

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:

Dr. Stephen Felker, Pastor

[Swift Creek Baptist Church.com](http://SwiftCreekBaptistChurch.com), 18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834

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Romans 9:1-5; 10:1 “A Burden for Lost Souls”

Intro. We have now come to another major division in our study of Romans. To the modern reader chapters 9-11 form a parenthesis in the course of Paul’s argument. Had he proceeded straight from the end of chapter 8 to chapter 12, we would have been conscious of no gap in his reasoning. However, we should not minimize the importance of these parenthetical chapters.

There are several reasons why he paused to take up the problem of Jewish unbelief in chapters 9-11. One, the situation in the Roman church required it. The original believers in Rome appear to have been Jews, but by this time they were becoming outnumbered by Gentile Christians. There was perhaps a tendency on the part of some of the Gentiles to look down on their Jewish brethren as mercifully rescued from an apostate nation. Two, it was of the essence of Paul’s argument that the gospel which he preached was no innovation. It was attested in the Hebrew Scriptures. Well if that is the case, how is it that so many of Abraham’s descendants refused to believe the gospel? Paul answers that question in this section. Three, Paul had argued in chapter 8 that the believer is secure in Christ and that God’s election would stand. But someone might ask, “What about the Jews?” They were chosen by God, and yet now you tell us they are set aside in unbelief. If their election did not secure *their* salvation, how do we know that our salvation is secure? But in Romans 9-11 we see that God is not by any means through with Israel. Paul’s answer to “Has God cast away his people?” (11:1) is a sharp negative: “Certainly not!” God’s election of Israel *as a nation* still stands, & the unbelief of individual Jews will not overturn their national election.

Now with that introduction of this section of Romans, I must now briefly introduce our text today. One thing that stands out in these verses is Paul’s burden for Israel. Most of his Jewish brethren had rejected Jesus as their Savior. But as we shall see, he was not at all unconcerned about their lost condition. He had great sorrow over the lost condition of his nation.

I must contrast the apparent lack of concern that many professing Christians have today about the lost condition of our nation and world. For the most part we are either not concerned about lost souls, or we fail to translate that concern into action. Are you concerned about the lost in your family? Are you concerned about the lost right here in your church? Are you concerned about the lost in your community? Are you concerned about the lost in your world? Probably none of us have the same concern & passion for the lost that Paul had. In just 4 weeks we will begin a revival with a focus on reaching the lost for Christ. I believe it is providential that 3 of the next 4 messages in Romans deal with the subject of reaching the lost. So let’s look into our text today, and I hope that we will be challenged by Paul’s great example here.

Now the first point I wish to draw from our text is this:

I. WE SHOULD HAVE A BURDEN FOR LOST SOULS

Paul says in v.2, “I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.” The heart of Paul is laid bare in the opening of chapter 9. “Sorrow” is from a word (*lupe*) that often refers to the grief & sorrow of losing a loved one. “Grief” is from a word (*odune*) that refers to consuming grief,

pain, sorrow. It is from a word that is used of the setting of the sun. Have you ever felt your heart sink when you heard some bad news about someone you cared about?

The intensity of this pain and sorrow is indicated in v.2 by the words “great” and “continual”. Paul’s heart was constantly burdened and concerned for his Jewish brethren. I believe that was the true driving force of Paul’s missionary work. And concern for the lost is the driving force behind many who go to the mission field today.

What was Paul so concerned about? Why did he feel such deep grief & ongoing sorrow? Paul said elsewhere that the lost are dead in trespasses & sins (Eph. 2:1), & Paul grieved over the spiritual deadness of his fellow Jews. Many times he preached the Gospel to his fellow Jews, only to see them walk away in unbelief, and sorrow would grip his heart all over again. But his sorrow was not due to feeling of personal rejection. Rather, it was sorrow over what he knew would happen to them. Without Jesus they were on their way to a devil’s hell. Without Jesus they were lost. He knew they needed to be saved. In fact, look over to chapter 10, v.1, & we will see what Paul was burdened about. He says, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.” His main concern and burden was that his people Israel “be saved.”

Yet there are quite a few who say that Jews do not need to be saved. They say their Jewish religion is good enough. But that’s not what Paul says in that verse I just read you. That’s not what the Bible teaches elsewhere. Jesus Himself said in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” When Peter stood before the leaders of Israel, he said in Acts 4:12, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Oh, how they needed to be saved from sin, but they had rejected their one and only Savior, Jesus Christ. In fact, all people need to be saved. Religion is not enough. Good works are not enough.

Take a look at your own heart this morning. Are you only slightly concerned for the lost, or does God see in you a great and continual burden for the lost? When we have a loved one who is very sick, we get very concerned and ask everyone to pray for them. If we found out that our neighbor’s house was on fire, would we be unconcerned, and just sit back & continue to watch TV? No! We would get up & go see if we could do anything to help. We are usually more concerned about someone’s physical well-being than their spiritual well-being.

So let us pray that we will become more like Paul, and have a passionate concern for the lost. Secondly, from Paul’s example we also see that:

II. OUR BURDEN FOR LOST SOULS SHOULD EXPRESS ITSELF IN SELF-SACRIFICE

This is indicated in v.3, where Paul says, “For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh.” We see Paul’s self-sacrifice first in terms of:

A. Desire – The word “wish” (*euchomai*) either means “pray” or “wish”. Both meanings would fit in the context. “I could wish” is an imperfect tense, which refers to ongoing past action that in this case is unfinished, an obstacle intervening. Paul’s wish is a hypothetical wish to the effect that if it were possible for his sacrifice to avail for the salvation of his kinsmen, he would be willing to be accursed on their behalf. That word “accursed” is from the Greek word *anathema*, which means “set apart or devoted to destruction.” Unbelieving Jews were on their way to death & destruction, but Paul was willing to take their place if doing so would save them. In fact, notice that Paul was willing to be “accursed from Christ for my brethren.” The word translated “for” (*huper*)

means “on behalf of,” or even “in place of.” What Christ-like love, for this is what Christ did. He was willing to be sent to earth for the express purpose of suffering death & wrath in our place.

There are several reasons why Paul was expressing a wish rather than a reality. In the first place, he had just written in Romans 8 that nothing can separate the believer from the love of God. So to wish what scripture plainly makes impossible would be futile. Secondly, no sinful man is eligible to die for others. Only the sinless Son of God could die for others. He became a curse for us, separated from God on the cross (Gal. 3:13, 14). Nevertheless, we do see in Paul’s wish a spark from the fire of Christ’s substitutionary love.

The heart of Paul for Israel was also expressed by Moses. Ex. 32:31-32 says, “Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, ‘Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—...’” At this point the sentence stops and the translators end it with a dash. They sense that there must have been a long silence at this point, or perhaps Moses began to weep for his people. He understood that sin had to be punished and he did not want this people to be punished. Then his cry began again, “but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.” Paul indeed placed himself in good company with Moses, and his Jewish readers were aware of this.

Abraham Bininger, a Swiss boy from Ulrich, came with his parents to this country on the same ship that brought John Wesley. The father and mother of the lad both died on the voyage and were buried at sea, and he stepped alone from the gangway on to a strange continent, where there was not a single familiar face. When he had grown to manhood, he asked to be sent to tell the story of the cross to the black slaves on St. Thomas Island, having heard of their great misery and degradation. When he arrived at the island, he learned that a law had been passed that only a slave could preach to other slaves. So he wrote the governor, agreeing to become a slave for the rest of his life & serve faithfully provided he could preach to the slaves in his free time. The governor sent the request to the King of Denmark, who was so touched that he decreed that Abraham Bininger could preach to whomever he wished.¹

What an example of self-sacrificing concern for others! Are you willing to make personal sacrifices to see others saved?

Having a desire & willingness to sacrifice self for others is not enough. We should also express that desire:

B. In Action - Paul’s willingness to put the interest of others ahead of his personal interest resulted in self-less action on his part. By his example, Paul teaches us about 2 of the primary ways concern for the lost should be translated into action. First of all:

1. We Need to Pray for the Lost – Again, in chapter 10, v.1, Paul says, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.” That is one of the first ways we should express our burden and concern for lost souls. When we are truly burdened for the lost, we will go to God in prayer on their behalf. We will ask others to pray as well. This is so important, for no one will get saved on their own. Romans 3:11 says, “There is none who seeks after God.” Jesus said in John 6:44, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him...” God must work in their life. And one main way we get God working in the lives of people is through prayer.

The late Gypsy Smith used to tell the story of the conversion of his uncle Rodney. Among gypsies, it was not considered proper for a child to address his elders unless spoken to. This would be doubly true if a child spoke to an elder on spiritual matters. So young Gypsy prayed and waited

¹ Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: #5180* (Rockville, Maryland: Assurance Publishers, 1979).

for his opportunity. One day, the lad's uncle took note of Gypsy's worn trousers. "Laddie," said Uncle Rodney, "How do you account for the fact that the knees of your trousers have worn nearly through, while the rest of the suit is almost like new?" Gipsy replied, "I have worn the knees through praying for you, Uncle Rodney." Then he added tearfully, "I want so much to have God make you a Christian!" Uncle Rodney put his arm around Gypsy in fatherly embrace, and a few moments later fell on his knees, confessing Christ as his Savior!²

Even so, we ought to be praying for the lost on a regular basis. Let me ask you something. Can you name at least 3 people that you are praying for to be saved? If not, can you truly say that you are burdened for souls?

Believe it or not, praying is not enough. There is something else we should do:

2. We Need to Witness to the Lost – People will not be saved unless someone shares the gospel with them. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "He called you by our gospel..." (2 Th. 2:14). Look over to Romans 10:14-15. There Paul said, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!'" Paul certainly translated his concern into many attempts to share the gospel with the Jewish people. He was even willing to suffer persecution in order to witness to them.

Nevertheless, most Christians and most churches are not doing very well at being concerned about the lost, & winning them to Christ. A 2004 research project, led by Thom S. Rainer, showed that it takes 86 church members in America one year to reach one person for Christ! In 2005 his team discovered that the vast majority of the unchurched with whom they spoke have never had a Christian share their faith with them. We Christians tend to isolate ourselves from the lost, and we are not doing enough to break down the barriers, and get the gospel to the lost in our communities.

Is your burden for the lost great enough to make personal sacrifices? Will you sacrifice your time to pray for the lost? Will you give up some time to go visiting or sharing the gospel in some other way, such as passing out tracts? Will you take the time to come to the witnessing class I will offer on Wednesday nights starting in a few weeks? Will you give financially to support missionaries and others who are sharing the gospel? This month we are asking you to give to our world hunger offering. As you give, you are not only helping to feed the hungry, but you are also giving our missionaries a great opportunity to share the gospel.

Finally, let us consider together:

III. THE REASONS FOR THIS BURDEN FOR SOULS

In addition to what I have already mentioned, I believe Paul gives two reasons why he was so concerned for the Jewish people in vv.4-5. If we grasp & apply these reasons, I believe we will share his burden for the lost. The first reason sets the stage for the second & main reason. Paul was concerned for his Jewish brethren:

A. Because of the Greatness of their Privileges - The incomparable gifts of God to Israel are bittersweet reminders of the extent of Israel's spiritual tragedy. And Paul's attachment to Israel is not merely due to natural ties. It is accentuated by the place Israel occupied in the history of redemption & revelation. What a shame it is for a people who had been so blessed, to end up

² Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: #5878* (Rockville, Maryland: Assurance Publishers, 1979).

rejecting their own Messiah and to suffer the consequences. So notice what Paul says about their privileges:

1. Israelites - The first privilege mentioned in v.4 is that they were "Israelites". This name harks back to Gen. 32:28 and is reminiscent of the dignity bestowed upon Jacob in the reception of the name "Israel", a dignity conferred also upon his seed (Gen. 48:16). The name means, "Prince with God." God bestowed honor upon him & his descendants.

2. Adopted (v.4a) - The adoption spoke of here was national. There were many nations upon the earth, but God chose to adopt only one. The only nation that God ever called His "son" was the nation Israel (Ex. 4:22-23; Deut. 32:6; Hos. 11:1).

3. Glory of God - In v.4 Paul merely says, "the glory," but he is talking about the fact that the glory of God was manifested to Israel in the tabernacle as an indication of the presence of God with them. Exodus 40:35 reveals, "And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." The children of Israel are the only people who have ever had the visible presence of God. The glory that belonged to Israel was something very special. It came upon Israel from the beginning of its march as a nation, stayed through many centuries, was taken from them in judgment, but shall be theirs once again in the future. "He spread a cloud for covering; and fire to give light in the night" (Psa. 105:39). The glory was not seen again until the moment the infant Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Lk. 2:9-11). The glory will appear again when Christ comes again (I Th. 4:17; Mt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7).

4. The Covenants (v.4a) - God has made certain covenants with the nation Israel that He intends to carry out. Many of them He has already carried out.

5. Giving of the Law (v.4b) - The Law of Moses was certainly the highest moral law of that day, and it served as a great moral guide for the people. When the people followed God's law, they were blessed above every nation on earth.

6. Service of God (v.4b) - This had to do with the priestly service in the tabernacle and temple. Israel was to be a kingdom of priests (Exod. 19:6). The nation failed God, but God took the tribe of Levi and gave them the responsibility of serving. No other nation had this privilege. At one time, if the Gentiles wanted to worship God, they had to worship and sacrifice to God through the ministry of the Jews.

Folks, I count it a privilege to be a preacher of the gospel. But think of how tragic it would be if I do not embrace the gospel that I preach, and miss heaven!

7. Recipients of the Promises (v.4b) - The Old Testament abounds with promises made to these people. Israel received great blessings through these promises.

8. Descendants of the Fathers (v.5a) - This refers primarily to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Some people boast in who their ancestors are. The Jews can boast that they are descendants of some of the most well-known men and women of ancient history.

9. Through Whom Christ Came (v.5b) - But of all the privileges and advantages that were ever given to God's chosen people, the greatest by far was that they should be the people through whom God would bring the Savior, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus. There were many promises to this effect in the Old Testament. There are many reasons to believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah. There is some emphasis on the fact that Jesus came through Israel "according to the flesh." When He came to this earth, He was a Jew. The woman at the well called Him a Jew (see John 4:9). Romans 1:3 says that Jesus "was born of the seed of David according to the flesh."

Paul not only spoke of the humanity of Jesus, but also His deity. In the last of v.5 Paul ascribes a doxology to Christ "who is God over all, blessed for ever." Though the Jews rejected

Christ, Paul affirms that He is God! God had done so much to reach out to Israel, but they still rejected God and His Son! Oh, what terrible judgment awaited those who failed to properly use such spiritual advantages, and even rejected their Messiah, God's Son!

I believe we can make application to those of Christian heritage living here in America. God has blessed us with a rich spiritual heritage. God has blessed this land with great preachers, like John Wesley, George Whitfield, D.L. Moody, Billy Sunday, W.A. Criswell, Billy Graham, & Adrian Rogers. Every citizen can have a Bible, & most of our citizens have access to a Gospel preaching church. God has blessed us with prosperity & natural resources. Ah, but this leads to the next reason why Paul was so concerned for Israel:

B. Because Great Privileges Can Lead to Great Judgment – The very fact that in v.3 Paul wished that he could be “accursed from Christ” on behalf of Israel implies what will happen to them if they remain in unbelief! Yet many remained in unbelief in spite of all they possessed of religion. They had religion but not righteousness. And the sad thing is that all their privileges only add to their condemnation when they rejected Christ. When they turned their back on Christ, there was no other way of salvation. Only great judgment awaited them. Knowing this, Paul was very concerned and burdened about his people.

May I say that somewhere between 50 & 75 percent of church members are not saved. They are just members of a religious club. They are in rebellion against God in that they will not accept the righteousness God offers in Christ. Instead, like the Jews of old, they cling to their own righteousness. You can be religious and lost. Whoever you are, your social position, your church membership, your good works, or the color of your skin will not help you.

Oh, we ought to be concerned about the many in our country who have been privileged to be raised up in churches. They have the opportunity to hear fine preaching from God's Word in their churches, or on radio & TV. Many have had good, godly parents or grandparents. And yet, they have not truly trusted in Christ as Savior. We should be burdened about the greatness of judgment that awaits them.

Conclusion: Do you ever get concerned that billions of people around the world are lost and on their way to hell? Do you share Paul's concern? Do you remember a time when you were more concerned and burdened about the lost? Has your concern grown cold? As we have seen, a real test of your level of concern can be seen in your action. Are you praying for the lost? Are you witnessing to the lost, or at least inviting them to church?

If you realize that your burden for the lost has been minimal, or grown cold, then I ask you to take a fresh look at what happens to lost souls. Right now they are dead in trespasses and sins. They try to fill the emptiness of their souls with sinful pleasures and worldly possessions. Then, they day will come when they will die, and their soul will be carried far away from God, to a place of outer darkness. Smell the sulfur. Hear the cries of agony & regret. Put some unbeliever that you know into this picture.

Do you care about the lost? I'm calling upon Christians today to come to the prayer altar to pray for the lost, or to seek from God a new or renewed passion for the lost. I trust that some of you will come forward to make a commitment to witness to the lost, or at least work the next 4 weeks to bring those who need Jesus to our upcoming revival. Finally, if there is anyone here today who needs to be saved, I call upon you to respond to the love of Christ for you. He died in your place. He cares for you. I care for you. This church cares for you. Come to Jesus today!

Sources: Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Expositions of Bible Doctrines Taking the Epistle to the Romans as a Point of Departure*, vol. 3, "God's Heirs" (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963); F.F. Bruce, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963); Bruce Corley & Curtis Vaughan, *Romans: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976); Hershel Hobbs, *Romans: A Verse by Verse Study* (Waco: Word Books, 1977); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 5 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); John Murray, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Right: Romans* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1977); Kenneth S. Wuest's *Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 1, Romans (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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