

Romans 9:1-8

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[Introduction before Scripture reading]

If you have your bible with you, please open to Romans chapter 9.

Today we begin three unique chapters in this letter to the Romans – chapters 9-10-11.

One thing communicated to us in chapters 9-11 is that God is SOVEREIGN over the whole world and has a grand plan for all human history. These three chapters describe God's grand plan – especially concerning the Jews (the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob). These three chapters end with a grand statement which wraps up the whole (**chapter 11**):

“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

*“For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?”*

*“Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?”*

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

Those words are particularly important:

*“For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?”*

We will see in the coming weeks that God's ways don't often make sense to us. As finite creatures, we don't have the wisdom, or knowledge or capacities to understand God's ways. So we question God's plan and God's justice.

We see some of those questions here in chapter 9.

“Has God’s word FAILED?”

“Is God UNJUST?”

“Why does God FIND FAULT with us when we have only done what He planned?”

As human beings we are quick to put GOD on trial rather than ourselves.

Many years ago Christian writer **C. S. Lewis** wrote an essay titled:

“God in the Dock.”

To be “in the dock” – means to be tried in a criminal court.

So what C.S. Lewis meant by that title is that modern people prefer to put GOD ON TRIAL instead of seeing THEMSELVES as standing before God for judgment.

We that happening in these chapters when it comes to God’s dealings with the Jews and all of mankind – especially here in chapter 9.

God makes it abundantly clear to us that HE IS GOD – and WE ARE NOT!

TODAY mankind’s question for God is this:

“Has your word FAILED?”

Listen closely as I read Romans chapter 9 – verses 1-8.

Scripture Reading: Romans 9:1-8

As I mentioned these words put God “in the dock” with a question.

The question is this:

“Has the word of God FAILED?”

That question is not asked directly here. But it is clearly the question Paul is answering.

We see that Paul anticipates and answers that question here in **verse 6**.
“But it is not as though the word of God has failed.”

You see clearly Paul is answering a question.

The question is: *“Has the word of God FAILED?”*

WHY would someone ask that question?

Well, we see why someone would ask that question when we read verses 1-5 before it.

Paul describes the situation with the Israelites – who were the physical descendants of Abraham.

Notice what Paul says in **verses 1 through the beginning of verse 4**.

“I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ 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. They are Israelites...”

Notice Paul says he had great SORROW and UNCEASING ANGUISH.

WHY did he have this great SORROW and UNCEASING ANGUISH?

He says it was for the sake of His “...*kinsmen according to the flesh...*[the] *Israelites...*”

He had SORROW and ANGUISH for so many of them because they had REJECTED Jesus Christ as the CHRIST – their MESSIAH whom God had sent to SAVE.

They had been born descendants of Abraham – and had been given God’s WORD of PROMISE that HE would be their God – and THEY would be His people.

They were BORN into the FAMILY of GOD which enjoyed all the BLESSINGS and BENEFITS of God's promises.

And we see – in **verses 4-5** – that Paul lists those BLESSINGS and BENEFITS they received as descendants of Abraham. Notice what he says:

“They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. ⁵ To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.”

Wow!! The people of Israel were ADOPTED by God! They were CHILDREN of God!

They had the GLORY of God in their midst. The “*shekinah glory*” – the VISIBLE manifestation of God's presence on earth as God dwelled in their midst in the MOST HOLY place of the TABERNACLE – and the TEMPLE.

They were in COVENANT with God. God sealed His COVENANT PROMISES to them in the ceremonies and sacrifices at the Passover – and Day of Atonement.

They had the PATRIARCHS – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – who were God's CHOSEN in the world who walked by FAITH.

And from their very own bloodline came the CHRIST – the MESSIAH – who is the eternal KING who is blessed forever!

God gave them all these words of PROMISE as God's chosen people – who would be with Him FOREVER in His ETERNAL KINGDOM.

BUT NOW, think about this.

MANY of the Jews had REJECTED Jesus Christ – the Messiah. And they had FAILED to RECEIVE all the promises. They were CHILDREN OF

ABRAHAM. They were CHILDREN OF THE PROMISE. Yet they FAILED to reach that kingdom.

THAT is what raised this question.

“Has the word of God FAILED?”

HOW can they have ALL these things PROMISED – yet NEVER receive them? Has God’s word to them FAILED?

That may be a question that seems rather irrelevant to many of you here today.

It may not seem like a question you are even asking.

But when you “*scratch below the surface*” you see it is a question many of us ask. It is a very REAL and very PAINFUL question many of us ask as Christian parents.

It is a question we ask ourselves when we see some of our children – who were baptized into Christ – walk away from the Lord – or outright REJECT Jesus Christ.

And it isn’t only a question Christian parents ask. It is also a question you ask when you have brothers, or sisters, or parents – who were baptized into Christ – but have walked away from the Lord – and many have even DIED while walking away from the Lord.

From all you know – they will NEVER RECEIVE the promises given in their baptism.

This is a very REAL and STINGING question when it comes to those whom we LOVE very DEEPLY – especially our children, our brothers and sisters, or our parents.

“Has the word of God FAILED?”

So how does God answer this painful question?

We see the answer to this question in **verses 6-8**.

“But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” ⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.”

Notice the short answer is stated like this: “...not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel...”

(Remember “*Israel*” was the new name given to Abraham’s son Jacob. Abraham, Isaac and Israel were the patriarchs of the nation of Israel.

So what these words mean is that NOT all of the PHYSICAL descendants of Jacob truly BELONGED to Jacob – meaning they DID NOT live by FAITH as Jacob did.

You could say they were PHYSICAL descendants, but not SPIRITUAL descendants.

Notice Paul says it in another way in **verse 7**:

*“...**not all are children of Abraham** because they are his **offspring**...”*

In other words, NOT ALL are CHILDREN of Abraham who walk by FAITH (as Abraham did) – just because they are his physical offspring.

We read in the bible that it was a common opinion among the Jewish people (especially in Jesus’s day) that the promises of God made to Abraham were certainly true for all his descendants. In other words, by simply being a PHYSICAL DESCENDANT of Abraham – you had all the RIGHTS and PRIVILEGES of God’s COVENANT with Abraham.

We see that was surely true when we read through Matthew, Mark, Luke & John.

John the Baptist surely knew this was the opinion of many when he preached repentance to the people of Israel. One of the things John said to the people of Israel was this (**Matthew 3**):

“Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.”

And when Jesus told the Jewish leaders he could set them free we read this (**John 8**):

“They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, ⁴⁰ but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did.”

Jesus was essentially telling them:

“Yes, you are Abraham’s descendants – but you are NOT Abraham’s CHILDREN! If you were Abraham’s children you would BELIEVE ME – and walk by FAITH– as Abraham did!”

So we see the short answer to the question here is this:

In God’s grand plan **God NEVER planned for His PROMISES to be applied to EVERY SINGLE physical descendant of Abraham.**

In other words, God gave His PROMISE to Abraham and His OFFSPRING – but that NEVER meant that EVERY SINGLE PHYSICAL offspring of Abraham would be saved.

As God tells us in the New Testament – that PROMISE was NOT to EVERY SINGLE “OFFSPRING” of Abraham. That PROMISE was to ONE of Abraham’s OFFSPRING – namely Jesus Christ!

In one of Paul's other letters (to the **Galatians – chapter 3**) we are told:

“Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ.”

The PROMISE was made to Jesus Christ – and ALL who are UNITED to HIM by faith.

God DID NOT intend to save EVERY SINGLE offspring of Abraham.

Paul makes that perfectly clear again in **verses 7-8**:

“...not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.”⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.”

Notice NOT all physical descendants of Abraham were true spiritual descendants.

It was the children of PROMISE. Both Ishmael AND Isaac were physical descendants of Abraham. But it was NOT Ishmael – but Isaac – who was the child of the PROMISE.

So again. What God is telling us here is this:

In God's grand plan **God NEVER planned for His PROMISES to be applied to EVERY SINGLE physical descendant of Abraham.**

In other words, NOT every person physically born a Jew was a Jew.

And so the same is also true for every person born today.

As followers of Christ we must know that not every person born into a believing family is a believer.

That is a reality which God tells us here. And it is a reality which affects us deeply.

It affects us very DEEPLY in TWO ways that we consider from our text today.

FIRST, believers CARRY PAIN for others.

SECOND, Christ CARRIED PAIN for us.

MP1: Believers CARRY PAIN for others (1-3)

FIRST, notice as believers we CARRY PAIN for others.

As I mentioned earlier, there is a lot of PAIN behind this question.

The PAINFUL REALITY is that there are people closest to us who may remain under God's WRATH and CURSE – and never be rescued.

The Apostle Paul FELT that pain for others – and CARRIED it with him EVERY DAY!

Look again closely at **verses 1-3**.

“I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ 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.”

What we see here is a “glimpse” into the deep recesses of Paul's heart. We get a brief picture of the DEEP PAIN Paul carried with him EVERY DAY of his life as an Apostle.

And notice what he says:

“I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.”

Paul is telling us he has DEEP emotional PAIN and DISTRESS over his brothers and sisters – and other family members who have rejected Christ.

He feels deep SORROW and PAIN over it.

And notice it is UNCEASING. That means it DOESN'T STOP. It is ALWAYS there...ALWAYS hanging over him.

Wherever he goes...whatever he does...it is CONTINUALLY weighing on him.

When he lies in bed – it is always there.

When he goes to work as a tentmaker – it is always there.

When he has dinner with friends – it is always there.

It is an UNCEASING ANGUISH that is like a constant WEIGHT pressing him down in everything he does. Even in his “*lighter moments*” with friends – the WEIGHT of PAIN is there...pressing...and persistent...

I know many Christian fathers and mothers who CARRY this kind of PAIN in their lives.

A mother pours her blood, sweat and tears into her child – LOVING her child – NURTURING her child with the Word of God – and CRYING OUT to God in PRAYER for her child – as the child grows.

But the child shows little interest in Jesus Christ and walks away from the LORD.

I know some of you mothers and fathers in this room feel that kind of pain.

I think Christian mothers can relate to these words of Paul more than anyone else.

When Paul says he has “...great SORROW and UNCEASING ANGUISH in my heart.”

...it is the FEELING that the mother of an unbelieving child KNOWS very deeply.

App: These words may not take away the PAIN you feel for your LOST children or loved ones.

But God does tell you that you are NOT ALONE in your PAIN.

This is part of the PAIN we CARRY as Christ’s followers in a fallen world.

God has given us new life – and we see the reality of being CUT OFF from God and under His wrath and curse.

As believers, we see the HORROR of it – and FEEL the HORROR of it – more than our loved ones who are lost. By definition, a LOST person does NOT SEE God as the ultimate good – and does NOT FEEL any concern about the wrath and curse of God. Otherwise, he would turn to God in desperation – and embrace Jesus Christ freely offered in the gospel.

So WHO really FEELS the PAIN of a LOST child or loved one?

It is YOU – the BELIEVER!

As a follower of Christ you FEEL this PAIN with Paul – and you FEEL only a VERY SMALL part of the PAIN which Jesus Christ (the God-man) felt when He WEPT over Jerusalem. In **Luke's Gospel** we are given a very “moving” account of what Jesus did when He approached Jerusalem for the final time in His earthly ministry.

We are told in **Luke 19**:

*“When [Jesus] drew near and saw the city, **he WEPT over it,** ⁴² saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side ⁴⁴ and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”*

There are only a few times when we read of Jesus WEEPING in the Gospel accounts – and this is one of them. Jesus WEPT when He drew near to the city of Jerusalem. He WEPT because He LOVED the people of Israel in that city – and He KNEW the destruction that was ahead for them.

Jesus had relatives in that city. They were people of His earthly family...and homeland.

Jesus SURELY KNEW – like Paul – what it meant to have SORROW and UNCEASING ANGUISH in his heart for LOST loved ones!

This is part of the PAIN we CARRY as Christ's followers in a fallen world.
We follow Christ in SUFFERING deep SORROW for loved ones who are LOST.

So FIRST, as believers we CARRY PAIN for others.

MP2: Christ CARRIED PAIN for us (3, 5)

SECOND, Christ CARRIED PAIN for us.

We see this when we consider **verse 3** and **verse 5** a little more deeply.
Look again at **verse 3**.

"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."

These words tell us the DEPTH of PAIN Paul was feeling for LOST loved ones who were FELLOW JEWS. The PAIN he felt for fellow Jews who were LOST was to this extent.

If it were really possible – he would wish that HE HIMSELF were ACCURSED and CUT OFF from Christ on their behalf. In other words, HE would take THEIR CURSE from God – and THEY would be brought into God's FAVOR!

And we know what Paul is telling us here is NOT simply an exaggeration to make a point. Remember that Paul said this in **verse 1**:

"I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—"

Paul wants to make sure that we know he is telling us the absolute truth here. He is not lying, or exaggerating to make a point.

That is a SHOCKING thought, isn't it?

Do you LOVE the LOST people you know to THAT extent?

Do you LOVE a LOST person to the extent that YOU would be willing to be CUT OFF from God's LOVE and FAVOR so that THEY could have God's LOVE and FAVOR?

Yet, in the gospel, God tells us that is what His Son Jesus came into this world to do!

Jesus Christ was ACCURSED and CUT OFF for the sake of His brothers – (His co-heirs).

Christ HAD all LOVE and FAVOR with the Father in glory.

But Christ took on a human nature – and came into this world – to go to the CROSS. And on the CROSS He was ACCURSED by God. God made it clear in the Scriptures that all who were hung on a tree were under God's CURSE.

And that's what Christ DID on the CROSS – He had the LOVE and FAVOR of God took our CURSE for SIN on Himself. He literally SUFFERED HELL on our behalf.

That is what we mean when we say those words in the Apostles' Creed:
“He DESCENDED into HELL.”

It means that Jesus truly SUFFERED the eternal HELL we deserve on that CROSS.

HE was CURSED and CUT OFF for our sake.

HOW could He SUFFER the eternal HELL we deserve in that time?

It is because of the nature of WHO HE IS!

He is the GOD-MAN – FULLY GOD and FULLY MAN.

Because He was FULLY MAN – He could SUFFER and make intercession for us in our own NATURE. Human beings SINNED – so human beings must SUFFER the CURSE for SIN.

And because He was FULLY GOD – He had the POWER to keep our human nature from SINKING under the INFINITE WRATH of God and the power of death.

ONLY GOD could SAVE – and ONLY A MAN could SUFFER.

And notice Paul reminds us here that this is EXACTLY who JESUS CHRIST IS!

He is the GOD-MAN who could SUFFER the CURSE for mankind.

Did you notice how Paul said this in **verse 5**? Look again at verse 5.

“To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.”

Notice Paul reminds us that Jesus Christ is **FULLY HUMAN**.

He is from the JEWISH RACE according to the flesh.

In other words, according to His HUMAN NATURE – He is a descendant of Abraham. Jesus could trace his family tree back to Abraham. And we see that the Gospel writers Matthew and Luke did that very thing. They showed that Jesus Christ was a descendant of Abraham – according to human nature.

But notice also Paul reminds us that Jesus Christ is **FULLY GOD**.

We are told here that Jesus Christ is “...*God over all, blessed forever!*”

And is confirmed with the words “*Amen!*”

(Which means TRULY or CERTAINLY...so be it!)

This is one of those places you can go to in the Bible if anyone ever asks you:

“Where in the Bible does it say Jesus is GOD?”

This is one place you can go if you are talking to a **Muslim** or a **Jehovah’s Witness**.

*“...from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, **WHO IS God over all**, blessed forever. Amen.”*

WHY was Jesus Christ FULLY GOD and FULLY MAN?

He was FULLY GOD and FULLY MAN so that He could CARRY the PAIN of our Sin.

Jesus came into this world to CARRY the PAIN of SIN for His people.

He was the SIN-BEARER. In His FIRST COMING He came to SERVE His people – and CARRY their PAIN – so that THEY could receive the BLESSINGS of sons and daughters.

App: And so we follow Christ in CARRYING the PAIN of others.

We do this when we CARRY a genuine BURDEN for LOST loved ones around us.

We CARRY PAIN for them – by being genuinely BURDENED for them – and desperately PRAYING for them. We DON'T KNOW who God will save in this world.

We surely DON'T KNOW which of our LIVING LOVED ONES that God will save.

So what do we do?

We persevere in prayer for them. And that is sometimes one of the most difficult things to do, isn't it? It's hard to persevere in PRAYER for a person when you see NO CHANGE.

I don't know about you, but I eventually QUIT PRAYING for people after months and years when I see NO CHANGE.

But do you know what will KEEP you PRAYING for someone? LOVE.

I have seen mothers PRAY every day for YEARS and YEARS for their children because they GENUINELY LOVE them. Genuine LOVE will go a LONG WAY in giving you PERSEVERANCE in PRAYER for someone.

Illus: We are told that one of the most influential leaders in the history of Christ's church became a believer because he had a mother who LOVED HIM and persevered in PRAYER for him.

I know many of you have heard the story of **Augustine** who lived in the 4th-5th centuries.

Augustine was born in Algeria – North Africa. His mother, **Monica**, was a follower of Christ – and taught Augustine of Christ as a young boy.

And out of DEEP LOVE for her son – she PRAYED for him.

But as Augustine grew into his teen years he did not follow Christ – but became enamored with oratory and rhetoric. He wanted to make a name for himself as an orator. So he decided to move to Rome – which was the center for learning and success in the world at the time. (Much like New York City today.)

But his mother, Monica, also knew it was the center for all the sinful desires a young man could have. (Again, much like New York City today!) She desperately wanted him NOT to go. Out of DEEP LOVE she continued in DESPERATE PRAYER for him.

But it was in Rome that God had Augustine sit under the preaching of Ambrose.

Augustine went to hear the preaching of Ambrose because of his eloquent speaking.

But in that time God gave Augustine ears to HEAR what Ambrose was preaching!

Augustine went through deep repentance and turned to follow Christ.

Years later Augustine wrote a book titled: **Confessions**.

In that book he describes how God used his mother's prayers to save him.

He said this – stated as a prayer to God (**Confessions Book 3, Chapter 11**):

“But you sent down your help from above and rescued my soul from the depths of this darkness because of my mother, your faithful servant, wept to you

for me, shedding more tears for my spiritual death than other mothers shed for the bodily death of a son. For in her faith and in the Spirit which she had from you she looked on me as dead. You heard her and did not despise the tears which streamed down and watered the earth in every place where she bowed her head in prayer.”

This was persevering prayer powered by the Spirit of God through genuine LOVE.

It was this mother’s DEEP LOVE for her child that drove her to PRAY for him.

As a matter of fact, when you want to GIVE UP PRAYING for someone this is the path you should pursue to persevere. Step back and consider WHY you LOVE that person. The best way to STIR PERSEVERING PRAYER – is by DEEP LOVE for a person.

If you don’t really LOVE a person – you will find it very difficult to persevere.

When you REALLY LOVE a person – you will persevere in prayer NATURALLY.

Conclusion: So all of this brings us back to the question:

“Has the word of God FAILED?”

Have God’s covenant promises to His people Israel FAILED – when we see people of Israel reject Christ?

Have God’s covenant promises to His people in baptism FAILED – when we see our children and loved ones reject Christ?

The short answer is: “No.”

In God’s grand plan for Israel NOT every person physically born a Jew was a Jew.

And so the same is also true today.

As followers of Christ we must know that not every person born into a believing family is a believer.

And that truth AFFECTS us very DEEPLY.

That teaches us – as believers – we will CARRY some DEEP PAIN for others in this life.

But it also teaches us – as believers – the profound truth that Christ CARRIED PAIN.

And it's BECAUSE Christ CARRIED our PAIN – that we follow Him in CARRYING the PAIN of others.

Let's pray...