

I. Introduction: Why do some people believe the gospel while others reject it. I Co. 4:7

II. The Word of God has not failed. v. 6

- A. Why would someone think the Word might have failed? v. 6a v. 4-5 3:3
- B. God's promise was never meant to be realized in the entire nation, but only in the true (elect) Israel within Israel. v. 6b 2:28-29 Jer. 18:5-10
 - 1. The promises are fulfilled with the remnant who are born of God and have faith. 4:12-13 11:5-6 Gen. 15:6 John 1:13,47 Ga. 4:29 6:16 Phil. 3:3 Lu. 19:9
 - 2. Israel's unbelief is consistent with God's purpose. 11:11
 - 3. The Word of God cannot fail. It always accomplishes all of the purpose for which God has sent it. Isa. 55:11 I Pe. 1:23 Acts 13:48
 - 4. All failure is attributable to sinful mankind, not God.
 - 5. The difference between the saved and the lost rests in God's electing purpose.
- C. Is there an elect (invisible) church within the visible "church"?

III. The example of Isaac proves that mere physical descent does not make one a child of God. v. 7-9

- A. The Jews regarded themselves as heirs of the kingdom because of their physical descent from Abraham. John 8:33,39f
- B. Paul proves that being Abraham's physical offspring is not enough.
 - 1. Not all of Abraham's descendants are his spiritual children. v. 7 Ge. 16:15 25:1-4
 - 2. Isaac is chosen by God to be the heir of God's promises to Abraham. v. 8
 - a. Ishmael was the child of the flesh. Ge. 17:18
 - b. Isaac is conceived according to God's promise and by His power. 4:16-21
Ge. 17:19 18:10-14 Ga. 4:23f
 - c. Both enjoyed physical blessings. Gen. 17:20 21:13
 - d. But only Isaac is the spiritual heir. Ge. 17:21
 - 3. The birth (and call) of Isaac, the child of promise, is a picture of our miraculous spiritual birth. Jo. 1:13 Ga. 1:15-16 Je. 1:1-5
 - 4. *As God rejected Ishmael, notwithstanding his natural descent from Abraham, so He may reject the Jews, although they also had Abraham as a father* (Hodge).
 - 5. There remains a remnant who enjoy both national and spiritual privilege. 11:5

IV. God's choice of Jacob further demonstrates sovereign electing grace. v. 11-13

- A. Why is another example required?
 - 1. The choice of Isaac demonstrates that God's distinguishing grace continues to operate among Abraham's offspring according to the flesh.
 - 2. Some might say that Isaac was chosen because he was born of Abraham's wife Sarah, while Ishmael was born of the slave woman Hagar.
- B. In this case there is no human or natural reason to choose Jacob over Esau.
 - 1. Both were born in answer to prayer. Gen. 25:21
 - 2. They both have the same father, mother, and birthday.
 - 3. The choice was not based upon their deeds (works).
 - 4. The choice of the younger twin to be the heir goes against human expectation.

- C. The sole basis of election is in the sovereign gracious purpose of God. 8:28-30.
1. God's choice was made before they were born: pre-natal love.
 2. God's choice had nothing to do with their merit (seen or foreseen). Deut. 7:6-8
 3. God calls those whom He has chosen to Himself. v. 11d 8:28-30 9:24
- D. God's purpose *stands!* Nothing can thwart Him. v. 11, 6 8:28 Eph. 1:11 Ps. 115:3
1. God continues to make distinctions among Abraham's physical offspring.
 2. The unbelief of the majority of Israel is according to His sovereign purpose.

V. Questions concerning election. 11:33-36 Isa. 55:8-9

- A. Is Paul speaking of the election of nations or of individuals?
1. Some try to overcome the doctrine of divine election by claiming Paul refers not to God's choice of particular persons, but rather of peoples.
 2. It is true that Israel was chosen for national privilege and blessing. Mal. 1:2-3 Deut. 4:37 7:7-8 10:15 14:2 I Ki. 3:8 Ps. 33:12 105:6 Amos 3:2 Isa. 41:8-9
 3. But certain individuals are chosen for personal spiritual blessing. v. 8 8:33 11:5 Eph. 1:4-6,11 I Ti. 2:10 II Ti. 1:9 I Pe. 1:1 2:9 .
 4. Limiting Paul's statement to national election doesn't solve any problem. Nations consist of individuals who are affected by God's distinguishing grace.
 5. Paul's entire purpose here is to explain how most individuals who are in the elect nation do not believe God's Word. God's election of individuals is his answer. v. 6
- B. Doesn't God just look ahead to see who will choose Him of their own free will?
1. If left to ourselves none would choose God. 8:7-8 3:10-11 II Ti. 1:9 I Co. 2:14
 2. If this were true, man would be sovereign over the success of God's plan and God's purpose to save all would be a failure. v. 6a
 3. Paul makes it clear that God's choice has nothing to do with our merit, but is solely according to His sovereign purpose. 8:7-8 Heb. 11:6 Eph. 2:8-9 Acts 13:48
 4. There is no power which can frustrate God's purpose. 8:28-30 Eph. 1:11 Ps. 33:11 115:3 Pr. 19:21
- C. Does God show favoritism? v. 14-15
- D. How can God say that He hates Esau? v. 13 Mal. 1:2f Ps. 5:5
1. This is an expression of God's choice/preference of one man over the other. Gen. 29:30-33 Lu. 14:26 John 12:25
 2. Is Paul merely saying that God loved Esau less? Mal. 1:3-4 Isa. 34:5
 3. Nor is God saying that he merely hates Esau's sin. Ps. 5:5
 4. God has good reason to hate Esau. 5:12 Ge. 25:29 Ps. 137:7 5:5 Je. 49:7f He. 12:16
 5. What we should ask and wonder is, "How could God love a scoundrel like Jacob."
- E. Is Paul teaching "double-predestination": both election and reprobation?
God's sovereign election involves a rejection as well as a choosing.
1. Election is according to God's gracious choice. He has elected some who deserve wrath to receive life.
 2. Reprobation leaves men to choose for themselves. God in His justice allows others to continue in their sin and to receive the wrath they deserve. 9:13,17-18 Jo. 10:26 12:38-39 17:12 Jude 4 I Pe. 2:7-8

VI. Concluding Applications.

- A. God's Word does not fail. His will is ultimate in salvation. 9:16**
- B. Belief in election does not nullify what the Bible says about human responsibility.**
 - 1. Paul still yearned for and worked for the salvation of the unconverted. 9:1-5
II Tim. 2:9-10**
 - 2. Paul still proclaims justification is by faith alone in Christ alone. 3:21-4:25f 10:13**
- C. Don't be surprised if you can't fully grasp this doctrine. 11:33-36 Deut. 29:29**
- D. The practical implications of this truth.**
 - 1. Man is humbled. I Co. 1:26-31 4:7**
 - 2. God alone is exalted and glorified. Rev. 5:12f**
 - 3. Salvation is secure because it rests upon God's will and power, not ours.**
 - 4. The Bible (and life) make sense.**
 - 5. We are motivated to serve and evangelize. Acts 18:9-10**
- E. You can settle the matter of your election today. . II Co. 13:5 II Pe. 1:10**

Discussion questions for family worship

- 1. Why might someone think God's Word has failed in the case of Israel? v. 6a**
- 2. What is Paul's answer to this question? v. 6b**
- 3. Has God's Word failed in our day because so many people remain lost? Why or why not?**
- 4. What is the difference between physical Israel and spiritual Israel?**
- 5. How does God's choice of Isaac prove Paul's point? v. 6-9**
- 6. What is the essential difference between Isaac and Ishmael?**
- 7. Why does Paul use a second example: Jacob and Esau? v. 10-13**
- 8. How does the example of Jacob and Esau illustrate the nature of divine election?**
- 9. In what sense does God "hate" Esau?**
- 10. Why is it fair for God to show favoritism?**
- 11. What are some practical applications of the doctrine of election?**