***The True Seed, No. 1
Romans 9:1-5
RO126-01***

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Please open your Bibles with me this this morning to Romans 9:6-13. We begin a new section this morning; the title of it is, "The True Seed." This is segment number 1.

Yesterday was Saturday. Therefore, yesterday was the Sabbath day. Thousands of Jews gathered to worship God in their synagogues on the Sabbath day. These Jews, by and large, gathered in the full confidence that they are historically the special, covenant people of God, and therefore they are under special promises. As God's specially chosen people, these Jews believe that they are assured of eternal life in heaven.

The Jews today maintain certain religious rituals because of their historic association with those rituals, and they view these as the ground of their claim upon God and as their basis and hope of salvation. In the opening verse of chapter 9 of Romans, we have discovered that the Apostle Paul has made a very dramatic declaration, to the fact that the Jews in his day, as in our day, are mistaken about their heavenly destiny because they have rejected the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God sent to them. All the rituals of the Jewish worship that the Jews historically practice and which were given to them under the Mosaic Law portrayed the person and the work of Jesus Christ. But when the reality actually came on the scene historically, when the Lord actually appeared to fulfill all those pictures, the Jews, amazingly, rejected Him and continued with the ceremonies, which are now empty and meaningless.

Paul's claim that the Jews in rejecting Jesus Christ had doomed themselves to hell is challenged on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant. And so, beginning at verse 6, Paul takes up the challenge that the Abrahamic covenant, under which all of these Jews are covered, had promised to them salvation. So, the argument is, "How can you say, Paul, that we Jews are not going to heaven when we are under the Abrahamic covenant which specifically promised us that we would go to heaven and that God would provide a way for us to enter into heaven? Are you telling us, Paul, that God's promises have failed in fulfillment?"

**The True Israelite**

So, Paul proceeds now to answer this objection and show it to be a false confidence. So, we begin with verse 6 in the examination of the true Israelite. There is a difference between being a Jew and being an Israelite. "Not as though the Word of God has taken no effect." The Greek Bible begins with the word "de." This is a conjunction. We translate it as "but," and it introduces Paul's rejection of the idea that the promise to Abraham's posterity is not being fulfilled by God. And Paul uses the strong negative, this word "ou," which is the strong negative in the Greek language, that he is denying that what he is suggesting is that God's Word is not being fulfilled.

So, the expression, "not as though," means, "but it is not as though," or not, "it is not the case that." Very emphatically, Paul says, "I want you to understand I am not implying that the Word of God is not or will not be fulfilled." He specifically identifies it by the word, "word," which is the Greek word, "logos." This is the Greek word for indicating an expression of a thought, and specifically, he says, this is the thought of God, the "theos."

I am not saying that the Word of God, which has been given to us, is not being fulfilled. The Word of God here refers specifically to the promise given in the Abrahamic covenant, which we have looked at previously in detail, which is recorded in Genesis 12, the first three verses. The "Word of God" referred to here is this word right here. "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: [then, here's the promise] And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.'"

Within that expression of, "I will bless thee," and, "thou shalt be a blessing," is contained the promise of eternal life. The primary blessing that Abraham needed, as all human beings need, is to have some way of going to heaven, have some way of handling the problem of personal sin that disqualifies for heaven and have some basis of removing that disqualification. That had to be done by someone that paid the price of our sin.

So, God says, "I'm going to make of you a great nation, and I'm going to bless thee with a way of going to heaven. I'm going to give you a great name, and I will make you a blessing, because through you, as the Jewish people, will come this Savior."

And then, he says in verse 3, "And in thee, shall all the families of the earth be blessed." There again, the primary blessing being the provision of salvation. So, when Paul says, "Not as though the Word of God hath taken no effect," he's referring to this specific word which was given to Abraham in that covenant promise. And in fact, this is what he was referring to in Romans 9:4 when he talked about the covenants that were given to the Jewish people. All that was an expression of the mind of God, so it is the Word of God.

The term "Word of God" refers to what God has spoken to mankind and which we today have recorded in the Bible. This Word of God, if it is to carry any authority, it should be self-evident, must be recorded in a way that is actually accurate. It really amazes me that even in certain Christian circles, there is still this inane and question about the fact that the Bible, when it was recorded, was recorded with absolute accuracy, that God has given us an inerrant scripture - a book that does not have any mistakes in it. If it has mistakes in it, then it cannot be a confident authority. If it has mistakes in it, then it is subject to the fallen reason of man to analyze what those mistakes are.

Well, we're not going to get into that subject this morning. We're simply to begin on the premise that when God speaks, and when God leads men to record what He has said, that He has the power and the capacity and that He surely would see to it that they did not interject any error into that record. The Word of God, with total accuracy, it cannot be subject to the evaluation and the confirmation of fallen human reason. Abraham had a true word from God, and we today have a true record of it in the Bible. We have an inerrant scripture.

**The Inevitability of God's Word**

So, Paul says, "I am not speaking as though the Word of God hath taken no effect." The word, "taken no effect," is the one Greek word, "ekpipto." "Ekpipto" means, "to fail." "Ekpipto" means, "not to be fulfilled." Let me give you a couple of examples how this is used elsewhere in scripture to clarify what Paul is saying here.

In Luke 16:17, the Lord says, "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than for one tittle of the law to ['ekpipto,' one tittle of the law to] fail." Here, the Lord declares that not the smallest part of the Old Testament scripture will be found to be false and so unfilled. It's God's Word, and so, it's inevitable. And that's what this word means; it cannot fail to come about. Once God has declared that this is what He intends to do, once He has declared that this is what is true, that's what's going to happen. That's what is true.

Another example is in James 1:11. This word is used again in that passage. "For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and its flower ["ekpipto," its flower] falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways." Here, in James 1:11, this word is used to mean, "the perishing of a flower," and so it's "elimination." So, when Paul says, in Romans 9:6, "It is not as if the Word of God has 'ekpipto,' as if it has been eliminated, as if it has fallen like a dried-up flower, as if it has perished." He's making very clear that what he is saying in no way implies that the Abrahamic covenant will not be executed and that it does not still apply.

This word "ekpipto" grammatically is in the perfect tense, which means that it has not failed sometime in the past, and it does not stand in the failed condition now. It is as accurate and applicable and true now. It is active voice. The Abrahamic promise itself is in view. That is a true promise, a statement of fact.

What Paul is here stressing is that God's promise to Abraham's posterity could simply not fail to be fulfilled. Paul is saying that his statement that the Jews who received the Abrahamic promise of salvation [???] does not conflict with God's promise to save them. He's not implying that the Word of God failed.

Now, Paul is implying that there is a problem here. Yes, God said, "I'm going to bless you, and I'm going to make you a blessing in the primary way that you can be blessed and that a person can be a blessing. I'm going to give you salvation." And Paul says, "There is a problem that you don't have that salvation. But that problem is not with God and is not with God's Word." Having descended from Abraham, therefore, is not sufficient ground for salvation and eternal life in salvation for a Jew.

**Abraham Proclaimed Not to Be the Father of the Unbelieving Jew**

And so, when the lady stands up in the Donahue program and on the basis of the fact that she is a Jewess that she believes she is going to heaven because she is covered by the divine promises of the Abrahamic covenant, she's wrong. It is not enough to be born in the line of Abraham to go to heaven. It is not inconsistent of God's promise to Abraham that not all Jews would participate in salvation, because they are not going to be in salvation.

The Jews, as a matter of fact, in Jesus' day, were claiming that Abraham was their father, and so, they were entitled to salvation. This is the same argument that they were giving to the Lord in order to cut Him off. They were saying to Him, "I don't care what you say. I don't care all these things you're telling us. We are children of Abraham. That means they were going to heaven." And they were thinking by their natural descent, their biological association, that they had it made.

And the Lord gave them a very amazing response, which they didn't think was very nice, and which they didn't like at all. In John 8:39, "They answered and said unto him, 'Abraham is our father.' Jesus saith unto them, 'If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.'" Jesus said, "If you really were the true children of Abraham, you would act like Abraham." Well, how did Abraham act? The Bible tells us that when God explained to Abraham that he needed a Savior and that God would take care of the problem, Abraham believed God, and God attributed justification, He attributed absolute righteousness to Abraham. And if they were truly the children of Abraham, then they would be trusting and believing in the coming Savior who proved, by every account, to be Jesus Christ.

In John 8:44, we read further, "Ye are of your father the devil [Abraham's not your father. You know who your daddy is? The devil. That's who your father is.], and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him [implying: you people are not abiding in the truth either. You're claiming the truth about Abraham, but you're not . . . that isn't the truth.]. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

So, the Jews claiming Abraham as their ground of salvation was very quickly undermined by the Lord who told them that Abraham's not even your father. God's promise of eternal life to Abraham's posterity was indeed in effect, but only to those who, like Abraham, believed in the Savior, Jesus Christ. The Jews in Paul's day and the Jews in our day cannot escape the statement of Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." And that's precisely what the Apostle Paul is saying, and people today do not like to hear that. But the Word of God says, "You can't go to heaven except on the basis of Jesus Christ, what His name stands for. He, the sinless Son of God, He who bore our sins, He who paid the price. And the evidence of that acceptance with God was His resurrection. People do not secure justification on the basis of their human family relationships. They secure it on personal trust in Jesus Christ.

So, the idea is this. Paul is saying, "But it is not as if the Word of God is not currently effective." That's what he means by that opening phrase in verse 6. "It is not as if the Word of God is not currently effective." The Word of God is effective today, even as it was in Abraham's day. 1 Peter 1:23 puts it this way, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

That's what so tremendous about having a Bible that doesn't have mistakes in it. You indeed now do have in your hand in these scriptures the Word of God. And it lives, and it abides forever. And anything that you do on the basis of the Word of God as your guidance will cause the consequences of what you do to live and abide forever. Now, that is really something great. To do something that's going to live and abide forever.

**The Wright Brothers**

There are great things that human beings have done because of the genius of man that God has instilled in man. When I was gone the past few weeks on vacation, I revisited an old favorite site out in the outer banks of North Carolina at Kitty Hawk, the site where man first flew a heavier-than-air machine. Here were these two brothers, Wilbur and Orville Wright, preacher's kids. Their father was a minister.

They were men of great personal integrity, men of great, personal honor, men who took seriously the Word of God that even when they were at a pitch of great excitement as they began to break through all of the misconceptions of how to fly and were beginning to realize that they were making breakthroughs that were enormous that people had never made for hundreds and hundreds of years, when it came to Sunday, they said, "This is the Lord's day, and we knock off."

Now, that's hard to do. Most of us, if we're on some project, and we're on a high, and things are rolling, we'll go home after church, and we'll work on that. Nothing wrong in that. Not a legalistic thing that we're bound to on Sunday. But they were men of respect for the Word of God and of personal integrity and for the Christian heritage of the home they'd been reared in, and they expressed it in ways they thought was fitting. The whole story of the Wright brothers is a fascinating progression of men who at certain points broke through with intuitive concepts that God must have given them. Nobody before them knew how to control a glider in the air.

One of the all-time greats, a German named Otto Lilienthal, who is highly respected as a glider pilot and who came up with the marvelous key feature that which causes lift in a heavier-than-air machine is that you curve the top of the wing and you keep the bottom flat. And then, the wind that has to go over here has to meet out here at the same point, this has to go faster than the bottom, and that sucks the thing up into the air. Lilienthal hit that with gliders, and he went gliding like you wouldn't believe. And this man accomplished great things, but he didn't have the final solution and eventually got into a glide that took him 75 feet in the air, and he killed himself. What he was doing was hand-gliding. We call it "hang-gliding" today, and it's still done.

But these men who had the predecessors of men who had done marvelous things, these men suddenly broke through with the solution on how to control that flight in the air so that it wouldn't take a stall, it wouldn't take a nosedive. And it was a simple device. If you visit the Kitty Hawk, you'll see an exact reproduction of their plane. And they did it by warping the wings. We use ailerons today. That causes the lateral stability. And when they found that, and they did it by flying their gliders first, then they put themselves in it, and kicked off a Kill Devil Hill and found that sure enough, they were able to control that machine in the air. And then, they put a motor on, and you can stand in the very spot where that little craft kicked off the ground. And they've got the four markers, the longest one over 800 feet that Wilbur finally made that day as they got the hang of it and that machine flew down that field on the outer banks.

These men have opened the whole world of aviation. They have gone down in history with an accomplishment. But is that really significant? In terms of eternity, no. Anybody who's interested in aviation who walks that ground at Kitty Hawk feels like you're walking on hallowed ground. It is awesome. It is impressive. It is fantastic to look into the reproductions they have of their workshop and their living quarters and to go step-by-step through what these men went through as they made one breakthrough after another and finally solved the problem. But none of that is going to be as significant as anything that the Wright brothers have done in their personal spiritual lives, because that's what's going to live and last forever. They did a great thing, but nothing that any simple Christian does who believes the Word of God and who like Abraham.

**Abraham's Faith**

Look what Abraham did. Because he believed what God said, his name has gone down in history with great respect, and we are the inheritors of a Savior through him. The unbelieving Jews in the world might have led one to assumption that the promise to Abraham was never fulfilled. Paul says, "No, that's not true. The problem was not with the promise of God, the Word of God. The problem was the unbelief of the Jews."

So, in the latter part of verse 6, he points out the true recipient of these promises of God. He says, "For [which is the word "gar," introducing an explanation of why the Word of God is reliable, and again, for] they are not [and again, he uses the strong negative "ou," very emphatically not. They are not] all [the Greek word "pas," which means every one. So, he says, they are not every one of] Israel [Israel. Israel. Israel refers to the chosen people of the Abrahamic covenant. This was, of course, the name of Jacob, who was one of the inheritors of the line of promise.], who are of." Connotes descendants. For not every one of Israel is of Israel.

Paul says, "Not all Jews are Israelites." Now, the Jews don't like to hear that. Paul says, "Not everybody born in the line of Jacob in Israel is under the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant. There is a spiritual Israel, to whom the covenant applies within a larger, physical Israel to whom it does not apply. And so, what Paul says is, "Here's the mass of Israel. These are people who bear the genetic structure of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in their bodies. Then, there is an inner circle Israel, and the two are totally different. This part is going to heaven; this part is going to hell.

The same distinction is made in Romans 2 that we've looked at that earlier, verses 28-29, when Paul says, "For he is not a Jew, who is one outwardly [that is, born physically of the Jewish line]; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh [Nor is the ritual of circumcision the real circumcision; it's just the picture. The real thing is something else.]: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly [that is, one who is born again spiritually]; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit [that is, the inward removal of the flesh in the form of the removal of the old sin nature that so often still controls a Christian. It's as if he had not been freed from that part in the circumcision of his heart.

"The inward circumcision of the heart, in spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." So, here is the same idea that not everybody who is a Jew is indeed a true Jew. This is expanded in Galatians 4:29, again, stressing this same distinction. "But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." There is, "he who was born after the Spirit." And there is a distinction there discussing the two children here of Isaac and Ishmael, that one was born after the spirit; the other was simply physically born. So, there was a distinction.

Galatians 6:16 says, "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." "The Israel of God," does not refer to Christians; "the Israel of God" refers to those who are true, born-again Jews. So, the Abrahamic covenant, Paul says, indeed is in effect. God's Word has not fallen, but it applies only to the true Israelite who is the true Jew because He believes in Christ as Savior.

Romans 4:13 pointed out that the Law of Moses given to the Jews did not secure the blessings of eternal life which were promised under the Abrahamic Covenant. Paul says in Romans 4:13, "For 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." When God said, "I'm going to make you a great nation, I'm going to give you a great posterity, and I'm going to give you eternal life," that didn't come through the rituals of circumcision or the keeping of the law. He didn't even have the law. It came through his faith in God's promise.

In Romans 4:12, Paul points out that Abraham was saved by faith in a promised, future Savior, and not by keeping the ritual of circumcision of the Mosaic Law. "And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walketh in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet circumcised." So that, those of us who are Christians who also follow Abraham's pattern of salvation by faith, we are spiritual children of Abraham. So, not all those of Israel's flesh are Israel's faith.

**Isaac and Ishmael**

Paul goes on. In Romans 9:7, he says, "Neither." Now, he's introducing an additional clarification. The idea is, "nor is it the case." "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham [The word "seed" is the Greek word, "sperma." This is a noun referring to physical descendants specifically of Abraham. Not all of them, not every one of them are children. The word "teknon."

So, here you have the two words: the seed and the children. The "children," referring to born-again Jews, the true Israel of the Abrahamic covenant. We translate this, "Neither because they are Abraham's descendants are they his children." Neither because they are his seed, his physical descendants, are they his true, spiritual children. Only the children of Abraham are entitled to the blessings of the covenant.

Because, he says, "but." The Bible points out, "In Isaac." "Isaak." ".In Isaak shall thy seed be called." The word "call" is "kaleo." This word here means "a summons." God, exercising His sovereignty in choosing the son of Abraham, through whom the Messiah promise would be fulfilled. Paul says, "The scriptures make it clear to us that just because you are physical seed of Abraham, a physical descendant of Abraham, does not mean you are a child of Abraham."

But, the true children of Abraham are those who are going to be called in a certain pattern. That pattern is represented by Abraham's son Isaac. Isaac was called by God exercising His sovereignty to choose that son. This call is in a future tense, years down the line, when the birth of Jesus Christ would come. Passive: it was done for Abraham by God, this provision of a Savior, through the line of Isaac. It was in Isaac that thy seed, Abraham's "sperma," would be called. Again, that Abraham's physical descendants, his true physical descendants, would be called.

As you know, Abraham had another descendant. Here is the background so you'll understand verse 7. Abraham had another son whose name was Ishmael. The physical line that God chose to work through, however, was not through Ishmael. It was strictly limited to the son Isaac. Genesis 21:12 says this, "And God said unto Abraham, 'Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.'"

Now, as you know, Sarah came up with a bad idea, a strictly human-viewpoint fulfillment. Because she and Abraham were really getting old. He was hitting in the nineties; she was in the eighties. And that's getting a little late to have children. So, Sarah, at least believed that God said, "I'm going to give you a son." We have to give her that much credit. But she made the serious mistake of deciding that something had to be done about it. We can't just believe the Word of God (same foolish thing we do today); we have to help it along and make it come about.

So, as you know, she talked Abraham into taking her Egyptian servant girl and having a child by that servant girl, and Ishmael was born. Now, this happened something like fourteen years before Isaac was born. And so, the point here that Paul is making is that Abraham has physical seed, physical descendants in both Ishmael and Isaac. But, that the calling to being the children of blessing is going to come through Isaac, and it will not come through Ishmael. Because Isaac was a miracle child from God to Abraham, while Ishmael was purely a biological product on the part of Abraham with no divine influence.

The Arab world, which has descended from Ishmael, is not the line of God's fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. There was a difference, you see, between what Ishmael was (sure, he was a descendant of Abraham, but not the line of blessing) and Isaac, who is also a descendant but of the line of blessing. When the 144,000 Jewish evangelists come on the scene in the tribulation era, they will be descendants of Abraham through Jacob's son, that Isaac, and they will be his true children as well. Any Gentile today who trusts in Christ as Savior is a spiritual child of Abraham, but is not part of the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant. In Galatians 3:7-9, we have that distinction pointed out.

So, the Apostle Paul in verses 6-7 simply has said, "You might want to suggest that the Abrahamic covenant is not being fulfilled, because the Jews are not being saved. Instead, they are being lost, and they're going into the lake of fire." But Paul says, "I don't mean to suggest in any way that the Word of God has failed, that it is not taking effect. The point I'm making," Paul says, "is that everybody who is born in the physical line of Abraham is not automatically in the spiritual line of Abraham. It is only the spiritual line that is going to heaven. It is the line that God has selected as he selected Isaac, the miracle baby, and as he did not select Ishmael, the non-miracle baby.

Then, in verse 8, let me illustrate this a little further. He says, "That is [connotes, in other words, "what this means is this"], They who are the children of the flesh [and here we have the word "sarx" for flesh. It refers to the biological birth process. It's same as the word "seed" in verse 7. Those who are the product merely of physical descent], "these are not" [again, Paul consistently uses this strong negative, 'these are not'] the children of God."

These children of the flesh are the natural descendants of Abraham, as are the Jews today, but they children of God are the born-again, spiritual children of Abraham, as he referred to in verse 7. Isaac was a symbol of Abraham's supernatural, born-again posterity. Ishmael was a symbol of Abraham's naturally-born posterity.

The book of Galatians makes this comparison between these two boys: the supernaturally-born posterity, then the naturally-born posterity. Galatians 4, beginning at verse 22, we read, "For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh [just a biological process, nothing of God involved in it]; but he of the freewoman was by promise [it had to be a special act of God, because of the age of the parents]. Which things are an allegory: for these are two covenants; the one from the Mount Sinai, bearing children for bondage, who is Hagar [Paul is saying that the law is a bondage system, like Ishmael was the product of a bondwoman]. For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above [spiritual Jerusalem] is free, which is the mother of us all."

"For it is written, 'Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.' Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise."

**Three Miraculous Births**

Paul is saying, "We Christians, like Isaac, have been supernaturally born-again." Christianity is based on three miracle births. One of them is this miracle birth of Isaac, which established the line of the Savior and was clearly an act of God. Secondly, we have the miracle birth of Jesus Christ through the virgin. And thirdly, we have our own personal miracle birth when we're born again spiritually.

And Paul in verse 28 is saying that, ".We, brethren, as Isaac, are the children of promise." We have a miracle birth. "But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. [The Jews who are merely physical descendants of Abraham don't like biblical Christians, and they don't like what biblical Christians have to say, because it condemns them to an eternity they don't like to anticipate.]

Verse 30 says, "Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but we are free."

So, the Apostle Paul is using this as a frame of reference when he says, "They who are the children of the flesh," in Romans 9:8, "are not the genuine children of God." But, who are the genuine children of God? They are the children who are the children of promise. "Epaggelia." This is a legal word used to indicate a summons. It connotes here a grace calling of God, something secured as a gift - not by negotiation and making agreements with God. The idea is children by virtue of promise. The children of promise are the same as the children of God, and it's in contrast with the children of the flesh. This promise had to do with the birth of Isaac as a miracle baby. It was by special, divine intervention. And Christians are the children of God also by special, divine intervention.

John 1:13, Galatians 4:28, Galatians 3:29 point that out. But Paul says, "It is the children of the promise who are counted.] and the Greek word is "logizomai," which means here, "to be regarded as" [It is those children who are the result of a supernatural promise of God who are to be regarded as] the seed [as the true descendants of these three patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob].

In verse 9, we have the promise to Sarah, "For this is the word of promise." This refers to the promise that God made to Abraham, specifically recorded for us in Genesis 18:10 about this boy that was coming. In Genesis 18:10, "And he said, 'I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son.' And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him." Genesis 18:14, "'Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.'"

Well, as you know, Sarah giggled at that. She laughed, because she had begun to lose hope. She was so old. Abraham was so old. They were both sexually dead and inoperative, and this was now beginning to be ludicrous, that there was going to be the promise of a special son.

And see, God committed Himself to do certain things for Abraham and for his descendants, the Jews. And then, God proceeded to provided whatever was necessary to keep His Word. That's an important point. Sarah didn't understand this. She understood that God had made a promise, but she didn't understand that God was going to provide the details to execute the promise. When God calls us to do something in His service, He's going to give us the details to execute the service. When God gives us a direction that we should move, He will give us what we need to be able to do that.

A key feature needed, of course, here was an heir for Abraham in the form of Isaac, the child of the promise. And so, Sarah was told, "at this time," quoting this Old Testament passage, "at this time [meaning, to God's point in time when the child is to be born], I will come to thee [that is, 'I will come into contact with] Sarah [and a supernatural thing will take place. She] shall have a son." God would bring to Sarah after a period of her pregnancy this son that had been promised.

Now, Abraham believed God's promise about Isaac, and that was no small thing to believe. Romans 4:19-20 puts it this way, "And being not weak in faith, he [Abraham] considered not his own body now dead [that is, sexually dead], when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform." Now, that's the issue. If we could only learn that simple lesson: what God has promised, He is able to perform, and He will do the performing. We do not get involved in putting the pieces together.

So, scientific arguments notwithstanding, Abraham said, "I'm going to have a son," and indeed, God restored this capacity to a ninety-nine year-old man and to an eighty-nine year-old woman. That's their age when the conception finally took place. And Abraham's faith in God's promise of a son exemplified his faith in God's promise to save him by grace.

Romans 4, beginning at verse 22 points that out, the connection. He believed God about the son, and it was an indication, an example, of his believing what God said about saving him. "And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification." Abraham's experience is recorded so that we would learn that when God says He's going to do something, we can trust Him to do it.

So, no one today is saved by religious works or rituals, self-crucifixion, by association with godly people, or by mixing law and grace in some way. The true Israelites today are those who, like Isaac, are the products of a supernatural birth. Isaac was the product of a supernatural birth. The true Israelite among the Jews today is the product of a supernatural birth through Christ.

Abraham's period of unbelief fourteen years before produced the human viewpoint decision of Ishmael. God's Word is, however, never to be frustrated by man's unbelief or man's wickedness. That caused a lot of problems, but it didn't keep God from keeping His promise. God protected the true line of the Savior, which He promised to Adam in Genesis 3:15.

So, the birth of the miracle child Isaac to overage parents, the birth of Jesus Christ to a virgin woman so that that child was free of the sin nature, and the new birth spiritually of those of us who trust in Christ today is the direct consequence of all this that Paul is talking about here as the way God has dealt with the Jewish people. That salvation which was brought to Abraham has been expanded to all of us Gentiles. That does not make us part of the Abrahamic covenant. That doesn't bring us under Israel's blessings, or earthly blessings, but it does bring us under the spiritual salvation blessing that was promised to Abraham.

All three miracle births, as you know, are rejected by liberals, and they are rejected by unbelievers, and they try to reduce these simply to natural phenomenon. There is no Christianity without these three miracle acts of God. There is no eternal life to those who call these false. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and all that His name implies, and thou shalt be saved.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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