

Sermon Growth Guide

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Children of the Promise | Romans 9:1-13

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Key Verse: Romans 9:8 – “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.” (9:8)

Big Idea: The gift of eternal salvation cannot be earned by human effort, nor otherwise seized by human beings. God Himself, in His sovereignty, grants salvation to those whom He has chosen in His hidden wisdom and purposes. Our response to His electing work is seen in our humility, gratitude, embrace of the family of God, and our newfound purpose to glorify the God of sheer grace.



Foundations

After such a rousing, climactic ending of hope and praise, Paul’s mood suddenly shifts dramatically. From the assurance that nothing can separate God’s people from the love of Christ, Paul turns to the conundrum of Israel, the vast majority of whom have rejected their own Messiah despite all their spiritual advantages over against the Gentiles, and face now the rejection of God. The question that challenges all the promises made to Christians in Romans 8 is: If God made promises to Israel and yet Israel is now facing the wrath of God, what assurances do Christians have that God will prove true to His stupendous promises that He is for us, that the elect are secure in God’s love, that we are more than conquerors through Christ, that nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord? Paul has to answer the question of why Israel seems to be outside the saving purposes of God after the coming of Jesus.

In 9:6-13, Paul employs the doctrine of God’s electing purposes to argue that “Not all Israel is Israel;” i.e., one is not part of “true/spiritual/saved Israel” simply by having the right bloodlines. God must make a Jew “a child of promise” for that individual to become part of true Israel. This act of God’s choice demonstrates His sovereign will which moves a “child of wrath” (see Eph. 2:3) to “a child of promise/God”. No human being by his or her own will can cause this miraculous change to happen – it depends totally on the mysterious mercy of God.

Understanding God’s Word

The Jews in Paul’s day believed they were the Chosen People. How do you imagine they might have responded to Paul’s argument here that “Not all Israel is Israel”? The doctrine of election when rightly understood creates a sense of humility among God’s people (see Dt. 7:6-8; 9:5-7), but often our sinful hearts twist the truth that God loves us simply because He chooses to into a false belief that God loves us because we are in some way more lovable (or worthy of His love) than other people. How do you make sense of Paul’s statement concerning God’s choice of Jacob over Esau: “in order that God’s purpose in election might stand, not by works but by Him who calls...”? Why is the purpose of God’s election so important that it needs to be emphasized? What truth does God want to communicate to His people through His electing work?

Applying God’s Word

We How does a deeper understanding of God’s sovereign work in the realm of human salvation impact your view of evangelism? Can human beings truly choose to love and follow God by exercising their natural free will regardless of God’s electing purposes? Or is it more appropriate to say from the model of 1 John 4:19 (“We love because He first loved us”), “We choose [God] because He first chose us”? Can you think of other practical implications for our lives (beside humility) that a hearty understanding of divine election would engender?

Witnessing God’s Word

On There is no question that the doctrine of election and its sister teaching regarding predestination are potential conversation flashpoints. Are you willing to engage others in learning about these biblical teachings more deeply, or would you rather let “sleeping dogs lie”? To be honest, these are not gospel issues. One’s view on election does not impact one’s salvation. Nevertheless, God has given us deep truths in the Scriptures that are worthy of meditation and understanding. Are you willing to engage other Christians on these topics to deepen your own faith and to encourage others to expand their own sense of God’s greatness in the realm of salvation?