

080106 God Remains Faithful 23/01 January 6, 2008
Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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God Remains Faithful

I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying.... ([Ro 11:1-2](#))

If one of the primary errors that Paul confronted in the Roman letter had to do with the idea of Jewish spiritual supremacy based either on race or culture, Paul's words beginning with the ninth chapter would have faced intense resistance, a likely explanation for his extended and intense affirmation of his teaching in these chapters. By the time his readers who were infected with this attitude of supremacy based on either race or culture, completed reading the ninth and tenth chapters, they would wonder if God had wholly forsaken His promises to their Jewish ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Paul continues to anticipate their reaction and answer their questions before they ask them. Thinking that Paul taught that God had fully reversed Himself and forsaken all Jews altogether, they would likely miss Paul's distinguishing between natural (either racial or cultural) Jews and "spiritual" Jews, a distinction that he clearly made in [Ro 2:28-29](#). In formal argumentation, as Paul clearly develops in the Roman letter, the person who proposes an idea is expected to clearly define his terms and to consistently honor his definitions throughout his argumentation. Having gone to great length to give a clear definition of what he meant by "Jew" in the second chapter, any reference to a Jew throughout the Roman letter should be interpreted according to this definition unless Paul made a point of redefining the term, something that he never does in the Roman letter. Thus we have a different understanding between Paul and his critics. By the term "Jew" he means one thing, and by the same term they mean another thing, but in all likelihood they would not have fully grasped his meaning when he gave his definition of the term. They would probably have been confused by his passionate devotion to them in the ninth chapter and his prayer for them in the tenth chapter, possibly concluding that Paul believed that God had rejected all Jews, while Paul's intent was to teach that God's definition of a "Jew" had to do with the state of the heart, not with the color of the skin, the accent of the speech, or the customs followed in a person's behavior. Paul's definition distinctly embraced many "Jews" who were both natural/cultural Jews as well as true "spiritual" Jews according to his definition of the term.

It thus seems reasonable that at this point Paul should address the errant conclusion of his critics and perform a significant course correction before going into a more detailed lesson that will focus on God's judgment against these particular Jews who became both enemies of the gospel, but at the same time remained elect for the sake of God's "spiritual" promises to the ancestral fathers of the Jewish people, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ([Ro 11:28](#)).¹²⁴

I say then, Hath God cast away his people? Has God forgotten His ancient promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? No, according to Paul, he has not at all forgotten or forsaken those promises. Clearly Paul's critics anticipated the fulfillment of those promises exclusively in their Jewishness, while Paul explains repeatedly in these three chapters of the Roman letter that God's promises to the fathers find their fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ, not in the Jewish people. Consequently those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ and who walk by faith in Him become the heirs of God's spiritual promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Paul will enlarge this precise argument in the third and fourth chapters of his Galatian letter.

So what is Paul's answer to this question? *God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of*

Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. By his personal faith in Christ, not to mention the multitude of other natural/cultural Jews who embraced the gospel and lived according to their faith in Christ, Paul affirms that God is altogether faithful to His promises to the Jewish fathers.

By his use of the term “God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew,” Paul affirms that he is dealing with God’s personal and individual election of a people from every race and culture to the family of God, a choice that indeed included natural Jews, but a choice based on divine mercy and God’s choice, not on such superficial marks as the color of one’s skin or the culture in which he/she may have coincidentally been born. Do not overlook Paul’s use of “foreknew” earlier in the Roman letter ([Ro 8:29](#); where the term appears as one of five major divine acts, all of which are defined by the personal pronoun “whom,” not the impersonal pronoun “what.”). Paul has no more left his teaching regarding God’s electing grace that ensures no separation of even one of His elect from God’s love than he has left his definition of a “true” Jew that he presented in [Ro 2:28-29](#).

Paul will go into great details in the eleventh chapter to explain his teachings regarding God’s promises and His preserving grace, along with His righteous rejection of unbelieving Jews, despite their familial connection to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He will use Elijah’s experience in the Northern Kingdom to exemplify that all people who coincidentally have ancestral ties to the Jewish fathers do not thereby get a free pass into divine grace. He will also use the Elijah experience to explain his point regarding a remnant of natural Jews who are also spiritual Jews, as well as sincere believers in God. I suggest that a person may sincerely believe in God, despite holding to significant error in his/her belief about God. The obvious problem in Rome, not to mention the Galatian letter or the seven churches in Asia (first three chapters of Revelation) all affirm that one’s belief in God does not prevent the incursion of significant error in what is believed. Do you know someone who is fully as sincere as you about their faith in God, but they are sincerely convinced that Arminianism, salvation by human works, is the correct interpretation of the Bible? Before Paul goes into the detailed explanations that follow in the eleventh chapter, he must anchor his teachings, and hopefully the minds of his critics, in the bedrock truth of our study verses. God has not forsaken His promises to the fathers. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew in the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace is not a covenant with conditions on us that we must perform in order to validate the provisions of the covenant. To be fully accurate, the covenant of grace does contain conditions that must be met in order for God’s grace to be extended to His chosen people, but the covenant of grace stipulates that all those conditions are met by God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and none—not even one—by the elect themselves. Being a child of God is based on God’s covenant, on God’s saving grace, and not on something—anything—that we do to gain that blessed state.

However, as we shall abundantly see as Paul develops his teachings in the eleventh chapter, God’s temporal blessings on His children to presently enjoy the promised land of milk and honey are full of conditions that we must meet if we have any expectation of enjoying the fruits of that land. By this land flowing with milk and honey, I do not refer to the geographical region of Israel, but to the spiritual blessings that God makes available to His obedient children who walk the walk of faith, blessings not wholly enjoyed and perhaps not even known by His chosen children who refuse to walk the walk of faith. Paul’s emphatic point repeatedly through these three chapters is that nothing whatever can substitute for this walk of faith that is so firmly anchored in the Lord Jesus Christ. Moses’ Law cannot substitute for it or supplement it. The first century Jews’ embellishment of Moses’ Law was even more impotent to supplement the walk of faith than a firm and true reliance on the original Mosaic code. And, my friend, no law that you or I contrive, however subtle its presentation in our minds or however good our intentions, can supplement the walk of faith any more than Moses’ Law. God has stipulated only one course of conduct that will ensure fellowship with Him and the blessings that grow out of a

personal walk of faith with Him. Only the walk of faith, and that without embellishment, enlargement, or supposed enhancements, can lead us across the wilderness of our self-imposed and fruitless legalism to the land that flows with spiritual milk and honey. Let's walk the walk together into the joys of that incredible land of promise.