

*From the Bits and Pieces series (#489) by Elder Ralph Harris*

## IT IS GOD THAT SHOWETH MERCY

Some have tried to explain God's election by saying that God foresaw those who would be good and He consequently elected them to salvation on that basis. However, not only does the Bible teach just the opposite with regard to what God foresaw (Psalm 14:2-3), but such an arrangement would base salvation entirely upon creature righteousness and human merit, which the Bible emphatically denies (Romans 9:11; Romans 11:5-6 & Eph. 2:8-10).

The example of Jacob and Esau clearly makes the point to anyone who is willing to see. The Lord loved one of them and hated the other without any consideration of their works, either good or bad, and without any unrighteousness or injustice on God's part (Romans 9:11-14). Neither Jacob nor Esau had any merit by nature, but were both sinners under the curse of God's holy law. God simply had mercy on one of them and not the other. Jacob became a godly person because of God's mercy. Esau was left in his sins.

The charge is often made against this doctrine that God would have been unjust to love one and not another, but this is a false conclusion based upon a false premise. God would have remained just and holy if He had never loved *anyone*. It is clearly His divine prerogative to have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and to have compassion on whom He will have compassion (Exodus 33:19). "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Romans 9:15-16, 18). The lesson is as clear as pure spring water.

The key word here is "mercy;"---not the *just deserts* of men, but *mercy*. If mankind were *deserving* of God's love and compassion there would be no place for *mercy* whatsoever. All are enemies of God by nature (Romans 8:7-8), and all would have remained in that condition if He had not shown *mercy* to those He loved. Some of mankind are "vessels of *wrath*," and some of them are "vessels of *mercy*" (Romans 9:22-23). If you have the love of God in your heart, it is because you are a vessel of mercy. If you *don't* have the love of God in your heart, then you are not interested in His mercy, and do not feel any need of it. ---Elder Ralph Harris