

REMNANT CHURCH SERMON NOTES – ROMANS 9: 6-13 (PART 2)
PREACHED ON SEPTEMBER 6, 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**

- You will remember that Paul is answering a very important objection. The question is this: How can God's covenant promises to Israel—to make them His people and save them—be reconciled with Israel's rejection of their own Messiah and their persecution of His followers? If the chosen nation has rejected Christ, has God's promise failed? Paul answers that question decisively in verse 6: "It is not as though God's word had failed." The apostle explains that the problem does not lie with God's promises but with a misunderstanding of them. He has already shown us that not everyone who belongs to Israel outwardly belongs to the true Israel of God. In verse 6, he says that not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. In verse 7, he teaches that not all of Abraham's physical descendants are truly Abraham's children. Then in verse 8, he explains that not all the natural children of Israel are the children of God. Those were the truths we considered together last Lord's Day.
- Paul's point is straightforward: there is nothing defective or unreliable about God's Word. God's promises have not failed. More often than not, the problem is that we misunderstand what God has actually promised. We sometimes read His Word through the lens of our own expectations rather than allowing Scripture to define its own promises. For example, Jesus teaches that if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things will be added to us. Yet many Christians begin to wonder why their lives do not unfold as they had hoped. One believer remains unmarried. Another longs for children but remains childless. Another struggles with poor health. Someone else cannot find steady employment. Another finds it difficult to make ends meet and wonders why prosperity never seems to come. They ask, "If Jesus promised that God would add all these things to those who seek His kingdom first, why am I still lacking what I desire?"

- The difficulty is not that God has failed to keep His Word, but that we have misunderstood what He promised. God never says that every Christian will marry, that every believing couple will have children, that no believer will ever suffer illness, that every disciple will enjoy financial prosperity, or that revival must come according to our timetable. Nowhere does Scripture guarantee such blessings. They are not included among the "all things" Jesus promised to provide. What God does promise is infinitely greater. He promises that if we make His kingdom our highest priority and gladly submit to Christ's rule, He will faithfully supply everything He has pledged in His Word. He will work all things together for our good. He will supply all our needs according to His riches in glory. He will never leave us nor forsake us. His grace will always be sufficient. He will fill us with His Holy Spirit, preserve us to the end, and finally bring us safely into His heavenly kingdom, where we shall be made like Christ. Those are promises God has made, and not one of them has ever failed. He has never promised a luxury car in every driveway, a life free from sickness, or earthly prosperity for every believer, though in His kindness, He may grant such blessings to some. What He has promised every disciple is a cross to carry. Many people accuse God of breaking promises that He never actually made.
- Having established that God's promises never fail, Paul now returns to the question of who actually receives the promise of salvation. In verse 11, speaking of Jacob and Esau, he writes: "Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand." Those words introduce one of the most profound doctrines in all of Scripture. This morning, we will consider together the biblical doctrine of election and seek to understand why Paul brings it into this discussion.
- I know of a man who grew up in the Christian Reformed Church, had godly parents, graduated from a Christian School, and served as a deacon and elder in the Christian Reformed Church, but he currently rarely fellowships with believers and shows no sign that he is a Christian. He has abandoned the faith. How can you explain why this man, who throughout his life has been identified with the reformed Church, but has now abandoned the teachings of the Bible that were at the core of the Reformation? How can you explain why the majority of the Jews are outside of Christ despite their spiritual privileges? Paul told us that the doctrine of election helps to explain questions like these.

➤ **THE FREE WILL OF GOD: THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.**

- What is it that brings people to repentance and faith? What is it that makes people receive the salvation that is for the Jew first and then to the Gentile? Paul says the answer is in God's elective purpose. The doctrine of election lies at the very heart of what Paul is saying here. Election is a truth both the Old and New Testaments teach. God Himself chooses a people, and He does not choose

them merely on the basis of physical descent but solely on His own elective purpose. Election is God's free will.

- Many of us are only interested in human free will, so many people object to God's free will, that is the doctrine of election, on the basis that it threatens human or our own free will but we must remember two things: man's will is limited, and man's will is polluted. Man's will is limited in ways that God's will is not. God's will is totally free to accomplish whatever he pleases. God is only limited in any action by His own choice. Man's will, however free he may think it is, is always limited by his abilities, and he is subservient to the will of Almighty God. Man's will is not only limited but also polluted. It is affected by sin. He wants sinful things because his will is affected by his sinful nature, along with everything else. This is what the theologians mean by 'total depravity.'
- They do not mean that we are all as bad as one another, or that everybody is just as sinful as Hitler was, or as bad as we could be or as we shall be, but that no part of us is unaffected by sin, our minds, and the way we think, our affections, our powers of observation, our desires for the things we want, our wills and the things we strive to do. Our wills are not characterized by freedom. Our wills are characterized by bondage to sin. Only God ultimately has free will, and in choosing a people and whom He wants to save, He exercises that free will.
- Two of the titles given to God in the Bible are Father and Bridegroom or Husband. What is it that makes God a Father and a Bridegroom? The doctrine of election simply means that God, as a Father, chooses His adopted sons and daughters, and God, as a Bridegroom, chooses His own bride. Even here in America and in several parts of the world, a couple has the free will to choose their adopted child or children. The hospital, government agency, or others don't say that "We have decided that you should adopt this child and that is it." You have the free will to decide whether to adopt a boy or girl. A husband also has the free will to choose his bride. So we have the free will to make adoption and marriage decisions.
- Interestingly, we are very reluctant to allow God to do that. We hate the idea that God exercises His free will in choosing His adopted sons and daughters. People attack John Calvin for the doctrine of election as if it were his own invention. It is a doctrine presented in both the Old and New Testaments. Far before John Calvin knew about this doctrine, our Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples in John 15:16, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." Jesus was simply repeating what the whole of the Old Testament Scripture tells us. We are here this morning as God's children because God, before the foundation of the world, as written in Ephesians 1, chose us in Christ to be His people. You are, in other words, God's chosen child and Christ's chosen bride.
- Throughout the Old Testament we repeatedly see God exercising His sovereign choice, selecting both individuals and an entire nation according to His own purpose. God sovereignly entered the life of a man living in the great city of Ur and called Abraham out from among his people. He set him apart and

commanded him to leave his homeland for the land God had promised to give him. From Abraham's family, God chose one son rather than another. From Isaac's sons, He chose Jacob instead of Esau. Later He chose Ephraim over Manasseh. Again, and again the Scriptures reveal that God makes distinctions between individuals according to His own sovereign will.

- The same principle is seen on a national level. God chose Israel to be His covenant people. They alone were known as the chosen people of God. He passed over every other nation—the Egyptians, the Philistines, the Assyrians, the Moabites, the Ninevites, the Babylonians, the Greeks, and later the Romans. Out of all the peoples of the earth, He set His love upon this comparatively small nation, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Why did God choose Israel and not the other nations? He answers that question Himself in Deuteronomy 7:6-8: "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you."
- That passage takes us beyond God's choice to its deepest foundation—His love. God's election flows out of His sovereign love. He did not choose Israel because they were greater, stronger, wiser, or more deserving than the surrounding nations. His choice rested entirely upon His own gracious love and purpose. Yet that immediately raises another question: Why should God set His love upon sinners such as us? Scripture never attributes the answer to anything found within us. It directs us instead to the sovereign, free, and gracious love of God. Why He loved you or me in particular is a mystery known only to Him, but we know with certainty that His love came first, and from that eternal love flowed His gracious choice.
- Paul says 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: not by works but by him who calls—she was told, 'The older will serve the younger.'" You will never understand the truth about salvation as presented in the Bible if you take out the doctrine of election. Why must we understand this doctrine? I will state three reasons.
- **FIRST.** Election produces genuine biblical humility in the believer. Many people imagine that it produces the opposite, namely, some kind of arrogant pride. A true understanding of election produces genuine biblical humility because, as a Christian, I discover that I was chosen by God not for any good in me or in who I am. God said to the Israelites, "The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt." So the Christian comes to God and discovers that the eternal and holy

God, before the foundation of the world, set His love upon him, upon her, and chose him in Christ to be His child. This produces a genuine biblical humility.

- The elect of God, the Christian plays no role in his salvation, it is all the work of God just like the songwriter said, "Not what my hands have done; Can save my guilty soul; Not what my toiling flesh has borne; Can make my spirit whole. Not what I feel or do; Can give me peace with God; Not all my prayers and sighs and tears; Can bear my awful load."
- **SECOND.** It produces a true ethical energy. Again, many people imagine that the doctrine of election produces some kind of ethical carelessness, that is, "Well, I am chosen in Christ and that is all that matters; I can live as I will." But whenever the truth of election is mentioned in the New Testament, it is always associated with an appeal to live the life that this doctrine has been given by God to produce in us. If God has chosen me in Jesus Christ, why has He done that? Paul says, He has chosen me for holiness. He has predestined us to be conformed to the image and likeness of Jesus Christ. In my own life, God, before the foundation of the world, has set His heart upon me and laid His hand upon me, and He has done it for the purpose of making me holy. You cannot be a true Christian and not be transformed because the transformation of the character of the Christian is part of God's purpose throughout all the ages.
- **THIRD.** The doctrine of election first produces a genuine biblical humility. Secondly, it produces a genuine ethical energy, and thirdly, it produces evangelistic activity. Again, many people imagine that one thing that will paralyze evangelism is this idea that some people are chosen and others are not, so what is the point in going out to preach the gospel? The answer to that is very simple: the preaching of the gospel is the very way God has ordained for those whom He has chosen as His sons and daughters to be brought to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Let me give you an illustration of that. Paul is the greatest evangelist the world has ever known. He wept, his heart was broken for his fellow Jews who were still in their unbelief and had rejected the gospel and were outside of Christ. Paul's answer to the spiritual condition of his people was not to stay at home and count on the doctrine of election; rather, he says that the doctrine energizes him for evangelism.
- For example, when he was in Corinth and found himself in great difficulty over his ministry there, he decided to give up. God appeared to him one night while he was there and was ready to give up, and said to him, "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." God said He had many people in the city, but these people haven't been converted yet. How did God know that there were many people in that city who were Christians? Well, the apostle says, "This is what gave me good cheer, this is what sent me out into the ancient world with a burden on my soul to present the gospel because I know that God has chosen some people before the world was formed in Corinth as His own." True to God's word, there were many who were brought to faith in Corinth.

➤ **ELECTION IS PERSONAL.**

- God elects His children individually. The word "election" would be meaningless if God chose everyone, because choosing everyone means God made no choice. There are some people who think that it is not fair for God to choose some people and reject others, but who are we to decide what is fair and what isn't? It is God who decides what is fair, not humans. For example, Abraham thought that it wasn't fair for God to choose Isaac for salvation and reject Ishmael. In Genesis 17:18, Abraham asks God, "O that Ishmael might live under Your blessing!" Abraham desired that Ishmael be included in God's promises, despite knowing that God's covenant would be established through Isaac, his son with Sarah, but God had his own purpose in electing Isaac. God responds affirmatively to Abraham's plea, assuring him that Ishmael will also be blessed, not for salvation, but emphasizes that the covenant will be with Isaac.
- We find the same thing being repeated in the next generation. Isaac preferred that God choose Esau over Jacob for salvation because of the Law of Primogeniture in effect at the time. The Law of Primogeniture states that a person's property, titles, or positions are 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. Esau was indeed beloved by Isaac, primarily due to their shared interests. Isaac favored Esau because he enjoyed wild game, which Esau often hunted (Genesis 25:28), but God had a different purpose and chose Jacob to carry on the true worship of God. In terms of human judgment, Jacob was not the most adorable of the two young men.
- More than that, Esau was the firstborn. Humanly speaking, the inheritance and the covenant line should have passed through him. Jacob, on the other hand, grew up to be a deceiver, a schemer, and a thief. He manipulated his brother, deceived his father, and eventually had two wives and two concubines. Yet God determined that the promised line would continue through Jacob and not through Esau. He made that decision while the twins were still in their mother's womb. Before either child had performed a single act worthy of reward or punishment, God had already determined their different roles and destinies.
- The differing destinies of Jacob and Esau were not determined by their physical descent, for both were sons of Isaac. Neither were they determined by birth order, even though Esau was the firstborn. Nor were they based upon any good or evil works that God foresaw either brother would perform. Before they were born, God chose one and passed over the other.

➤ **ELECTION IS PREDETERMINED.**

- God not only elects His children individually, but He also went before anything man could ever do in choosing His elect. Both Isaac and Jacob were chosen before their births and announced to their mothers, before they could do

anything, good or bad. There was nothing in either Isaac or Jacob that attracted God to them, nothing that made them beautiful in the eyes of God. Only God knew the reason why He chose them. When God chose us to become Christians, it wasn't because of who we are or what we have done or not done. Election, therefore, takes away the false confidence in the elect. I cannot say that I was chosen because I have godly parents, attend a Bible-believing church, went to a Christian school, served as an elder, etc.

- Esau's attitude demonstrated false confidence. He thought all was well with him because he was his father's favorite and didn't take his spiritual privileges seriously. He sold his birthright for some food to eat when he was hungry, thinking it was not very important. He didn't care about those things, and even as he sold his birthright, he thought there were still more blessings for him from his father. The elect, on the other hand, has no self-confidence. He knows that unless God saves him, unless God chooses him, the power is not in his hands to save himself when he wants to.

➤ **ELECTION IS EFFECTUAL.**

- Election is, first of all, personal. Secondly, it was predetermined by God, and thirdly, it is effectual. How did we know that Isaac and Jacob were the elect of God? In the case of Isaac, God told Abraham and Sarah by divine revelation that He had chosen Isaac over Abraham's other children. In the case of Jacob, Isaac and Rebekka were also told by divine revelation which one of the twins was chosen. What about our families and us? How do we know whether we are the elect of God and whether a member of our families is chosen by God for salvation, because we don't have that divine revelation to know who is chosen and who is not?
- We recognize who God has chosen by God's work in their lives. The elect bear fruit as evidence that they belong to God. Jesus declares in John 10:27, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." The marks of Christ's sheep are not perfection, but perseverance. They continue listening to His voice. They continue following their Shepherd. Jesus' sheep have two distinctive marks that identify them as his. They have one mark on the ear – they keep on listening – and they have a mark on their feet – they keep on following. Literally, Jesus says, "They keep on listening to Me, and they keep on following Me." They love the word of God, and they follow Jesus by their obedience to His word.
- Some people who call themselves Christians are like plastic flowers stuck in the garden. It looks real for a while, but it doesn't take long to know they are not real. Some church people are like statues of animals, such as deer and dogs, on the lawn. They look so real, and as you drive by, you think they are real animals, but as you go too close to them, you will know that they are not real. You throw fire and objects at these statues, and they are not scared away. These church

people show no evidence of repentance in their lives, and Jesus is not the master of their lives. They are Christian-like because of their association with the church, but are not Christians. They are “life-like,” but they have no life in them. The elect bear the fruit of holiness as evidence of the transformation within them.

- Ishmael didn't continue the true worship he grew up with under Abraham. He fathered 12 sons and a daughter who married Esau. He lived to the ripe old age of 137. Ishmael's numerous descendants lived among unbelieving people, settled near the eastern border of Egypt, and were hostile toward all their relatives. They became enemies of Israel and didn't want to do anything with God. In the case of Isaac, he stayed near his father and continued to worship God. Genesis 24:63 says, “Early in the evening, Isaac went out to the field to meditate.” Meditation in the biblical sense involves deep reflection and communion with God. This act of meditation indicates Isaac's spiritual discipline and reliance on God. It reflects a practice of seeking divine guidance and peace.
- Esau, after selling his birthright, quickly got over it and lived his life recklessly, and was careless about God. Esau married Hittite women (Genesis 26:34-35), which is a departure from the covenantal expectations of marrying within the faith, further illustrating his abandonment of God's ways. But Jacob could not get over the pursuit of God. He desired to know God and serve Him all his life. Jacob sought God all his life because God first sought Him. He first chose him to be His own. Before any man or woman thinks about God, God first enlightens that person. Before any woman loves God, God first loved her. Before any man prays, God first stirs him up to pray. Before anybody cries to God for mercy for his or her sins, God the Holy Spirit first convicts the person of sin. He makes the sinner see his sin and how he is incapable of saving himself. The Holy Spirit makes the person cry out to God for pardon, repent of his or her sins, and believe in Christ as his or her Lord and personal savior.
- So the responses we see in people to the gospel, including the transformation for holiness, their daily repentance from sin, their perseverance in radically battling their personal sins, their love for the word of God, and obeying it, are the only clues you can know that you are chosen by God, and it is the only clue people close to you might also have about your election.

➤ **CONCLUSION.**

- I conclude by asking each of us to examine our lives: whether we are bearing fruit for holiness, repenting of our sins daily, and loving the word of the Lord and applying its teachings to our lives, because the elect are known by their fruit. By their fruit you will recognize them, says Jesus. AMEN.