

The Pain of Separation

Romans 9:1-3

- :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.

REVIEW

I. THE POINT

A. Paul has been speaking of the most powerful and wonderful divine bond.

1. Such talk would lead to sad thoughts of ...
 - a. Those who don't have this bond with God
 - b. Those from whom believers are separated because of it
2. Two illustrations
 - a. Acts 5:12-13 – all of one accord vs. no one dared join himself to them
 - b. Acts 22:22-23 – fellow Jews concerning Paul: “It is not fit that he should live”!
3. The point: Joining to Christ can lead to division from others.

B. There have been, of course, divisions among people ever since the Fall.

1. Cain and Abel
2. Tower of Babel
3. Wars and rumors of wars
4. Benedict Arnolds, Uncle Toms, union scabs, religious heretics, ...

C. Divisions only appear to be increasing now.

1. Ethnic groups or money behind them fan the flames of racial tensions.
2. Emotion-driven mobs lash out against law enforcement.
3. Disparate wannabe minorities with newly concocted ways of “identifying” demand favor.
4. Religious radicals wage jihad on citizens in airports, restaurants, events.
5. Democrats and Republicans and conservatives spar.
6. Chasms grow between sides on abortion rights, gay rights, gun rights, free speech, ...
7. Global tensions increase, with war ready to bust out all over.

D. And let's not think that if believers just followed Christ's teaching, all would be peace.

1. Montel Williams: "In the party of Lincoln there is no room for intolerance and bigotry of any kind." He then cited Galatians 3:26-28 to support immoral agendas.
2. But see I Cor. 6:9-10.
3. Hear Jesus' own words: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." (Matt. 10:34-36)

"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another." (Matt. 24:7-10)

II. THE PAIN (9:2)

A. Feel the pathos here – "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart." Compare:

1. "And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul." (I Sam. 15:35)
2. "Oh 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!" (Jer. 9:1)
3. "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." (Ps. 119:136)
4. "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)" (Phil. 3:17-19)

B. Why such sadness?

1. Because of what could have been.
 - a. Jerusalem could have stood, not been destroyed (70 AD) – Luke 19:41-44.
All would have been different if they had known the time of their visitation.
 - b. Brethren could have dwelled in unity, not strife – James 4:1-10.
All would have been different if they had humbly submitted to God.
 - c. The same is true in America today.
 1. Who knows, but that America would stand if we would know the time of our visitation? God is long-suffering, but He will not bear our impudence forever.
 - a. The day comes when we hear, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." (Jer. 8:20) The day comes when conditions in II Thess. 2:7ff occur.
 2. Who knows, but Americans would dwell in unity, if we would humbly submit to God.

2. Because of what is instead.

a. Israel's sin is a bad statement on God.

1. "Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?" (Jer. 2:15a)
2. See an example of Moses' repeated argument: Numbers 14:13-16.
3. See David's burden in Ps. 42:3,10.

b. Israel's sin is a bad statement on Israel.

1. "Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord GOD of hosts: for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee." (Jer. 50:31)
2. They're likened unto a tree carefully tended that never produced fruit, now good only to be cut down and thrown into the fire.

c. And, folks, the same truths apply to our nation as well.

1. Our iniquity is a bad statement on our God. When we entertain with sensuality, bathe ourselves in luxuries, establish our own moral values, erect our own gods, imbibe the lusts of our flesh, and walk in the vanity of our own imaginations, who indeed are we saying our God is?
2. And our sin is a bad statement on us as a nation. If we do not remain a friend of Israel, we fall under the curse of God. If we do not gather, we scatter; if we do not build, we tear down; if we do not teach whatsoever things Christ has taught us, then we deepen the darkness; if we do not serve as salt, then we shall be trampled under foot.

III. THE PASSION (9:3)

A. Paul writes, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

1. Hodge: this is the language rather of "strong and indistinct emotions than of definite ideas."
2. Barnes: "I could be willing to be destroyed, or devoted to death, for ... my countrymen."
3. Compare Moses: "If thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." (Ex. 32:31-32)

B. Note the irony.

1. We may suffer most at the hands of those for whom we care and do the most.
2. To learn from this text we must see the great passion Paul has for his people and their God.
3. A good question for us: Do we have that sort of passion Paul expresses today?
 - a. Does it grieve us that young couples are living together outside of marriage?
 - b. Does it grieve us that curse words are used so lightly, commonly, publicly?

- c. Does it grieve us that the Lord's Day is profaned so thoughtlessly?
 - d. Does it grieve us that private and personal behavior is displayed publicly for profit?
 - e. Does it grieve us that such an ignorance of the Scriptures prevails?
 - f. Does it grieve us that some church denominations have confused women for bishops?
 - g. Does it grieve us that church buildings become rock and roll concert halls?
 - h. Does it grieve us that absolute standards of right and wrong are rejected?
4. Do such failures make us sigh and cry? And if so, why? Is there a "mark" on our foreheads?

"And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." (Eze. 9:4)

DISCUSSION

1. How does a person get the great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart which Paul describes?
Do *you* know those feelings?

2. What does the Bible say about iniquity? How is it a bad statement on God?