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Sermon Notes

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Paul's Anguish for His Fellow Jews

Romans 9:1-5

Introduction: The Wailing Wall

This is the holiest shrine of the Jewish world. The Western Wall is part of the retaining wall supporting the temple mount built by Herod in 20 B.C. After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 A.D., Jews were not allowed to come to Jerusalem until the Byzantine period, when they could visit once a year on the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple and weep over the ruins of the Holy Temple. Because of this, the wall became known as the "Wailing Wall."

Jews were again not allowed to visit the wall from 1948-1967 when it was in the Jordanian section of the city. After the Six Day War, the Western Wall became a place for national rejoicing and prayer, as the last accessible relic of the last Temple.

The Jews who stand there weep and wail and pray because of the dreadful and tragic misery that has befallen their people in the PAST

Almost two thousand years ago, while the temple was still standing, the greatest Jew of his day, a Hebrew of Hebrews named Paul wept wailed and prayed not because of a past misery and tragedy, but a future one, and far greater than the destruction of the temple... he wept and wailed because of the eternal condemnation that would come on his Jewish kinsman because of their sins and their rejection of the Messiah, the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 9:1-5 I speak the truth in Christ-- I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit-- ² I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ 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, ⁴ 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. ⁵ Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

I. The Cause of Paul's Anguish: "My Kinsmen are Accursed!"

A. Paul's Intensely Personal Revelation

1. Paul's Intensely Fervent Nationalism
2. Paul's Amazing Gospel Call: Apostle to the Gentiles
3. Paul's Evangelistic Experience: Constant Jewish Opposition
 - a. The pattern was clear in every city: begin by preaching Christ from the Law and the Prophets in the synagogues; the Jews would resist and rebel; Paul would turn to the Gentiles and they would believe in LARGE NUMBERS; whereupon the Jews would openly oppose the gospel and privately plot and scheme to destroy Paul and stop his ministry
- B. Paul's Spiritual Understanding: Jewish Rejection of Christ
- C. The Cause of the Anguish: The Eternal Consequences of Jewish Unbelief

II. The Depth of Paul's Anguish

A. Overpowering Emotions

"I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart."

- B. Astonishing Desire: "I could wish to be accursed"
 1. **CUT OFF FROM CHRIST:** Willing never to see Christ again... never to see the heavenly glory of Jesus the love of his life
 2. **ACCURSED:** Understanding the eternity of torment that awaited the damned in hell...
- C. Impossible Desire
 1. But it is impossible!!

Romans 8:38-39 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

D. Christlike Desire

III. The Authenticity of Paul's Anguish

Romans 9:1 I speak the truth in Christ-- I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit--

- A. Repeated Solemn Statements
- B. Why? Paul's Attitude Supernatural

C. Genuine Compassion for the Lost Is Rare

IV. The Shock in Paul's Anguish

Romans 9:4-5 They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. ⁵ Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

Nine great spiritual blessings given to the Jews: 1) Israelites, 2) adoption as sons; 3) divine glory; 4) covenants; 5) receiving of the Law; 6) the temple worship; 7) the promises; 8) the patriarchs; 9) the human ancestry of Christ

A. Contrary to All Expectations

1. Humanly speaking which is more likely
2. Jews prepared for centuries to receive Christ
3. Gentiles prepared for centuries to reject Christ
4. BUT Jews reject, Gentile flood into the church

B. Amazing Spiritual Advantages for Israelites

1. "Israelites"
 - a. Connecting with Jacob, who was renamed Israel
 - b. This name used throughout Israel's history
 - c. They are the physical descendants of Jacob, who was called by God
2. "The Adoption"
 - a. Essential not to misunderstand
 - b. This is not the same as the eternal and divine adoption in Romans 8

Romans 8:14-15 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

If you make a mistake here you'll miss the whole point of Romans 9 in light of the Jews... if God can adopt an individual person as His son, can that son be lost eternally? Would not God's word be rendered empty, His promises like vapors?

- c. This rather is the national adoption spoken of in the Old Testament

Exodus 4:22-23 Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, ²³ and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me."

Hosea 11:1 "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

Deuteronomy 1:31 "There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place."

3. "The Glory"

- a. Again, this is not the promise of personal glory made in Romans 8
- b. Rather this is the consistent record of the experience national Israel had with the glory of God at key moments in their history

Exodus 24:15-18 When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, ¹⁶ and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud. ¹⁷ To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. ¹⁸ Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

Exodus 40:34-38 Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁶ In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out; ³⁷ but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out-- until the day it lifted. ³⁸ So the cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels.

Leviticus 9:22-24 Then Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them. And having sacrificed the sin offering, the burnt offering and the fellowship offering, he stepped down. ²³ Moses and Aaron then went into the Tent of Meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. ²⁴ Fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and fell facedown.

Solomon's Temple Dedication: 1 Kings 8:10-11 When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the LORD. ¹¹ And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple.

- c. BUT seeing the glory of God did not guarantee personal salvation!! Quite the opposite in some cases

Numbers 14: The people rebelled against Moses and Aaron, and spoke angry words against God. They wanted to choose leaders for themselves and go back to Egypt. As they were shouting and talking about stoning Moses and Aaron, at that moment the glory of the Lord appeared:

Numbers 14:10-11 But the whole assembly talked about stoning them. Then the glory of the LORD appeared at the Tent of Meeting to all the Israelites. ¹¹ The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them?"

Numbers 14:22-23 not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times-- ²³ not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it.

4. "The Covenants"

- a. This refers to the covenants God made with Israel...
- b. The Abrahamic covenant: "Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed"... and "I will make your descendents as numerous as the stars and the sand" and "To your descendents I will give this land"
- c. The Mosaic covenant: "If you obey me and keep all my commandments, then I will preserve you in the land and you will be my people and I will be your God."
- d. The Davidic covenant: "You will never lack a son to sit on the throne. I will build the house of your son and His Kingdom will never end."
- e. BUT NOTE: The unconditional covenants made to Abraham and David were fulfilled... but neither of them guaranteed eternal life to every Israelite; the conditional covenant made with Moses was not kept, because the people sinned

5. "The Giving of the Law"

- a. Clearly this refers to the Law of Moses
- b. A tremendous blessing to have the Laws of God dictated directly through Moses for the people to have, to hold, to read, to cherish, and to try to live

Deuteronomy 4:8 And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?

Psalm 119:97 Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.

- c. However, simply having the Law did not guarantee personal salvation to all the Israelites

Romans 2:23 You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?

Romans 3:20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

6. "The Worship"

- a. This refers to the temple sacrificial system
- b. An incredible blessing, one of the greatest teaching tools for the person and work of Christ ever
- c. Every time an animal was sacrificed, it pictured what Christ would do one day on the cross... laying down His life as a substitute for sinners
- d. BUT the prophets consistently showed how much Israel abused the temple worship... they offered diseased or lame animals, they sniffed at it and said "What a burden!" or they arrogantly assumed that because God had given them the sacrificial system that they were safe from all harm

Isaiah 1:10-18 Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah! ¹¹ "The multitude of your sacrifices-- what are they to me?" says the LORD. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. ¹² When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? ¹³ Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations-- I cannot bear your evil assemblies. ¹⁴ Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. ¹⁵ When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; ¹⁶ wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, ¹⁷ learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.

Jeremiah was given was one of the most difficult ministries in Redemptive History... to stand in Jerusalem at the temple gate in the days leading up to the destruction of the temple and tell the overconfident Jewish nation that merely having the temple would never save them!!

Jeremiah 7:2-11 "Stand at the gate of the LORD's house and there proclaim this message: "Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the LORD. ³ This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you

live in this place. ⁴ Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!" ... ⁹ "Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, ¹⁰ and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, "We are safe"-- safe to do all these detestable things? ¹¹ Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you?

7. "The Promises"

- a. God made many promises to Israel throughout their history
- b. I have already mentioned the promises He made to Abraham to give him many descendents and to give him the Promised Land
- c. He made promises to Israel to bring them back into the Promised Land from Exile
- d. He made hundreds of lesser promises and fulfilled them
- e. BUT never did He promise that all of the physical descendents of Abraham would be saved eternally

8. "The Patriarchs"

- a. The example of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was of immense spiritual advantage to Israel
- b. The godly heritage of these men, and other fathers of their faith: Joseph, Samuel, David
- c. But as Paul is about to prove, this spiritual advantage would not guarantee salvation for all their descendents

9. "The Human Ancestry of the Christ"

- a. Paul finishes by pointing out that the Christ was sent to them
- b. Their own nation was the physical tribe through which God blessed the whole world
- c. Jesus said "Salvation is from the Jews"
- d. To have the human ancestry of Christ is an incredible blessing
- e. BUT if anything this seemed to be a stumbling block to the Jews, hindering their faith

Matthew 13:54-58 *Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. ⁵⁵ "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" ⁵⁷ And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor." ⁵⁸ And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.*

Note: Strong statement of Christ's Deity

^{NIV} **Romans 9:5** *Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.*

There specifically because Christ's Jewish humanity in some way hid His awesome deity from their eyes

Summary: The Jews had an extreme advantage over every other tribe and language and people and nation on the face of the earth... it seems astonishing that those nations would be flooding into the Kingdom, while blessed Israel did not

C. BUT **KEY CONCEPT**: These Advantages Do Not Promise Individual Salvation

D. Therefore God's Word Has Not Failed

One last point: Each of these Old Testament spiritual advantages COULD HAVE BEEN an instrument of salvation by promoting faith for Jews... indeed many of them WERE!!! Remember that Abraham was saved simply by believing ONE of God's promises... how much more of an opportunity did later Jews have after the Exodus and after more of God's glorious self-revelation

Also... Gentiles who believe now (as well as Jews) come into the fullness of EACH of these blessings

1) Israelites

Ephesians 2:19-20 *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.*

2) adoption as sons;

Romans 8:15-16 *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*

3) divine glory;

2 Corinthians 3:18 *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

4) covenants;

Matthew 26:27-28 *Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*

5) receiving of the Law;

Romans 8:4 *in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.*

6) the temple worship;

Philippians 3:3 *For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh--*

7) the promises;

2 Corinthians 1:20 *For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.*

8) the patriarchs;

Romans 4:11-12 *So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. ¹² And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.*

Romans 4:16 *Abraham. He is the father of us all.*

9) the human ancestry of Christ

V. The Fruit of Paul's Anguish

Romans 10:1 *Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.*

A. Emotion Alone Accomplishes Nothing

1. Paul's tears and anguish cannot save a single soul
2. It was not enough for Paul merely to be in intense anguish over the spiritual state of the Jews
3. It had to flow out into action... and it did

B. Heart Desire for Salvation of Jews

1. Rather than harboring a bitter heart of revenge for these people who have crushed him in city after city, he wants to share eternity with them!

C. Prevailing Fervent Prayer for Salvation of Jews

1. Romans 10:1 says his first action is prevailing and intense, heartfelt prayer for Jews to be saved
2. Paul starts in the prayer closet, never giving God a day of rest concerning the salvation of his kinsmen according to the flesh, the Jews

D. Tireless Evangelistic Labor for Salvation of Jews

1. Paul's whole life was devoted to the tireless proclamation and modeling of the gospel message
2. Every city he went to, he was willing to pay the ultimate price for the salvation of the elect
3. He was willing to be beaten, stoned, imprisoned, publicly humiliated, stripped, even killed if it meant salvation for the elect

2 Timothy 2:10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

And some of those elect were Jews!!!

VI. The Significance of Paul's Anguish

A. Status of Unbelieving Jews

1. Simply put: despite being "God's chosen people," Paul's astonishing grief and outpouring here in Romans 9:1-5 means one thing
2. Apart from faith in Christ, Jews will be eternally damned
3. If not, why would Paul carry on so?
4. Some evangelicals actually advocate that Christians should not evangelize the Jews, because they are already God's chosen people

5. Some in the extreme dispensational camp

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement recently saying that Catholics should evangelize non-Christians—but not Jews. "The command of the Resurrected Jesus in Matthew 28:19 to make disciples 'of all nations' means that the Church must bear witness in the world to the Good News of Christ so as to prepare the world for the fullness of the kingdom of God," says [*Reflections on Covenant and Mission*](#).

However, this evangelizing task no longer includes the wish to absorb the Jewish faith into Christianity and so end the distinctive witness of Jews to God in human history. Thus, while the Catholic Church regards the saving act of Christ as central to the process of human salvation for all, it also acknowledges that Jews already dwell in a saving covenant with God. The Catholic Church must always evangelize and will always witness to its faith in the presence of God's kingdom in Jesus Christ to Jews and to all other people.

Rabbis from the National Council of Synagogues (representing Reform and Conservative groups) also joined in the statement. "It should be obvious that any mission of Christians to the Jews is in direct conflict with the Jewish notion that the covenant itself is that mission," the document says.

6. Paul's overwhelming grief in Romans 9:1-5 totally crushes this false notion

7. Jews need the gospel as much as Gentiles

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

B. Understanding Limits of Old Covenant's Blessings

1. Paul's list of Old Covenant blessings at the head of Romans 9 is immensely significant
2. If these incredible spiritual blessings of the Jews were sufficient to save them, why does Paul weep and wail for them
3. How much less are the natural blessings of pagans out in Irian Jaya enough to save them
4. We needed a New Covenant in order to be saved... without it, we would have had no chance for salvation

C. Possible to Rejoice in God Greatly While Sorrowing Greatly

1. Paul goes from heights of soaring joy to depths of grieving sorrow immediately
2. Romans 8 ends with a note of majestic triumph that is designed to bring all of us to our feet in exultant and confident joy

3. Romans 9 begins with immense sorrow and unceasing anguish over the lost
4. Romans 11 will end again with soaring praise for the infinitely deep and complex plan of God
5. Christians then, while looking up at our sovereign and triumphant God will rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory
6. But while Christians look around at the ravages of sin and devastating consequences of rank unbelief that will come upon our neighbors and friends and coworkers and ever FAMILY members, we have reason to weep as bitterly as Paul did
7. How is this possible? Could FBC be the kind of church characterized by immense joy AT THE SAME TIME AS overwhelming sorrow?
8. This is commanded to us!!

2 Corinthians 6:10 sorrowful, yet always rejoicing

D. Possible to Believe in God's Sovereignty While Sorrowing Greatly

1. Romans 9 is the meatiest chapter in the Bible
2. Soon Paul will explain why some Israelites are saved and others are not
3. He will unfold the incredibly difficult doctrine of God's sovereign rights and freedoms to have mercy on whom He will have mercy and to harden whom He wants to harden
4. He will say that God made this determination before the foundation of the world in predestination
5. Some would say that we should just stoically accept God's will and feel nothing concerning the damnation of the reprobate
6. Paul does not do that! He is filled with unceasing sorrow and anguish in his heart
7. Neither does Paul shrug and say "What will be will be" and leave it at that, but he pours out his heart in prayer and pours out his life in unceasing toil for the lost

VII. Application

A. Thank God for a Better Covenant with Better Promises

Hebrews 7:22 Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

Hebrews 8:6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.

Hebrews 12:24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

The promises of the New Covenant are simply better than the promises of the Old Covenant. The spiritual advantages we have in Christ are vastly superior to those listed by Paul.

BE THANKFUL!!!! God has lavished on us “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.”

BUT:

B. “Do Not Be Arrogant but Be Afraid”

Luke 12:48 From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

The more blessings God lavishes on you, the more accountable you are to God.

Also, there are greater spiritual blessings in the new covenant that you can taste and experience without actually being included... Hebrews 6:4-6

Romans 11:19-22 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." ²⁰ Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. ²² Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.

C. Evangelize Your Children

Don't assume that just because they are your children and attend church with you, they are fine spiritually. The “kinsmen according to the flesh” that cause us the most anguish are our children. Pour out your heart to God for them... for it is possible for them to receive many spiritual blessings that only inoculate them from the gospel.

D. Pray for Israel

Romans 10:1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.