

✠ Deuteronomy 9:23 – 10:22 ✠

**IN NOMINE IESU**

What makes one an Israelite? Is it genealogy? No. John the Baptist says, “Do not think to yourself that you have Abraham as your father. For I tell you, God is able to raise up children of Abraham from these stones” (Matthew 3:9). Also, St. Paul writes, “Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel” (Romans 9:6).

It is it circumcision? No. The apostle Paul writes, “no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart” (Romans 2:28-29). As we heard Moses, “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart” (Deuteronomy 10:16).

Therefore, what makes an Israelite are not matters of the flesh, but matters of the heart. Not outward obedience to the Law, but rather inward obedience to the Law. Circumcision of the flesh marked one a descendant of Abraham, but circumcision of the heart, repentance unto faith, makes one a descendant of the promise.

For an Israelite is not one who only goes through the motions, as it were, but rather one whose heart is pure so that the deeds that flow out of his heart will also be pure. As the psalmist writes, “Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart” (Psalm 73:1).

But who is pure in heart? Is it not also written, “No one is righteous; no one seeks God; no one does good, not even one” (Romans 3:10-12)? Who has no other gods? Are we not all guilty of putting our trust in something or someone other than God?

Do we not tell lies and go along with gossip because we fear a bad reputation or uncomfortable confrontations rather than fearing God’s wrath against all lies? Do we not love more our own works and desires than we love God who knows what is good for us even if it does not seem to us to be good? Who among the children of men has feared, loved, and trusted in God above all things? No one.

Thus here is Moses, the servant of the living God, saying to the descendants of Abraham, “You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you” (Deuteronomy 9:24). Moses prayed to God, interceding on their behalf, “O Lord God ... do not regard the stubbornness of your people, or their wickedness.”

Yet there is one like a son of man (Daniel 7:13) who has perfectly obeyed God’s Law. He is the Lord Jesus. He is the true Israelite in whom there is no deceit. He is the recipient of the promise made to Abraham, for He is the firstborn of the resurrection. Moses did not intercede on His behalf; rather, He intercedes on Moses’ behalf. He stands before the Ancient of Days and reminds His Father, “Father, do not look at their sins or cast them down because of them. Behold, I stand before you, holy and innocent. For my sake, forgive them.”

Though a wild olive shoot, you have been grafted into the olive tree, which is Christ. You have been grafted into the vine, and from the vine you receive your nourishment. From the vine you receive a new heart and a new mind. You receive the good fruit of the vine, producing it as if it were your own. You receive all the benefits of being grafted into a healthy, strong, and good vine.

And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord (cf. Deuteronomy 10:12-13)?

What does this mean except to love the Lord your God and you neighbor as yourself? This is the whole of the Law and Prophets. This is not a condemnation, rebuke, or challenge. It is a proclamation of who you are in Christ. You are Israel. You are the chosen people of God that you may proclaim His wonders (1 Peter 2:9-10). Do not fret over what to do or how to do it. Be bold in the Lord and live for Him. He will not let you stumble and fall. He will uphold you and cause your feet to walk the path of the just.

And when you fail, when you sin by not loving God or neighbor, as you are sure to do, you have an advocate with the Father. Not Moses, who himself sinned and fell short of the glory of God. But Jesus, the only-begotten of God. He intercedes on your behalf. He is your advocate. He is your redeemer, your savior. For the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1: 17).

In him you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt (Colossians 2:11-14).

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is now your Father. You have been adopted as children. Not because of you, but because of Jesus. You are coheirs of the promise. Therefore the Lord is your praise. He is your God. Him alone shall you serve.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠