

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Romans 9: 10-13

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank God, it's time to read the Bible again. Let's continue to read Romans Chapter 9. We will read verses 10-13 today.

Romans Chapter 9 addresses God's sovereignty, a topic that is not easy to discuss and can easily veer into extremes. If viewed entirely from God's perspective, it may lead to a misconception of God, portraying Him as a dictatorial tyrant; yet our God is full of love, grace, and mercy. If viewed entirely from the human perspective, it mistakenly places humanity above God, leading to the misconception that God exists to serve man. In fact, the opposite is true: God is here to lead and guide humanity, upholding us with grace and mercy when we fail and fall, with the purpose of bringing us back to His will.

For this difficult topic, Paul demonstrates great wisdom by not approaching it theologically. Paul himself received the most rigorous logical training and had a complete Jewish education, making him highly qualified to develop a sound theological discourse. I believe in Paul's heart, he deeply knew that he was incapable of defining God and His sovereignty.

Therefore, Paul cites familiar Old Testament figures to illustrate God's sovereignty. I believe these examples were carefully considered by Paul, hoping to demonstrate through them the relationship between God's sovereignty and humanity. Through these relationships, we may see how God's sovereignty guides people and how it operates in different circumstances. In this way, people with different measures of spiritual maturity can understand how to submit to God's sovereignty based on their own circumstances.

Paul first cites the example of Abraham giving birth to Isaac to show God's promise within His sovereignty. To understand God's sovereignty, we must first experience God's promise. The realization of God's promise must come through grace. God

foreknew that Abraham would have eight sons, but only Isaac, born according to the promise, could be his heir; and Isaac had to be born through Sarah, who represents grace. Those born before Isaac did not count, nor did those born after him. Only those born through the promise and by grace are God's children.

God has given many promises to His children, all recorded in the Bible. If we experience grace through these promises, Christ will be born in us, meaning the image of Christ will grow in us. This is the first step in experiencing God's sovereignty.

Today, we will look at the second step. Paul continues to use an Old Testament example, this time of Rebecca giving birth to twins, to illustrate God's election within His sovereignty.

Verse 10: "And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac."

"And not only this" indicates that this example follows the previous one and introduces a further discussion. "When Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac." Isaac was born through the promise and by grace, becoming Abraham's sole heir. Abraham was the first to be called, and after his calling, all spiritual experiences and inheritance were passed to Isaac. This process included God's foreknowledge, and in His foreknowledge, Isaac inherited Abraham's estate.

Rebecca was the wife chosen for Isaac by Abraham's old servant, sent to his homeland and kindred. Rebecca came from Padan Aram and married Isaac. Rebecca was barren, so Isaac prayed for her, God answered, and Rebecca conceived twins by Isaac. Thus, these twins were also born through the promise. The two children struggled in Rebecca's womb, and since both were born through the promise, Paul uses this example to illustrate God's election.

Verse 11: “for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls.”

The twins had not yet been born, nor had they done any good or evil. Paul emphasizes that God’s election transcends human existence and actions. Once children are born, there will be distinctions in appearance or strength, leading to preferences. As they grow, some do good, and some do evil, providing further basis for human selection. Therefore, Paul specifically notes that while the twins were still in Rebecca’s womb, with no external basis for choice, God spoke to Rebecca about His election in His sovereignty.

God did this to show that His purpose according to election might stand: not of works but of Him who calls. God has full sovereignty and exercises election within that sovereignty to manifest His purpose in electing people.

Let us examine this sentence closely to understand Paul’s view of election. The Greek word for “election” is *ekloge*, composed of two parts: *ek*, meaning “out from and to,” and *loge*, meaning “speaking to a conclusion.” Together, it means “selection out of and to a given outcome.” In English, it is generally translated as “election,” meaning a careful selection for a specific result. For example, when a sister attends a wedding, for that specific purpose, she goes to a department store to select suitable clothing—clothing that is festive, formal, and appropriate to her appearance and figure. She carefully chooses, tries on various options, and finally decides.

God’s election is the same. For a specific result, God carefully selects the most suitable person from among thousands. The Greek word for “purpose” is *prothesis*, also composed of two parts: *pro*, meaning “beforehand,” and *thesis*, meaning “place” or “setting.” This word means something arranged in advance. The KJV and NIV translate it as “purpose,” while the Chinese Union Version translates it as “aim” or “will,” which is not entirely accurate. A more precise translation would be “purpose.” God, according to His will, requires a plan to achieve His will. This plan’s

blueprint includes thousands of objectives, each being God's purpose, and God carefully selects for that purpose.

"That the purpose of God according to election might stand." The Greek word for "stand" is *meno*, meaning "remain" or "abide." The KJV and NIV translate it as "stand," indicating not only to manifest but also to stand firm and achieve God's purpose. Thus, God's election is based on His eternal will.

Within His will, there is a blueprint containing many objectives. For a specific objective, God selects the most suitable person to fulfill His will and purpose. While the two children were still in Rebecca's womb, before they had done good or evil, God had already chosen one of them based on His eternal will and purpose. This election was not based on the goodness or badness of the two children but on God's eternal plan to accomplish His eternal will. Therefore, it is not based on human works but entirely on the God who calls.

Verse 12: "it was said to her, 'The older shall serve the younger.'"

God chooses according to His own will, plan, and purpose. After choosing, He told Rebecca that the older would serve the younger; the older being Esau, born first, and the younger being Jacob, born second. Genesis provides some descriptions of these twins. From a human perspective, Esau was simple, honest, rugged, and carefree. Though gluttonous, he was generally a likable child. Jacob, on the other hand, was cunning, calculating, and manipulative, seeking to seize what he wanted. He was not a likable child.

But God's election does not consider these traits. God told Rebecca that the older would serve the younger. If we look only at the surface, it may seem that God is unfair, but Paul offers no explanation, intending to dispel our self-righteous feelings. God has full sovereignty to choose those who fit His plan, and humans have no room to argue. If you feel sorry for Esau because of this, there is no need. Esau lived a good life, even better than Jacob's from a human perspective.

In Genesis, Esau never served Jacob. Instead, Jacob, having deceitfully taken Esau's birthright, had to flee to Padan Aram. He lived a hard life for 20 years away from home, and without God's protection, he would not have returned to Canaan. Yet, under God's care, he accumulated much wealth. When he returned to Canaan, he was trembling, fearing Esau still held a grudge from 20 years earlier, and humbly sent Esau many gifts.

Although Jacob took the birthright from Esau, according to the custom of the time, he could have received a double portion of Isaac's estate. However, Isaac gave all his estate to Esau, and Jacob received not even a single lamb. Moreover, fearing Esau's wrath, Jacob sent him many gifts. Genesis 32:14-15 lists these gifts: "two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milk camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten foals." These were extremely valuable and substantial gifts.

The blessing Jacob received from the birthright was entirely spiritual, not material. Material blessings can be enjoyed immediately, but spiritual blessings can be passed down forever. Thus, when God told Rebecca that the older would serve the younger, it was not about Esau and Jacob's lifetimes but about their descendants. In 2 Samuel 18:14, during David's reign, garrisons were set up throughout Edom, and the Edomites became subject to David. It was not until David's time that Edom was subdued.

The Edomites were Esau's descendants. From Jacob to David, about 1,000 years passed. From a human perspective, who cares about what happens 1,000 years later? But God sees a thousand years as one day. Esau was a simple, rugged person who enjoyed life and valued material things, which he received from his father, Isaac. Jacob was cunning, but he valued what God valued, willing to sacrifice material enjoyment for spiritual blessings. Though his character was flawed, he desired what pleased God.

God could work in him, transforming a corrupt, grasping person into a generous, selfless, spiritually mature person who blessed others. Though his life was bitter, he gained a rich spiritual inheritance, blessing not only himself but also his

descendants. God's election is still based on His foreknowledge. God knew Jacob's qualities, which perfectly suited His eternal plan's blueprint.

Verse 13: "As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.'"

This statement by Paul quotes Malachi 1:2-3: "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" says the Lord. "Yet Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated." (NKJV) We must emphasize again that God's love for Jacob and hatred for Esau were not manifested in Jacob and Esau themselves. During their lifetimes, Jacob faced many hardships, and in his later years, due to a famine in the land, he had to lead his family of 70 to seek refuge with Joseph, who was a ruler in Egypt. His descendants sojourned in Egypt, eventually becoming slaves until the time of Moses, when they were delivered.

Esau is mentioned little in Genesis. In Genesis 35:29, it is recorded that when Isaac was old and died, Esau and Jacob, the two brothers, buried him in Hebron, where Abraham was buried.

Genesis 36:6-8 records, "Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the persons of his household, his cattle and all his animals, and all his goods which he had gained in the land of Canaan, and went to a country away from the presence of his brother Jacob. For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together, and the land where they were strangers could not support them because of their livestock. So Esau dwelt in Mount Seir. Esau is Edom." Esau moved to Mount Seir and became the ancestor of the Edomites. His descendants prospered, and the Edomites had kings ruling them before the Israelites had a king. In worldly terms, Esau's descendants seemed to outpace Jacob's.

The prophet Malachi said that God loved Jacob and hated Esau in reference to their descendants. During Israel's times of distress, the Edomites disregarded brotherly ties, failing to help Israel, thus incurring God's wrath. The prophet Obadiah specifically warned the Edomites in his book. In Obadiah 1:10-12, the prophet accuses them: "For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and

you shall be cut off forever. In the day that strangers carried captive his forces, when foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them. You should not have gazed on the day of your brother in the day of his captivity; nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; nor should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress.”

Obadiah further prophesies in 1:15, “For the day of the Lord upon all the nations is near; as you have done, it shall be done to you; your reprisal shall return upon your own head.”

God loved Jacob because Jesus Christ, God’s Son, would come from Jacob. This fulfilled God’s blessing to Abraham that all nations on earth would be blessed through his seed. Abraham’s blessing was passed to Isaac, and from Isaac to Jacob. Jacob valued spiritual blessings and received eternal blessings. Esau despised spiritual blessings, and though he prospered in his lifetime and his descendants enjoyed earthly blessings, these earthly enjoyments ultimately came to nothing because they lost spiritual blessings and became those whom God hated.

Dear brothers and sisters, when we read about God’s election in His sovereignty—loving Jacob and hating Esau—we must look deeper. God is not referring to earthly inheritance or prosperity but to spiritual inheritance and eternal blessings. God’s election is within His sovereignty, but this election is based on His foreknowledge. God’s election is according to His eternal will, plan, and purpose, which are spiritual. God selects based on His purpose. If we also value what God values, God, who foreknows us, can choose us in His foreknowledge.

Let us pray together: Dear Father God, through Paul’s epistle, we come to understand Your sovereignty. Your election is not based on human works, human determination, or human effort; You choose entirely according to Your eternal will. In Your will and plan, You carefully select the most suitable people. We thank and worship You for making us Your children today. It is not because we are better than others or have any merits, but in Your foreknowledge, You saw that we are suitable to be part of Your plan. For Your election, we offer thanks and worship. We also ask

You to continue watching over us, helping us to value what You value and to enjoy all spiritual blessings. Bless our daily lives. We pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ.