

**The Sorrowful Unbelief of Israel, Part 2**

Scripture: Romans 9:4-5

Code: 45-70

Let's look to the Word of God, Romans chapter 9 is our text. I want to read for you verses 1 through 5. I really don't feel in my heart that I'm going to preach a sermon tonight, but I'd like to have a Bible study with you. And I'd like us, if we can, to allow the Spirit of God to be the preacher and just impress some things deeply in our hearts as we look at this passage and several others.

Paul begins this ninth chapter by saying, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart for I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh who are Israelites to whom pertaineth the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the service of God and the promises, whose are the fathers and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ who is over all God blessed forever, amen."

Now this passage as we noted last time opens up a whole new section of Romans to us...a vital section, vital to any reader of this epistle. The section is not parenthetical, it is not arbitrary. It is not just tacked on or slapped in. It is essential. It is germane to the whole argument of the Apostle Paul and the Holy Spirit in this great epistle. In fact, in some sense it could be said to be the most essential passage of all for if left out there's a great gap in the believability of the message of the gospel. Because if we are to accept the fact that the new covenant, salvation by grace through faith, which has been the theme of the first eight chapters is in fact true and if we are also to accept that it is for all men in all nations and all times, then what happens to God's special nation Israel? What happens to them?

Several questions must be answered because Paul has been presenting a gospel that has been preached to all nations. He said that in chapter 1. And he has characterized the lostness of all men and the redemption of all men. And in presenting this gospel of salvation by grace through faith to all who believe, whatever their national heritage, he naturally poses this very important question that would be asked by a Jew or anyone who knew the special place of the Jews, what does this mean in relation to Israel? Are they no longer God's chosen people? Are they permanently set aside? Has God cancelled His promises to them? Is the Gentile church the new Israel? And then this question, how can Jews to whom this gospel came first and who are the sons of Abraham be rejecting it if in fact it is the truth? Wouldn't they be the most likely to recognize its truthfulness? And then there's this question, if Paul has been saying in chapter 8 particularly how secure we are in Christ and how nothing can ever separate us from Him or His love, how can we be sure God's going to keep that

promise if He broke His promises to Israel? I mean, if God didn't keep the Jews in the place of covenant blessing, why should we believe He'll keep us there no matter what he says?

Now these are important issues. And before Paul can move on to the application of this great truth to the matter of practical living, before he can call for a response of the heart to these great truths, he must deal with this strategic area. And he does that in chapters 9, 10 and 11. And I say it is essential to the argument because if he stops and doesn't deal with this, there's a gaping hole in his presentation. So the questions must be answered. In chapters 9, 10 and 11 Paul's objective is to deal with these issues. He shows, for example, why the Jews who are God's people and to whom the gospel did come first and who truly were and are the children of Abraham nevertheless have rejected. He shows why. And he states that their rejection is only partial and only temporary and that it was always in the plan of God to be partial and temporary. He also makes it abundantly clear that God will fulfill ultimately all the promises to Israel. Therefore God can be trusted to keep His word to the church because He will keep His word to His people Israel.

Now those are the things he deals with in this section. It's a thrilling section because it tells us where the Jew and the Gentile fit into the redemptive plan of God, more than any other portion of Scripture this section tells us. It tells us how the Jew in his unbelief is temporarily and partially set aside and the Gentile brought in to be redeemed and Gentile redemption then provokes Israel to jealousy and they, too, then desire that which Gentiles have so that the coming in of the Gentiles provokes the salvation of the Jews. It's a marvelous plan, marvelous. So marvelous is it that the whole section ends with praise.

Look at chapter 11 verse 33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord or who hath been His counselor? Or who hath first given to Him and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things to whom be glory forever. Amen." It ends with a doxology of praise...praise for a God who could come up with such an incredibly marvelous supernatural and amazing plan of redemption.

Now, you see, Paul has to deal with this because Paul has become defined in that day and age and that part of the world as the archenemy of Jews, that's how he is known. And the Jews actually believe that Christianity is an anti-Jewish conspiracy, that Paul is the beginner, if you will, or the mainstay of an anti-Semitic movement. They believe that. And Paul wants them to know that that's not the case at all. And before he gets into the theology of that, he wants to give them his heart. And so in verses 1 to 5 he does that, he unbears his heart and the deep and profound love that he has for Israel. He cherished that people. They were his people. And he celebrates his Jewish identity. In Acts 23:6 he says, "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee." And he celebrated it in the letter to the Philippians, "A Hebrew of the Hebrews of the tribe of Benjamin, circumcised the eighth day, zealous for the law above all my countrymen." He was a Jew and he respected and revered and honored and

loved and treasured that Jewishness. And he loved his people. Look at chapter 10 verse 1. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be...what?...saved." He wasn't anti-Jewish, nor is any true minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But the Jews, you see, need to know where his heart is. And so he gives them a look at his heart at the beginning of chapter 9 and then again at the beginning of chapter 10. He loved his people. The fact that he went to the Gentiles and the fact that he preached the truth about salvation by grace through faith, not law through works, doesn't mean that he was anti-Jewish. The fact that he confronted the lost Jew with his sinfulness and the emptiness of his system was not an act of hate but an act of...what?...of love, for love calls men away from sin to salvation. Love calls men away from the delusion to the truth. So they missed the point. The reason he confronted the false system of Judaism and called men to Christ was not because he hated the Jewish system or the Jewish people but because he loved them so much.

But they saw him as the archenemy. They hated him. They hated him with a burning passion. They hated him as much as they hated Jesus Christ. And he even said, "I bear in my body the marks of Christ." The reason they hate me so much is because they hated Christ so much. They can't hit Him so they hit me in His place. You see, in their eyes he was a traitor because he started out persecuting Christians and then became one of them. He was selected because of his zeal for Judaism to stop the Christian movement and he turned traitor.

Now I want you to go with me to the book of Acts. And I just want to do a little study with you for a few moments, to give you a perspective of how he was perceived in his day. And I think it will begin to dawn on your mind what he was up against. He was converted in chapter 9, so let's begin there.

In chapter 9 we have this great story of his conversion on the Damascus Road. And apparently after his conversion he spent some time with the Lord in a very unique and private relationship. He was called away into the Nabatean Arabia area, not the Arabia that we know today as Saudi Arabia, but Nabatean Arabia, an area around Palestine. He was there for a period of several years at which time the Lord dispensed to him the gospel. And in Galatians 1 he says the message I preach I didn't receive from men, I received it directly by revelation from Christ Himself. And it was during that time that he did.

And it was after that time that immediately he returns to the area at Damascus and verse 20 says he preached Christ in the synagogues that He is the Son of God. Now that would be a pretty volatile place to preach that message. That would be like me going down the street to the synagogue to preach Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Only even more volatile in that time. And all that heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this he that destroyed them who called on this name in Jerusalem and came here for that intent that he might bring them bound to the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength and confounded the Jews who dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ."

So he not only preached that Jesus was the Messiah but he proved it, literally confounded...what it means is he defeated them in debate, they were no match for his presentation.

And what was their reaction? Verse 23, "After many days were fulfilled the Jews took counsel to murder him." They wanted him murdered. They were so enraged that they finally sought to eliminate him all together. It started that way, folks. Didn't get any better. Chapter 13 verse 14, he has just been set apart for missionary service, along with his dear friend and companion Barnabas. Set apart from their role as pastors in the church at Antioch and sent out to preach Christ. They departed, verse 14 says, from Perga, came to Antioch in Pisidia, went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. And after reading of the law of the prophets, the ruler of the synagogue sent to them saying, Ye men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."

Here he is again in the synagogue. And they offer him the platform as they were accustomed to doing when a visiting rabbi came. "Paul stood up and beckoning with his hands said, Men of Israel and ye that fear God, listen." Men of Israel refers to Jews, God fearers would be Gentiles who had identified with the Jewish religion. "You listen, the God of this people of Israel chose our fathers..." and he goes on to preach this sermon and guess who the subject is...Jesus Christ...Jesus Christ. His name is mentioned in verse 23. And he goes on to preach Jesus Christ. And you can pick it up in verse 38, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins and by Him all that believe are justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." Do you realize what a devastating statement that would be in a synagogue? "Beware therefore lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophet, Behold you despisers and wonder and perish for I work a work in your days of work which you shall in no way believe though a man declare it unto you. And when they...that is Paul and Barnabas...were gone out of the synagogue, the Jews, they...again...besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath." Boy, they were fascinated by this. "And they persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. And the next Sabbath day the whole city, almost, came together to hear the Word of God but when the Jews saw the multitudes they were filled with envy and spoke against those things which were spoken by Paul contradicting and blaspheming."

I mean, they were willing to listen until they realized the Gentiles could get in on it. And they became jealous and envious. Gentiles in their minds were outcasts...racial pride raises its ugly head. They certainly couldn't believe something that Gentiles believed. And so they became hostile...contradicting, blaspheming. "Paul and Barnabas grew bold." I love that. The more the negative reaction came, the greater the message. And they went on articulating and preaching. And, of course, in verse 48, "The Gentiles heard, were glad, glorified the Word of the Lord, as many as were ordained to eternal life believed and the Word of the Lord was published throughout all the region." But note verse 50. "But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women."

Now apparently there were some women, Gentile women, who had attached themselves to the synagogue...honorable women, devout women, women who sought God, women who were tired of the pagan morality and identified...immorality, rather, and identified with the unique moral convictions of Judaism, women of high position who were religious, who were drawn to monogamy and drawn to family life and drawn to all the virtues of Jewish tradition. And they stirred up these devout and honorable women and the chief men in the city and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas and expelled them out of their borders...threw them out.

Chapter 14, would you notice verse 1? "It came to pass in Iconium, they went both together in the synagogue of the Jews," they went right back in the synagogue next time. You say, "Why did they keep going there?" Because they had an interest there, they were Jewish. And...you say, "Weren't they sent to reach the Gentiles?" That's right. But they didn't want to do it alone and they figured their first fertile soil for recruits was in the synagogue...cause they would have a hearing there and if they could get a few Jews to help them it would be a little easier to do. Plus, if they went to the Gentiles first, they could never come back to the Jews. So they had a strategy. They went into the synagogue. They spoke. There were Jews and Greeks who believed. "But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, made their minds evil affected against the brethren. The city became divided...verse 4 says...there was an assault made, both of the Gentiles who had been stirred up by the Jews, they wanted to stone them, crush their life out."

Well, you find them in Lystra in verse 19, "And there came there certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium." They go down to Lystra and here come the same Jews that gave them trouble in Iconium. "And persuaded the people." They stirred up another riot. They were rabble rousers. They wanted this guy stoned to death. They threw him out of the city, stoned him to death, that's how he was treated. He was a blasphemer to them. They despised the man because he confronted the evils and the untruths of their system.

Look at chapter 17 verse 1. This is the chronolog of Paul's ministry. "When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica where was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, as his manner was, this was the way he did it, went into them and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, risen from the dead, that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ. And some of them believed and consorted with Paul and Silas and of the devout Greeks a great multitude and of the chief women not a few." So there were some good responses...good responses.

Look at verse 5, "But the Jews who believed not, again moved with envy." So many times with them it was racial pride. The reason they wouldn't accept a gospel wasn't because the gospel wasn't believable or verifiable, but it was because there were Gentiles in it and they couldn't handle that...they couldn't handle that. They were moved with envy. And it says, the King James says, "They took unto them certain vile fellows of the baser sort." What those are is marketplace hoodlums,

local hoods that hung around the marketplace, loafers, dissipated characters. And they paid them some money to start a riot, to set the city in an uproar. That's exactly what they did.

And then down in verse 13, "When the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the Word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the people." Everywhere he went, everywhere he went they were set against him, to kill him, to start a riot, to get him thrown out of town. They dogged his steps. And even when he established a church, they'd come in after that and they'd try to get the people to reject what he told them...the Jewish people.

Look at chapter 19 verse 8, we find him here in Ephesus. "He went into the synagogue, spoke boldly for the space of three months disputing and persuading the things concerning the Kingdom of God." Can you imagine him coming in every sabbath day preaching in the synagogue for three months? Boy, what an opportunity. "Some were hardened and believed not, spoke evil of that way...referring to the Christian way...before the multitude. He departed from them and separated the disciples disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued for the space of two years so that everybody in Asia Minor heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." They threw him out of the synagogue. They didn't want him there. And they got up and literally cursed that way. They cursed Christianity before the crowd.

Look at chapter 20. And this is a most interesting point in Paul's life. "After the uproar was ceased at Ephesus, Paul called unto him the disciples and embraced them and departed to go to Macedonia...that's Greece...and when he had gone over those parts and given them much exhortation, he came to Greece and there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him." Now they're hiding in the bushes and they want him dead, plotting.

We can stop there and interject this. It was at this point in his life in Greece, staying in the house of Gaius, also known as Titus Justus, likely in the city of Corinth. At his right arm was a secretary by the name of Tertius. And it was at this point in the twentieth chapter of Acts that he dictated Romans...he dictated Romans in the midst of Jewish persecution, the Jews were laying wait for him. They were plotting his death. It was in the midst of the death plot that he's writing Romans. So even as he writes he feels their bitter hatred. And so when he says in chapter 9 that he has the wish that if it were possible he himself could be damned for the salvation of his brethren, his kinsmen, he is expressing the heart of the Apostle who loved his people in spite of their hatred for him...in fact in the midst of their hatred.

It never changed. Chapter 21, the same thing, in verse 27 here he arrives in Jerusalem and he goes into the temple. And they found him there, in verse 28, and they cried out, "Men of Israel, help, this is the man that teaches all men everywhere against the people." He's anti-Semitic. "And the law," he's anti-God. "And this place," he's anti-worship. "And further, he brought Greeks or Gentiles into the temple and polluted this holy place for they had seen before with him in the city, Trophimus." They

saw him with Trophimus in the city, he didn't bring him in there. They just made that up. They stirred up the whole city, verse 30, the whole city of Jerusalem. "People ran together, took Paul, pulled him out of the temple and shut the doors," verse 31, "and they went about to kill him." They were going to kill him. Fortunately the Romans moved in and saved his life as God would have it.

Chapter 22, it's no different. Chapter 22 is basically the same. Look what he says, verse 18, he's in a trance, some kind of a vision. "He saw them saying unto me, Make haste, get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me." He sees the Lord and the Lord says they're not going to listen...they're not going to listen. "And I said, Lord, they know that I am prisoned and beat in every synagogue, those that believed on Thee and they know that when the blood of Thy martyr, Stephen, was shed, I also was standing by and consenting to his death and kept he raiment of them that slew him." In other words, Paul is arguing in this vision and saying, "Lord, don't You think they're going to respond to me. I mean, they know that I was really one of them. I was a zealous one of them. I was a leader among them. I persecuted Christianity. Don't you think the transformation will be highly impactful?" He said to me, "Split, get out. I have to send you to the Gentiles." There's one group that is not going to hear you, that's the Jews because they see you as a traitor. I'll send you to the Gentiles...far from here. That was the Lord's call to him.

Chapter 23, this is very interesting. They bring him before the council in Jerusalem. Verse 2, "The high priest, Ananias, commands him...them that stood by him to smack him on the mouth. He says, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. And the guy says, Hit that man in the mouth, says the high priest, smack his mouth for that blasphemy. He has not lived in good conscience before God, he is anti-Semitic, anti- God, anti-worship. And then Paul says, God smack you, you whited wall. Sitest thou to judge me after the law and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law." Boy, he had a sharp mind. But he did get a little carried away here. That's really not the way you deal with your enemies. "And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest. He said, I knew not, brethren, that he was the high priest, for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." But you can see the level of conflict. "And there arose a tremendous dissension...verse 7...the dissension is indicated in verse 10...the chief captain fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces." They would have ripped him in pieces. There's an argument...he created an argument, he pitted the Pharisees against the Sadducees over the issue of resurrection. And they were using him as a...as a tug-a-war rope, pulling each way to see who won. They would have split him in half. And again the Romans rescued him from the Jews.

Chapter 23 further down, verse 14 to 22, we see more of this. And again they would have killed him. They plotted against him. And I want you to notice verse 16, "Paul's sister's son..." we don't know much about Paul's family but he had a sister who had a son, "heard of the plot of the Jews and he went into the barracks and told Paul." See, at the end of verse 15 they were ready to kill him. They had this plot ready. And Paul's sister's son told Paul and again he was saved from death.

Chapter 26 verse 19, he reiterates a testimony here to Agrippa, just pick up verse 21. "For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple and went about to kill me...they went about to kill me."

It all ends in chapter 28, look at verse 25. This is the life of Paul. "When they agreed not among themselves, they departed. After Paul had spoken one word, well spoke the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers saying, Go unto this people and say, Hearing you shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing you shall see and not perceive, for the heart of this people has become obtuse and their ears are dull of hearing and their eyes they have closed lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and should be converted and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles and they will hear it. And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had great disputing among themselves."

I don't know if you ever thought about it, the reason I took the time to take you through that is two fold. Number one, I want you to understand that this man from the beginning of his ministry to the end was under the animosity and the bitterness and the hate and the plotting of the murderous Jews all the way along the line. And I want you also, secondly, to note that one great reason why God had to send this very capable man to the Gentiles was because there was no way he could get through to the Jews who was perceived to be such a traitor. Paul himself sums up his relationship to them in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 and I want you to look at it, verse 14, "For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus, for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets and have persecuted us and they please not God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved to fill up their sins always for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."

That's how he perceived his relationship to them. They killed the Lord just like they killed the prophets and they persecuted us. And they please not God and they're contrary to all men and they forbid us to preach the gospel and they fill up their sins and upon them comes wrath to the uttermost. That's a pretty tragic and fearful indictment. In 2 Corinthians 11 he says this in verse 24, just listen to it, "Of the Jews, five times received I 39 stripes..." Five different times the Jews whipped him with 39 lashes. He was not popular with them.

You say, "Was he anti-Semitic?" No, he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He honored and loved his heritage and he loved his people. But he was honest enough to confront them with the truth...with the truth.

It wasn't just that way with Paul. It's been that way through the ages with many who have tried to preach. I was interested to note that a couple of weeks ago we had a funeral here. It was a funeral



for a Jewish Christian whose family and friends were not Christians. Fred Barshaw preached the funeral service for a Jewish lady who loved Christ. The service exalted Jesus Christ. I mean, it was so clear it was just impossible to misunderstand. Christ was exalted from beginning to end. He was presented as the Savior and Messiah of this person. And there was a call to salvation to everyone that was present. It was marvelous.

Well the family was infuriated. The mother sat in her seat saying, "No, no, no, no," over and over again all during the message. And a letter came afterwards addressed to Dr. Fred MacArthur. I don't mind bearing Fred's burdens. And in the letter it said things like this, "I was offended." Quote, "I absolutely cringed when you were delivering your very bigoted diatribe. Many members of the Jewish group in attendance had the impulse to walk out..." and other phrases.

You see, the gospel offends the Jews. And it offends them uniquely because they have such historic covenants with God. And to be told that they are outside those covenants and have in fact rejected the Messiah who was the key to the reality of those covenants is something they cannot tolerate. It's too much. And then to tell them that they have been replaced in the covenant by Gentiles...beyond acceptance.

So Paul just accepted this as a way of life. I love the fact that he didn't change his message. I love the fact that he didn't stop going to the synagogues. But when he writes Romans, and now let's go back to Romans 9, I didn't mean to teach the book of Acts but... When he comes to Romans 9, now do you understand why he says what he says? You understand why he has to unbear his heart to them? You understand why he has to tell them how he cares? "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart for I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." That's...that's a long way of saying, "Jews, I love you. I love you enough that were it possible I would wish damnation myself that salvation might come to you. Do you understand the reason I say what I say is that you might be saved?" And that gives us the first reason for Paul's love for Israel, his own personal connection to them. My brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh...he loves them because they're his people...strong statement.

And notice that he affirms "I say the truth in Christ," and I told you last time he means to bring Christ in to corroborate that that is the truth. I live in the sphere of Christ. And as Godeau(?) the commentator says, "In the eyes of Paul there is something so holy in Christ that in that pure and luminous atmosphere of His felt presence no lie, not even an exaggeration could exist." Calls Christ into testimony. And then he says, "My conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit." And he calls the Holy Spirit to bear testimony. Testimony to what? That he is not bitter towards his people but that he is sorrowful. He has a heavy heart. It is a continual burden of pain and sorrow. And like Jesus who wept over the people who rejected Him, Paul weeps. Like Stephen who asked that God would forgive the ones who crushed his very life out, so Paul seeks their salvation. He loved his

persecutors. He loved them...like Jesus did, like Stephen did. Their unbelief left him with a permanently grieving heart. And the reason he was so zealous was not because he was insensitive but because he wanted them redeemed. This letter that came said, "How could you be so insensitive? How could you be so insensitive?" That's not insensitivity. We hate that they reject because we long that they believe.

In 1 Samuel 15:35, as you know, Saul was a great failure as a king. He disobeyed God. He was rejected as a king by God and by Samuel, you'll remember. And the text says in 1 Samuel 15:35 these words, "Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death, nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul." It's important to note that. He didn't go to see him anymore cause he was living in sin and disobedience. He had confronted him with the message of truth but he never stopped mourning for him...always the broken heart for the one who rejects the truth.

In Psalm 119:136, I'll just read you this verse. "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, says the psalmist, because they keep not Thy law." What a beautiful sentiment. The broken heart over those who do not believe. And Jeremiah 9:1, "O that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." Jeremiah can't cry enough, he says. My eyes don't have enough water. I can't shed enough tears. I wish my head were a fountain so that all the emotion in me could find its expression.

In chapter 13 of Jeremiah, that pensive marvelous text, verses 15 to 17, "Hear and give ear, be not proud for the Lord has spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God before He cause darkness, before your feet stumble on the dark mountains and while you look for light He turn it into the shadow of death and make it gross darkness. But if you will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride and mine eyes shall weep bitterly and run down with tears because the Lord's flock is carried away captive." So Jeremiah weeps.

In Lamentations 1 he weeps. In Lamentations 3 he weeps. God's heart is broken over the unbelief of Israel and so is the Apostle Paul's. And we must not misunderstand that.

And then this, listen to Isaiah 66:10 and 11, "Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad with her all ye that love her, rejoice for joy with her all ye that mourn for her that ye may nurse and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations, that ye may drink deeply and be delighted with the abundance of her glory." Those tears some day in behalf of Israel are going to be turned to rejoicing because Israel is going to enter into salvation.

And so, it's that heart of love that causes Paul to wish himself accursed. So the first thing that drew Paul's affection to Israel was his personal connection. The second was the divine connection and I want you to look at verses 4 and 5...the divine connection. He loves them not only because they're his kinsmen but he loves them because of their special relationship to God. You see, he loves God

and therefore loves whom God loves. He can't separate himself from that. The love of Christ is shed abroad in his heart. If God loves them uniquely, then he loves them uniquely. And so he introduces us to their special relationship to God in verses 4 and 5. And these are such rich concepts...just incredible.

I want you to see the privileges. Now I'm going to try to give you an understanding of each one. First of all, he says they are Israelites. Who are Israelites? The name Israel, what is it? Where does it come from? Well, it goes back to Genesis 32:28, it was given to Jacob after he wrestled with an angel. It is the unique name of God's people. It signifies the name of God's people, the identity of God's people. And what it's basically saying is you're God's people, uniquely called and named by God, a noble people. I love what it says in Isaiah 5 that when God chose a people to place in the land, He chose the most noble vine. And when you see the word "Israelite" you are hit with the nobility of that people. They're God's special people. They are a noble people.

Philippians 3:5, Paul refers to the stock of Israel. They are a distinguished people. And through the years of human history the Jews have distinguished themselves in every area of human life. They have given to the world geniuses. They have set the world in new direction, humanly speaking, with their advances in science and art and economics and education. The world has learned to understand the nobility of the stock of Israel, the choicest vine, that noble people set apart unto God. He says you're a special people. You're not like every other person. You're not like every other people, every other nation. You have a unique relationship with God. He called you out, gave you a special name...you were a noble people, a gifted people.

Secondly, he says, "To whom pertains the adoption." Not only are they a noble people, not only are they a people with distinguished marks, humanly speaking, but beyond their natural nobility, beyond their racial nobility, beyond their unique identity as Israel, they have received as a nation what I'll call electing grace...they've been adopted by God. Is that marvelous? They've been adopted by God. God says, "I want that people to be My people." He adopted them.

In Exodus 4:22 it says, "Israel is My son, even My firstborn." His people. Hosea 11:1, "When Israel was a child then I loved him and called him My son." They're not just a noble race. They're the recipients of electing grace. Now when we say that we're saying that nationally, beloved, don't forget that, nationally, not personally, not individually. They were not just because they were Jews automatically God's spiritual children, right? No, because in 9 it says at the end of verse 6, "They are not Israel who are of Israel." No, I'm talking about nationally, they were nationally chosen to be God's son. They were His nation. And He brought them into covenant with Himself and He blessed them...oh, He blessed them. They were privileged as a nation...privileged to have His protection, privileged to have His care, privileged to have His oversight.

The Old Testament doesn't talk about God being the Father of individual Jews, that's why it was so shocking when Jesus talked that way. The Old Testament talks about God being the Father of the nation, and that's right. They were nationally His chosen son through whom He poured out His blessing. God was their Father in the unique sense of a nation, uniquely set apart to be His witness nation to reveal to the world who He is, to be the recipient of His blessing that it might be transferred from them to the nations of the world, that they might demonstrate the kind of God that He was.

In Isaiah 46, listen to these two verses, 3 and 4, "Hearken unto Me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel who have been borne or carried along by Me from their who are carried from the womb, even to your old age, I am He and even to gray hairs will I carry you. I have made and I will bear, even I will carry and I will deliver you." And then He goes on to say, "Why are you worshiping idols? I'm the God who bore you in My womb, I'm the God who brought you into existence. I'm the God whose carried you along and I'll bear you till your old age. Why will you go after other gods? To whom will you liken Me?" And so they had a unique relationship. They were chosen as a noble piece of human property and then drawn into a special relationship with God.

Then it says in verse 4, "To them not only the adoption but the glory." What is the glory? What is the glory? I'll tell you what it is, it's the Shekinah presence of God. Was that given to any other people? Did God dwell in the midst of any other people? No. God was in their tabernacle and their temple in their Holy of Holies, dwelling in light between the wings of the cherubim on their Ark of the Covenant. God wasn't anywhere else in that unique sense. When they came out of Egypt He gave them His glory and led them. And when they built a tabernacle, His glory descended and dwelt therein. It was the glory that appeared to them at Mount Sinai in Exodus chapter 24...the glory in Exodus 40 that filled the tabernacle, the glory in Exodus 33 and 34 that shown on the face of Moses, the glory that settled in the Mercy Seat and the Holy of Holies and filled the temple in 1 Kings chapter 8. It was the glory that was theirs and it was to say that God dwelt with these people. This is no ordinary people. God made them a noble people. And then God drew them to Himself as His own and gave to them the privilege of His presence. Remarkable privilege, remarkable...remarkable.

Notice also it says in verse 4, "And the covenants...and the covenants." Covenants with Abraham, Genesis 12:15 to 17. Covenant with Moses, and that all the way from Exodus 19 to 31, repeated in Deuteronomy 29 and 30 and given an even added dimension. Covenant with not only Abraham and Moses but David, 2 Samuel 7, the covenant of a great and eternal kingdom, reigned over by a great and glorious son of David. God promised them a nation through Abraham. God promised them blessing through Moses. God promised them eternal glory through David. I mean, they were the recipients of the covenants. They were the nation to be blessed. They were the nation to be a blessing. They were the nation given the moral, social, ritual, ceremonial law of God that they might enter into intimacy with Him. And they were the nation promised an eternal Kingdom. No other nation was given that unique covenant. Other nations would enter into it through them. But it was given to them. And even a new covenant was given to them. Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36, God promised

a new covenant that would come. That He would take away their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh, that He would sprinkle clean water upon them and make them clean...a new covenant. He would write His law in their hearts. And no feature of Israel's history marked their uniqueness as much as the covenants...the covenants...the covenants.

Peter in his sermon in Acts 3 reminds them, "You are the people of the covenant...the people of the covenant." God made promises to you that He made with nobody else. Not that they were to end there but through you they were to reach the world. These people received a noble stock, adoption as God's own personal loving people, the presence of God dwelt among them and He made them incredible covenants.

Further, verse 4 says, "The giving of the law...the giving of the law." Exodus 20, the Mosaic standard, they had God's law. They were told how to have a prosperous life, how to have a blessed life, how to enter into joy, how to know you're going to be blessed by God. They were given the law. If they kept the law they were to prosper. God said, "You obey it and you'll be blessed. You disobey it and you'll be punished." So they were given the road to prosperity. They were given the road to blessing, the road to joy, the road to peace, the road to happiness, the things that everyone seeks because they were the repository of divine truth. God gave them His law. Didn't give that to everybody. Oh, it was to come from them to the rest of the world but God gave it first to them. In Deuteronomy 4:5, "I taught you statutes and ordinances, keep therefore and do them for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations. Keep them and do them that you might be a witness to the rest of the world." God gave them the privilege when He gave them His law of being a witness nation, what a high calling.

I mean, we think of it when you're lifted up to be the witness to the world as a high calling...and that's what they were. And that's back in Romans 3, isn't it, verses 1 and 2 when they said, "Well what advantage has the Jew?" Oh, chiefly because unto them were committed the oracles of God. The greatest advantage was the Word of God, the law of God, the Old Testament Scripture came through them...and most of the New Testament came through them. And the proper response to the Word of God was Psalm 119, wasn't it? "O how I love Thy law." This is a rich people and God has established a very unique relationship. Further verse 4 says they also received the service, the Latrea(?), the word means ceremonial service. And it refers to the whole ceremonial system, all the sacrificial system, all the rituals, the cleansings the priesthood, the Levites, the Kohathites, the altars the whole thing.

In other words, they were given a system by which they could have access to whom? To God. I mean, it's incredible. All that they could ever need for access to God was given to them. All that they ever needed for worship was given to them. They should have entered into the fullness of worship with God. Look what they had. They were to start with a noble people. They enjoyed a special intimacy with God as His son. They were given His glorious presence to dwell within their midst. And

then He gave them covenants, glorious fulfilling covenants. And then He gave them His law that they might enter into blessing, the blessing of obedience. And then He gave them the services, the ceremonies, the sacrifices, the priests that they might enter into communion with Him on an intimate level so that they might come into His presence and fully experience His goodness.

That's not all, the end of verse 4 says "and the promises." Then the promises. You know what I think that refers to? It's not the same as the covenants. Since covenants has already been covered, I believe this refers to the Messiah, the Messianic promises...the promises embracing the saving work of Christ and the Kingdom because this was the great Jewish hope, wasn't it? This is the great Jewish hope. They waited for the promise. And what was the promise? The promise of Messiah. In Acts 2:39 Peter is preaching and he says, "For the promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." He's just preached on Christ and he says the promise is offered to all of you. What promise? The promise of salvation in the Messiah, the promise of salvation in Christ, that's the promise. And the Old Testament was full of promises referring to the Christ. Again preaching, this time Paul in Acts 13 says in verse 32, "We declare unto you the glad tidings...and what are the glad tidings?...how the promise which was made to the fathers God has fulfilled the same unto us their children in that He raised up Jesus again." The promise of Messiah, Messiah's death, Messiah's resurrection, that's the promise...the glorious Messiah, the glorious promise of the Messianic redemption, the Messianic salvation. God gave that to them.

And in Galatians 3:16 Paul writes, "Not to Abraham and his seed were the promises made." To Abraham and his seed were the promises...what promises? The promises of salvation in Messiah. And when Jesus came, what did He say? He said, "I have come to Israel, the lost sheep of the house of Israel...salvation is of the Jews." He came to give them the fulfillment of the promise.

And then look at verse 5. He adds this: "Whose are the fathers." It's amazing, and here is reference to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob...all those patriarchs and all, I believe, listen, beloved, all the rest of the righteous line, all the distinguished leaders of Israel throughout their redemptive history, all the special instruments of God who passed on His divine truth by word and example, of whom ultimately Christ came. He gave them all this long line of patriarchs, godly men, privileged men to pass righteousness on from one generation to the next...the fathers. I think that has to do with all of the line of the Jews, all of those particularly who stood in righteous conformity to God's standard. They were given to them. They had examples, is what it means. They had source of truth in their assembly always, there were always God's chosen people, God's chosen leaders, God's righteous men to be the models.

And then the climax in verse 9...or verse 5, rather...number 9 in this list, "And of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came." This refers back to the Israelites, the "of whom." And "of whom," that is the Israelites, "out of the Israelitish race has come as concerning the flesh Christ." What does that mean? It means that Christ was born a Jew, doesn't it? Born a Jew, culmination of all their

privileges. They were a noble people, called by God to be a special child, recipient of His holy presence among them, blessed with covenants, the knowledge of the divine will through the law, given away to enter fully into God's presence through the service or the ceremonies that they might worship personal intimacy. They were even given special men who could pass on righteousness from one generation to the next, and ultimately of whom of Israelites came Messiah as to His flesh. As to His Spirit, He came from whom? From God...as to His flesh He came from Israel.

And then he adds this, "Who is over all God blessed forever. Amen." Now, that's a great ending. What is he saying? Well, this has got to be one of the greatest statements in the Bible and it's so often overlooked. Listen carefully and we close with an understanding of this, but don't miss it, it's the climax to everything. Christ came, He was a Jew. And who is He? He can't resist this. He can't just say, "As concerning the flesh Christ," he can't just say that. He has to say who He is and who is He? "Who is over all God." That's who He is. "Blessed forever."

As to His human descent, He's an Israelite. As to His divine descent, He is God. And I believe it is not just some kind of benediction that says, "Christ who is over all God blessed forever. Amen," as if God was the one being blessed. I don't see this as a benediction. I see this as an affirmation of who Christ is. First it says "Christ who is over all," equals the Most High, who is the supreme one. He is the one God who is over all of Ephesians 4:6. This passage demonstrates directly that Jesus Christ is God, there's no other way to take it and be honest with the text. All the interpreters from the Reformation on agree with this, all in the evangelical strain that this is a statement of who Christ is. The only place I could find in exception to that is in the Revised Standard version of the Bible which was translated by a whole bunch of unbelievers who denied the deity of Christ. You see, without one exception in Hebrew and Greek, blessed always comes before God if it's a doxology, "Blessed be God, blessed be the God and Father." Whenever you have a doxology just blessing God's name, blessed always comes before God. Here God comes first, only time.

Secondly, the one being over all, ha on(?) must refer back to Christ. So he says Christ who is over all, God. That has to be the intent and "blessed forever" offers praise to Christ...offers praise to Christ. The two other times that that phrase is used in the New Testament, Romans 1:25 and 2 Corinthians 11:31, it always refers to the subject of the sentence, and here it is Christ. Christ who is over all, God, blessed forever. And so I believe that the phrase affirms the deity of Christ, first of all, because that's the only way you can translate it and do justice to the text. And secondly because it's consistent with what Paul believed, right? Cause He believed Jesus was God...he believed it. Why should we be surprised that he would say it here? He believed it with all of his heart. And that could never be disputed...never.

First Timothy 1:16 he talks about Jesus Christ, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God." Jesus Christ, the only wise God. Paul believed that. In Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to

feed the church of God...listen...which He hath purchased with His own blood." God purchased with His own blood, that has to be Christ...has to be. That's what Paul believed. What a passage...what a passage.

Paul loves his lost people. He loves them because they're his people, first of all, and he has a relationship to them. But he loves them secondly because they're God's people and God has an incredible and unique relationship with them. This is the heart of the evangelist. This is the heart of the missionary.

But it's sad to see how they failed to respond. A pastor told one time about visiting a home. A father called and said, "I need some counseling." The pastor went to the home. Went in to talk to the father and heard some noise in a room behind a closed door. The father said, "Well, let me take you in there and you'll see what the problem is." He took the pastor through the open door into the room and it revealed a boy, a boy, I suppose, who could be classified at the level of animal-idioty. And the mother was kneeling with her head in her hands weeping and saying over and over again, "I have fed you, I have clothed you, I have loved you with all my heart and you don't even know me...you don't even know me." Wasted privilege to be so loved, so fed, so blessed and so it is with Israel. But God has a plan and we'll see that next time. Let's pray.

Gracious Father, we appreciate so greatly that You've given us Your Word to speak to us, to help us understand. Thank You, thank You for the fellowship we've enjoyed tonight, singing, sharing and being blessed by Your great truth. Give us the heart that Paul had to love the lost because they're our kinsmen and because You love them and especially Israel. Father, do Your work in every heart and we thank You for what You will accomplish for Christ's sake. Amen.

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