esau had nothing to do with Esau’s eternal destination. We must remember that God chose Jacob instead of Esau while they were both still in their mother’s womb. In doing this, no one could say the reason for God rejecting Esau was because he had sold his birthright to his brother Jacob. Question: Why do we suppose that God chose between these two sons before they were ever born? Answer: God did it deliberately to show that the choice was solely His and was made with grace. In other words, no requirements were made by God to receive this great honor. It is pointed out by Paul that the choice was made before they had done either good or bad so that the purpose of God might stand by God’s grace which means Jacob did not do anything to earn this favor from God. I hope we are all getting the message that God wants us to get from all these verses and that is a better understanding of His grace. God wants every one of us to know beyond any shadow of a doubt that no person’s good works ever cause God to feel that He owes them anything.

Please notice that the very things Paul is discussing here are the very things that the Jews kept claiming as the grounds of their special relationship with God, and that was fleshly relationship and law-keeping. They should have now learned that the fleshly relationship that they had with Abraham was not a good argument. They also should have learned that their law-keeping had nothing to do with their being fleshly kinfolk to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Paul just keeps on teaching on this subject. He wants his Jewish brethren to know positively that Abraham was not chosen to be the first

patriarch because of any fleshly connection with someone or because of his law-keeping, but it was all God's doing. Paul is going all out to get his Jewish brethren to know and to understand that God has the right to choose Abraham above anyone else to become the one to whom God would say in Genesis 12:2-3 *2aI will make of thee a great nation, 3band in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.* Sure, God has the right to choose Abraham above anyone else. Sure, God the right to choose Isaac above Ishmael. Sure, God has the right to choose Jacob above Esau.

Question: Why does God have the right to do all of this choosing?
Answer: Without God, this world as we know it would not be here. Without God's grace there would be no plan for redeeming fallen man, which means that we would all be hopelessly lost. So it should be a great joy to each of us that God has done all of this choosing and electing for our salvation. This should be of the utmost importance to each one of us. Because if anyone of us is lost, we cannot blame anyone but ourselves. God has left nothing undone that can keep us from going to Heaven when this life is over. So let us never be guilty of finding ourselves quarreling or being displeased with God over His ways that He has chosen to do things.

Now let's notice something else that God chose to do. He did not choose to use any existing nation to bring the promised seed line through. Instead, he chose to begin a new nation of people by selecting Abraham and Sarah who were married for many years. However, Sarah was barren and could not have children, so God began this new nation by a great miracle. When Abraham was one hundred years of age and Sarah was 90 years of age, Sarah gave birth to their firstborn son whom they named Isaac. This was the beginning of the nation of people through which the promised seed line would come that was to bless all nations with salvation. This nation of people was called Hebrews and sometime later God changed their name to the Israelites. Out of that nation of people, God chose only those who were faithful to Him and His teachings to be His children. The faithful people were called the election of God. The faithful people were also called the remnant and they were also called the people of God. In the Old Testament the prophets many times wrote about a remnant of the Israelites being saved from their enemies, and this remnant is the faithful Israelites. Please notice they are not the unfaithful Israelites. Many years later these Israelites began to be called Jews. There is a great truth that these Jews had a very difficult time understanding, and that is that Salvation did not come to all of Israel as a nation. It came only to the faithful ones.

In all of Jewish history it shows that a close relationship with God is an individual relationship based on their faith. In other words, each person must surrender his or her own life to God. These Jews expected this relationship to come to the whole nation of Israel. Paul says not so. A man is not saved because he is a member of a certain nation, nor is he saved because he is a member of a certain family, nor is he saved because he has inherited righteousness and salvation from his ancestors. Paul is saying that a person is saved because he has made a personal decision to believe and obey God and to serve Him, not because he has been lumped into one big nation for salvation. The elect of God are those who “whosoever will” and the non-elect are those who “whosoever won’t.”

So Paul’s argument that he is making is very valid, and that is that God has not rejected His people. His people that he is referring to are the faithful Jews, not the unfaithful Jews. God never has rejected the faithful Jews, because they are the Israel of God. The unfaithful Jews are not the Israel of God. The hearts of these unfaithful Jews have been hardened by the do’s and the don’ts of the word of God. Question: Is this still true today concerning all nations that just a remnant is going to be saved? The answer is yes. How do we know the answer is yes? Because of what Jesus says in Matthew 7:14 *14Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.* The word few shows us there will be only a remnant saved in the end of the world.

Salvation has never come to anyone because of the great number of people that they were a part of. Question: How about the church? Will everyone who assembles together and calls themselves Christians be saved? The answer is no. Because Jesus says at the end of the world the Son of Man shall send His angels and they shall gather out of His kingdom (which is the church) all of those who offend and those which do iniquity and shall cast them into a lake of fire. Question: Who then will be saved? The answer is found in Matthew 7:21 where Jesus says *21Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* So again we can see at the end of the world only a remnant of the people will be saved. Question: How do we harmonize that with Luke 9:56 and John 3:17 where Jesus said that He did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them. If we can harmonize these scriptures, we will have the answer that Paul is trying to show these unfaithful Jews.

We have the exact same situation today. Salvation is promised to the whole world but only a remnant will receive it. Question: Is God fair in saving only a remnant and not the whole world? Answer: It is just like it was with the Jews where only the election were saved. At the end of the world, only the election will be saved. Remember who the elected are--they are the ones who obey God's will, or we could say the faithful ones. We have been discussing where these Jews have been arguing with Paul. That same thing will be going on in the day of judgment. Let's read it in Matthew 7:22-24 where Jesus says on judgment day there will be many who will be arguing with God about not saving them. They were saying, "Look at all the good works that we have done. Doesn't that count for something?" That is exactly what the unfaithful Jews were saying to Paul, "Just look at all of our law-keeping. Doesn't that count for something?" And then Paul says to the unfaithful Jews the same thing that God will say to the lost of all nations on the day of judgment, "You should have trusted in my grace and not in your good works." This really helps me to see more clearly the problems that Paul had to deal with in his teachings to the unbelieving Jews.

In Romans 9:12-13 we read where God told Rebekah that the older shall serve the younger. We read this for the first time in Genesis 25:23. In verse 13 of Romans 9, we read ¹³*As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*. Then the writer says in the next verse, ¹⁴*What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid*. Verse 13 is a quote from Malachi 1:2-3. I don't mind sharing with you that these verses have been very difficult for me to comment on. The things that I will say about these verses seem to me to harmonize better with other scriptures on this subject than some of the other views that are going around. Let's start this discussion by reading Genesis 25:21-23. ²¹*And Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.* ²²*And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the Lord.* ²³*And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.*

So God had enabled Rebekah to conceive and she was carrying twins in her womb. The two were struggling within her and she seemed to think that she might lose her baby. She did not know at this time that there were twins inside of her. She knew that her conception was a miracle from the Lord, so she asked God what the movement inside of her meant and what was going on

with her baby. Notice that God tells her there was more than one baby inside her, and He also assured her that they both would be born. I believe that it is very noteworthy what God then says to Rebekah. He does not refer to the two babies as two individuals, but as two nations.

23...*Two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.* Here is another example where God had to make a choice between these two boys. Both of them cannot be in the seed line through which the Messiah is to come, so the right thing to do was to choose before either one was born. Question: Why was this the fairest way to make the choice? The answer is found in Romans 9:11 where it says neither one had done any good or any evil. This way it could not be said by anyone that Jacob had done so much good that he had earned this great favor from God over his brother Esau.

God has always been very careful about His choosing, or we could say His election, so it could always be seen as His grace. Grace means without any merits or works on man's part, and that is exactly what God chose to do. Here in verse 13 where God says, *13As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*, I do not believe God is saying He literally loves Jacob or that he literally hates Esau. Question: How could he literally love Jacob and literally hate Esau when neither one had done anything good or anything bad? If this hate was literal, it would be in direct opposition to what His son Jesus said in John 15:25 when he said, *25b...they hated me without a cause*. This statement made by Jesus shows beyond any doubts that it is not right to hate without a cause.

Question: So what did God mean when He said, "*Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated?*" We must do some Greek word study to find out the true meaning of these two words. In the Greek on this word "loved," it only has one meaning and that is to love "much" and it is used in a social or a moral sense. It also comes from a Greek word which means a highly esteemed position. Now we can know exactly what God means when he said, Jacob have I loved. It means that he has chosen to place Jacob in a higher position in life than the position in which he placed Esau. The higher position in life for Jacob was that he would become the father of the twelve tribes of Israel through which the promised Messiah was to come.

Some may be wondering how the name "Israelite" could be connected

with the descendants of Jacob. We read how this took place in Genesis 32:24-28. Here we can read about one night when Jacob was fleeing from his father-in-law Laban, that he wrestled with an angel from God all night. At daybreak the angel said, ²⁸*Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.* Now we know why the twelve sons of Jacob are called the twelve tribes of Israel.

Now back to our lesson. Let's continue our Greek word study and look up the word hate. This word means to "love less." So the meaning of, "And Esau have I hated," would be talking about the position in life in which God places Esau compared to the position in life in which He places Jacob. Esau's position in life would be a much lesser position. Question: Did God's choosing of Jacob to be in the greater position in life assure him of future salvation? The answer would be no. Another question: Did the lesser position have anything to do with the eternal salvation of Esau? The answer would still be no. Esau could be saved by the same requirements that Jacob would be saved by and that would be on an obedient faith. I hope we can all understand that God was not unfair in His choosing of Jacob instead of Esau to help carry out His plan of salvation which He had planned before He ever created the first day. God is the only one who has the right to do all of the choosing and all of the electing of those who will carry out His purposes.

There are some other verses that are very helpful in understanding these verses that we are discussing on love and hate. These two words with these meanings are very common in the language of the earlier generations. For example, in Genesis 29:30 we read that Jacob loved Rachel more than he loved Leah. The next verse says, ³¹*And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.* Please notice, one verse says he loved Leah less, and the next verse says that he hated Leah. So we can easily see the word hate did not carry with it the same meaning that the English word hate carries with it today.

Now let's read Proverbs 13:24 *He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.* Then we can read in Luke 14:26 where Jesus says ²⁶*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.* Question: Can we still have a great love for those who Jesus says for us to hate? Answer: We sure can. In Ephesians 5:25 we read, ²⁵*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the*

church, and gave himself for it. We just read where Jesus said that husbands must hate your wives or you cannot be my disciple. Doesn't this sound like a direct contradiction? It sure does to me. If we will remember what we learned in our Greek word study, it will sure help us to understand what these verses mean. So when Jesus says that husbands are to hate their wives before they can be a disciple of His, it means that he must love his wife less than he loves Jesus. These verses sure do help me to better understand the verses that we have been discussing.

The verses that we have already studied show that in all of Israel's history, the process of choosing or selecting or electing, whichever one we want to call it, has gone on. Paul has further stressed the fact that this election was not based on any merits or works of the person elected. It was dependent on nothing else but the will of God himself. Paul's answer to these Jews was that God can do whatever He chooses to do, and that is not unfair. Paul decides they have a great need for a lesson on the nature of God's mercy and His justice and he teaches them right from their own Old Testament scriptures. So in verse 15 of chapter 9, Paul reads to them Exodus 33:19 where God says to Moses, ¹⁵*For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*

Now let's remember that Moses was a sinful man and he was leading a sinful people. Moses and the people of Israel had earned nothing from God but His judgment, so it was solely by God's grace that they were a separated and a blessed people. God was not compelled by anyone to extend His mercy to the Israelites. It was grace or favor from God without a cause. Can we just imagine how this must have sounded to these arguing Jews who believed that God was obligated to them because they thought their moral performance should merit them salvation. This is nothing new for us today. There are those in the world today who believe that they can do enough good works to meet God's approval. This whole exhibition of God's grace from early times until now is the result of God's free and sovereign will.

Paul says in verse 16, ¹⁶*So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.* This verse could present a problem because it seems to be saying that the willing and the running have nothing to do with salvation. We read in I Corinthians 9:24 where it says ²⁴*Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.* This verse is saying that we must run to be saved.

In Hebrews 12:1 we read, *1Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.* This verse also is saying that we must run in this race of life if we are going to be saved. Here in these three scriptures that we have just read, Paul is the writer in at least two of these three verses and he may be the writer in all three. In one verse he says running has nothing to do with God showing mercy, and in the other two verses he says that we must run to gain salvation.

Question: How are we going to harmonize these three verses so we may know what is truth on this subject? There is one thing that we can be sure of, and that is the running in these three verses is not talking about the same subject. To harmonize these three scriptures, we must take them in the context in which they are written. The first verse that we read would have to be talking about God's first bestowal of mercy, and that will harmonize perfectly with that which Paul had been teaching which was that blood kin or law-keeping had nothing to do with God's grace and mercy that He offers to mankind in their initial salvation. Now let's notice the context in which the other two verses are written. Paul is pointing out to us that after our initial salvation, we must run the spiritual race that is set before us. Doesn't it make a lot of difference in understanding difficult verses when we read them in the context in which they are written? It sure does help me.

Now let's read verse 17 of Romans 9 so we can continue our discussion. *17For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.* This verse is saying that God brought Pharaoh into history to serve unto all men as an example of what happens to those who oppose God. Question: Have we thought about what all it could mean when God said, "I raised up Pharaoh?" The word raised in the Greek means to resuscitate from death. In other words, God had a part in keeping Pharaoh alive. He protected him from his enemies and from any fatal disease. God sustained Pharaoh so He could show through him His power to all the world. Question: Was Pharaoh a hardened and cruel king before God chose to use him to show His great power? Let's read Exodus 1:11 that says that Pharaoh afflicted the Israelites with heavy burdens. In verse 14 of the first chapter of Exodus it says that Pharaoh made their lives bitter with hard bondage and made them serve with rigor. In verse 16 Pharaoh told the midwives when a Hebrew woman gives birth to a male child to kill him. Verse 22 says throw them into the river. In Exodus 3:7 the cruel treatment to

the Israelites had become so bad that their cries from the whips of the taskmasters had reached the ears of the Lord. Question: Did God have anything to do with developing this kind of character in Pharaoh before He sent Moses to him? Answer: No. In all of Pharaoh's cruelty to the Israelites, he was acting exactly like his heart wanted to act. He pursued his own purpose.

Neither Pharaoh nor any one else can justly blame God for placing them in circumstances to purposely change their good character into someone who is opposed to God's doings. Pharaoh's hard heart was not the fault of God. It was his own fault. Pharaoh had a hard, cruel heart before God ever started telling him what to do. Notice what Pharaoh asked Moses in Exodus 5:2 *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.* So Moses immediately started him on a ten lesson course on the power of God. It was the ten plagues. Pharaoh had already beaten and killed many Israelites who were God's chosen people. God would have been just if He had taken Pharaoh's life before the ten plagues ever started. But God had raised Pharaoh up for a purpose and that was to show His power to the world through him. God used a wicked man to show His righteous power. There is no word in this chapter, nor any other place in the Bible, where God takes a faithful man and overrides the longings of his heart. All of those who are blessed with salvation have embraced God with their hearts. All those who stand opposed to God's word with hardened hearts can be used by God at any time to carry out His purposes as He chooses.

In verse Romans 9:18 we read, *18Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.* Question: Whom does God choose to harden? If we will accept the testimony of the Bible, we will find that God hardens only the unbelievers and the disobedient. God never hardens the obedient believer's heart. Isn't that comforting to know? James 1:13 says *13Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.* This means that God never takes a righteous person and solicits him to do evil. If He did, that would be defeating His very purpose. If we will remember this and use it as a guide when we are studying these kinds of verses, it will certainly help us in understanding them. God only hardens the hearts of those who have personally chosen to reject Him in his or her life.

Harden is a medical word and it can mean a callous. When the Bible

says that a person had hardened his heart, it means that a callous has formed upon his heart through his own choosing and his own actions. When a callous forms on any part of the body, that part of the body loses its feelings. In other words, it becomes insensitive. The majority of the Israelites had let their hearts become calloused through their lack of faith. When we do this we can no longer hear or feel the appeal of God's love through the words that He speaks to us. Now let's read in John 8:43 where Jesus says ^{43a}*Why do ye not understand my speech?* Now we must listen very intently to the rest of the words of Jesus in this verse. He continues by saying ^{43b}...*because ye cannot hear my word.* If we ever wonder why people believe all of the false doctrines that are in the world today, here is the answer straight from the mouth of our Lord. They let His words go in one ear and out the other ear and never let Jesus' words get into their hearts. We cannot believe anything if it never gets into our hearts. That is the reason that we must study with an open mind so the words of God can get into our hearts.

If any one of us chooses our own way long enough, we will have a calloused heart. We must have a love for the truth if we want to escape having a calloused heart. This is one of the greatest facts that we can ever learn. Please, we must give this our most serious attention. Pharaoh's heart had become so insensitive to the words of God that God's word could not get into his heart. It just went in one ear and out the other ear. When we get into this kind of lifestyle, it is impossible for us to change, because we cannot hear what God is saying to us. Now doesn't this really help us to see how important it is to study God's word with an open mind? Just as a callous can form on many parts of the body, we often forget that a callous can form upon our hearts by using our hearts to let God's word just slip right through it and out through our ears until it forms a callous on our hearts. This can happen to any one of us if we are not really careful in our reading and studying of God's word. We must have an open mind and be a lover of the truth.

Question: How does God harden a person's heart when it is already hardened? Since it is the unbeliever's heart that is hardened, it is God's do's and don'ts that cause the callous that is already on the heart to become thicker and thicker. And that will move the person further and further away from God.

From Exodus chapter 4 to Exodus chapter 15, we can read as many as 15 times where it says that God hardens Pharaoh's heart. In these same chapters we can read four times where it says Pharaoh's heart was hardened. In those verses it does not say who did the hardening, whether it was Pharaoh or God, and in these chapters we can read two times where it says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart.

In conclusion, what should we have gained from this discussion?

1. We must have an open mind.
2. We must have ears that are attached to the heart.
3. We must be truth seekers.
4. We do not have the right to doubt God's choices.
5. God has the sole right to do or say whatever He chooses to say or do.

Thank you for taking the time to read this lesson.

In Christian Love,

Herb Trout
June 2006