

**August 31, 2014**  
**Pentecost 12**

*"Heartache for the Lost"*

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## **ROMANS 9:1-5**

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**I** speak the truth in Christ-- I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit-- <sup>2</sup> I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. <sup>3</sup> For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, <sup>4</sup> the people of Israel. *Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. <sup>5</sup> Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised!*

This sermon is a hard one for me to preach. As I dug deep into the thoughts of this text and struggled over these words, I became convicted by the reality that my love for people who are lost does not come anywhere near what the Apostle Paul says about his love for the lost. How could Paul even consider being cursed and cut off for the sake of the Jewish people that he loved? In contrast my love for the lost is so weak by comparison.

Dear Christian, you and I live with two conflicting emotions. There is this joy, almost giddy joy, of knowing that nothing in all creation will ever separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Then there is the sorrow and sadness that comes to us when we think of people we know and love who don't know and believe in this love Jesus has for them. In this letter to the Romans Paul writes about the joy of knowing that nothing would ever separate him from the love of Christ. But then in the very next words he describes his great sorrow and unceasing anguish when he thinks of his beloved Jewish people who wanted nothing to do with Jesus.

Does your heart ache for the lost? Sure, it does and so does mine. Rather than avoiding the heartache, we embrace it. In fact we want the Holy Spirit to increase our concern or heartache for the lost.

### **Longing for others to be saved**

Listen again to how the Apostle Paul anguishes over the rejection he sees in the Jewish people. "I speak the truth in Christ- I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit- I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart." Paul says that he is not lying. He is not just overstating the case or exaggerating or just getting too emotional. He is speaking with conviction that comes from the Holy Spirit.

Why was Paul so concerned about the Jewish people coming to faith in Christ? Why are you so concerned about other people coming to saving faith in Jesus? Because you have been convinced by the Holy Spirit that what Paul wrote in Romans one is true. "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness." There is a heaven and there is a hell even though it is unpopular to mention hell these days. Recent polls indicate that only 31% of Americans see hell as "a place of physical torment where people may be sent." How often

our Lord Jesus spoke of hell as a place of eternal fire where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Read the book of Romans and you become convinced that no one has what it takes to escape this judgment that is to come. It isn't just the heathen who turn their hearts against God and fall short of his glory. Romans 2 says of the religious people, "At whatever point you judge the other you are condemning yourself." Romans three makes the sweeping statements of all people, "There is no one righteous; not even one" and "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." That means that the nice people we have as neighbors and friends who don't believe in Jesus will someday perish forever because their righteousness does not measure up to the righteousness God expects of them.

The book of Romans convinces us that people can only be saved through Christ and his righteousness. There is only one way to be justified or declare not guilty and that is through Jesus. Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned.." but then it goes on to say that all "are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." According to Romans 8 the Holy Spirit constantly testifies or witnesses to you that you are a child of God through Jesus. You long and ache and yearn to have other people know about this righteousness that is theirs in Christ. You long for them to have the Holy Spirit telling them they are children of God through Jesus.

If your heart aches for those who are lost, then you not only have something in common with Paul you also share the feelings and emotions that Jesus experienced in his life. One day when Jesus saw large crowds coming to him it says in Matthew 9:36, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Sheep that are lost have no chance of surviving on their own. Their bleating resonates throughout the canyon inviting coyotes and other wild animals to an easy dinner. So we pray, "Jesus, make me more like you in my love for those who are lost. Help me see people as sheep without you as their shepherd." Yes, after spending time with these words this past week, I can say, "I want to be more like Paul."

What hits us hard in these words is what Paul says about being cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of the Jewish people he loved. "For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ, for the sake of my brothers, for those of my own race." Notice he says, "For I could wish." Off course it would be impossible for Paul to give his life or even to give up his faith to save the Jewish people. Psalm 49 says, "No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him- for the ransom for a life is costly, not payment is ever enough." Jesus did that for us. Galatians tell us that Jesus became a curse for us. He was cut off. He was forsaken by his heavenly Father in our place for us. Now we are privileged to give our lives to bring this life saving message to people who are lost.

How much does your heart ache for the lost? How much do I look at people and think in terms of them being lost without Jesus. Paul could not be cursed and cut off to save his Jewish people, but he sure went through some hard times just to bring the gospel to his people. He writes in 2 Corinthians, "Five times I received from the Jews forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day on the open sea." I am holding in my hand a stone. Paul had stones like these thrown at him by his own Jewish people just because he wanted

them to know about Jesus. What am I willing to risk to bring Jesus to the lost? That is what went through my mind this past week.

### **Realizing how merciful God is to people**

What amazes us about our God is how much he is willing to do for people to bring them to salvation? Paul does not point an angry finger at God and condemn him for not caring about his beloved Jewish people. In fact, here and throughout this chapter he points to the mercy of God that reaches out to the lost. "Theirs is the adoption of sons; theirs is the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised!" Let's point to these blessings one by one.

God adopted these people as his very special people. I recall a pastor talking once in a sermon about how much he appreciated his parents who adopted him when he was a little baby and raised him in a Christian home. We speak about the Jewish people as God's chosen or adopted people.

These people had the divine glory. They saw the waters of the Red Sea divide. They walked through on dry land with monstrous walls of water to their right and to their left. They watched as God destroyed the Egyptian army and then led them through the desert providing them with manna from heaven and fresh water from the rock.

These people had the covenants. God swore to them to give them the promised land. God swore to send a Savior to deliver them. God swore that he would bless them richly if they obeyed the special laws given to them on Mount Sinai.

These people had the temple worship. They gathered in the temple. They sang praises to God. They watched as the priest sprinkled the blood of sacrifices that pictured the blood of the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world.

These were the people who had God's promises recorded for them in the Old Testament Scriptures. They heard God speak promises that we still cherish and apply to our lives. "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; and uphold you with my righteous right hand."

These were the people who had the great patriarchs. Fathers and mothers told their children about great men of God with names like Abraham, Noah, Elijah, Isaiah, and David. I know a boy named Elijah. He is my grandson. I know a man named Abram, he is my nephew. And the most popular boy's name this year as of May 2014 is....Noah. God's people were blessed not just to name their children after the patriarchs but to pass down the stories of their lives to their children.

These were the people who could trace the genealogy of Christ down through the generations from Adam to Jesus. Jesus was born a Jew from the tribe of Judah, from the House of David. Jesus was often called the Son of David because he descended from David, at the same time He was and is the Son of God who existed from all eternity.

This past week we had our first Bible lesson at the transitional shelter. It was an amazing opportunity to talk to the children about creation and also about Jesus as God's Son who was with the Father and the Spirit in the creation of the world. One girl asked if Jesus was going to burn up. Then I realized she was thinking of SUN and not SON. She smiled sweetly when she realized we were talking about SON and not SUN. Notice what this says about the Christ who descended from the Jewish people. He is God over all. Our hearts ache for children and adults, people all over the world, my little Jewish friend at Santa Maria Terrace, my cousin Jerry the agnostic. Our hearts ache for them to know about Jesus as their Savior and God over all. Amen.