

96-10-18a

As we prepare to resume our study in Romans this evening, let's begin as we always do by going to the Lord in prayer. Father, we thank you as always for this day and for all of the many ways that you have blessed us and provided for our needs. We thank you for the joy and the peace that you bring to our lives and for the great circumstances that we find ourselves in, even when there's pressure and even when there is adversity.

We have such a great hope for the future and we have such a wonderful status in Jesus Christ. We thank you for the provision of your word. We thank you for the ministry of God the Holy Spirit who enables us to understand it and to digest it and to make it a part of our thinking.

We pray tonight as we study these things that we will have insight that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth. We pray that as a result we will have a greater appreciation for yourself and for your plan and for your Son, Jesus Christ. We ask these things in his name.

Amen. We resume tonight in Romans chapter 9. And having given a very severe blow to the people who insist on going back to the previous dispensation for their righteousness, Paul has now faced the question, what about Israel? If there is a new dispensation, if there's a new economy in God's plan, if God is moving in a different direction and now it doesn't really matter if you're Jewish or if you're a Gentile, if the only thing that matters is your attitude toward God and His plan, what does that do to all of the special promises that God gave to Israel? Some were accusing Paul of throwing off his allegiance to his people and that he just didn't really care what happened to them anymore. He was the apostle to the Gentiles and he was accused of being insensitive to the place of Israel in God's plan.

And so he began this chapter, Romans 9, by emphasizing the fact that Israel is very near his heart. He is, after all, an Israelite. He was trained and steeped in the Old Testament as a Pharisee and he has a great burden, if you will, for his own people.

And he says, I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen, according to the flesh. And we've seen in studying that anathema idea that this is not so much looking at separation from Christ in the realm of salvation, but as Scripture typifies this status, this is, for the believer, loss of all reward. And we are going to see some additional passages as we address the next section of this chapter that make that clear to us as well.

But he gave the eight unique distinctions that belong to Israel. They have the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises. To them belong the fathers, and from them, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God.

Amen. And we haven't really addressed this doxology at the end of verse 5, but it is fairly self-explanatory. And I think Paul's reason for including it here is simply to point out the fact that these

things are all manifestations of God's grace.

The fact that Israel has these eight things, and the fact that they culminate in the eighth, which is Jesus Christ, the God-man, and the fact that he is God. Now, this is not necessarily a clincher passage to come to if you're trying to argue someone into believing that the Bible states that Jesus Christ is deity. The Greek here is somewhat ambiguous, to be honest.

And it is equally valid to take this as saying that Christ is the eternally blessed God, or to see a new sentence starting here after he says that from the Israelites, according to the flesh, Christ came, and then to say God is over all and eternally blessed. Amen. And so while in the English, and I think I prefer to read it this way, it isn't generally typical of Paul to state the deity of Christ in this direct fashion.

There are other passages you can go to where he talks about the Father, and he talks about the Son, and he usually emphasizes Christ's humanity. And I think this might be an odd place for him to come out with such a very bold statement of Christ deity, but it's not out of the realm of possibility, and it is certainly true. But I think his review of these blessings and promises and so forth to Israel reminds him of God who is over all and is eternally blessed.

And the word for blessed there, anywhere you see this in Greek, the word blessed is eulogeo, which eu we know is the prefix that means good, and eulogeo is to speak or has to do with words. And literally, blessed in Greek means to be well spoken of. And we have this phrase or this saying in English, let's bless God.

Well, obviously God blesses us. It would be difficult for us to send some benefit God's way and say that we have blessed God. But we do speak of God in his holiness, in his wonderful attributes, his grace, his compassion, all of his magnificence and the fullness of his deity.

And when we do that, we're blessing God in this sense. God should be well spoken of eternally because of the things that he has done specifically in this context for Israel. And having said this, the next section of the letter begins because Paul has raised the issue sort of obliquely as he has argued for righteousness by faith.

It brings up the issue, well, what about Israel? Israel has been going about this, generally speaking, all wrong. And so he confirms his solicitude for Israel, his heart for the Jewish people. And he lists the things that are part of their heritage.

And with all of these things, they appear to not be responding in the plan of God. Many of them don't respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many of those who do accept Christ as the Messiah fall back into... they can't wean themselves away from the law and they fall back into righteousness by works.

And it is a very sad state of affairs where Israel is concerned. They were the first few generations

of the church and yet, generally speaking, their spiritual progress in the plan of God as church-age believers has been very dismal. So what happened? That's the big question that Paul's now going to address.

If all of these things were foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures, Paul has bolstered from the last several chapters the way that the plan of God works. Well, if all this is true and if Israel are the people of God and to them belong all these things, why didn't Israel jump on the bandwagon and beat the drum and be in the forefront of this? Why is it that they are so far behind and the Gentiles seem to be exhibiting a greater response? If you went through our Mark study, you may recall that it is clear from the Gospels that even in Jesus' day, the Gentiles were more responsive than Israel to the presence of Jesus Christ and to His teaching. And we find the greatest illustration of that in the two multiplication of bread miracles that Jesus performed, the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000.

And if you remember the comparison that Jesus makes of those two when He's in the boat with the disciples, after both have taken place, and He asks them, He says, how many were there? How many loaves of bread did we break? And how many baskets were taken up in each of those cases? And then He says, do you not yet understand? And on the surface of it, many of us might say, well, actually I don't understand. But the first crowd, the feeding of the 5,000, where there were seven baskets of fragments taken back up, was in an area populated almost exclusively by the Jews. And it was an almost totally Jewish crowd.

And they had an enormous number of fragments taken up after Jesus Christ distributed the bread. In the feeding of the 4,000, there were many fewer fragments taken up. I think it was 12 baskets in the first time because 12 is the number of Israel, and there were more fragments taken up for the 5,000.

The feeding of the 4,000, there were only seven baskets of fragments. And when you work it all out, you find out that basically more of the bread was rejected amongst the Jewish crowd than amongst the Gentile crowd. And that was typical.

Jesus found faith in the Roman centurion. He found faith in the woman up in Sidon. He found the woman with the issue of blood who was apparently not Israelite.

He found faith in the Samaritan woman at the well and in her village. And it seemed that there was a greater response and a greater level of faith. The woman who talked about the fact that even the dogs could eat the crumbs that fall from the children's table was another picture of that.

And so the conclusion that we draw here and the observation that we make is that Israel was unresponsive in the generations where Jesus was here and at the beginning of the church age. So what's the problem? That's the question for tonight. The passage we're going to look at tonight is going to answer this question.

If Israel are the people of God, the chosen people with all these advantages, why weren't they the first to recognize Christ? Why weren't they in the forefront? Why weren't they outshining all of the Gentiles in the church age? And this would be a legitimate question. The analogy in our current circumstances is we're coming up on a presidential election and the sitting president is ahead in the polls and the Republican challenger is behind by something in the double digits of percentages in virtually all of the polls. And someone could make the argument, well, if there's so many problems with the country and if the president's doing such a bad job, why is the challenger lagging so far behind in the polls? And the argument being, well, there must not be anything wrong.

Well, that's a similar argument that someone could raise here. They'd say, well, Paul, you're talking a great fight here and you're shooting down our righteousness by works and everything else, but if this is so right, how come the people of God, who are the keepers of the oracles of God and have been the people of God for a couple of thousand years here, how come they're not agreeing with you? How come they're not jumping on and following? So Paul is going to address that unspoken argument here. And basically, if you boil it all down, people will say, Paul, your message is not the word of God because if it was the word of God, the people of God would be responding to it and they're not.

And so in verse 6, he says, after talking about all of this grief and sorrow over the Jews, he doesn't even say that they have rejected. If you review verses 1 through 5, Paul never says Israel has completely rejected the gospel. They've rejected Christ.

They've rejected the plan of God. He says, I have great grief and sorrow in my heart. I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for them.

They're Israelites. They have these eight things. And he doesn't ever say why it is because everyone knew.

Everyone knew that Israelites, as a rule, were in great opposition to the message of Paul that he has just outlined in the last eight chapters. It was a given. As soon as Paul started talking, you could count on the Jews disagreeing with him and turning him off.

And so he doesn't have to say, I'm very sorry for them because they're not falling in line with the plan of God for this age. They don't recognize the righteousness by faith system that God is emphasizing now. And so he doesn't even address that.

He just goes right on into his answer in verse 6. He says, it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. It is not that the word of God has taken no effect. The argument might be, well, Paul, if all this teaching that you're bringing out is the truth, why isn't it taking an effect? Well, it isn't that the word of God has taken no effect.

The problem is people are measuring in this argument by a false standard. They're saying, well,

the people of God would be responding to you if you were teaching the word of God. And he says, no, you need to take a closer look at what you're calling the people of God.

And he says, they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham. But in Isaac, your seed shall be called. Now, let's go back up here to verse 6. It is not that the word of God has taken no effect.

When you see the phrase word of God in the New Testament, the first of those three words in that phrase, W-O-R-D, translates generally one of two words. It's either rhema, R-H-E-M-A, which is the spoken word. For example, the quote from the Old Testament that says, the grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of God abides forever.

That in the Septuagint and in the New Testament quote is rhema, R-H-E-M-A. Here we have the other word, which is logos, the logos of God. And this is most often used for the recorded word of God, generally the scriptures or what is known to be the word of God, the promises which were known not only from the law of Moses, but also passed down by verbal tradition in Israel.

So it is not that the recorded word of God, the logos, the truth about God, has taken no effect. Now, this second part of that first sentence, taken no effect, this is a very interesting Greek word. It is ekpipto, E-K-P-I-P-T-O.

Pipto is the word that means to fall. Ek is the prefix or the preposition that means out of, out from, away. The combination of those two words means to fall away, to fall off, to fall down.

This word was used in nautical terms for a ship that was veering off course. And even in English, in the British Navy, they would talk about if the wind shifted you might fall off your course, you'd fall off your heading. It actually came to be synonymous with a ship running aground, falling off in terms of not steering a true course.

It is used for the attitudes that people themselves have. For example, if you go over to James chapter 1, let's turn over there. James chapter 1. James is going to pull a passage from the Old Testament.

In verse 11, James says, talking about the lowly brother glorying in his exaltation but the rich in his humiliation because as a flower of the field he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it weathers the grass. Its flower falls.

And that word is ekpipto, it falls away, it falls off. And its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

So this is more of a literal use. And you find the same use by Peter just a few pages over in 1 Peter 1.24. The reason we're looking at these, this word only occurs a few times in the New Testament, maybe a half dozen times total. 1 Peter 1.24 is a quote from Isaiah 40 verse 7. All flesh is as grass and the glory of man as the flower of the grass.

All flesh is as grass, the grass withers and its flower falls away. But the word of the Lord endures forever. And it's not out of the realm of possibility that this Isaiah passage was in Paul's mind when he used that specific word *ekpipto* in Romans chapter 9 verse 6 when he says it is not that the word of God has failed or that the word of God has fallen away.

Isaiah says men are like grass and their glory fades like the flower of the grass. The grass withers and the flower falls away. But the word of the Lord, by contrast, endures forever.

And so there's a close link here that we see with the word *ekpipto* in these two passages. And so he says if something fell away, if something failed, it wasn't the word of God. Think about Isaiah.

Where have you seen *ekpipto* before? The grass withers, the flower fades, which is man and his glory. The word of God does not *ekpipto*, it does not fall away, it does not fail. It endures forever.

So whatever the problem is, it isn't that the word of God has somehow unraveled at the seams. This word is used by Paul also in Galatians chapter 5 and verse 4. We were in Galatians not long ago. And in Galatians we know that the problem is very similar.

In fact, these two letters, Romans and Galatians, were written probably at almost the same time. And he's addressing the same problem, people going for righteousness by works. And he says if you are doing that, if you're entangled again with a yoke of bondage and worrying about circumcision and so forth, in verse 2 he says if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.

Now this gets back to our anathema idea. You can be a believer and yet Christ can profit you nothing. You have the title and you have the standing of being a believer, but you get none of the benefits if you fall away from the plan of God as a believer.

Christ will profit you nothing. Now, we look at that and we say that this has its limits. Obviously Christ profits us deliverance from the lake of fire no matter what.

And to take this any other way, we'd have to assume that you could lose your salvation if you become disobedient and go in for righteousness by works. If Christ profits you absolutely nothing, then you're not saved anymore. You don't have his righteousness.

You don't share in his atoning work on the cross and so forth. But obviously he's talking to believers and he's encouraging them to stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made them free. So he's talking to believers, it says that in verse 1, but he says if you fall back into circumcision and righteousness by works, Christ will profit you, a believer, nothing.

No reward, no blessing, no purpose in your life, no fruit in your life, no production. For all practical purposes, you're dead. And he says in verse 3, I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.

You have become estranged from Christ, anathema from Christ, cut off from Christ. You who attempt to be justified, to attempt to be declared righteous by works, in this case the works of the law. You have fallen from grace, and the word fallen there is *ectypto*.

You're like the grass or the flower that fades and falls, that doesn't endure. Your life is going to have no enduring value. It isn't going to reflect the glory of God now or in the eternal future.

Very significant word, *ectypto*. We see it also used by Peter in 2 Peter 3.17. 2 Peter 3.17. Peter says, You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, talking about the things that are coming up, he talks about the end times and the rolling up of the heavens passing away with a great noise and the elements melting with fervent heat in verse 10. He says, You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.

It's possible for a believer to fall from his steadfastness, and that word fall is *ectypto*, to fall away. He says, If this could not happen to a believer, we wouldn't have any cautions, would we? Nobody says, Beware, be careful, you might fly off the planet Earth. If gravity quits, you'll be out in space.

Well, it's not going to happen, so we don't have any cautions in that way. We get warnings when something is a possibility. This is a warning.

He says, Beware lest you fall, *ectypto*, from your steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked. What's the remedy? What's the alternative? Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Fasten on to the word of God that lives and abides forever, that never fails, that never falls, and you won't fail or fall either.

So that's the choice, the enduring, steadfast word of God, or the falling away that is our heritage as human beings. And so Paul chooses this word carefully in Romans 9, 6. It is not that the word of God has fallen. If it's not the word of God that has failed, what is it? Something fell, because Israel is not where it should be.

It's not living up to its heritage. And he implies the answer to that question. He says the reason Israel has fallen is that Israel the nation, Israel at large, isn't necessarily the chosen Israel that God made the promises to.

He says they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children, because they are the seed of Abraham. But in Isaac your seed shall be called. And this is fairly obvious to us, isn't it? We know there's a difference between just being a physical descendant of Abraham and being a person of faith, and that is the distinction.

It's not complicated, it's not deep, it's not murky, it's something we have to spend a lot of time on. It's clear that just because you're descended from Abraham doesn't mean that you partake of the

promises that God made to Abraham. Here's a quiz question for you.

Here's something to test your detailed knowledge of the more prominent facts of the Old Testament. You just have five seconds for this, and then the buzzer will sound. How many sons did Abraham have? Five, four, three, two, one.

That's what I would have answered until I prepared this lesson. Abraham had ten sons. Abraham, turn back to Genesis chapter 25.

Genesis chapter 25 verse 1. After Ishmael, after Isaac, after the death of Sarah, in chapter 25 verse 1, Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah. And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Midan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. I'm sorry, six sons for a total of eight.

Six with Keturah and Ishmael and Isaac make a total of eight. And then these are major clans underneath when Jokshan begets Sheba and Dedan, and Dedan begets Asherim, Latushim, and Launim, and the sons of Midian, Ephah, Ephur, Hanak, Abida, and Eldahah. All these were the children of Keturah.

Now, why are we delving into that? But when the Bible says, In Isaac shall thy seed be called, we're down to one-eighth of the descendants of Abraham in the first generation alone. Because not only Ishmael, but also Zimran, Jokshan, Midan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah miss out on the promise that was made to Abraham. Not all children are the seed.

They are not all children because they are the seed of Abraham, verse 7 of Romans 9. But in Isaac your seed shall be called. And of course, that's a quote from a couple of chapters back in Genesis 21. Now, let's remember what we covered in the last part of Romans chapter 8. Remember all of that? Whom he foreknew, he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his son, talking about us in this age.

Well, there was a similar operation in the Old Testament. And there could be a similar passage of Scripture that for the Old Testament saints said, And whom he foreknew, he predestinated to be the chosen people, Israel. Now, did all of Abraham's other seven sons die physically? Eventually they did.

But at the point of rejecting God, or at the point of not expressing positive attitude and moving forward and claiming the promises the way Isaac and his son Jacob did, they continued to be sons of Abraham, didn't they? And they continued to enjoy a base level of prosperity just by virtue of God's promise that he would make the descendants of Abraham like the sands of the sea, like the stars in the sky, that of him many great nations would come. God promised he would make Ishmael a great nation. And if you go back and look at the story when Sarah demands that Abraham kick out Hagar and Ishmael and they go out in the desert, God appears and God tells Hagar that he has heard the voice of her son Ishmael and that he is going to be with Ishmael and that he is going to bless him.

And if you look in Genesis 21, verse 17, God heard the voice of the lad. Now, if God hears the voice of someone, you suspect that they're on the believer side of the equation. God heard the voice of the lad.

The angel of God called Hagar out of heaven. Now, angels of God and God bending his ear, this doesn't happen in the broad spectrum of unbelievers, but God's listening to Hagar and God's talking to Hagar. God's listening to her son Ishmael.

God heard the voice of the lad. The angel of God called Hagar out of heaven and said to her, what ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Now, that fact is repeated and it's important.

God heard the voice of Ishmael. Now, the only voice of an unbeliever that God hears is their expression of faith for salvation, as far as I know. And I believe that both, I think if Hagar is hearing God's voice out of heaven, she probably believes in him.

He says, Arise, lift up the lad, in verse 18, and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation. God opened her eyes. She saw a well of water.

She went and filled the skin, gave the lad a drink. So God was with the lad. See that in Genesis 21-20? God was with the lad.

Now, that may seem like kind of a minor detail, but this same phrase is used of Isaac, and that same phrase is used of Jacob, that God was with him. And this is more than just sort of a kindly supervision in the temporal realm. God is with him.

He grew and dwelt in the rich wilderness and became an archer. He dwelt in the wilderness of Paran. His mother took a wife for him from where? Where did Ishmael's wife come from? Came from the same place Hagar came from.

She came from Egypt. What does Egypt represent in the Old Testament? It is the place of bondage. It's the place of unbelievers.

It represents the pagan world that does not believe in God. So, what's the point? There are two facts to note about Ishmael. Ishmael is a believer.

He has a relationship with God. God is with him. God hears his voice.

God makes a covenant with him to bless him. God fulfills that promise to Ishmael. What kind of decisions does Ishmael make? Ishmael chooses Egypt.

He gets his wife from Egypt. He voluntarily goes back to the land of his forebears, his mother's people. That's his choice.

Ishmael does not inherit the covenant. But I would argue that Ishmael is a believer. Ishmael will be there in the eternal future.

The covenant is not a covenant of salvation. The covenant is a covenant of blessing. It's a covenant of reward.

It's a covenant of special function in God's purpose. Otherwise, you would have to say that Old Testament salvation depended upon circumcision. Look at Genesis 17.

What is the Abrahamic covenant? Genesis 17 is the statement of that covenant. When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, I am Almighty God. Walk before me and be blameless.

Is that an instruction for unbelievers? It's not. This is lifestyle for believers. I will make my covenant between me and you and will multiply you exceedingly.

Abram fell on his face. God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be Abram.

It's going to be Abraham. I've made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful.

I will make nations of you. Kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you in their generations for an everlasting covenant to be God to you and your descendants after you.

Also, I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession, and I will be their God. Now, one of the first provisions of the covenant, other than the personal promise to Abram that his descendants will become many mighty nations, is that Abram's descendants under this covenant are going to inherit the historical land of Palestine, the historical land of Canaan. Ishmael misses out on that.

Isaac does not. It doesn't have anything to do with salvation per se, but this is special function. Look at verse 9. As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.

This is my covenant which you shall keep between me and you and your descendants after you. Every male child among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins.

And so forth. Everyone in the household of Abram was circumcised, as it tells us at the end of the chapter. In verse 24, Abram was 99 when he was circumcised.

Verse 25, Ishmael, his son, was 13 when he was circumcised. Ishmael received the sign of the

covenant. He was circumcised.

But he doesn't get the benefits of the covenant. Why is that? Well, you look at the pattern of decisions and he's choosing Egypt. And it goes on to tell us in verse 12 of this chapter.

He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations. He who was born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who was born in your house, he who was bought with your money must be circumcised, and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

The uncircumcised male child who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be what? Cut off from his people. Is he killed? Is he burned? Is his house made of dung heath and so forth? No, he's cut off from his people. What is that? Separation.

He's an exile. He goes out and wanders. He doesn't have an inheritance.

He doesn't own land. He doesn't get flocks. He doesn't marry from within the clan.

He's cut off from his people. He loses all the benefits that come from being born into that family or being bought into that family as a slave. Very interesting analogy there between the hereditary right of being born into the family and the adoptive right of being bought into the family which parallels Israel and the Gentiles in the plan of God.

And it also tells us something very interesting. Think about this. You could be born into the family of Abraham or purchased into the family of Abraham and have the opportunity to participate in this covenant, right? It's a covenant to all the descendants.

All of the descendants started out at birth with that mark of circumcision. It said you're eligible for the covenant. Even Ishmael got it.

But by their choices, they could decide whether or not they are going to reap the benefits of that covenant. They could have physical life and physical relationship with Abraham and yet by their choices, miss out on the potential of this blessing of having a heritage in the land and being fruitful and multiplying and prospering under the hand of God. My point here is there is a similar situation today.

We can be saved. We can be entered into the family of God and be physical descendants, if you will, of God. Physically speaking, we are sons.

As many as received Him, to them gave He the authority to be called the sons of God. The authority to be called the sons of God is like getting circumcised on the eighth day. It doesn't matter what you do with the rest of your life.

Just the fact of your birth gives you a certain set of opportunities and a certain relationship.

However, just like under the old covenant, if you go down and start marrying in Egypt, if you don't care about the things of God and you can look historically at the descendants of Ishmael who acknowledge God as Allah but who don't acknowledge the authority of the law, who don't acknowledge the scriptures, who don't acknowledge Jesus Christ, who have been a people apart, even though they're descended from Abraham, they missed out on all of the things that came to the descendants of Isaac and of Jacob. And as we'll see, we're talking about the spiritual descendants there.

So what's the comparison? It is possible now to be saved and be a believer and experience the same loss of opportunity. And that's where Paul is going with this comparison. In chapter 9, it looks like, okay, now I'm going to drop everything I've been talking about the church and for three chapters I'm going to talk about Israel.

But he's going to show us that there's a parallel between the way God deals in the Old Testament and in the New. And in the same way that you could be a physical descendant of Abraham, you could even be a descendant of Isaac and Jacob and be a part of Israel and by your decisions miss out on the benefits of the covenant. All Israel is not Israel.

It started splitting in the very first generation after Abraham. Seven sons missed out. One son got the blessing.

The descendants of Isaac, we're going to have Jacob and Esau coming up in our passage in Romans 9. But the same thing holds true now. We have a calling as believers in this age. We have the potential of fulfilling that calling and partaking of the covenant, of all of the blessings that are coming to us as the brethren of Christ, as those who have been pre-designated to be conformed to His image and have been called and justified and glorified with all the provisions that God made in eternity past.

But we can miss out. And if we miss out, it doesn't mean we lose our salvation or that we never had salvation. We're like the descendants of Abraham.

You can't say, well, Ishmael wasn't really a son of Abraham because he didn't accept the covenant. He was a son of Abraham. And so were Midian and Joctan and all these other guys.

But they belied their actual descendancy to Abraham by not being spiritual sons of Abraham in the sense of following him in his positive attitude toward God and his faith in God. That can happen to us. And in the same way that they still had the circumcision and they still had the presence of God and the blessing of God in a limited sense like Ishmael had, believers in Jesus Christ in this age still have a relationship with God, still have provision from God and blessing from God and probably a lot of discipline from God in this age.

It's not a matter of losing salvation or whether or not one has salvation. It's what you take advantage of after salvation. Just like someone in Abraham's family, what is he going to take

advantage of after his birth? Now you say, well, wait a minute.

God said before they were even born, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. So didn't that disqualify Ishmael? I mean, the guy never had a chance. Why not go down to Egypt and get a wife? Because he's out of the loop.

God said beforehand he's out of it. Well, this is where Paul is going in Romans chapter 9. If we turn back there, Paul says that they are not all children because they are the seed of Abraham, but in Isaac your seed shall be called. That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.

Ah, the children of the promise. The children of the promise. How did he start out this section? What is the topic sentence of this paragraph in 9.6? It is not that the word of God has taken no effect.

The issue is the word of God. It's the word of God that never fails. It's the word of God that never falls.

People encountering the word of God may fall and may fail. We're going to pause here and take our break, and when we come back we're going to see a couple of very explicit passages of Scripture that talk about how this can happen, both in the Old Testament and in the New. Let's pause here and take a break.