

REMNANT CHURCH SERMON NOTES – ROMANS 9: 13
PREACHED ON SEPTEMBER 13, 2026, BY REV. B.B. ANUM-HIGHER

13 Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

➤ **INTRODUCTION**

- Before us are twin boys, and before either of them had been born, God declared of the younger, “Jacob I loved,” and of the firstborn, “Esau I hated.” Before the twins were ever born, God revealed His purpose to their mother Rebekah in verse 12, saying, “The older will serve the younger.” Then, many centuries later, through the prophet Malachi in the opening verses of the last book of the Old Testament, God reaffirmed His sovereign choice with these remarkable words: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” (Malachi 1:2–3; Rom. 9:13).
- From the beginning of their lives to the close of the Old Testament, God's purpose concerning these two brothers remained unchanged. At first hearing, those words sound astonishing, even offensive. They seem difficult to reconcile with the same Bible that commands us to love our enemies and to love our neighbors as ourselves. How can such language come from the God who is love? That is the question many people ask when they first encounter this passage.
- This morning I stand before you to defend these words because I believe they are the very words of God. They are true, and therefore they are worthy of our faith and careful consideration. We must not explain them away or soften their force simply because they challenge our natural way of thinking. Instead, we must allow Scripture to interpret Scripture and humbly submit ourselves to what God has revealed.

➤ **WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT GOD LOVED JACOB AND HATED ESAU?**

Firstly, consider the God who speaks these words.

- There is not a single moral defect in Him. Not one! Scripture calls Him the Father of lights. There are dark spots even upon the sun, and every one of us has blind spots, but there is not the smallest trace of darkness in God. God is light, and in Him there is absolutely no darkness. He is perfectly consistent in all that He is and all that He does.
- God is eternally and perfectly righteous, calm, pure, and at peace within Himself. God's holiness is one of His supreme perfections. Indeed, the third Person of the Trinity is called the Holy Spirit. The holiness of God is infinite and immeasurable. It has no beginning and will have no end. He possesses holiness in absolute perfection. The cherubim who surround His throne have never sinned; they serve Him continually and are holy beings. Yet when they behold the majesty and holiness of God, they cover their faces and cry continually to one another, “Holy!

Holy! Holy!” They cannot look upon Him without being overwhelmed by the infinite holiness of the God they serve. That is the God who speaks to us in our text.

Secondly, consider the miserable condition of fallen humanity.

- Every human being has sinned. This is one of the great themes running throughout Scripture. First Kings 8:46 says, “There is no one who does not sin.” Psalm 143:2 declares, “No one living is righteous before you.” Romans 3:12 says, “All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” First John 1:8 warns us, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” Christ alone was without sin.
- What exactly is this sin that has brought such misery upon us? Scripture describes it in many different ways, but at its root sin is rebellion and deviation from the holy law of God. It has corrupted the whole person—the heart, mind, understanding, judgment, will, desires, affections, conscience, and every part of our body and soul. Consequently, fallen man is incapable of producing perfect spiritual righteousness, the kind of goodness that a holy God can examine and declare completely pleasing. We possess a natural inclination toward evil. Children do not need to be taught selfishness, pride, or self-centeredness; these things come naturally to us. By nature we are enemies of God. We rejected His authority, and our sin ultimately led to the crucifixion of His Son. We are slaves to sin, and nothing we do is completely untouched by its corruption.
- The consequences are therefore everywhere. We commit sins of omission and commission in our thoughts, words, and actions. Some sins are committed ignorantly and others deliberately. Some arise from weakness, while others are carried out with full intention. Yet there was only one way our guilt could ever be removed: through the incarnation of the Son of God. He had to come into this world, born in Bethlehem in that humble stable.
- Jesus Christ had to live under the demands of God's law and fulfil every commandment perfectly. Then He had to willingly submit Himself to the judgment of God, bearing the guilt of the sins of His people and interceding for them. He was crucified and hung upon the cross for hours in darkness, surrounded by a mocking crowd, bearing the wrath of the holy God who hates sin. This was the only way God's righteous condemnation against our sin could be satisfied and sinners could be reconciled to Jehovah.
- One consequence of sin is guilt, though we may not always feel that guilt immediately, as David did in the matter of Bathsheba. Another consequence is the pollution and defilement of sin, a stain that reaches into every part of our being. Another consequence is God's judgment upon sin—ultimately death and hell. “The wages of sin is death.”

Thirdly, consider how this holy God responds to sinful humanity.

- When Adam and Eve failed to obey God in the Garden and deliberately did the one thing God had forbidden, God did not simply overlook their rebellion. He drove them out of Eden and prevented them from returning. He had warned them, “When you eat of it you will surely die.” Sin entered the world, and death entered with it. Our first parents began to experience physical death, while spiritual death had already entered their hearts. As Paul says, “Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.”
- Scripture tells us that “the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness” (Romans 1:18). We are told that God is angry with the wicked every day. We are reminded of Sodom and Gomorrah and of the great flood. Scripture tells us that God loves righteousness and hates wickedness. Indeed, Psalm 97:10 says, “Let those who love the LORD hate evil.” Paul later exhorts the church in Rome to “hate what is evil” (Romans 12:9).

Fourthly, consider what it means that God hated Esau.

- What does the Scripture mean when it says, “Esau I have hated”? Some have argued that the word “hate” is comparative, meaning that God loved Esau less than he loved Jacob, so that Jacob was his favorite. There is some truth in the idea that a comparison is being made, but we must be careful because there is no partiality or injustice with God. God cannot be bribed, manipulated, or persuaded to show favor to someone who deserves it.
- We can understand something of this comparative use of the word “hate” from the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus described the demands of discipleship, he said, “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother . . . he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26). Jesus certainly was not commanding us to despise our parents. He honored His earthly parents and loved His mother Mary to the very end. There were even occasions when Mary and His brothers wanted Him to leave His ministry and return home, yet Jesus never ceased to love them. So what did He mean when He said that we must hate our father and mother?
- He was making us confront the question of ultimate loyalty. Who has first place in our hearts? Whom do we love above everyone else? If our parents oppose our obedience to Christ, then we must resist their opposition because our love for Christ is greater than our natural affection for them. If they forbid us to follow Christ or oppose our baptism, we must obey the Lord rather than our parents. When we reach adulthood and leave their authority, we must still confess Christ openly as our Lord and Savior. We hate whatever opposes our Savior because He is altogether lovely and worthy of our highest affection. Compared with our love for Christ, even our deepest natural affection for a husband, wife, parent, or

child must appear so small that, by comparison, it can almost be described as hatred. Christ must have the supreme place in our hearts.

- Now consider Esau in his sin, guilt, and condemnation. He was a child of wrath, just as we all were by nature before God showed us mercy. God is angry with the wicked every day. But we must understand something important when we speak about divine hatred. We must never transfer to God all the sinful features that often accompany human hatred. The hatred we see in fallen humanity can be cruel, malicious, vindictive, bitter, and destructive. None of those things can ever be attributed to the holy God.
- There is nothing unrighteous in God's hatred. There is no malice, no malevolence, no vindictiveness, and no sinful bitterness in Him. God's hatred of Esau, and of all that is sinful, is a perfectly holy and righteous opposition to everything that is wicked, corrupt, cruel, proud, and rebellious. His hatred is perfectly consistent with His holiness and justice. It is constant, steady, infinite, and immeasurable. That is why Scripture warns us that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for our God is a consuming fire.

Fifthly, consider the question: how could God love Jacob?

- How could God love Jacob, the cheat, the liar, and the polygamist? Here was a man whose family life became deeply troubled and dysfunctional because of the way he lived and the relationships he created. His sons became divided against one another, and eventually they hated Joseph so intensely that they almost murdered their own brother, changing their minds only at the last moment and selling him into slavery in Egypt.
- How could God love their father Jacob? Was there unrighteousness in God? Was Jehovah indifferent to Jacob's deceit, selfishness, and dishonesty? Certainly not. God hated Jacob's sins and everything in Jacob that was contrary to His holy character. He did not look at Jacob's sinful behavior and call it good. Yet God loved Jacob in Christ. And that is the only way God can love any sinner with an everlasting and saving love. God loved Jacob because Jacob was united to Christ, and the righteousness of Christ was counted as his righteousness. As the hymn says, "God looks on Him and pardons me." God looked upon Christ, the spotless Lamb, and loved Jacob because Christ would bear Jacob's sin and provide the righteousness Jacob could never produce for himself.
- The Son of God was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. Before the creation of the universe, God chose Jacob in Christ to be holy and blameless in His sight. "In love He predestined him to be adopted as His son through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will—to the praise of His glorious grace" (Ephesians 1:4–6). In Christ, Jacob had redemption through Christ's blood and the forgiveness of his sins according to the riches of God's grace.
- That is why God could love Jacob, and it is precisely the same reason He can love you and me. It is not because of anything good that we have done. It is not because we were naturally better than others. It is entirely because of what

Jesus Christ has done for us. Christ earned the righteousness that God credits to us. Christ lived the perfectly obedient life that we failed to live, and Christ endured the judgment that our sins deserved. He removed God's wrath from us by His atoning death and reconciled us to God.

- So the love of God for Jacob does not mean that God overlooked Jacob's sin. Rather, God dealt with Jacob's sin through Jesus Christ. The cross is where God's holiness, justice, mercy, and love meet. God's hatred of sin is real, but so is His saving love for sinners whom He has chosen in Christ. And that is the only hope any of us has: not our goodness, not our works, not our religious privileges, but Christ alone. God looked upon the perfect obedience and sacrificial death of His beloved Son, and because of Christ He could say to Jacob, and to every sinner who comes to Christ in faith, "You are mine." The God who justly hates sin can also graciously love the sinner He has redeemed. That is the wonder of sovereign grace.

➤ **THE BLESSINGS THAT FLOW FROM GOD'S ELECTION.**

- There are tremendous blessings that come from understanding this doctrine of election, believing it, and meditating upon its glorious reality. You can say, "I was chosen and loved by God before the USA was established as a nation and before the foundations of the world were laid. Before God created the heavens and the earth, He already knew me and loved sinful little me." So what are the benefits and blessings of this divine discrimination? What does it mean for us personally that God, before the foundation of the world, purposed to save sinners through Jesus Christ? What encouragement, comfort, humility, assurance, and worship should this great doctrine produce in the hearts of God's people?

1. It crushes our pride.

- No Christian will arrive in heaven and congratulate himself, imagining that his own works earned him a place there. He will know that the God who knew everything about him had graciously called him to heaven. That is exactly what Paul says in this passage: "not by works but by Him who calls" (verse 12). If God had not predestined us for heaven, that glory would never have become our chosen destination. God himself created within my heart the desire to be with the Lord Jesus. I have absolutely no grounds for boasting that I have been rescued from hell. God reached down His hand and lifted me from the horrible pit and the miry clay. He did it all. Salvation was His work from beginning to end—from its conception, through its continuance, to its final consummation. The only thing I contributed to the price of my redemption was my sin—that was the entire sum of what I brought to God. Electing mercy declares that we contributed nothing toward accomplishing our salvation and it crushes our pride and leaves us amazed at the grace of God.

2. It exalts God, because it gives all the glory to God.

- Election declares that both the plan and accomplishment of our salvation came entirely through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It declares that our repentance, our faith, and even our ability to obey God have come from Him. He opened our hearts. He removed our hearts of stone and gave us hearts of flesh. He is the one who credits us with the righteousness of Christ, adopts us into His family, unites us to Christ, and finally brings us into heaven transformed into His likeness. We did not make ourselves like Jesus. He does all of this. When we fall, He is the one who lifts us up. When we fall seven times, He lifts us up seven times. When we fail, His faithful love covers our failures and continues His work in us.
- If God's sovereign choice is the foundation of our salvation and all glory belongs to Him, then election directs our hearts away from boasting in ourselves or in other people and toward the glory of God alone. It promotes the great purpose for which we were created: to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. As Jonah 3:9 says, "Salvation belongs to the Lord," and therefore all our praise belongs to Him. Heaven will not be populated by sinners who give God a portion of the glory while congratulating themselves for making the wise decision that brought them there. No! Heaven will resound with one great chorus: "To God be the glory, great things He hath done."
- Indeed, one of the ways we can cause our hearts to rise in praise is by reflecting upon God's sovereign grace, just as the psalmist does. In Psalm 59:16–17 he says, "I will sing of Your strength; I will sing aloud of Your steadfast love in the morning. For You have been to me a fortress . . . O my Strength, I will sing praises to You." Do those words belong in your mouth? Are you willing to confess that there is nothing in yourself that gives you grounds for hope, and that nothing in you naturally distinguishes you from the great multitude of unbelieving humanity? Do you acknowledge that you have been saved only because of God's electing grace—because God chose you despite your unbelief and indifference, when there was nothing in you to commend you to Him? Do you believe that He chose you before the foundation of the world, in Christ, and that He did all this for the praise of His glorious grace? Do you agree that without this electing grace you could never be saved? "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him." Those words give us confidence in God's blessing both now and forever. They take our eyes away from ourselves, direct them to Christ, and put a song of praise to God upon our lips.

3. It produces joy.

- Psalm 65:4 says, "Blessed are those You choose and bring near to live in Your courts!" What greater source of joy could there be than knowing that God has set His everlasting love upon us? Paul has already been speaking about God's electing purpose in chapter 8, and his response is not fear or embarrassment but an explosion of joy and praise: "What then shall we say to this? If God is for us,

who is against us? . . . Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? . . . We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life . . . nor things present, nor things to come . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:29–39).

- Just stop and consider the depth of that love—the incomprehensible love of God, the freely given affection of the Father, the Almighty and eternal love that was set upon us before time began. This is a love that does not merely begin our salvation and then leave us to finish the journey ourselves. It has taken hold of us, redeemed us, brought us from spiritual death to spiritual life, and pledged to carry us safely through every battle, trial, temptation, and storm until we reach the everlasting joys that God has prepared for His children at His right hand.
- Before we had done anything good or bad, before we had ever existed, God knew us and purposed to save us in Christ. His love does not depend upon our changing circumstances, our fluctuating emotions, or our imperfect performance. The God who chose us is the God who keeps us. The Christ who redeemed us is the Christ who intercedes for us. The Spirit who gave us life is the Spirit who will bring us safely home.
- That is why the Christian can rejoice even when life is difficult. Our joy does not ultimately rest upon our health, our possessions, our family circumstances, our success, or the absence of trouble. Our deepest joy rests in this unchangeable reality: God has loved us with an everlasting love, and nothing in all creation can separate us from His love in Christ Jesus. The Christian finds his greatest happiness here. We rejoice not merely because God gives us good things, but because He has given us Himself. We have been chosen, loved, redeemed, adopted, and secured by sovereign grace. And when we understand that, our hearts cannot help but rejoice in the God who loved us before the foundation of the world and will love us forevermore.

4. It grants us tremendous privileges.

- Election gives us “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). As a Christian, you already possess every spiritual blessing in Christ. They belong to you now, and they will remain yours through every difficulty and trial that lies ahead. We have been made “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that we may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). All these privileges are ours because of God's electing grace, and they ought to cause us to cling even more firmly to this wonderful truth.

5. It promotes holiness.

- One of the strongest objections to the doctrine of election is this: “If God chooses people for salvation, then surely they will simply live however they please.” Again and again people say to us, “Surely this tremendous emphasis upon God's grace

and His sovereign initiative is dangerous and morally destructive. If people are assured that salvation is entirely the result of divine choice, won't that undermine godly living? Won't it weaken the seriousness and holiness of their walk with God? Surely," they argue, "such a doctrine must work against holiness."

- If salvation is entirely of grace, then we might as well continue in sin and give God's grace even more opportunity to be displayed, someone might argue. But the very purpose of God's election is to make His people holy and blameless in His sight. God has predestined His people to be conformed to the image of His Son. That means that a person cannot say, "I am chosen by God, therefore I do not need to become Christ-like." In fact, the very opposite is true. If I am chosen by God, then I cannot ultimately escape becoming Christ-like, because the purpose of election is that God's invincible grace will carry His people forward until they are increasingly transformed in their intellect, emotions, desires, conduct, and aspirations into the likeness of the Son of God.
- Those whom God has chosen cannot remain permanently under the dominion of sin. They cannot live continually in hostility toward Christ. They cannot persist in deliberate defiance of the will of their Savior, because God's choice of them includes His determination to transform them. He has ordered their lives and promised His grace to ensure that they will finally be conformed to the image of His Son. In other words, to be chosen by God means that God is determined to make us holy. God is committed, with all the resources of His glorious grace, to accomplishing that purpose. He has eternally decreed that His chosen people should become holy and Christ-like. Do you understand the distinction? He did not choose me because I was already holy, nor because I was good, because I was neither. He chose me so that I would become holy; so that I would become good; so that I would increasingly resemble Jesus Christ.

6. It makes us secure.

- If God loved you before you were born, knowing everything about your life, and in the mystery of His sovereign grace chose you to be His own, do you really think He will ever let you go? Never. Never! He has bound you to Himself with unbreakable cords of love and united you to Christ. The security of your salvation does not finally rest upon your ability to hold on to God, but upon God's ability and determination to hold on to you.
- Of course, if we insist that we must contribute one essential link to the chain of our salvation, then our security will always be uncertain. The strength of a chain depends upon its weakest link. There are people who believe that they will remain saved only if they continue doing this, and that, and the other, and the other, and the other. They are never completely sure that they have done enough, persevered enough, obeyed enough, or remained faithful enough. They may say that they believe salvation is by grace, but their thinking often sounds much more like salvation depends upon one indispensable work that they must continue to perform.
- But the doctrine of election points us away from ourselves and toward the God who saves. Our confidence is not that we will never stumble, fail, or fall, but that

God will never abandon those whom He has chosen in Christ. The God who loved us before the foundation of the world is the God who called us, justified us, sanctifies us, and will finally bring us safely into glory. Our salvation begins with His grace, continues by His grace, and will be completed by His grace. Therefore, the believer can rest securely, not in the strength of his own grip upon Christ, but in the strength of Christ's grip upon him.

➤ CONCLUSION

- Saving faith involves understanding the gospel, believing that gospel to be true, and then entrusting your whole life to Jesus Christ as He is revealed in that gospel. We are not saved by trusting in Christ plus something we have done—whether that is signing a decision card, speaking in tongues, being baptized, or having a bishop lay his hands upon our heads. To claim salvation through Christ plus any additional ground is ultimately to destroy our hope, because we never perform any of those things perfectly. Christ saves us completely by Himself, and we receive all the blessings of His salvation by entrusting ourselves to Him alone. He, just as He is, saves me, just as I am.
- Where, then, do security and assurance come from? The answer is found in Christ. We have assurance of salvation as we believe in Christ. And this is where the doctrine of election is such a tremendous help. It tells us that when we can sincerely say to God, “I trust in Jesus Christ,” our faith rests upon the solid foundation of God’s eternal election. We are not saved by believing that we are elect; rather, through saving faith in Christ, we discover the evidence that God has chosen us. Having saved us through faith, God then assures us that we are secure in His mighty hands. Election does not give assurance to unbelief; it gives assurance to faith. The truth that God has sovereignly chosen His people gives the believer God-given confidence that his salvation rests securely in the sovereign grace of God.
- How many Christians struggle through life in weakness, carrying burdens of doubt that would be lifted if only they understood that their salvation rests not upon themselves but upon God! Election tells us that God sought us before we ever sought Him, and that He called us to Himself because He had chosen us long ago. If at any point our salvation depends upon us—upon our character, our consistency, our desires, or our performance—then we are in trouble because none of us can meet God’s perfect demands. But how secure is the believer when everything rests upon God! As Paul says elsewhere, “God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: The Lord knows those who are His” (2 Timothy 2:19). Nothing can make a Christian more confident, courageous, steadfast, and secure than understanding and rejoicing in the doctrine of God’s sovereign election.
AMEN.