

As we launch into Paul’s teaching on predestination and election, don’t separate it from the beginning of chapter 9. Paul is writing from a heart broken for his ethnic people, who have, for the most part, rejected the Messiah/Christ Who was promised to them.

The Truthfulness of the Word (9:6a)

9:6a *But it is not as though the word of God has failed.*

- This is the key idea Paul is seeking to prove in chapters 9-11. “The word of God” contains numerous “promises” (9:4). Does the rejection of Jesus Christ by most of the Jews mean that those promises are no longer valid? Paul answers, “no.” He will defend “the word of God” by properly explaining it.

Defining “Israel” By Promise (9:6b)

9:6b *For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel...*

Descended from Israel

- In Genesis, Jacob wrestles “until daybreak” to receive “a blessing” from a mysterious figure described only as “a man.” The man asks Jacob his name, and when he tells him, the man replies, “Your name shall no longer be **Jacob, but Israel**; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed” (32:28; see also 35:10; 1 Kings 18:31).
- When Paul speaks of being “descended from Israel,” he is using this God-given covenant name for Jacob. Jews may be physical descendants from Jacob/Israel, but that doesn’t mean they are truly of the nation “Israel.”

The Remnant

- Paul is not teaching anything new or novel; the Old Testament frequently taught of a “true Israel” that was part of the visible Israel. This is usually spoken of as the doctrine of the remnant.
 - Paul will quote Isaiah 10:22, “*though the number of the sons of Israel [Jacob] be like the sand*

of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved” (9:27).¹

- After citing the doctrine of the remnant from 2 Kings 19:18 (Romans 11:4), Paul says, “in the same way, then, there has also come to be at the present time **a remnant** according to God’s gracious choice” (11:5). Paul is not speaking of a future (end-time) salvation of Jewish people, but of the salvation of Jews by faith in Jesus in his day unto now (throughout the whole Gospel Age).
- When Paul says, “they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel,” he is speaking of the remnant who believe in Jesus as the Messiah and are the true Israel among the ethnic Israel.²

Look At Yourself

- Just as “they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel,” the New Testament contains warnings for those who confess to be Christians.

¹ Isaiah 10:20-22; 11:11,16; 28:5. The doctrine is so important that Isaiah names a son “Shear-jashub,” which means, “a remnant will return” (Isaiah 7:3). While the “remnant” prophecy had a symbolic, or shadow, fulfillment is the return of the exiles from Babylon in the 6th century B.C., the New Testament’s use of the doctrine shows us that the true remnant are those Jews who confessed Jesus of Nazareth to be Messiah. They came out of exile in spiritual Babylon (A.D. 1st century Temple Judaism) to the true Jerusalem, the Church of Jesus Christ.

² This verse (9:6b) will be very important when we read later, “and so all Israel will be saved” (11:26). Do not forget how Paul is teaching us the Bible defines Israel!

- READ 1 John 2:19.³ The most obvious warning sign is when a person who confesses Christ does not gather with the Church (in violation of Hebrews 10:25).
- Beyond that, believers should constantly have a self-examining attitude about their faith:
READ 2 Corinthians 13:5a; 2 Peter 1:10.

God’s Gracious Choice (9:7)

9:7...nor are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants, but [as it is written in Genesis 21:12]: “through Isaac your descendants will be named.”

Abraham’s Election

- Abraham didn’t become the father of God’s people because he was the best and most worthy person in the world: *“Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac’”* (Joshua 24:2,3). The patriarch of biblical faith “served other gods” in Babylon. Why did God call Abraham and not one of the millions of other idolaters? So that *“God’s purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him Who calls”* (Romans 9:11).

³ John is speaking of the “*antichrist*” (only in the Bible in 1 John 2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 7), which is not a governmental leader, but an attitude that arises among believers which replaces Christ with the love of the world and the things of the world (1 John 2:15-17). The Greek prefix/preposition “anti” (ἀντί) does not mean “opposite” or “against,” as it does in English. It means “in the place of.”

Abraham’s Spiritual, Not Physical Children

- As proof that *“they are not all [the nation] Israel who are descended from [the father] Israel,”* Paul goes back a generation to Isaac and Ishmael.
- Isaac wasn’t Abraham’s firstborn. Ishmael was born of the Egyptian servant by the plan of Sarah (Genesis 16:1-16). Later, Abraham asks God to make Ishmael the child of covenant: *“Oh that Ishmael might live before You!”* (Genesis 17:18). This wasn’t God’s plan, though.

Children of God’s Promise (9:8,9)

9:8That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. 9:9For this is the word of promise [as it is written in Genesis 18:10,14]: “At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son.”

- The apostle has already taught us that faith identifies the true children of Abraham: READ 4:16,17.
- This will be Paul’s teaching in his letter to the Galatians, as well (Galatians is sometimes called a “small Romans”):
 - *“...if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise”* (Galatians 3:29).
 - *“...you, brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise”* (Galatians 4:28). The allegory of Galatians 4:21-26 overturns Jewish expectations; Paul compares Jews “*according to the flesh*” to the Egyptian slavewoman Hagar, but says believers in Jesus Christ, both Jew and non-Jew, are of the “*free woman,*” Sarah.
- The birth of Isaac was supernatural miracle, the result of a God *“Who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist”* (Romans 4:17), not resulting from Abraham’s body, which was *“as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb”* (4:19). In the same way, your rebirth in

Christ is a supernatural miracle – like Isaac, you too are a child of God’s divine power if you are reborn in Christ.

Defining “Israel” By God’s Choice and Calling (9:10-13)

9:10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; 9:11 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, 9:12 it was said to her [as it is written in Genesis 25:23], “The older will serve the younger.”

- “Expressions indicating God’s sovereignty in this matter are heaped upon one another, because it is a thing so offensive to the human mind.”⁴ We like to think we are sovereign; I believe our innate rebellion against God’s sovereignty in salvation comes from our inherited desire to “be like God” (Genesis 3:5).
- God has chosen a people for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ; that choice is not based on their actions, but on His sovereign will.⁵ As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) says, “the great doctrine of predestination” is “the first wheel which in the business of salvation sets all the other wheels a-going.”
 - “...had not done anything good or bad” (9:11).
READ 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:3-7.
 - Here is the great mystery: we are still saved by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, and we come to faith by the proclamation of Jesus in evangelism/missions/preaching, but all of this is part of God’s predestined choice:
READ Acts 13:44-49. God “calls” His elect

⁴ Robert Haldane (1764-1842), commenting on 9:11.

⁵ In the movie *Evan Almighty* (NBC Universal 2007), Evan Baxter is asked, “what makes you so sure God chose you?” Evan replies, “He chose all of us.” This is just not true according to the Bible!

through our sharing of the Gospel, and never apart from that proclamation.

- The Genesis 25:23 highlights God’s sovereign choice, since Esau (the firstborn) should have been the inheritor of Isaac’s promised blessing. Instead, God chose the younger (Jacob/Israel), reminding us that He does what He will.

Spiritual Birth

- Just as Jacob did not cause himself to be born into God’s covenant, but was chosen by God’s grace to be brought into the covenant people, you and I are caused to be reborn by God into His covenant family in Jesus Christ:
 - READ John 3:7,8.⁶
 - “Blessed be the **God** and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to His great mercy **has caused us to be born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3).
- How do we know that we, like Jacob, are chosen and called of God? We hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and believe with a life-changing faith. The elect are revealed through the power of the proclaimed Gospel bringing them from death to life. Believing what the Bible says about predestination and election is not a denial of evangelism or missions, but is a belief God works through our evangelism and missions to save those whom He has predestined and elected.⁷

⁶ The Lord is referencing Ecclesiastes 11:5, which compares “the path of the wind” and an infant’s being “formed in the womb of the pregnant woman” as being both “the activity of God Who makes all things.”

⁷ “Those whom God hath predestinated unto life, He is pleased in His appointed, and accepted time, effectually to call, by His Word [shared through evangelism/missions] and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus

God’s Sovereign Choice of Love (9:13)

9:13 *Just as it is written [in Malachi 1:2,3], “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”*

- This is not unfair against Esau.
- Prior to salvation all human beings are ever-increasing in their lawlessness (Romans 6:19); Christ rejects all lawlessness from His presence (Matthew 7:23), and even hates it (Hebrews 1:9). The question isn’t “how is this fair to Esau?” but “how could God love Jacob?”

Biblical Hamartiology: the Answer to the Question of Fairness

- Hamartiology is the doctrine of sin. We react so strongly to predestination and election because we have a watered-down understanding of the sinfulness of humanity.
- Let’s review what Paul says about lost humanity:
 - READ 3:10-12,23.
 - What words describe us in 5:6,8,10? How are we described in Ephesians 2:1,3.
 - In chapter 6, he says we “*were slaves of sin*” (6:17) who “*presented [our] members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness*” (6:19).
- Remember that the root of this depravity is traced back to Genesis 3. All those who are sons and daughters of Adam are born with his sin nature: “*...through one man sin entered into the world, and death through*

Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by His almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace” (1689 Baptist Confession, 10.1). **God uses the Church’s telling of the Gospel and the freely-exercised faith in that Gospel to accomplish His eternally-predestined, sovereignly-gracious purpose in saving the elect.**

sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned...by the transgression of the one the many died...the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation...by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one...through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men...through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners” (Romans 5:12,15-19).⁸

- The question isn’t, “why did God only choose some?” The question is, “why did God choose any?”

How Do I Know God Loves Me?

- 9:13 ought to make us ask, “how do I know whether I am a Jacob or an Esau, whether I am loved or hated by God?”
- We can know we are loved of God when we see that love given to the unworthy through the cross of Christ, which is the love of God (John 3:16; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 5:2,25; 1 John 4:9,10; Revelation 1:5).
- When we see ourselves as guilty sinners before God unworthy of His love, and see the cross of Christ as the unearned forgiveness of God, we are saved by faith in Christ alone for salvation. Do you believe? If you do, you are the elect, the chosen, the beloved of God in His Son Christ.

God presented His Son, Who paid the price for your sin it would have taken you an eternity to pay – this is the display of God’s unmerited, utterly gracious love. You cannot do anything to save yourself. Believe and be saved today.

⁸ “By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation” (Baptist Faith & Message 2000, 3).