

Text: Rom 9:6-13

Title: Israel, the Church, and the Purposes of God – part 5

Intro: A profound text of Scripture

The promise of God to Israel is not based upon ethnicity, obedience to the law, or rejection by God's people.

- The promise of God is rooted in the character of God.
- God will save and restore a 'national Israel' even though presently they have hardened their hearts against their Messiah.
- Before the foundation of the world, God set His electing love upon some.

The promise of God cannot fail. The electing love that God has for Israel cannot fail. And, by extension, God's electing love set on Gentiles cannot fail.

Questions arise about the sovereignty of God and 'fairness'

- The answer God gives in this chapter will not satisfy the finite mind or the proud of heart.
- People often get 'sideways' when you mention God's sovereignty and 'predestination.'
- Or, they try to explain away the subject of predestination.
- The subject of God's sovereignty and predestination and the tension therein is not a 'problem to be solved' but a 'framework to be explored.'¹
- The Scriptures are replete with statements of God's sovereignty, and they make no apology for it.
- Rom 9:10-11—God's sovereign choice
- 9:16—
- 9:18—
- 9:21—
- 9:25—
- If God has set His electing love on national Israel, He is bringing about His purposes and saving a remnant who will experience His faithfulness.

John 1:12-13—"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

John 3:18,21—"He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God...But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

John 6:35-37—"Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. 'But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. 'All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.'"

¹ D.A. Carson, *The Sovereignty of God and Human Responsibility: Biblical perspectives in tension*.

John 6:44—"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day."

John 17:1-2—"Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life."

Eph 1:11—"...having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,"

- Eph 3:11—"This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,"
- Col 3:12—"as those who have been chosen of God..."—we are chosen by God to be His people
- 2 Thess 2:13—"But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth."

Rom 1:20-21—"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

God is absolutely sovereign (He does as He wills) and man is responsible for his sin. Those two truths are always held in tension.

- You cannot solve the tension by adding human ideas/explanations that go beyond the plain reading of Scripture.
- God is an infinite being. We are finite beings.
- God has chosen to leave some things a mystery.
- Some say they don't believe in predestination, and yet that is what the Bible plainly says.
- The mere fact that there are divine tensions in the Bible is proof that the Bible is God's Word because man would have removed all apparent tensions and things that people might argue over.
- The Scripture catalogs supernatural events that give no explanation or apology.

The dilemma that Paul addresses in Romans 9: How can Israel be the recipients of God's promise and yet they have rejected their Messiah???

- Does Israel's rejection of Christ impugn God's character???
- Where does ethnic Israel stand in God's program???

If God has made the promises and Israel is in unbelief, how can God be truthful???

How can God be righteous when He doesn't keep His promises to Israel???

How is Messiah the redeemer of His people when He cannot save Israel???

Paul must answer these questions. In Romans 9, Paul explains God's sovereign choice...the reason why God's promises will not fail for the remnant in Israel. This is why those promises cannot fail and cannot be reassigned or revoked.

9:6—"But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;"—Paul anticipated the difficulty some would have over Israel's present situation.

- Paul's answer is that the Lord has not in any way invalidated the ultimate fulfillment of His unconditional promises to the Jews.
- Jer 32:42—"For thus says the LORD, 'Just as I brought all this great disaster on this people, so I am going to bring on them all the good that I am promising them.'"
- Israel is in a present season of hardened unbelief
- Some systems of theology view this text as Paul rewriting the future for national Israel—that the church has now replaced Israel because of their unbelief.
- They say that the 'church' is now the 'New Israel' a 'spiritual Israel' that has replaced national Israel.
- Problems with that view already: in 9:1-5, Paul says that Israel's privileges are still valid (present tense).
 - It would be strange that if unbelieving Israel still has the covenants that Paul would redefine Israel in the next few verses.
 - How could the Israel of the OT who had all the promises made to her now be redefined as a non-ethnic body of believers???
 - Why would Paul throughout the letter of Romans make ethnic distinctions between Jew and Gentile if ethnicity no longer mattered???
 - Rom 1:16—"to the Jew first, and then to the Gentile"
 - Rom 2:10—"to the Jew first, then to the Greek"
 - See: Rom 2:28-3:3—their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God

So, what does Paul mean when he says, 'not all Israel is Israel'???

- Paul explains in 9:7-8—"nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED. That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants."—not all physical descendants of Abraham are true heirs of the promise.
- Paul's argument is that 'not every Jew within Israel would be saved'—to think that God's promise to Israel guaranteed salvation for every ethnic Jew is wrong thinking
- There has always been an 'Israel' within 'Israel'—a true spiritual Israel within ethnic Israel
 - Paul makes it clear: 'it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God'
 - God elects whom He desires and it isn't on the basis of works, ethnicity, or any other means
 - God elects based upon His own mercy

Notice: the illustration: Isaac and Ishmael

- 9:9—"For this is the word of promise: "AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON."

- The first male descendant of Abraham was Ishamel, whom he had by Hagar, the Egyptian maid of his wife, Sarah.
 - They were not believing the promise that God had made to them, that Sarah would bear a child, a son, even in her old age.
 - Ishmael was a son of Abraham, but not through Sarah, his wife and one to whom God promised.
 - Gen 17:19—"But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him."
 - Hagar was not to bear the 'son of promise'—this explains that it is not the 'physical descendants that God sets His promise upon but the ones whom God sets His electing love upon'
 - Being a physical descendant of Abraham does not guarantee salvation.

Notice: '...it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.'—Paul is not redefining Israel but contrasting elect Jews from non-elect Jews.

- Paul's argument is not that there's no longer any ethnic Israel (or the church has replaced Israel), but that the children of the promise are those elect Jews within ethnic Israel.
- The chosen remnant of Israel that God sets His electing love upon cannot be lost eternally.
- Issac was a 'true Jew'—a true descendant of the promise to Abraham—but even within the 'true Jews' were elect and non-elect Jews
- Issac was 'chosen' long before he was even born.
- JM: "The unbelief, sin, rejection, and hostility of Israel toward Christ is not proof He is not Messiah. To the contrary, they fit perfectly with God's promise, which anticipated that not all Jews would believe in Jesus and be saved."²

9:10-12—"And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER."

- The story of God's choice with Jacob and Esau further proves God's sovereign choice.
 - Both were of pure Abrahamic descent
 - Both were true Jews in the strictest sense
 - If any two descendants of Abraham ought to be recipients of God's promise it should be these two—but God says, 'No'
- Long before Issac was conceived, God made a choice.
- JM: "Isaac also is an excellent illustration of the true child of God because, long before he was even conceived, he was divinely chosen among the descendants of Abraham to be the heir of promise. His becoming the spiritual child of God was just as sovereignly and supernaturally preordained as his becoming the physical child of Abraham."³

² John F. MacArthur Jr., [*Romans*](#), vol. 2, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 23.

³ Ibid, 24.

- God's promise to save some is not based upon any human element—no human heritage, no human value, no human merit, no human institution or authority
- Rom 9:11-13—"for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER." Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED."—God made a choice—before they had been born and could do anything right/wrong—because of God's eternal purpose
 - It's interesting that nothing is said of Jacob's choice or 'choosing God'
 - God has the right, the authority, and the power to elect whom He will—and nothing can stop God's promise
 - Nothing can stop God's electing love
- Deut 10:14-15—"Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day."
- Matt 24:31—"And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other."
- Rom 8:33—"Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;"—if God is the One who declares a sinner righteous, no one can successfully bring a charge against him.
- John 15:16—Jesus told His disciples—"You did not choose Me but I chose you,..."
- Can there be a more humbling doctrine than God's election of sinners???
- God elects those who will become heirs of His promise.
- Jacob and Esau had the same mother and father—born at the same time though one out before the other.
 - Normally, that would be the natural heir (the eldest)—but God said, 'No, the older will serve the younger'
- Interesting that when you look at the descendants of Jacob, they were drawn to the Lord, even though at times some were unbelieving—and God blessed them
 - When you look at the descendants of Esau, they turned against the Lord and were judged—they chose to rebel of their own accord (Amos and Obediah)
- 'Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED."—God has a sovereign electing love that He sets on some
- Many say, that is unjust—Yet, if God chose to not set His electing love on any sinner, He is still holy and just.
- Why did God 'love Jacob'??? Why did God love you???
- Why does God pour His mercy out on some when He's not required to do so—and, if He does pour His mercy upon some and not others, why is God suddenly 'unrighteous'???
- We're not to put God on trial in our court.
- God chooses some and those who remain in unbelief are there because of their choice.

Notice: 'BUT ESAU I HATED'—there's nothing in all the OT that shows God having a personal bias or hatred for Esau—yet you look at Esau's life and his descendants and they of their own rebelled against the Lord

- God never implicates Himself as the culprit in someone's unbelief—the sinner's own sinful heart is the culprit
- Whoever stays in their unbelief is acting according to their own corrupt nature.
- God implicates Himself when mercy is expressed.

9:14—"What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!"—if salvation were up to man's choice, this passage would make no sense. You wouldn't have to defend the justice of God.

- If it's up to us to choose, why would Paul be concerned about people thinking God is unjust???
- Paul knows that God's choice will go against our fallen reason and we will accuse God of injustice when we hear that God makes the choice according to His own purpose.

9:15-16—"For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy."—the Apostle Paul denies that 'human will' and 'human effort' have anything to do with basis of God's sovereign choice to salvation.

- Your salvation doesn't depend on your ability to grab ahold of a promise.
- What it depends upon is a God who has mercy on whom He chooses
- When God shows mercy to one sinner and leaves another in his unbelief (for which he is willing and culpable for) He is not unjust.
- God is always just.

Rom 11:7—"What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;"

When God sets His electing love upon a people—that cannot be thwarted or undone.

Rom 8:33—"Who will bring a charge against God's elect?"

Israel's present unbelief cannot stop God's promise to His elect.

What is our message??? Do we ask people if they are elect or non-elect??? No, we tell them to repent. The elect/non-elect is a mystery that only God knows.

The message is Jesus Christ—repent and believe in Him.

If you are elect, you will repent and believe when God draws you in His electing love.