

Musing #62: Romans 9:1-8

Romans 9:1-5 With Christ as my witness, I speak with utter truthfulness. My conscience and the Holy Spirit confirm it. My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ!—if that would save them. They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God’s adopted children. God revealed his glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave them his law. He gave them the privilege of worshiping him and receiving his wonderful promises. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are their ancestors, and Christ himself was an Israelite as far as his human nature is concerned. And he is God, the one who rules over everything and is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.

Paul seems to insert a (parenthesis) at this point in his letter. Why? Because Israel became a disobedient nation and was broken off from God's full blessing. Early on we find Moses who had been 40 days with God on the mountain. When he returned to the people he found them worshipping a golden calf, and God was angry.

In Exodus 32:9-10— **The Lord said, “I have seen how stubborn and rebellious these people are. Now leave me alone so my fierce anger can blaze against them, and I will destroy them. Then I will make you, Moses, into a great nation.”**

Moses asked the people—“Who is on the Lord’s side?” Only the children of Levi came forward.

Exodus 32:26-28 So he stood at the entrance to the camp and shouted, “All of you who are on the Lord’s side, come here and join me.” And all the Levites gathered around him. Moses told them, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Each of you, take your swords and go back and forth from one end of the camp to the other. Kill everyone—even your brothers, friends, and neighbors.” The Levites obeyed Moses’ command, and about 3,000 people died that day.

Moses went back up the mountain to God and begged God... **“Forgive their sins—and if not, blot me out of your book also.”** And the Lord said....**“No, they will be held accountable for their sins.”** Later, Moses again said to the Lord....

Exodus 33:12-23 (Select) “Look, you’ve been telling me, ‘Lead these people forward.’ But you haven’t told me whom you will send with me. Yet you’ve assured me, ‘I know you by name and think highly of you.’ Now if you do think highly of me, show me your ways so that I may know you.... remember too that this nation is your people.” The Lord replied, “I’ll go myself, and I’ll help you.”

Moses replied, “If you don’t go yourself, don’t make us leave here. Because how will anyone know that we have your special approval unless you go with us?” The Lord said to Moses, “I’ll do exactly what you’ve asked because you have my special approval, and I know you by name.”

Moses said, “I pray You, show me Your glory!” The Lord said, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I

will have compassion.” But He said, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.”

And the Lord said, “Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.”

What a perfect picture. We never see God coming! It is only after he has been here — and a part of something in our life, that we see that He was directly involved.

God has singled out His people—the descendents of Abraham.

Isaiah 66:22 (O.T.) For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.

Hebrews 8:7-10 (N.T.) For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.

Even today...the Torah is loved by them.

Romans 9:6-7 Well then, has God failed to fulfill his promise to Israel? No, for not all who are born into the nation of Israel are truly members of God's people! 7 **Being descendants of Abraham doesn't make them truly Abraham's children. For the Scriptures say, “Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted,” though Abraham had other children, too.**

Ultimately... the very custodians (leaders) of God's promise gradually became the very enemies of God's plan. Then the Messiah came—the Christ. God in human form, who was fully a Jew. And He was rejected... not Jesus, the man... but Jesus, the Lord. So, being born a Jew does not automatically make one a descendent of God's "spiritual promise" to Israel. Paul was often beaten... and sent to jail because he taught that the nation of Israel was not spiritual Israel.

Romans 9:8 This means that Abraham's physical descendants are not necessarily children of God. Only the children of the promise are considered to be Abraham's children.

John 8:37-59 (Selected—Jesus speaking) “I realize that you are descendants of Abraham. And yet some of you are trying to kill me because there's no room in your hearts for my message. I am telling you what I saw when I was with my Father. But you are following the advice of your father. ‘Our father is Abraham!’ ” they declared. “No,” Jesus replied, “for if you were really the children of Abraham, you would follow his example. Why can't you understand what I am saying? It's because you

can't even hear me! For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. So when I tell the truth, you just naturally don't believe me!" The people retorted, "You Samaritan devil! Didn't we say all along that you were possessed by a demon? You aren't even fifty years old." Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I Am!" At that point they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus was hidden from them and left the Temple.

Paul summed it all up in his letter to the Galatians...

Galatians 3:7-9 The real children of Abraham, then, are those who put their faith in God. What's more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would declare the Gentiles to be righteous because of their faith. God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, "All nations will be blessed through you." So all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith.

Galatians 3:26-29 For you are children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

Paul was making a specific point that went against much of what the Jews had never considered. Wake up, you Jewish brothers! Just being a physical Jew doesn't make you a child of God. You were Born. You must be Born Again! *That which is born of the flesh is physical... that which is born of the Spirit is spiritual.* We must conclude then that salvation was never based on natural things. It's not inherited, or in any way genetic. You can't talk anyone into it. God's promises are based on what He does—never on what we do. Our total responsibility is to believe it all. No one comes to God out of merit. And that includes Jews!

A truth—Jews, and many who call themselves Christians today, have missed the mark.