

Ministry of Grace Church

Romans 9:1-5 – Family Prayers Sermon Notes



Background

This chapter opens with what appears to be a new train of thought and argumentation. Its main design seems to be to meet objections which would be alleged against the positions Paul has presented in the previous parts of the Epistle. He has defended the position that the barrier between the Jews and Gentiles had been removed; that the Jews could not be saved by any external advantages which they possessed; that everyone, Jew or Gentile, was guilty before God; and that there was only one way for Jews and Gentiles to be saved - by faith in Jesus Christ.

In chapters 1 through 7, Paul stated the benefits of salvation by faith and showed its ability to accomplish what the Law of Moses could not do in overcoming sin. In chapter 8 he showed that this salvation by faith was according to the purpose of God. That is, salvation is according to God's choosing, which we call election. This however, might have produced two objections from the Jews: first, that it was unjust; and second, that this whole argument involved a departure from the promises that Yahweh made to the Jewish nation. Because of this, it might be supposed by some that the apostle had ceased to feel an interest in his countrymen, and had become the exclusive advocate of the Gentiles. So, in this chapter he will demonstrate:

1. His unwavering love for his countrymen, and his regard for their spiritual welfare.
2. That the principles of election had existed in former times with regard to Isaac ([Romans 9:7-13](#)), Moses ([Romans 9:15](#)), Egypt's Pharaoh ([Romans 9:17](#)), and in the prophecies of Hosea and Isaiah ([Romans 9:25-29](#))

3. Throughout this chapter he shows the divine prerogative to reject even some of God's promised people and that it was His purpose to call others to the privileges of being the people of God.

Now, in order to prepare everyone for the fact that he accepts God's sovereignty in choosing and rejecting, Paul expresses his deep seated and continual emotional pain because of his unbelieving brothers in the flesh.

Now, consider this, when we are challenged by others regarding the truthfulness of what we have said, we are prone to say, "I swear it's true." This is an oath declaring the absolute certainty of what we have said. That is just how passionate Paul is about the eternal welfare of his fellow Jews who have rejected the gospel message. Therefore, he opens this section of his letter with an oath:

Romans 9:1-2

I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.

Paul declares this oath, "I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying," yet he does not swear by heaven, or the temple, or any other thing. In fact, in [Matthew 5:34-36](#) Christ told us not to swear by these things. Instead, Paul declares this oath in the presence of Christ himself. The reason for this oath is to make it very clear that He wants his countrymen to be saved.

Notice that he declares this oath with Christ as his witness. We Christians so casually pass by this term, Christ, but the Jews of Paul's day understood that he was referring to the Messiah, the Anointed One for whom the Jews had been eagerly waiting almost 2,000 years.

Unfortunately, in spite of his passion for his people, Paul was accused by the Jews of being a turncoat and of rejecting all that they stood for as the chosen people of God in favor of this "new religion." In fact, his fellow Jews were openly desirous of having Paul killed as we see from the book of Acts:

And Festus said, "King Agrippa, and all you gentlemen here present with us, you see this man about whom all the people of the Jews appealed to me, both at Jerusalem and here, loudly declaring that he ought not to live any longer. ([Acts 25:24](#))"

In reality Paul had not turned against the Jews. In fact, he was greatly troubled that so many of his countrymen not only denied the true Messiah but were openly hostile toward the gospel. He declares that he is deeply committed to his countrymen and, in fact, would rather that all of them be saved. But he will demonstrate later in this chapter that election has been part of God's dealing with mankind throughout history, including the offspring of the patriarchs, and he will cite several examples.

So, after having invoked the witness of the highest authority possible regarding what he is about to say, Paul follows this up with the witness of his own conscience in the presence of the Holy Spirit as well. This is an urgent plea to his countrymen to understand that what he is about to say is true and straight from the innermost part of Paul's being.

He says that he has continual sorrow and great grief, but for what? In fact, he will tell us in the next verse that this great grief and unceasing sorrow are for his kinsmen in the flesh, that is, the Jews. He will also say in the opening of the next chapter that his heart's desire and prayer for Israel is for their salvation. Pay particular attention to this. Paul is saying that he cannot shake this feeling of grief and sorrow whenever he thinks about the lost condition of many, many Jews. After all, they are the ones that God separated out and who received the books of Moses and the Prophets. God has given special attention to the Jews and special revelation of Himself to them as well.

But - Paul knows that many of them are lost because they are relying on satisfying a set of legal requirements to be saved. Paul spent a great deal of time and effort in the earlier chapters of this letter explaining that obeying the rules will not produce righteousness. Only the grace of God through faith in the Anointed One (the Messiah, the Christ) will produce the righteousness they seek.

Romans 9:3-5

For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

There is some disagreement among theologians regarding verse three, here. By carefully looking at the Greek, however, we get a better sense of what Paul was trying to say. You see, he did not actually wish himself to be accursed (given over to destruction); rather, he was implying that he was at a point where he was almost willing to endure being accursed for the sake of his lost brethren. However, he has just spent the last few chapters of this letter explaining that only the elect are saved. Paul knew that he was one of the elect, therefore he also knew that he could not get unsaved even if he wanted to.

Paul makes some very strong statements in the opening of this chapter to indicate to his fellow Israelites that not only has he not turned against them, but he has a very strong desire to see them saved. Since he grew up as a very devout Jew (he even studied under Gamaliel, one of the most respected teachers of his time), he knows how trapped they are in trying to keep the law as a means of salvation. Since his conversion, however, Paul has learned that salvation cannot be attained through obedience. It can only be attained through faith. He will show later in this chapter that neither the Law nor the Jewish lineage have any effect when it comes to righteousness.

He now continues on from the previous verse. He is making a comparison between the things he has been teaching about the church (chosen by God, adopted by God, given promises by God, etc.) and the Jewish people. In doing so he will demonstrate to his Jewish brethren that God's dealings with the church are very much the same as His past dealings with the Jews (until the time they rejected the Messiah). Here, Paul begins to detail some of the special privileges that the Jews had. Let's look at each of them.

“Who are Israelites” - They are the descendents of Jacob (renamed Israel by God when he wrestled with God at Penuel – See **Genesis 32:28**.) Jacob means “trickster” whereas Israel means “a prince of God.”

“To whom belongs the adoption as sons” – This is probably a reference to **Deuteronomy 7:6** where God chose them (the Israelites) as a special people to Him above all people that are on the face of the earth.

“For you are a holy people to Yahweh your God; Yahweh your God has chosen you to be a people for His own treasured possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. (**Deuteronomy 7:6**)

Is it fair that God chose the descendants of Jacob (Israel) and excluded all others? Yes, this is an example of God’s election (choosing) just like His election of Christians. But, he doesn’t just identify their adoption. He points out other things that have belonged to the descendants of Israel.

“The glory” – probably a reference to the glory of God which led the Israelites through the wilderness.

“The covenants” - The various compacts or promises which had been made from time to time with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and with the nation of Israel.

“The giving of the Law” – On Mount Sinai – see **Exodus 20**.

“The temple service” – this was a point of pride for Israel, indicating that only they worshipped at the true temple of the true God.

“And the promises” – Most notably the promise of the coming Messiah from the seed of David.

Paul is showing to his brethren in the flesh that theirs was a special relationship with God. But Paul will soon show them that this relationship does not guarantee righteousness. That only comes from believing the promise of the Messiah and accepting the Messiah when he comes - which they didn’t do.

“Whose are the fathers” – This is a reference to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who each had a special relationship with God. Paul will refer to these three as well as others in this chapter as examples of those whom God chose for special blessing.

“From whom is the Christ according to the flesh” – This is the greatest privilege and promise that was given to the Israelites: that the promised Messiah, the Christ, would (and did) descend directly from the same lineage as theirs. Before Jesus came to earth to take on human form, He was promised as the Savior of the Jews. They believed that he would rescue them from all foreign rulers. Please pay special attention to the fact that God did not promise the Savior of the world to be of any lineage except the Jews. They took great pride in this and believed that it meant He would come only for the Jews.

Paul’s point in this section is that Christ is a descendant of the fathers (Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob) but only in regard to his flesh. This is a clear statement against the Catholic theology stating that Mary is the mother of God. Paul says that she is the mother of Jesus only with regard to the flesh.

“Who is God over all, blessed forever.” – He then clearly states that Christ is over all things. That is, His position is above all creatures of all creation. But Paul does not stop there. He now declares that Jesus Christ is God. The apostle is making a statement of the deity of

Jesus Christ (He is God), but he is not simply saying that He is a god, but that He is the one and only God who is above all things. Paul ended this section with, “[blessed forever](#).” This was commonplace for Jewish writers to include this doxology immediately after mentioning the title of God when in reference to Yahweh.

So What?

Paul expressed concern for his fellow Jews who still clung to the promises that Paul once believed in. Now that Paul has been truly converted, however, he is aware of the futility of their supposed worship. Today, we can look at other Christians and see how futile their “worship” really is. We need to be as concerned for them as Paul was for his fellow Jews. Do you have Christian friends, perhaps people that you used to attend church with, who have turned away from some of the basic tenets of the faith? Perhaps they no longer believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, or they now believe that the Bible is not to be interpreted literally, but culturally. After all, the society that we live in today is totally different from the society that the first century Christians lived in.

Many Christians today no longer believe that the Bible is “the Word of God,” but that it contains the Word of God, or perhaps, it becomes the Word of God as we read it. Many professed Christians no longer believe in a literal 7-day creation. They believe this because, they say, science has “proven” that everything that is, came into being in an instant, as all matter, which had been compressed into an infinitesimally small “singularity,” suddenly exploded in what science refers to as “the Big Bang.” All this happened some 12 to 15 billion years ago, and the universe and life have been evolving ever since. However, there is no direct, or even indirect evidence of this and there is no one who was there to witness it. However, in contrast, there was someone present during the 7 days of creation, and He has related His first-hand experience to us in the Bible.

There are people who still profess to be Christians, though they have changed the meanings of many of the teachings of the early church. These people attend church “religiously,” but instead of the faith that their life should be founded on, they have substituted works, like church attendance and devotion to a specific church or pastor. Some of them believe that strict adherence to what the Bible teaches will offend non-believers, so they “soften” the gospel message to make it more acceptable to them. They prefer the newer paraphrase versions of the Bible that represent what someone supposes the writers meant rather than what they actually wrote. These are preferred versions because they are much easier to read, even if they do change the meaning and intent of the original writers. These same pseudo-Christians prefer the exciting, emotional “worship” time on Sunday morning to the simple soul-searching, heartfelt praise songs of the past. They like songs such as “Reckless Love,” “I’m Going to See a Victory,” “I Know a Name,” or others that have no real Scriptural basis, but they stir-up emotions. They’re sung in churches to create excitement, without giving God the glory and praise that only He deserves. Don’t get me wrong, some of the new songs are okay, but they are usually sung more for the emotional kick, than to lead us to a humble submission to the savior who gave up His life to offer us eternal life.

When we worship, we need to make sure our worship is God-centered, not man-centered, or worse yet not me-centered. Do you remember what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well?

... an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:23-24)

In spirit and in truth, not in emotion and excitement!

I’m talking about “professed” Christians who think Paul was speaking culturally when he said, “I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man ...” He didn’t really mean that a church should not have a woman pastor, now did he? After all, God loves men and women the same and He wants us all to serve in the church with the spiritual gifts He has given us, including the gifts of teaching and exhortation. But wait! You all know that I’m being sarcastic, don’t you? So just to let you all know where I stand on this subject, within the operation of a church, what Paul said is: “I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man ...” What he actually meant was, “I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man ...”

Today, many Christians rely on obedience to church rules or traditions to make them “feel” religious. So, let me ask you, are you relying on obedience to a set of rules or on certain church doctrines or traditions for your salvation? Are you depending on your baptism or your membership in the church to save you? If you are, you have missed the whole point of what Paul has been teaching in this letter to the Roman Christians. Paul will tell us in the next chapter “... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” We will get into exactly what this means when we come to that verse. For now, my message to you is not to depend on your church, or your Pastor, or your behavior to save you because they will all fail you. Instead, fall on your knees confessing your inability to save yourself, believe that you are a lost sinner and that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins. Then confess Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, as your Savior and your Lord (Master).

We all need to recognize that we are miserable sinners and that we have absolutely nothing to bring to God except a humble, submissive spirit, professing as Paul did:

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the working out of the good *is* not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. ... Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death? (Romans 7:18-19, and 24)

When you are completely convinced of your own sinfulness and your own unworthiness, then praise God for His mercy and His grace, for He is worthy! Quit focusing on yourself and get your focus back on Him. Quit trying to earn God’s favor through obedience and simply trust Him and obey Him because you love Him.

Let’s pray