

“What does all this mean? Even though the Gentiles were not trying to follow God’s standards, they were made right with God. And it was by faith that this took place. But the people of Israel, who tried so hard to get right with God by keeping the law, never succeeded. Why not? Because they were trying to get right with God by keeping the law instead of by trusting in him.” Romans 9:30-32 NLT

[lectio] // ROMANS 9:30-10:4

This is a hard concept to swallow! I don't think I'm smart enough or patient enough to understand it. I give Israel credit for struggling with this whole law & grace concept. So God gives the law, it's much stricter than laws in that time, but it also kept Israel alive and prospering when every nation around them failed. There are two counter points. God knew they couldn't keep the laws perfectly, and they didn't. He also knew they would add their own and make the laws not only harder, but far more complicated. He also punished them for what? Not keeping the laws or for being stubborn and turning to another love - idolatry? And even this idolatry was complicated because Israel so desires to be like other nations, nations that a God did not choose or work with because of their wickedness. And Israel not only strayed from God's laws, they followed a false narrative, filled with false hopes and promises, and was more complicated, expensive, bloody, destructive to families and dangerous. Honestly, I look back and it seems impossible! God was teaching the human race through a trusted relationship with Israel. The book of Job is a micro-story of Israel's entire history? As a Jew, this passage Paul writes would infuriate me too. The gentiles did nothing to earn a right relationship with God and yet he granted it! He jews worked hard and got it wrong and still didn't understand what God was doing.

[oratio]

pray as responding to the words, phrase, sentence that God has stirred within you

Dad,

I've not seen the struggle so clearly. Was Israel chosen BECAUSE they were so persistently stubborn and gritty or did you make them that way through their suffering and rejection of your will? Is that the difference? Is this what sin has done to all of us? Makes us stubborn and willfully disobedient to you? And the antidote is grace not more work (which makes it complicated and arrogant)? If so, then Israel is not the only ones with this issue - this is in the human heart now and is prevalent in the church! God help us, God help me.

[contemplatio]

rest in the presence of God, allowing the words revealed to take root