

**Subject: *A Burden for Lost Souls***

**Scripture: *Romans 9:1-5***

One of the saddest statements in the Bible is found in Psalm 142:5, "no man cared for my soul." It is possible that a lost person may not care for his own soul, but it must never be said that a Christian does not care for lost souls who are bound for hell.

In our text Paul describes his own burden for lost souls. In Romans 8, Paul rejoices as he thinks about the blessings of those who are in Christ. But as he writes that, the sad condition of his fellow Jews came to mind. Many of them had heard the gospel of Christ, but they rejected it. Someone said, "The greatest tragedy in life is not what people suffer, but what they miss." Paul's heart was broken because so many of his fellow Jews were still lost and he wanted them to be saved. Paul and his fellow Jews are described in the words to our hymn, *At Calvary*:

*Years I spent in vanity and pride  
Caring not my Lord was crucified  
Knowing not it was for me He died on Calvary.*

Chapters 9-11 seem like they might be out of place. But here is God's plan for Israel. Paul answers the question: "If God has turned His back on the Jews, how then can Christians be eternally secure?" So Paul explains God's plan and purpose for the Israel.

### **1. *Paul's special burden for the Jews (vs. 1-3)***

Paul bares his heart to share the burden he had for his fellow Jews. What he says is not an exaggeration. He is not saying this just to sound spiritual. Although Paul considered himself to be "the apostle to the Gentiles," he always had a deep love and concern that Jews be saved. He was a Jew himself. Whenever Paul gave his testimony, he referred back to his Jewish roots.

**Philippians 3:5-6**<sup>5</sup> *Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;*<sup>6</sup> *Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

The burden Paul had for other Jews is the same kind of burden we should have for the lost:

#### **A. *It was a genuine burden***

He speaks as a Christian who is aware of his own spiritual position in Christ. His own conscience could attest to it. We often say, "Let your conscience be your guide." But that's not true. The Bible speaks of a defiled conscience, and a seared conscience (one that has no feeling). A person's conscience is helpful only if it is controlled by God's Word and God's Spirit. All believers should be able to say what Martin Luther said, "My conscience is captive to the Word of God." The Holy Spirit could also attest to it. Paul had a genuine, heartfelt burden.

#### **B. *It was a heavy burden***

Paul had *great heaviness*. This concern for other Jews weighed heavy on his heart. Paul's heart broke because they needed salvation. Some of us have friends or family members that are lost, and we know what it's like to have this kind of burden. We enjoy good times with them, we laugh with them, but underneath, deep down, our heart breaks for them to be saved. This is the heart of a parent broken by a wayward child. This is the heart of a wife who lives with an unsaved husband. Our hearts should break over the things that break God's heart.

C. It was a constant burden

He had *continual sorrow* in his heart. Paul's concern just wouldn't go away. Centuries earlier Jeremiah was called "the weeping prophet" because of the Jews and their unbelief.

***Jeremiah 9:1*** *Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!*

*Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.*

***Jeremiah 13:17*** *But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD'S flock is carried away captive.*

D. It was a Christ-like burden

Paul was so burdened over the lost that he was willing, if it were possible, to trade places with them. He was willing to bear their curse in Hell if they could go to Heaven. This kind of burden is not common. It's the same kind of burden that Jesus had for the lost. He died in our place.

Jesus was willing to be accursed for our sake so we might go to heaven. Only God can give you a burden like that. But we all need to have a burden for the lost. We need to be burdened to the point that we do something. We pray for them and we witness to them.

**2. God's special blessings for the Jews (vs. 4-5)**

The most tragic thing about so many Jews being lost was that God had blessed them in so many ways. They could have been and should have been saved, but they were lost. Paul lists nine special blessings God gave to the Jewish people:

A. They were God's princes

They were descendants of Abraham through Isaac and then Jacob whose name was changed to Israel ("prince with God").

B. They were God's people

They belonged to God as a favored nation and had a special relationship to Him.

**Exodus 4:22-23** <sup>22</sup> *And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: <sup>23</sup> And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.*

C. They had God's presence

God's visible presence was with them. God was with them in the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day. His presence was with them in the tabernacle and the temple.

D. They had God's covenants

God made a covenant with Abraham and then with Moses. Another covenant was made with David, and then God made the New Covenant.

E. They had God's law

God gave them the moral law, the Ten Commandments.

**Romans 3:1-2** <sup>1</sup> *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? <sup>2</sup> Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*

**Deuteronomy 4:8** *What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?*

F. They had God's worship

This refers to the service of God through worship in the tabernacle and temple. This included all the sacrifices and offerings for sin, the holy days and feasts. Worship reminded them of God's holiness and their need for His mercy.

G. They had God's promises

This refers to all the promises God made of a coming Savior. The promised Messiah would rule over His kingdom and bring promised blessings.

H. They had godly ancestors

There were men like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Leaders like Moses and Joshua and Aaron. Prophets like Samuel, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah. And kings like David and Josiah.

I. They had God's Son

Christ was born as a Jew. The supreme blessing of the Jewish people was the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel of Christ came first to the Jews.

**Romans 1:16** *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

**Matthew 10:5-6**<sup>5</sup> *These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: <sup>6</sup> But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

And yet with all these great blessings the Jewish people rejected Christ and most of them remained lost. They were privileged, but lost. They were blessed beyond measure, but lost. They were religious, but lost.

**John 1:10-11**<sup>10</sup> *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. <sup>11</sup> He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

The same thing happens in our day. Think of the blessings of God upon people right here. We have more Bibles, more churches, more preachers and teachers and Bible colleges. We have all these things and yet, most people are lost. It is heart-breaking that so many people are lost and on their way to hell.

