

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon Title: Remembering Sacrifice, Romans 9:1-9

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INTRODUCTION: [Intro about Memorial Day] Why do we have Memorial Day? To remember those who gave their life for our country. It is a day to be thankful. We can get bogged down in our own problems; in our own issues and baggage and forget those who came before us and those who are actively fighting for us.

As we celebrate our nation today, specifically those who lost their lives in serving our country, remembering affects us in the present, and it also affects the way we approach our future. I appreciate the freedom I have. I appreciate the way I can live safely and have opportunities for the future.

BACKGROUND: Today, we continue our series in the Book of Romans. Paul is writing to people who had a great history of God working in the lives of their people. He was also writing to people, reminding them of what Jesus did and encouraging them in their faith. Many, perhaps millions of Jews had given their lives so their people could live in freedom. And, Paul's letter to the Romans was written to the Jews and Gentiles who had become Christians. The Jews had a rich history that few of the Gentiles knew about.

In Romans, Paul so far—has explained what the Gospel is, “*the power of salvation to everyone who believes...*” and he also has written about our need for the Gospel. The results of both man's rejection and the acceptance of it, our hope in Christ. And, about how God is working all things for the good of those who love God and who are called according to his purpose.

In Romans—Chapter 9—Paul talks about the nation of Israel. He is caught up in grief because many of his people—the Jews—were not receiving the message of Christ. Even though they had been promised salvation, and many of them knew of this promise and of God's revelation throughout history, they didn't believe Jesus

was their Savior. The Jews in Rome would have understood Old Testament scriptures. They would have understood when Paul talked about the Law. They would have known the stories of Adam and Eve, the fall of man, how God revealed himself to Abraham, and promised he would be his God and the God of his descendants. They would have known about how God had mercy, how God punished sin, and ultimately how God promised a Savior would come to save the world of its sin.

He wrote to both Jews—those who knew this history of God’s promises—and to Gentiles, those who did not grow up in this religious background. The Christian Jews living in Rome would have been a minority among their people. They were living under oppression and persecution. Many of the Jewish leaders hated Christians and denied the Way of Jesus, as Paul used to do.

Paul sees where the unbelieving Jews were coming from because he used to be one of them. He used to kill Christians who followed Jesus, thinking he was doing “God’s work.” But, after he experienced a miracle—meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus—his eyes were opened, and he realized Jesus was the Lord. Jesus was the Savior, and he had to tell everyone about it.

So, Paul’s realization of who Jesus was impacted the way he felt about his people—the way he felt about his nation, Israel. He was sad for Israel because not only were they living under the bondage of an oppressive government, but they were living under spiritual bondage. As you may know during the time Christ came the Jews were expecting someone to come and set them free from their political bondage. But, Jesus came to set them free from their spiritual bondage which is greater than being set free of political bondage.

This morning, we are going to look at Paul’s example, in dealing with the problem of his own nation. In his remembering what Jesus did, his whole worldview was shifted. The way he saw his nation, himself, and God were radically changed. There are three areas I want to look at in terms of Paul’s Christ-centered worldview. Christ changed:

1. His relationship with his nation.
2. His relationship with himself.

3. His relationship with God's people.

Let's look in Romans, Chapter 9—

SCRIPTURE: Romans 9:1-2 ¹*I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—*²*I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.*

First, CHRIST CHANGED PAUL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS NATION.

Verse 1: [Paul says] *I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.*

Paul is extremely saddened by the state of his people, Israel. And, this has nothing to do with the politics or the economy. He is saddened by the spiritual state of his nation. He is concerned about their relationship with Christ.

SCRIPTURE: [He saw Israel as the recipient, the receiver of God's blessings—in verse 4:] Israel was called God's chosen and God's children. God revealed his glory to them when he led them from Egypt into the Promised Land, he sent a cloud by day and fire by night. He made covenant with them. He gave them a Law and a way to have a relationship with him and to be holy. He gave them mighty prophets and patriarchs who by faith, followed God and set an example for all of us. And, he gave them the best promise—the promise of a Savior.

APPLICATION: We could draw a parallel to our country, can't we? Do you get upset when people disregard our heritage? Do you get upset when people disregard with all the lives given for our country? Do you get upset when people disrespect the flag?

APPLICATION: We get upset because some Americans abuse or disregard our freedoms. Paul got upset because his people refused to receive God's promise of salvation in Jesus Christ. Do we get upset when we know God's promise is for all people, and those we love refuse to accept it? Paul sets an example for us—he is grieving over the spiritual state of his people. He is sad in his heart for them. Are we grieving over the spiritual state of our people—of our families, of our friends, of our country, of our world? *That's what we would should really grieve about.*

Not only did Christ changed Paul's relationship with his nation,

Second, CHRIST CHANGED PAUL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HIMSELF.

SCRIPTURE: He says in verses 3-4—³ *For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race,* ⁴ *the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to son ship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises.*

EXPLANATION: This is an astonishing attitude Paul has. He says he could wish to lose his connection with his Savior, Jesus. Lose his salvation and be cut off from Jesus Christ if it could save the Jews. He would trade his own life in Christ if the many others who are rejecting Christ could come to him.

Is Paul saying he would go to hell if they could go to heaven, if there were such an exchange? Very interesting—was he exaggerating?

Look closely at the wording...*For I could wish*...He does not say, "I wish." Saying he could wish his separation from Christ for the sake of others...shows he knows it is an impossibility. Paul loves his people so much he says he could wish for himself to be cut off from Christ if it meant it would bring them to Christ.

BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATION: Paul's sentiment echoes Moses's love for Israel. After the Lord had delivered the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt and parted the Red Sea for them to walk on dry ground, Moses went up the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments from the Lord. When he came down, he saw the people had become impatient. They were tired on waiting for God, so they decided to make their own god—a golden calf.

Moses came down and saw the great sin of the people. They had forgotten it was God who led them out of Egypt. Moses was so angry with his people, he smashed the commandments God had given him. But, because Moses loved them so much, he pleaded with the Lord to forgive them.

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 32:31-32 "*So Moses went back to the LORD and said, "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of*

gold. But now, please forgive their sin--but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."

Similar to Paul's wish to be removed from Christ for the sake of his people, Moses wished God would take his name off the book of life. He wished his life could be given in exchange for those of his people.

Again, though, we see impossibility.

The Lord's Reply—

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 32:33-34 *The LORD replied to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book. Now go, lead the people to the place I spoke of, and my angel will go before you. However, when the time comes for me to punish, I will punish them for their sin."*

EXPLANATION: Those who sinned against the Lord were separated from him. But, Moses—who was called according to God's purpose—could not be separated. God had a purpose for him...to lead the people to the place God was taking them. Paul knew it was up to the heart of the people to open to the conviction of God and the Holy Spirit to repent of sins.

APPLICATION: Don't for a moment think your salvation is merely for yourself. When you feel like giving up, remember you were saved for God's purpose.

FURTHER EXPLANATION: Paul also was called according to God's purpose. Right after his conversion experience, we read a word from God in Acts 9—God called Paul his "*chosen instrument to proclaim [his] name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.*" He also told him how much he would have to suffer for his name (Acts 9:15-16).

Paul wrote in chapter eight that "*all things for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose*". He did love God, and he was called according to his purpose. And, this was good—although it involved suffering, it was to be made more like Jesus Christ and to bring many more to Christ. And Paul knew nothing could separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:39).

But, Paul, like Moses, knew what the ultimate good was. In this moment of compassion for his people, he shows himself to be like Christ. He would rather give up his life than have his people die. He puts their good above his own.

EXPLANATION: Christ changed Paul's view of his salvation. It wasn't for himself. No, it was for the Lord's sake. We saw it from when Jesus first called Paul to himself. It was to bring many others to know Jesus—to proclaim his name to both the Jews and the Gentiles. Paul was the first missionary to the Gentiles. God had a specific plan for him.

APPLICATION: God has a specific plan for you. He has a specific reason for your salvation.

[Ephesians 2:10 ¹⁰*For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

2 Timothy 1:9 ⁹*He has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,]*

We are not saved to sit around and do nothing. No, we are not saved by the things we have done. But, we are saved for a reason. Our salvation should be selfless...willing to do whatever he wants us to do.

So, Christ changed Paul's relationship to his nation, with himself, and -

Third, CHRIST CHANGED PAUL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD'S PEOPLE.

Before Paul met Jesus and was given the task of taking the Gospel to all people—both Jews and Gentiles, Paul's view of God's people was limited. He saw God's promise as only applying to the Israel nation. Now, God revealed his plan to save all people through Jesus Christ. And, Paul was the chosen instrument to do so. Let's think about that Paul the ultimate racist known as Saul at that time became the apostle of inclusion.

He spread the Gospel to both Jews and Gentiles, but as we know, many of the Jews did not believe. Christ's call upon Paul's life, expanded Paul's view of who the people of God actually are. Continue in verse 6—

SCRIPTURE: Romans 9:6-9 ⁶ *It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.* ⁷ *Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."* ⁸ *In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.* ⁹ *For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son."*

EXPLANATION: When Paul says, *"It is not as though God's word had failed..."* he is assuming people think this is the case. It would make sense...If God had promised Israel they would receive God's promise, and they are rejecting God, it might appear as though God's word had failed.

But, Paul has to redefine who Israel is. Israel doesn't include all of those who were born from in Israel or even those who were born from Israelite parents.

Paul—redefined Israel too as the family of God—the chosen people of God to be God's holy people to bring glory to his name. Not everyone who was from an Israelite family—was a part of the family of God. Not every Israelite's child was assumed a child of the promise. No, God is greater than our physical world and our fleshly understanding.

The scripture says, children of the promise are God's children. It's not a physical thing—

APPLICATION: Think of our own country. Are we Americans because of anything we did? Is America the way it is today because of our own work?

No, it's all built on a foundation not built on our own. It is built on the countless lives of men and women who gave themselves in selfless service for their friends, and family, and those who would come after them.

APPLICATION: And, now in our faith: Are we saved because of anything we did? Are we saved because of anything we are doing? No, we are saved because of the sacrifice Jesus Christ paid for us on the cross. We are saved because he wants our whole lives to be lived out for Him—by his Name and for His Name.

There are no limits to who, God can save. At first, Paul had a very limited view of God's people. Now, he knew all who called on the Name of the Lord could be saved.

CONCLUSION: If you think you are in God's family because of anything you have done, you are missing the truth. If you think you are in God's family for your sake alone, you are missing the point. You are saved only by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. You are saved in order that you might live with the greatest purpose of all—the only purpose intended for us from the beginning of creation—to bring glory to the Father.

As we remember our past on this Memorial Day weekend, let us remember Christ's sacrifice.

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