

A level results for students - much joy but also rejection.

Has God rejected his people?

This is Paul's question as he reaches the high point of this theological discussion about the people of Israel.

People of Israel - vision of Messiah fulfilled in Jesus

...what comes next?

God's people throughout the OT.

Paul is out on his own - and this is Paul at his most theologically innovative.

Messiah comes = God's new kingdom fully comes.... Not fully happened.

NT Wright - Paul and the Faithfulness of God (Volume 2)

God's faithful love

Where does Paul locate the answer to this question?

Not with us. Not with our own failings, mistakes, weaknesses, wrongs.

Paul starts with who God is.

Because of the faithful steadfast love of God - because of who God is.

The first revelation of God's character in the Bible takes place in Exodus 34. When the Lord passes before Moses:

The Lord passed before him (Moses), and proclaimed,

'The Lord, the Lord,
a God merciful and gracious,
slow to anger,
and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,
keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation,
forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.
(Exodus 34: 6-7)

Khesed - loyal love, steadfast love.

How much of how we understand God starts from who we are, rather than who God is?

Elijah - alone, depressed, doesn't want to eat or drink.

Meets with God. (1 Kings 19:10)

Plant - cave - God is not in the mighty wind, the earthquake or the fire.

God is in the sheer silence. "What are you doing here Elijah?"

Elijah has to learn a deeper understanding of God's faithful, steadfast love.

"The great thing to remember is that though our feelings come and go, God's love for us does not. It is not wearied by our sins, or our indifference; and, therefore, it is quite relentless in its

determination that we shall be cured of those sins, at whatever cost to us, at whatever cost to Him." (*Mere Christianity* (1952) C.S. Lewis)

Elijah learns that God's love for God's people is steadfast and faithful. It does not depend on his feelings, or the rejection of the people.

Not because of our own strength.

Because of the steadfast love of God.

Ultimate revelation of the faithful love of God is Christ's death and resurrection.

Steadfast love for all

Steadfast love open to everyone - as Paul writes to the mainly Gentile church in Rome he writes so that they will not reject their spiritual heritage from the people of Israel.

Matthew 15 reading - the Canaanite woman.

"Send her away...." We are the ones on the inside.

God's steadfast love is there for all. As we saw with Elijah and the disciples how we feel about others does not affect God's steadfast love towards them.

God's steadfast love is marked by acceptance, not rejection.

God does not reject us in life, in the joys and challenges that it hold.

God does not reject us at the moment of our death.

God's steadfast love are (as Paul says...) irrevocable.

Where are we trying to do things in our own strength, rather than depending on God's steadfast love?

God's steadfast love is given not out of what we deserve or not, not because we are holy, not because of our worthiness.

But because of who God is.

The ultimate example of this is at the centre of our Christian faith: Christ's death and resurrection.

Christ's steadfast love on the cross absorbs our weaknesses, our historic failures and our spiritual failures.