

REMNANT CHURCH SERMON NOTES – ROMANS 9: 6-13 (PART 1)
PREACHED ON AUGUST 30, 2026, BY REV. B.B. ANUM-HIGHER

6 It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. 7 Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 8 In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. 9 For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son." 10 Not only that, but Rebekah's children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac. 11 Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: 12 not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger." 13 Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

➤ **INTRODUCTION**

- God has made certain promises to Abraham and about his children down through the generations. For example, He said to Abraham, "Your seed will be as numerous as the sand on the seashore." All the promises point to the salvation that Jesus Christ would bring to a certain group of people described in Scripture as Abraham's descendants. Throughout their history, the Jews have understood the promise to be theirs; it applied to them only, but it seems that this promise has not been fulfilled. The reality on the ground doesn't support the promise. The Jews who were Abraham's seed had rejected God's way of salvation through Christ, and so Paul asked, "Is it that God's word had failed?" The majority of the Jews were outside of Christ. "Has God's promise to Abraham failed?" "Can God be trusted?" "Can God be depended on?" As a Gentile, you could even ask, "If God's promise to the Jews has failed, what about His promises to the Gentiles?" Can we trust the promises of eternal life to those who believe in Him? Can we trust Jesus' promise to be with Christians always, even to the end of the age?
- Not long ago, Paul had said that nothing in all of creation can separate Christians from the love of God in Christ Jesus, but some of Paul's opponents might say, "If God's previous promises to the Jews have failed and proved meaningless, will not these promises prove equally pointless?" "If the majority of God's ancient people are not saved, how do Christians know that they are saved and nothing can separate them from God's love?" Paul answers this question in the verses before us this morning.
- Paul responds to this objection or question by stating that anyone who questions God's faithfulness to His promise has greatly misunderstood the promise God made to Abraham and the Israelites. Paul says, "No, it is not as though God's word had failed." God has always kept His word and His promises. Everything He

said to Abraham has rather been fulfilled. Then the apostle explained what brings the confusion.

➤ **VERSE 6. NOT ALL WHO DESCENDED FROM ISRAEL ARE ISRAEL.**

- Paul says the promises were never made to all of Israel, to all of the natural or ethnic Israel. Listen to what he said in verses 6, “It is not as though God’s word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.” Inside the physical Israelites are the spiritual Israelites, and Paul says the two bodies are not the same. The promise God made to Abraham was not extended to every physical descendant of Abraham simply because of their ethnic origin. The apostle says that salvation is not a matter of national privilege or natural inheritance, because within the physical Israel, there is a spiritual Israel, and they are the true descendants of Abraham. The spiritual Israelites are the true children of God and not the entire national entity. “For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.” Paul is saying that there is no guarantee that God has given in Scripture that all the descendants of Abraham as a physical ethnic group are going to inherit salvation.
- This statement may remind some of you of something Paul had already written earlier in the book of Romans in Romans 2:28–29: “A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man’s praise is not from men, but from God.”
- The decisive issue is not whether someone is physically descended from Israel or has received the outward sign of circumcision. God does not judge by outward appearances; He looks upon the heart. The heart itself must be transformed. Under the Old Testament, circumcision symbolized the cutting away of sin’s dominion and the necessity of belonging wholly to God. It pointed beyond itself to the greater reality fulfilled under the New Covenant—the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of God’s people.
- The promises God made concerning the coming Messiah, the great Seed of Abraham, were never fulfilled in every ethnic Israelite without exception. They were fulfilled in those whose hearts God had renewed by His grace. Long before Christ came, Jeremiah had prophesied that God would establish a new covenant in which He would give His people a new heart and write His law upon it. Among Israel there were those who were outwardly circumcised and inwardly renewed, believing Jews who truly belonged to God. At the same time there would also be uncircumcised Gentiles—Romans, Greeks, and people from every nation—whose hearts had been circumcised by the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ.
- Do you see the distinction Paul is making? Not everyone who descended physically from Jacob, later named Israel, belonged to the true Israel of God. Physical ancestry alone did not guarantee covenant blessing. There was an

Israel within Israel, a believing remnant to whom God's saving promises truly belonged. These were the people whom God acknowledged as His beloved covenant people, because they possessed not only the outward sign of the covenant but also the inward work of His saving grace.

➤ **VERSE 7. NOT ALL THE DESCENDANTS OF ISRAEL WERE ABRAHAM'S CHILDREN.**

- One of the most significant conversations Jesus had with the Jews is recorded in John 8:32–44. In that passage, our Lord explains what it truly means to be His disciple. At its heart, the discussion is really about who belongs to the true Israel of God. During the conversation Jesus declared in verse 32, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Rather than rejoicing at those words, His listeners became offended. They answered, “What do You mean by saying that we shall be set free? We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves to anyone.”
- Their confidence rested entirely on their physical descent from Abraham. They assumed that being members of Abraham's family guaranteed that they stood in a right relationship with God. Jesus acknowledged their physical ancestry, but He immediately exposed the emptiness of their claim. He said, in effect, “Yes, I know you are Abraham's descendants according to the flesh, but you are seeking to kill Me. Abraham would never have done such a thing. Your actions reveal that although you share Abraham's bloodline, you do not share Abraham's faith or character.” Their deeds exposed the identity of their true spiritual father. Then Jesus declared, “You belong to your father, the devil.” They could trace their genealogy back to Abraham, yet spiritually they belonged to Satan. Physical descent had not made them children of God. Their unbelief and hatred of Christ demonstrated that they belonged to another family altogether.
- This perfectly illustrates Paul's point in Romans 9. Not everyone who is descended from Israel is truly Israel. Neither is every physical descendant of Abraham one of Abraham's true children. A person may stand within Abraham's family tree and yet have the Devil, whom Scripture also calls Beelzebub, as his spiritual father. Why? Because instead of believing God's promise, they rejected the promised Seed of Abraham. Rather than welcoming the Messiah through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed, they sought to destroy Him. By rejecting Christ, they proved that, although they possessed Abraham's ancestry, they did not possess Abraham's faith.

➤ **VERSE 8. NOT ALL THE NATURAL CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WERE GOD'S CHILDREN.**

- Paul then went on to prove his argument to us. He cites Abraham's first two children in verses 7-9, and his grandchildren from his son, Isaac, in verses 10-13.

Abraham had children with three women – Hagar, Sarah, and Keturah and had a total of eight sons. The oldest was Ishmael. When God made His promise to Abraham, he was already an older man, and his wife, Sarah, was also well advanced in age. They reasoned that God's promise to give them a son would be fulfilled quickly because of their ages, but God delayed for another 25 years. During the waiting period, Sarah asked Abraham to have a baby with her Egyptian maid servant called Hagar, and Ishmael was born.

- Even though Abraham had a total of 8 sons, the promise was made not to all of them but only to Isaac. Listen to Paul in verses 7 through 9, “Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children. On the contrary, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” 8 In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring. 9 For this was how the promise was stated: “At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son.”
- Not the natural children who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring. The children of Abraham by blood are not the same as the children of the promise given to Abraham. Paul says in verse 9, “For this was how the promise was stated: ‘At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son.’” The promise was given to Sarah’s son. Paul says that not all the physical children of Abraham are the children of the promise. Not all of the sons of Abraham by blood were promised salvation. Only the son who was born spiritually through a miracle received the blessing of salvation. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him, and Sarah, who was barren, was approximately 90 years old when she became pregnant, and 91 years old when she gave birth to Isaac.
- Immediately, Paul seemed to have reasoned that someone might say that Ishmael and the other sons of Abraham had a different mother, and that this might be why they were not chosen as the children of the promise. Someone might say, “Ishmael wasn’t chosen because he wasn’t a legal son of Abraham; he was born by a slave woman.” How did Paul address this objection?
- Paul explained in verses 10 through 13 that this applies not only to Abraham’s children but also to Isaac’s children. “10 Not only that, but Rebekah’s children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac. 11 Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: 12 not by works but by him who calls—she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” 13 Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”
- Rebecca was Isaac’s wife, and she had twins – Esau and Jacob. Note that Esau and Jacob had the same mother. Both had the same physical descent from Isaac, but Paul says, “Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls—she was told, ‘The older will serve the younger.’” The same thing

that happened between Isaac and his other siblings happened in the next generation – one was chosen, and the other was rejected. There was nothing obvious to distinguish the two because they were twins. Isaac loved Esau, and also the human choice between the two as to who would carry the promise would have been Esau, the firstborn. There was a law at that time called the Law of Primogeniture, in which a person's property, titles, or positions passed exclusively to their firstborn legitimate child. Esau would have been the heir of the promise as well as the heir of every other thing.

- Instead, Paul says that God chose not Esau but Jacob, and that was an extraordinary thing because the decision was made by God before they were born. Why did God do that? Why is Paul citing it here to make his argument? Well, the apostle is telling us that salvation is not a matter of physical descent. Salvation is not a matter of some natural privilege. Salvation comes for only one reason, and that is the electing, choosing grace of God. Notice how Paul puts it in verses 11 and 12, "Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: 12 not by works but by him who calls—she was told, 'The older will serve the younger.'" It is Jacob rather than Esau who God has chosen to inherit the promise.
- Paul says when we understand God's purpose for Israel and the promise, we will know that God's word, God's purpose for Israel, has not failed. The few Israelites who repented of their sins and believed in Jesus and His message of salvation were the Israelites to whom the promise was given. They are the real and the true Israel. They are the spiritual and chosen Israel, designed for heaven. There has always been a separation in the nation of Israel. Throughout their history, there has always been a division and a rejection, that is, the big physical Israel and the spiritual or chosen Israel.
- The Jews always took pride in their relationship with Abraham. "Abraham is our father," they told Jesus in John 8:39. Because of their misunderstanding of the promise, the Jewish leaders believed that their descent from Abraham granted them a special relationship with God, which was a source of pride and identity, but in response, Jesus challenges this claim by stating that true children of Abraham would act in accordance with Abraham's faith and actions. He implies that their current behavior contradicts Abraham's legacy, suggesting that their spiritual lineage is not as secure as they believe. What did Abraham do? He believed in the coming Messiah. He was glad and rejoiced in seeing the day of the Messiah, says Jesus. Abraham didn't try to get rid of the Messiah in his life.

➤ **DO GENTILES HAVE A CLAIM TO THE PROMISE GIVEN TO ABRAHAM?**

- The promise of the gospel is not to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but it is for the chosen within that group of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As a matter of fact, the Gentiles have more claim to that promise than the Jews. Listen to what Paul said to a church with mostly Gentile members in

Galatians 3:26-29, “26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Earlier, Paul had said in Galatians 3:8, “Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you.’”

- You can be outwardly identified with the nation of Israel, but if Abraham’s faith is not in your heart, it will be no advantage that Abraham’s blood runs in your veins. Not all of the physical Israel will be saved, but all of the spiritual Israel will be saved. The Jews always held the view that they were Abraham’s seed and therefore, they are all the sons of God and would go to heaven. Paul says if it were true that all of Abraham’s sons would be saved, then what about Ishmael, whose descendants have always been involved in all forms of wickedness, even against the Israelites? Nations that came out of Ishmael were outside of Christ and became wicked nations who attacked, killed, and persecuted Israel. Does that mean Ishmael’s descendants would be in heaven? Paul says that it cannot happen.
- Paul gives us a detailed explanation of who the children of the promise are in Galatians 4:22–28, where he writes: “For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written: ‘Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.’ Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.”
- Paul contrasts the descendants of Hagar and her son Ishmael with those of Sarah and her son Isaac. Isaac alone was the child born according to God’s promise. Then Paul makes a remarkable application to the Gentile believers in Galatia, located in what is now modern-day Turkey. He tells them, “Just as Isaac was the child of promise, so you also are children of promise.” In other words, God’s covenant promise to Abraham—that through his Seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed—was never intended for every physical descendant of Abraham without exception. It was not given to Ishmael and all who descended from him simply because they shared Abraham’s bloodline. The promise belongs to God’s true children, those who have received the Holy Spirit through faith in

Christ and who, by their lives and witness, proclaim the gospel and shine as lights in the world.

- This is Paul's answer to the question that troubled so many Jewish believers after Christ's resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost: Why have so many of my fellow Jews rejected their own Messiah? How could the majority of Israel approve of Jesus' death as though He were a blasphemer? Paul's answer is that God's Word has not failed. The promises of God were never directed to every circumcised Jew without exception. They were always intended for the children of the promise—the true Israel of God, Abraham's spiritual offspring rather than merely his physical descendants. Entrance into the kingdom of God has never been secured by physical descent, but by God's sovereign grace working through faith.
- In the visible church of God, there is a division, a separation, and a rejection. You can go to a big church with about 600 members. Even though they all profess to be Christians, they are not all going to heaven just because they have all made a profession of faith and are actively involved in the church. Only those who genuinely believe in Christ and daily repent of their sins would be saved, and the rest would be rejected. The gospel is not 'salvation to all,' but only for 'those who believe.' To the rest, it is a sentence of death.

➤ **CONCLUSION.**

- Privileges can be deceptive. You ask someone in our city if she is a Christian, and you are likely to hear this: "I am a member of This and That Reformed Church, my grandparents were elders at this church, we have always been Christians. I attended a Christian School, was baptized as an infant, and have made a profession of faith." These are the grounds on which so many people based their salvation. They appeal to their lineage and heritage and disregard the appeal of the gospel to repent of their sins and truly believe in Christ week after week. They think they automatically became Christians because of their infant baptism, lineage, and their association with the church, etc.
- Going to heaven automatically didn't work out that way for all of Abraham's children and grandchildren, and the millions of Jews at the time of the Messiah and up until now. It doesn't work that way for everyone in our generation. All of Abraham's children and grandchildren were circumcised, but not all of them were part of the spiritual Israel who were saved. It is not necessarily true that the children of believers are automatically saved. Not everyone baptized as an infant is going to heaven. It is not automatic.
- Our parents may be faithful Christians, but that alone gives us no assurance that we will one day join them in heaven. You were born into their family, but have you been born into God's family? Have you personally received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord? John makes this truth unmistakably clear in the opening chapter of his Gospel: "To all who received him, to those who believed in

his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God” (John 1:12–13). Every one of us must personally experience the new birth. It is a birth from above. It does not come through believer's baptism, infant baptism, confirmation, participation in the Lord's Supper, or church membership. None of these ordinances can produce spiritual life.

- The new birth is God's work alone. It comes from heaven as the Holy Spirit enters a sinner's heart, giving new life and creating a new nature. While these ordinances are important expressions of obedience and may mark a person's entrance into the visible church, they cannot save. Consider Israel. Every male bore the outward sign of circumcision, yet many—perhaps the majority—never experienced the inward circumcision of the heart. They belonged outwardly to the covenant community, but they remained strangers to God's saving grace. They had never known His life-giving work within them. What we all need is a living and personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.
- Church membership should be the fruit of genuine conversion, and that saving relationship is strengthened through the faithful use of the gospel ordinances. These are precious gifts God has appointed for His people, but they are not the source of salvation. A person may sit under the preaching of God's Word every Lord's Day, hear His promises and warnings week after week, and yet never truly know Him in a saving and transforming way.
- Paul's point is that throughout Israel's history it was always a remnant who truly trusted in the Lord. When the promised Messiah finally appeared, it was again only a remnant within Israel who recognized Him, believed in Him, and confessed Him as their Lord and God. They were the faithful ones who had longed for the coming of the Messiah, recognized Him when He appeared, sang the psalms with believing hearts, rested upon God's covenant promises, and entered into the joy and blessing of His great salvation.
- Everyone, regardless of your spiritual privileges, must be born again. You have to become a child of God by forsaking your personal sins and believing personally in Jesus Christ as your Lord and personal Savior. Do not say that I have always been a member of this and that church, and my parents were Christians, because connections to the church and Christians are privileges, but they do not get you to heaven. You must have personal faith in Jesus Christ to be saved. Have you done that? Have you forsaken your sins and believed in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Do you know Jesus Christ personally? This is what it takes to be saved. AMEN.