

27. Learning the Benefits that God Gave to Israel

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our children learn to rest in the love of Christ. We saw several things that we experience in our daily lives that cannot separate us from the love of God. We also saw that things both in the world and throughout the entire creation will not separate us from that love. Finally, we saw that nothing can ever separate us from the love of Christ. Today, we want to see how God showed His love to the nation of Israel. We will see that even though Israel received many blessings from God, it did not cause the people to serve the Lord.

We begin by seeing the great concern of Paul for the people of Israel. Romans 9:1-5 says, “I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom *pertain* the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service *of God*, and the promises; of whom *are* the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ *came*, who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God. Amen.” Here, we see that Paul had great sorrow and continual grief in his heart for his people, the Jews. This is an example of the concern that we want to have for the people of our own family, tribe or nation.

Paul said that there were several ways that the Romans could know that Paul was speaking the truth when he spoke about this concern. He said that he was telling the truth in Christ. He said that his conscience also gave witness that he had this concern. He said that the Holy Spirit could give testimony to the fact that he had a clear conscience as he spoke about this sorrow and grief that he had for his people. Paul also said that he could wish that he were accursed from Christ if that would cause his family and the Jewish people to all turn to Christ. Although Paul knew this was impossible, he was saying by this statement that he would be willing to experience eternal destruction if it would mean that all of the Jewish people would be saved. Here, we see that he had such a great love for his people that he would be willing to follow the example of Christ and suffer in their place if that would cause all of the Jews to be saved.

Then, Paul went on to list some of the blessings the Jews had received from the Lord. The first blessing was the adoption of Israel by God. In Exodus 4:22, God told Moses, “Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD: ‘Israel *is* My son, My firstborn.’”” Here, we see that God had chosen the nation of Israel to be His firstborn. The second blessing of Israel by God was the fact that God allowed the people of Israel to see His glory. Exodus 40:34 says, “Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.” This glory of the Lord was present with the people of Israel throughout their time in the wilderness. God also gave the people of Israel His covenants beginning with His covenant with Abraham.

Other blessings in the wilderness included the giving of the Law and the pattern for the building of the tabernacle and everything in the tabernacle. God also gave Israel several promises. These promises were first given to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 where we read, “Now the LORD had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and

you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” The greatest promise was that One would come from Abraham that would bring blessing to all of the families of the earth. That was a promise to Abraham that Christ would come from the family of Abraham. That particular promise brought eternal blessing to all who placed their faith in Christ from all of the families of the earth.

Romans 9:6-9 goes on to say, “But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they *are* not all Israel who *are* of Israel, nor *are they* all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called.’ That is, those who *are* the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. For this *is* the word of promise: ‘At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.’” Here, we see that some were saying that all of those blessings had not come on all of the people of Israel. It is true that the blessings had not given life to every descendent of Abraham. In addition to Isaac, Abraham had several other sons including Ishmael and all of the sons of Keturah. These other sons were called the sons of the flesh. They were physical descendants but they did not receive the blessings that God promised to Israel.

However, the promise to Abraham was that in Isaac would his seed be called. God gave a promise to Abraham and Sarah. Genesis 17:19 says, “Then God said: ‘No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his descendants after him.’” Here, we see that God made this everlasting covenant with Abraham and promised that it would pass on to the future descendants of Abraham through Isaac and not through any of the other sons of Abraham. As a result, God said that only the descendants of Isaac would be the children of promise.

We want to help our children understand another key thing about the family of Abraham that did carry on the promise. Even within those descendants, only a small part of Isaac’s family were spiritual descendants and were able to enjoy the blessings that God gave. A spiritual descendent is one who also placed his or her faith in the promises of God. Many of the people of Israel turned from God to worship idols. In the time of Elijah, we see that most of the people had turned from God to idols. In fact, Elijah said twice in 1 Kings 19:10, 14, “So he said, ‘I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.’” Here, we see that Elijah thought that he was the only person left that truly served the Lord.

However, the Lord told Elijah in 1 Kings 19:18, “Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.” Here, we see that God had reserved 7,000 of the Jews who were spiritual descendants as well as physical descendants. They had placed their faith in the promises of God and so they were able to enjoy the spiritual blessings that God had promised to the nation of Israel. In every generation of the Jews, God has always kept a remnant of the Jews that have been faithful to the Lord and are spiritual descendants as well as physical descendants.

At the same time, we see that not even all of the physical descendants of Abraham actually became

a part of the nation of Israel. Romans 9:10-13 says, “And not only *this*, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, *even* by our father Isaac (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), it was said to her, ‘The older shall serve the younger.’ As it is written, ‘Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.’” Here, we see that Isaac also had two sons. In fact, they were twins. Before these two sons were even born, God explained to Isaac and Rebecca that one son would be the one who would carry on the promise that had been made to Abraham.

At the time God told Isaac and Rebecca about their two sons, they had not even been born, so they had not done either good or evil. God told Rebecca in Genesis 25:23, “And the LORD said to her: ‘Two nations *are* in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; *one* people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger.’” Here, we see that God continued to carry out His promise to Abraham. However, God said that the promise would be carried through the line of Jacob and not the line of Esau. We also read that this was according to the purpose of God and He was going to carry out His purpose.

In the same way, once our children place their faith in Christ, we want to help them understand that God wants to carry out His purpose through their lives. Our children will experience great joy as they yield their lives to the Lord and let Him carry out His purpose through their lives. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Christ has created every believer to do good works. God has prepared those good works for each of us so that our lives will have real meaning and purpose.

We also see that God said to Israel nearly 1500 years after the birth of Jacob and Esau in Malachi 1:2-3, “‘I have loved you,’ says the LORD. ‘Yet you say, “In what way have You loved us?” *Was* not Esau Jacob's brother?’ says the LORD. ‘Yet Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated, and laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness.’” God had shown His love to the descendants of Jacob by preserving them. At the same time, He had allowed judgment to come on the descendants of Esau. In Genesis 25:34, we read, “And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised *his* birthright.” Here, we see that Esau sold his spiritual leadership for a bowl of stew because spiritual leadership meant nothing to him. That is one reason why we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the value of spiritual leadership. God will only really bless our lives as we seek spiritual blessings and not physical blessings. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children the importance of seeking spiritual blessings in their lives.