**Lesson 25: Why Are So Many Excluded From the Family of God?**

**Text: Romans 9:6-13**

**Introduction**

Paul was grieved because Israel was so privileged and yet remained in unbelief. His beloved nation was missing out on the blessings of knowing their own Messiah. Instead of Jews turning to Christ, Paul witnessed a great number of Gentiles coming to the faith. What did this mean for the people of Israel? Was God finished with His people? Does a failure on their part mean a failure on God’s part? What about the promises of God? Many would struggle with the thought that so many Jews have been excluded from God’s family. In this lesson, we will see that the resistance of Israel does not affect the validity of God’s promise. We will also see the reason many Jews are excluded from the family of God.

1. **The example of Isaac and Ishmael demonstrates that being in the family of God is not based on nationality. (v. 6-9)**
   1. Jews are not excluded from the family of God because God has failed to keep His Word! (v. 6) The verb “taken none effect” can literally mean to “drift off course.” In the context, it means to “fail.”
   2. Paul can make this statement because “they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.” In Romans 2:28-29, Paul made a distinction between those who were Jewish by birth and those who were truly Jews by virtue of the new birth. There is something more than bloodline to consider (John 3:1-16).
      1. “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.” (Douglas Moo)
      2. N.T. Wright said, “What counts is grace, not race.”
   3. This is evident in the difference between Isaac and Ismael. (v. 7-9)
      1. Being a child of Abraham does not make one an Israelite. Ishmael and Isaac were both the children of Abraham, but God sovereignly chose Isaac. (v. 7; Genesis 21:12).
      2. “Children of the flesh” refers to being a physical descendant of Abraham. This does not automatically make one a child of God. The “children of the promise” refers to those who have been justified by faith. They are “counted for the seed.” They are the true children of God. (v. 8)
      3. God did not fail in His promise to Abraham and Sarah. (v. 9; Genesis 18:10, 14)
2. **The example of Jacob and Esau demonstrates that being in the family of God is not based on personal performance. (v. 10-13)**
   1. Those holding to their national heritage would object to Paul’s illustration on the basis that Ishmael was the son Sarah’s handmaid. He provides an additional example that clearly met the requirements of national heritage. Jacob and Esau were the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah. Thus, they were both descendants of Abraham through Isaac. Nonetheless, God chose Jacob to the exclusion of Esau.
   2. The children had neither done good or evil at the time that God revealed that the elder would serve the younger. Acceptance with God is not based on works. This has been made evident throughout Romans. If it is not by works, then how can a person become a child of God? Clearly, the resounding answer throughout Paul’s letter to the Romans is that a person becomes a child of God by grace through faith (Romans 1:16; 3:28; 4:5; 5:1).
   3. He chose Jacob “that the purpose of God according to election might stand” (v. 11). The word *purpose* refers to God’s “plan, resolve, or will” (Gingrich). God’s election is based on His foreknowledge (1 Peter 1:1-2). God chose Jacob based on what He knew. What did God know about Jacob that fit His purpose?
      1. God knew that Esau would reject Him and live as a fornicator and profane man (Hebrews 12:16). God also knew that Jacob would respond in faith to His promise. Although Jacob had many issues in his walk with God, he evidenced a life of faith (Hebrews 11:21).
      2. “God elected Jacob because he fit God’s purpose. Esau did not fit God’s purpose. It is that simple! God operates with perfect foreknowledge. In His perfect foreknowledge, He knew Jacob valued the promises of God. He knew Esau valued his belly and fleshy things and had light regard for the promises of God. So He chose Jacob!” (Sam Davison)
      3. Esau did not become the profane man he was because of a failure on God’s part to elect him. Esau made his own choices. God sovereignly knew what those choices would be and chose to work through Jacob to bring the Messiah into the world.
   4. Bro. Sam Davison used this illustration to explain the passage: “A business magnate has two sons. One wants to party and blow his dad’s wealth. The other wants to help his dad and is disciplined and learns the business. The dad must choose which son to leave in charge of his business. Everyone would call him a fool if he didn’t make the right choice. Well, then God knows how and who to choose for His purpose.”
   5. Thus, God choose Jacob and rejected Esau. (v. 13) “Love” and “hate” refers to God’s choice rather than His emotions. The same use of the terminology is found in Jesus’ call to “hate” family in order to follow Him (Luke 14:26). It does not mean to have emotional hatred, but rather to choose to follow the Lord even when it puts you at odds with family. Thus, in the context, God chose Jacob rather than Esau. He is not unjust in this selection as we will see in the remainder of Romans 9.
   6. “Paul was not building a case for salvation that in no way involves the consent of the individual….Rather he was arguing that the exclusion of so many Jews from the family of God did not constitute a failure on God’s part to maintain His covenant relationship with Israel.” (Robert Mounce)
3. **Central Idea: The examples provided by Paul demonstrate that being in the family of God is based on God’s sovereign choice to save any who come to Him by faith.** 
   1. It is clear from God’s Word that He loves sinners. (John 3:16; Titus 3:4; 1 John 4:10) It is a distortion of His holy character to say that God loves some sinners, but not others. He loves all people equally. While that does not mean that all will be saved, it does mean that by sending His Son, the Father sovereignly made the provision so that all *could* be saved if they *would* trust Christ for salvation.
   2. The Bible teaches that the atonement of Jesus Christ was for all people. Thus, it is an unlimited atonement! John wrote that Jesus is the “propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). To twist this to mean that He died only for those who would receive Him does not coincide with the meaning of the words used in the text. Peter warned that there would be false teachers who would deny “the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1). Jesus paid the price even for those who would never believe!
   3. The unlimited nature of Jesus’ atonement means that the offer of salvation is thereby a legitimate offer. “Whosoever” really means “whosoever”! When you come to a passage that seems to teach otherwise, it is hermeneutically sound to refer to the plethora of Scriptures that make it clear. Doing so can shed light on a more obscure passage.
   4. A person is not excluded from the family of God because God failed to choose him or her. Rather, it is their own unbelief that condemns them (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 13:3; John 3:17-18, 36; Romans 11:20; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

**Conclusion**

The examples Paul provided demonstrate that acceptance with God is based on faith. This is what he has been driving home. It is not based on their pedigree. It is not based on their performance. God has sovereignly chosen to save any who come to Him by faith. God’s choice to save is based on a sinner’s choice to believe.