

I.N.I.

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost
November 8, 2015
Romans 9:1-5

In Christ Jesus, the Savior of both Jew and Gentile, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Two weeks ago in our sermon based on Romans 4 we were told that Abraham was the father both of the circumcised (the Jews) as well as the uncircumcised (the Gentiles), because it is faith that saves, not works. So all of us Gentiles who believe in Jesus are God's chosen people, chosen by His grace in Christ.

But what about God's first chosen people, the Jewish nation? By the time Paul wrote these words, the majority of the Jews rejected Jesus as the Christ and were outside of the Christian Church and its blessings. Paul had written in Rom 1:16: **FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST, FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD TO SALVATION FOR EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES, FOR THE JEW FIRST AND ALSO FOR THE GREEK.**

Yes, the Gospel was given to the Jewish people in the sacrifices, rituals, ceremonies and the priesthood. But these were all types and pictures pointing ahead to the fulfillment. They had the prophecies, but when the prophecies were fulfilled, they rejected the One who fulfilled them, Jesus of Nazareth.

In this section Paul in somber words, anguishes over the unbelief of his own people. Paul begins by emphasizing that what he is about to write is the truth. **I TELL THE TRUTH IN CHRIST, I AM NOT LYING, MY CONSCIENCE ALSO BEARING ME WITNESS IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

Paul is writing under the inspiration and direction of the Spirit of Truth, the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. That is why Paul places the Greek words for truth at the beginning of the sentence—in other words: “Truth I tell you!”

What is the truth Paul is about to reveal? His own deep personal feelings about his own nation and people.

As the Apostle went on his mission journeys he always started in the synagogues proclaiming Christ and Him crucified to the Jews. For the most part his message was rejected by the Jewish people and so was he. He was cast out, chased from place to place, arrested and jailed, whipped, stoned and left for dead. He was accused of anti-Semitism.

How did Paul respond to all of this. Was he angry, filled with hate toward his Jewish brothers and sisters? No. He writes: **I HAVE GREAT SORROW AND CONTINUAL GRIEF IN MY HEART. FOR I COULD WISH THAT I MYSELF WERE ACCURSED FROM CHRIST FOR MY BRETHREN, MY COUNTRYMEN ACCORDING TO THE FLESH.**

Wow! That is hard to believe. That is why Paul started out this section by saying “I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying!”

With this great love in his heart for the unbelieving Jewish people, Paul reflects Jesus' love. Remember how Jesus mourned for the Jewish people saying: **O JERUSALEM, JERUSALEM, THE ONE WHO KILLS THE PROPHETS AND STONES THOSE WHO ARE SENT TO HER! HOW OFTEN I WANTED TO GATHER YOUR CHILDREN TOGETHER, AS A HEN GATHERS HER CHICKS UNDER HER WINGS, BUT YOU WERE NOT WILLING!**

In Luke we read: **NOW AS HE DREW NEAR, HE (JESUS) SAW THE CITY AND WEPT OVER IT, SAYING, "IF YOU HAD KNOWN, EVEN YOU, ESPECIALLY IN THIS YOUR DAY, THE THINGS THAT MAKE FOR YOUR PEACE! BUT NOW THEY ARE HIDDEN FROM YOUR EYES.**

Paul's love for his fellow Jews imitates Christ's love for sinners, His suffering damnation on the cross in perfect submission to God's will.

Paul also speaks with the same love of Moses who told God to blot his name out of the book of life if God would not spare and forgive His people. Moses did not want to be saved without them. Here Paul's love wanted them to be saved even at the cost of losing his own soul.

Paul is filled with so much anguish because it didn't have to be this way. The Jewish people had all of the advantages. Paul lists them in our text: **MY COUNTRYMEN ACCORDING TO THE FLESH WHO ARE ISRAELITES, TO WHOM PERTAIN THE ADOPTION, THE GLORY, THE COVENANTS, THE GIVING OF THE LAW, THE SERVICE OF GOD, AND THE PROMISES; OF WHOM ARE THE FATHERS AND FROM WHOM, ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, CHRIST CAME.**

They are "Israelites," they bore that sacred name given to them by God that marked them as the favored and chosen recipients of God's revealed grace and promises. Again and again in the Old Testament God called His people, "His sons." He treated His rebellious children with patience and love. He showed His glory to them in the pillar of cloud by day and fire at night during their wilderness journey. He filled the temple with His glory and Moses' face shone with the glory of the Lord Jehovah after speaking with Him.

God established His covenant and promises with this people. Remember God's gracious Gospel promise to Abraham that in him and his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. He made the Sinaitic (Law) covenant with His people at Mt. Sinai.

No other nation, no other people were as greatly blessed as Israel. Their worship was directly ordained by God. Their temple was a picture or type of heaven itself, fellowship with God. Every last detail given by God Himself with all of the animal sacrifices pointing ahead to the Great sacrifice of the Lamb of God for their sins and the sins of the whole world.

And then there were the prophets and all of the Messianic prophesies that only Israel had.

The Israelites were the direct descendants from the patriarchs of old: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

And finally the greatest advantage and the highest privilege and blessing which could be given any nation or people was given to them—from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, the Christ, David's Son, yet David's Lord! And Jesus lived among them for 33 years, and during his 3 year ministry Jesus performed miracles among them, preached the Good News and fulfilled the Old Testament promises in their midst by His suffering, death and resurrection. Right before their very eyes.

Paul then adds this glorious truth, that this Christ, born in human flesh as a Jew is also **OVER ALL, THE ETERNALLY BLESSED GOD. AMEN.**

Paul is not biased against his own race, anti-Semitic. Far from it! He shows them the premier place they had in God's plan of salvation for mankind. In reality, they were the center of all world history by virtue of their being the bearer of God's Words of promise and of the Promised Messiah.

That is why Paul is filled with so much pain, grief, sorrow and anguish of heart. In spite of all of these God-given advantages, so few Jews in the New Testament era are followers of Jesus and members of the Holy Christian Church, the true Israel of God. They rejected the fact of Jesus being the Christ, the Son of God, sent from the Father and crucified Him for blasphemy.

Paul was indeed a true apostle of Christ. He spoke the truth in love! He grieved over the unbelief of the Jews and He proclaimed the true doctrine concerning Jesus.

And that leads us to the application of this text to our own lives. Our theme is this:

AS BELIEVERS IN CHRIST OUR LOVE FOR THE LOST WILL LEAD US TO

I: Speak the truth in love.

II: Grieve over their unbelief.

III: Proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ as the unbelievers only hope.

Do we realize what a great blessing we have? Even though we were conceived and born in sin, not a child of God, outside of God's chosen nation of Israel, God has adopted us into His family. He has called us to be His own through our baptism. We were washed clean of every sin in Christ's shed blood. As His believers, engrafted into Christ the Vine, He has called us to be His ambassadors, His spokesmen to speak the truth in love, to tell others what we have been told.

And that truth is this: All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. All are lost and condemned because of their sins. No one can earn their way into heaven by their own good works, no matter how hard they try.

When we think of the countless millions upon millions of people in this world who do not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior and how many every minute of every day are dying in unbelief and their souls are going to hell, it should grieve us as it did our Savior.

Do we have that same love and devotion as Paul? Not that we be sacrificed and damned for others, for that wouldn't help anyway, but that we sacrifice our time, our energy, our moments and our days, our money and our goods to get the word out. To proclaim to the unbelievers around us, that their only hope is to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus, who lived, died and rose for them. Anguish for the unbelievers will move the mission-minded Christian into action.

One commentator wrote this about Paul's great love for his fellow unbelieving Jews: **"If only all Christians had this love and concern for others as Paul! There would be no need for special mission festivals or evangelism committees. Worker training schools would be filled, and there would be more than enough funds to send their graduates throughout the world."**

What blessings indeed our God has given to us as His children.

----His Word in its truth and purity.

----Our worship centered in our Savior.

----His great announcement of forgiveness, life and salvation through Jesus.

----His promise to be with always, even to the end of the world.

May our Savior's great love for us and our love for the lost move us to spend and be spent in our efforts to reach out to the lost with the Gospel message of eternal life alone through Christ.

FOR THE LOVE OF CHRIST COMPELS US, BECAUSE WE JUDGE THUS: THAT IF ONE DIED FOR ALL, THEN ALL DIED; AND HE DIED FOR ALL, THAT THOSE WHO LIVE SHOULD LIVE NO LONGER FOR THEMSELVES, BUT FOR HIM WHO DIED FOR THEM AND ROSE AGAIN. 2 Cor. 5:14-15

Amen.