

Romans (50) **God's Love for His Elect (part three)**

Today we will arrive to Romans 9, which is the beginning of the second half of this epistle. It is also the beginning of a new division of subjects. The next three chapters before us, Romans 9 through 11, address the issue of God's righteousness that He has shown to both Jews and Gentiles. Before we begin to consider these chapters, however, it is necessary for us to go over some matters at the end of Romans 8 that we were unable to address last Lord's Day. Let us reread the last paragraph, Romans 8:33-39.

³³Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The major point of emphasis of the apostle is that God will most certainly bring to pass all that He has promised His people because He loves them in Jesus Christ. All of the blessings of God's grace are assured to us. They come to us from God because of Jesus Christ and our union with Him.

Verse 33 reads, “*Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?*” The implication is that no one can do so. Paul cites two reasons: first, “It is God who justifies”, and then second, Jesus Christ is the judge of these matters and it was He that died and rose for us. No charge will be legitimately leveled against the true believer on the Day of Judgment because Jesus Christ is defending us in the face of any and all accusers. Where verse 33 affirms the first, **verse 34** affirms the second, which reads, “*Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*” One once put it this way:

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?” Paul stands forth like a herald, and he looks up to the holy angels, and down to the accusing devils, and round about on a scowling world, and into conscience, and he asks, Who can accuse one whom God has chosen, and Christ has washed? It is God who justifieth. The holy God has declared believers clean every whit.¹

Verse 33 is worded in the future tense. It probably looks forward specifically to the final Day of Judgment. On that Day no charge will be able to be laid against you, if you are a Christian, so as to damn your soul. It will not be because there will be no efforts to do. Perhaps the devil will be there charging you. Perhaps others in attempting to justify themselves before the Judge, will accuse you, attempting to show that they are no more deserving of damnation than you, for you did many of the same things. And our own sins would accuse us also on that day, if it were not for the fact that Jesus Christ will stand on our behalf and defend us, calling upon His own life and death as the grounds of our exoneration.

¹ Robert Murray M'Cheyne, in his sermon, “Who Shall Separate Us?”

Not only has Jesus died to secure our justification—“more than that” he has “been raised” and has also ascended to the right hand of God, so that he may intercede for us, ensuring that the justifying verdict for which he died is applied to us in the judgment. The language of Jesus being at “the right hand of God” is taken from Psalm 110:1, one of the most quoted OT verses in the NT. The language is, of course, metaphorical, indicating that Jesus has been elevated to the position of “vice-regent” in God’s governance of the universe. But it is not with the universe, but with Christians, that Paul is concerned here. Because Christ lives and has ascended, he is able to “intercede” for us, acting as our High Priest in the very presence of God.²

Paul then in effect stands back and exclaims the wonder and glory of the matter, that God loves us in Christ. **Verse 35** reads, ***“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?”*** The answer is a resounding “Nothing and No one can do so; our relationship with God is secure and our future exoneration at the judgment is certain.” Here the love of Christ refers to Christ’s love for us.³ Nothing will ever cause the love that Christ has for His own to cease.

Paul describes seven kinds or forms of trouble that are impotent in their ability to separate the true believer from the love of God. Two of these seven are problems that all people encounter in this world. The other five speak of problems that Christians encounter because of their faith. Paul first mentions ***tribulation*** and ***distress***. Life in this fallen world is characterized by difficulty for all people everywhere.

For affliction does not come from the dust,
Nor does trouble spring from the ground;
Yet man is born to trouble,
As the sparks fly upward. (Job 5:6)

The Lord Jesus told His disciples, “In the world you will have tribulation” (John 16:33). This is the experience of all people everywhere. Whether or not you are a Christian does not change the fact that you will encounter tribulation.

Now it is the common tendency for people to make assessments on whether or not God’s favor is upon them by the degree of trouble that they encounter. If we experience little difficulty, we assume that God is for us. If we experience much difficulty, we conclude that we must have fallen out of favor with God. And so, it is common for Christians to become discouraged due to the trouble that they encounter in this life. But this is a wrong view of the way God deals with His people and it is a wrong way to view the problems that we face in life. We are to react and respond to difficulties as Christians, who know that God is for us for Christ’s sake. Regardless of what kinds of happenings that we experience, Christians are to be confident that God will help us and see us through our difficulties and that He will use even our trials to accomplish His good purposes in our lives. Therefore, to murmur or complain or become depressed due to our difficulties, is to murmur against God.

Moreover, if we were to maintain this of God and our relationship with Him, that we may assess His favor toward us based upon whether or not “good things” happen to us, then when life seems to go well for us, we will tend toward two or perhaps three wrong conclusions. First, we will wrongly draw a conclusion that God’s favor must be upon us, which may or may not be true. Second, we will wrongly think that there is something good about us or something good we have done that has resulted in His “blessing” upon us. Thirdly, we will wrongly think that those who experience “bad things” must do so because of something they either did against God or something they failed to do for God. Our whole concept of who we are, who God is, and how He relates to us becomes twisted and perverted. We must affirm the truth that God is good and does good for us due to His goodness, not ours.

² Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 542f.

³ In other words, for those who have Greek ears to hear, this genitive, of Christ, is a subjective genitive (Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 463).

Consider what God told Israel when His people were about to enter the Promised Land. We read in **Deuteronomy 9:1-6** His words to them:

“Hear, O Israel: you are to cross over the Jordan today, to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves, cities great and fortified up to heaven, ²a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you have heard it said, ‘Who can stand before the sons of Anak?’ ³Know therefore today that He who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the LORD your God. He will destroy them and subdue them before you. So you shall drive them out and make them perish quickly, as the LORD has promised you.

⁴***Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, ‘It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,’*** whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you. ⁵***Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.*** ⁶Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people. (Deut. 9:1-6).

Again, God is good and does good for us due to His goodness, not ours. It is all of grace; not of our doing. The same can be said of God’s dealings with us under the new covenant. The prophecy of the new covenant in Ezekiel 36 declares this same principle. God foretold that He would bring salvation to a remnant of Israel that He would bring through the Babylonian exile. But it was not because of some good thing in them that moved God to bestow His favor them. Rather, it was wholly due to His grace that He purposed to show them His kindness and mercy.

²²“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: ***“I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went.*** ²³And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD,” says the Lord GOD, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. ²⁴For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. ²⁵Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. ²⁸Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. ²⁹I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. ³⁰And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations. ³¹Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations. ³²***“Not for your sake do I do this,” says the Lord GOD, “let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!”*** (Ezek. 36:22-32)

To see further that we cannot and should not use adverse circumstances in our lives to determine our relationship with God, consider the events in one day of Job’s life.

¹³Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house; ¹⁴and a messenger came to Job and said, “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, ¹⁵when the Sabeans raided them and took them away-- indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!” ¹⁶While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you!” ¹⁷While he was still speaking, another also

came and said, “The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!”¹⁸ While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house,¹⁹ and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!” (Job 1:13-19)

Job had a tough day. But Job did not conclude that God was against him, that God was punishing him, that there had been something that he had done that had moved God to afflict him with these great losses. God could say of Job to Satan,

“Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to destroy him without reason.” (Job 2:3)

What was Job’s response to what had happened to him?

²⁰Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. ²¹And he said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.” ²²***In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.*** (Job 1:20-22)

When we complain, when we mope about and make everyone miserable about us because we do not like what God has dealt us, we sin greatly against God for we charge God with wrongdoing. The devil sought to charge Job with unbelief in his God, moving him to complain and murmur against God because of what was happening in his life. We should be aware of the fact that the devil tries to trip us up in similar ways. He would have us despise the chastening of the Lord which comes to every true child of God, to complain because of “dark providences” that we encounter. Rather, if we have a true understanding of our sin and what it deserves, we would see that anything “bad” that happens to us in this life is less than what we should experience. We should be as Ezra who exclaimed concerning himself and his people, “You, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities deserved” (Ezr. 9:13). As one once put it:

Do not murmur and complain under new straits (i.e. difficulties). This is a vile temper, and yet how natural to us when wants (needs) press hard upon us! Ah, did we but rightly understand what the demerit of sin is, we would rather admire the bounty of God than complain of the strighthandedness of Providence. And if we did but consider that there lies upon God no obligation of justice or gratitude to reward any of our duties, it would cure us of our murmurs.⁴

We should express ourselves as Jacob did to God, “I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant” (Gen 32:10).

The Christian who is thinking rightly knows that no amount of ***tribulation*** and ***distress*** can separate him “from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Our Lord Jesus promised us that we can have peace in our tribulations. Jesus said to His disciples, “*I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33).

We should be wise to the fact that the devil will try to take advantage of us in our times of difficulties. He would lead us to think that we are separated from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus and that our trials and troubles confirm to us this is so. The devil would have us despise the chastening of the Lord and not submit to His discipline of us as His children (cf. Heb. 12:5). He wants us to fear and fail God in our trials.

⁴ John Flavel, ***The Mystery of Providence*** (Banner of Truth Trust, 1998; orig. 1678), p.. 88.

Now aside from the first two kinds of trouble that are cited, there are five others, which seem to be characteristic of hardship that Christians experience for their faith. Paul wrote of things that we might assume may separate us from the love of God, “Shall tribulation, or distress—the first two, or *persecution*, or *famine*, or *nakedness*, or *danger*, or *sword*? These are the weapons that the enemies of God and God’s people have used through the centuries to persecute them for their faith.

The history of the Church in all ages has been a history of persecution. No sooner does a soul begin to show concern for religion—no sooner does that soul cleave to Jesus, than the world talk, to the grief of those whom God hath wounded. What bitter words are hurled against that soul! In all ages this has been true: “They wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy.” Those that eat the bread of God have often been driven from their quiet meal—those who are clothed with Christ have often had to part with worldly clothing, and have been exposed to famine, nakedness, peril, and sword—the last extremity. Cain murdered Abel. They killed the Prince of Life; and so all his creatures ever since have been exposed to the same. Do not say, ‘The times are changed, and these are the days of toleration.’ Christ is not changed—Satan is not changed, and, when it suites his turn, he will use the same weapons.⁵

Now these terrible things described by Paul are often the common experience of devout Christians in an unbelieving world. He cites the worst kinds of things that could happen to us, declaring that they are incapable of severing us from our relationship with our God. And the fact that these experiences are those of Christians is apparent from history and it has been documented that they are being experienced now by Christians in many places in the world. The fact is that because of our relationship with God, we can expect to be maltreated in this life while we live in this fallen sinful world.

Now, those who wrongly teach that true Christians can lose their salvation should change their theology due to the passage before us. That Christians may lose their salvation is the common teaching of most Arminians, who believe that people become saved through their own free will rather than the Reformed understanding the people are saved by God’s grace alone. They teach that because one has faith to be saved, if he loses that faith, he loses his salvation. In spite of all of the assurances having been piled upon one another showing that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, there are those who argue, “Yes, but Paul never says that one cannot separate itself from the love of Christ and thereby lose his salvation.” But that is to deny the entire context and undermine the entire effort of Paul to underscore the security of the elect of God. All who are justified will be glorified. If some could lose their salvation, then it would mean that some whom God justified, nevertheless fail to be glorified. This is nowhere allowed in our passage. Here is the eternal security for the true child of God. Once one is truly saved, he can never become unsaved. God has decreed it so. Christ has secured the reality through His life and death. And Christ reigns even now preventing that from ever occurring.

Verse 36 states the fact that Christians are appointed to experience hardship in this life. *“As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’”* This is taken from Psalm 44:22.

The adversity of which the apostle had given examples (vs. 35) was the lot of the people of God in all generations (cf. Acts 14:22; Heb. 11:35-38). It is noteworthy that by adducing this quotation attention should have been drawn to the fact that it was for the Lord’s sake the people of God were downtrodden and regarded as fit only for slaughter. This injects an eloquent, though easily overlooked ingredient into the assurance which the apostle is unfolding. It is the reproach of Christ that persecution betokens. “All the day long” expresses well the thought of the original. It is not simply “every day.” The violence unto death at the hands of persecutors is always present.⁶

⁵ Robert Murray M’Cheyne, in his sermon, “Who Shall Separate Us?”

⁶ Murray, *Romans*, vol. 1, p. 331.

Paul affirmed that these things can in no way defeat us, in fact, we are not only conquerors of these things, but we are “more than conquerors” through God who in Christ loves us. Paul wrote in Romans 8:37 through 39:

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Thank God that we who have believed the gospel are secure in our salvation through Jesus Christ.

We now arrive to **Romans 9, 10, and 11**. In these chapters Paul sets forth the righteousness of God that He has shown to both the Jews and the Gentiles in bestowing and withholding salvation from them. The need for this treatment is clear. Paul has directly stated and has indirectly asserted that the promises of God to Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures are being realized to the people who have their faith alone in Jesus Christ. He has shown in many different ways that the church that is now comprised of both Jewish and Gentile believers all share in these promises. Since this is the case, how does one explain the fact that Israel for the most part, failed to believe on Jesus Christ as their Messiah? How is it that the Jewish people who had all of the glorious promises given to them by God find themselves excluded from the enjoyment of these blessings, whereas gentiles, who never had the desire to know God and who were excluded from God’s Messianic promises, become beneficiaries of God’s saving grace?

There are various ways to outline these chapters. The editors of **The New Reformation Study Bible** propose the following outline:

- VI. God Demonstrates His Righteousness in Jew and Gentile (Rom. 9-11)
 - A. God’s Righteousness Established in History (Rom. 9)
 - B. God’s Righteousness Received Only by Faith (Rom. 10)
 - C. God’s Righteousness Revealed in Jew and Gentile (Rom. 11)⁷

The outline in **The ESV Study Bible** has this outline of these chapters:

- V. God’s Righteousness to Israel and to the Gentiles (9:1-11:36)
 - A. God’s saving promises to Israel (9:1-29)
 - B. Israel’s rejection of God’s saving promises (9:30-11:10)
 - C. God’s righteousness in His plan for Jews and Gentiles (11:11-32)
 - D. Concluding doxology (11:33-36)⁸

We may see, therefore, that Paul had sought to set before his readers the purposes and ways of God in bringing His chosen people to salvation.

But how are these chapters to be understood in the light of the entire epistle? John Murray gave a very good assessment and introduction of these chapters in a section of his commentary which he entitled, “Purpose of Chapters 9-11.”

But what of chapters 9 to 11? It might seem that there is discontinuity in this portion of the epistle and its length appears to aggravate the question raised. It is only as we fail to discern or overlook the relation that these chapters sustain to the thesis of the epistle that any thought of irrelevance or

⁷ R. C. Sproul, gen. ed. **The New Reformation Study Bible** (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), p. 1765.

⁸ **The ESV Study Bible** (Crossway Bibles, 2008), p. 2156. This is the identical outline in Thomas Schreiner’s commentary on Romans, since he was also an editor for The ESV Study Bible. See Schreiner, **Romans** (Baker Academic, 1998), p. viii.

discontinuity is entertained. On closer inspection this part of the epistle is seen to bring to climatic vindication the thesis stated in 1:16, 17 and correlative doctrines unfolded later in chapters 1 to 8. If this section of the epistle were absent, there would be a hiatus leaving us with unanswered questions and the corresponding perplexity. It is not that we may demand or expect answers to all our questions. But in this instance we may be profoundly grateful that the supreme author of Scripture inspired the apostle to deal with questions so germane to the grand theme of this epistle and urgently pressing upon the minds of intelligent readers.

It is, however, not merely the questions which emerge from this epistle that are answered in chapters 9 to 11. They are the questions which the biblico-theological perspective derived from the whole of Scripture necessarily provokes. It is noteworthy to what an extent Paul appeals to the Old Testament in this part of the epistle. This appeal shows that the subjects with which he deals are those that have their roots in the Old Testament and are, therefore, to be understood in the light of the apostle's interpretation and application. In other words, the apostle, writing in the full light of fulfillment which the advent of Christ brought and by the inspiration of the Spirit at Pentecost, furnishes us with the orientation in terms of which the prophetic Scriptures are to be understood.

Furthermore, these chapters delineate for us the world-wide design of God in reference to Jew and Gentile. They disclose to us in a manner that is without parallel in the New Testament revelation the ways in which God's diverse providences to Jew and Gentile react upon and interact with one another for the promotion of his saving designs. It is as the apostle leads us on through this delineation and reaches the climax at 11:32: "For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all" that we with him reach the apex of adoring wonder and exclaim: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!" That Paul, at the conclusion of the section of the epistle concerned, should have occasion to burst forth in such exclamatory doxology is of itself demonstration that the themes of these chapters are the fitting sequel to the great theses of the gospel developed in the first eight chapters.⁹

Let us consider the opening paragraph of Romans 9, which is contained in verses 1 through 5. Here we have Paul's expression of great grief and concern that the Jewish people were largely in unbelief.

I am speaking the truth in Christ--I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit--²that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. ⁴They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. ⁵To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

Notice first that here Paul swears **a legitimate oath** before God. He calls upon Jesus Christ as His witness as well as the Holy Spirit to bear witness with his conscience that he indeed is burdened for the well-being of the Jewish people. The Bible teaches that there occasions when we may find it necessary to make an oath or a vow before God. There are some who argue that a Christian should never swear an oath. They assume that our Lord's words in the Sermon on the Mount forbid all such oath taking. He taught His disciples,

³³"Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.'³⁴But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or

⁹ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Eerdmans Publishing, 1965), pp. xii and xiii. This volume has Murray's two volume commentary in a single volume. These introductory pages are of the second volume contained in this one book.

black. ³⁷Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil. (Matt. 5:33-37)

Based upon these words some have argued that a Christian should never swear an oath. But our Lord was not forbidding all oath taking, but rather rash and vain oaths that people would take to assure to others that they were speaking the truth. But that there are legitimate oaths according to the Word of God may be seen from time to time when a biblical writer or biblical character swears an oath before God. Here in Romans 9:1ff we have an example of the Apostle Paul swearing a legitimate oath, calling upon the Holy Spirit as His witness.

Our 1689 Confession of Faith has an article dedicated to this matter of lawful oaths and vows. Here are three of the five paragraphs of that article:

1. A lawful oath is a part of religious worship, wherein the person swearing in truth, righteousness, and judgment, solemnly calleth God to witness what he sweareth, and to judge him according to the truth or falseness thereof. (Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 10:20; Jeremiah 4:2; 2 Chronicles 6:22, 23)
2. The name of God only is that by which men ought to swear; and therein it is to be used, with all holy fear and reverence; therefore to swear vainly or rashly by that glorious and dreadful name, or to swear at all by any other thing, is sinful, and to be abhorred; yet as in matter of weight and moment, for confirmation of truth, and ending all strife, an oath is warranted by the word of God; so a lawful oath being imposed by lawful authority in such matters, ought to be taken. (Matthew 5:34, 37; James 5:12; Hebrews 6:16; 2 Corinthians 1:23; Nehemiah 13:25)
3. Whosoever taketh an oath warranted by the Word of God, ought duly to consider the weightiness of so solemn an act, and therein to avouch nothing but what he knoweth to be truth; for that by rash, false, and vain oaths, the Lord is provoked, and for them this land mourns. (Leviticus 19:12; Jeremiah 23:10)

And so, here in Romans 9:1 Paul swears an oath with God as his witness that he was speaking the truth that he had a deep and genuine love and concern for the Jewish people who had refused to believe on Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

The love that Paul had for his Jewish brethren is quite amazing. **Verses 2 and 3** read: ***“I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”*** Here we see the great love of the apostle for his people, the Jewish people. Paul had a love for His people as Christ has a love for His people. It is the same kind of love that Jesus Christ has for all of His people. But whereas Paul would have been willing to become accursed if it meant the salvation of his people, Jesus Christ in actuality became cursed of God in order to redeem His own. Paul had written elsewhere: “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’)” (Gal 3:13). And 2 Corinthians 5:21 reads, “For He (the Father) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Paul identified himself with his Jewish “brothers.” But lest anyone misunderstand and assume that he was here speaking of his Christian brethren, he adds the clarifying statement, “my kinsmen according to the flesh.” But it is not merely his genetic ties to his people that caused his great concern for them and his own identification with them. It was because of the promises and the blessings of God that had been conferred upon them in which Paul had shared with them being Jewish himself. And so he writes in **verses 4 and 5**: ***“They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.”***

Paul enumerated their blessings. Let us consider these. First, to the Jewish people, the Israelites, belonged “the adoption.” Israel was God’s adopted son who had very great privileges because of its relationship with God.¹⁰ Second, to the Israelites belonged “the glory.” This refers to the manifestive presence of God in His glory to Israel on Mount Sinai, through the tabernacle and later temple manifestations

¹⁰ Cf. Exod. 4:22f; Deut. 14:1f; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Hos. 11:1; Mal. 1:6; 2:10.

when the glory of God abode above the mercy seat.¹¹ Third, to the Israelites belonged “the covenants.” The plural is used perhaps to denote the covenants that God made with Israel through Abraham, later at Mount Sinai through Moses, and then later still with Israel through King David.¹² Fourth, to the Israelites belonged the giving of the law, which is of course a reference to the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. Fifth, to the Israelites the true “worship of God.” This was also given to Israel through Moses when he instituted the worship of God in the tabernacle. Sixth, to the Israelites were given “the promises.” These are the promises of God to His people found throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. Seventh, to the Israelites “belong the patriarchs.” These men, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were the reason that God had shown favor to Israel, because they were the physical descendants of these men to whom God had given His promises of blessing. But the greatest of privileges that the Jews had received is that through Israel, eighth, it was from the Israelites that “according to the flesh is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever.” The promised Savior came into the world through Israel. The cause of Paul’s great concern and grief was due to the great privilege that God had given to Israel in every way, but because they had rejected Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, they had forfeited receiving the full benefit of all that God had assured to them through Christ. Paul was grieved by his own people’s rejection of Jesus Christ. By rejecting Him they had lost it all.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,
And to present you faultless
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,
To God our Savior, Who alone is wise,
Be glory and majesty,
Dominion and power,
Both now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24f)

¹¹ Cf. Exo. 24:16f; 40:34-38; Lev. 16:2; 1 Kings 8:10f; 2 Chron. 7:1f. Exo.

¹² Cf. Gen. 15:8-21; 17:1-21; Exo. 2:24; 6:4f; Deut. 8:18; Luke 1:72f.