

Pt 30 Romans 9:1-5, Accursed from Christ for My Brethren

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Romans 9:1-5

1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,
2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.
3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:
4 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;
5 Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came*, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

All up to this point, Paul has mainly been dealing with Christians and the Church. All of Chapter 8 was speaking of believers in Christ. Most of the Church by the time Paul wrote this letter was made up of Gentile believers. Although the Church initially began with Jews and there were many thousands of them that believed, the biggest majority of them rejected Christ. They rejected their Messiah. John, in his Gospel said it like this: **John 1:11** He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

Jesus, just before he was betrayed and crucified made a triumphal entry into the City of Jerusalem (we recognize it as Palm Sunday) and listen to what happened:

Luke 19:41-44

41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,
42 Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which *belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.
43 For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,
44 And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

Jesus was prophesying of how the Holy City would be invaded and their precious Temple destroyed because they missed the time of their visitation. That means they missed their Messiah when He came to save them (speaking of himself, of course).

All these are reasons Paul starts out this chapter by stating the following:

1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, 2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

You see, he knows he is walking on treacherous ground here. He's going to turn his attention away from the Church and the individual believer and place his focus on the Nation of Israel as a whole – God's chosen people.

He wants to make sure his listeners understand that what he is about to say is a fact and even states the Holy Ghost is his witness. He's not lying. Some may think Paul is rejecting the Jews because his attention has been on the Gentiles so much.

Let's keep in mind, that it was Christ Himself whom appointed Paul as a preacher. Listen to what the Lord told Ananias about Paul when he came to him in a vision in Damascus: **Acts 9:15** But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

Though the Lord mentioned Paul preaching to the children of Israel, his main focus was to be on the Gentiles.

Over in the Book of Acts we read of when Paul and Barnabas went to Antioch of Pisidia and were preaching, and the Bible says this:

Acts 13:44-48

44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.
45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.
46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.
47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.
48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

Paul often declared his mission several times:

1 Timothy 2:7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

2 Timothy 1:11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

Paul wanted badly to preach to the Jews (and he did) but the Lord set him apart to be a light unto the Gentiles but that did not keep him from longing for his fellow Jews to be saved. In fact, in the next Chapter here in Romans he says this: **Romans 10:1** Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

Paul says in verse 2 of our opening text here in **Romans 9:2** that he has "great heaviness and continual sorrow (in his heart)."

You know how sometimes there is some situation going on in your life or the life of your family that is overwhelming, but you still have to go through life and live day by day in your regular routine but in the very back of your mind the problem is always there, and you continually think about it? It is the same with Paul. This burden Paul has for his fellow Jews is a constant heaviness. He thinks of it continually.

We see in the next verse just how much Paul is burdened for them:

3 For I could wish that myself were **accursed from Christ for my brethren**, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

This is where I took the title of our message from this morning: "**Accursed from Christ for My Brethren.**"

Let's examine this verse closely as it has significant meaning. It gives us an inside look at the Apostle Paul's true heart of hearts.

Look at the first part of the verse: **For I could wish**

At first glance, this seems to be some strangely worded statement. "**For I could wish.**" What does that mean? You can consult dozens of Bible commentaries and try to make sense of that statement and you will find dozens of different interpretations; however, I have yet to find a sensible explanation. Is Paul saying "**he could wish**" such a thing? Or he **did wish** such a thing? Or **if he could he would wish** such a thing?"

One of my favorite old-time preachers and Bible commentators, J. Vernon McGee, says he thinks it should read like this: “**For I was once myself accursed from Christ just like my brethren. I know I cannot be accursed, and I want them to come to know Christ and be in my present position.**” As much as I like ol’ J. Vernon, I have to disagree with him on that interpretation. I think that’s adding a whole different line of thought into it.

Some people want to correct these words and change it to: “**For IF I could wish.**” I can lean towards that meaning but I think if we just leave it just like it says, we will be fine: **For I could wish** – meaning that Paul could wish such a thing but just as he said in the previous chapter which we studied last time: **Romans 8:38-39** *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* So, if nothing can separate from the love of God, then it wouldn’t matter if Paul wished it, it would be impossible to happen.

And what is it that Paul could wish? **that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:**

Now, this is where the rubber meets the road. Paul is stating that he is willing to be “**accursed from Christ**” for his brethren. That is a very bold statement. As much as I have read and studied Paul’s writings, I have never once found an instance of insincerity. He ALWAYS shoots straight.

You know how sometimes we say things that we don’t really mean like: “**I’m so hungry I could eat a horse?**” We don’t really mean that, it’s just an expression of how hungry we are. None of us would really eat a horse under normal circumstances. Or “**I would kill for a piece of chocolate cake right now.**” Hey, I love chocolate cake but I’m not really going to kill anyone to get a piece.

Well, this is NOT what Paul is doing here. He isn’t making some hypothetical statement or expression; he is genuinely stating he would be willing to be accursed from Christ for his brethren.

The definition of the word “**accursed**” is: “**to be set forth or set aside or devoted to destruction in eternal hell. Doomed to destruction and misery.**” This would be total separation from Christ and his love.

The base Greek word that it comes from, **Anathema**, is used once in our King James Bible in Paul’s letter to the Church at Corinth: **1 Corinthians 16:22** *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha. Anathema* meaning “**accursed**” and the Aramaic word, “**Maranatha,**” meaning “**the Lord’s coming.**” So, you could read that verse like this: “**If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed at the Lord’s coming.**” Meaning they will be judged when the Lord comes.

Paul used the word “**accursed**” to indicate the severity of it. For example, in his letter to the Galatians when he was admonishing them for how quickly they turned away from the Gospel, he said this: **Galatians 1:8-9** *But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*

By Paul saying that he could wish that he himself were accursed from Christ for his brethren, he is saying he would willingly give up his salvation and spend eternity in hell.

That’s a pretty bold statement. I wonder how many of us today would be willing to say that? Is our burden for others salvation so much that we would trade our own salvation so they could be saved? I’m just going to tell you, except for my immediate family, I have to say I would not be willing to do that. Do I want for everyone to be saved? Yessir, but I would not be willing to go to hell in their place.

Interestingly enough, Paul wasn’t the only man in the Bible that was willing to trade his soul for the salvation of Israel. Over in Exodus chapter 32 we read where Moses had been up on the Mountain communing with God for 40 days and 40 nights and the Children of Israel got impatient and demanded Aaron to make them a false god to worship. They broke off their golden earrings and used the gold the Egyptians had given them and Aaron made them a golden calf. They drank and danced around naked in front of it and worshipped it like it was their god.

When God told Moses he was going to destroy the people for it, listen to what Moses said to him: **Exodus 32:31-32** *And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. 32 Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.*

Moses, like Paul was willing to give up his salvation in exchange for the Children of Israel’s.

Now, look back at our opening text and let’s look at verses 4 and 5 and we will be finished: **4 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; 5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.**

Paul is making sure he describes exactly who he is talking about here. He didn’t want anyone to be confused. He’s not speaking about the Gentiles, the Romans or the Greeks, he is speaking about that covenant nation that God chose and separated from the rest of the world to be His people. These are also, as Paul mentioned, the “**covenant**” people. It started with God’s covenant with Abraham when he brought him out of the Er of the Chaldees and it continued on through his bloodline.

He mentions the “**fathers**” that of course would be Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all their descendants. The sons of of Jacob (Israel).

Paul himself is an Israelite. As we will study in a few weeks when we get to **Romans chapter 11**, Paul gives his credentials: ... **For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.**

He wrote the following about himself to the Church at Phillippi:

Philippians 3:5 *Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;*

Paul was expressing how he understood their way of thinking. He used to think just like them. He was the fiercest opponent of Christianity before he was saved. That is why he is so burdened for his fellow Jews.

You must keep in mind sometimes when the Bible is talking about the Jews or the Israelites, it is speaking on an individual basis but many times it is speaking on a National basis – as in the Nation of Israel as a whole and not each individual Israelite. We will talk more about this when we get to Chapter 11 when Paul say: **Romans 11:26a** *And so all Israel shall be saved...* He is going to continue addressing the Nation of Israel and their need for salvation all through chapters 9, 10, and 11.