



# HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Love's Gospel Burden

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Romans 9:1-5

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*9 I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—<sup>2</sup> that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. <sup>5</sup> To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.*

*<sup>6</sup> But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel,*

*(Pastor prays)*

More than likely it's not that you don't believe the Gospel. That's not why you don't witness. Or it's not that you don't love people; surely as a Christian you do love people. You wouldn't live the way you live and have the friends you have if you didn't love people. It's not that you don't believe in hell. The Bible teaches it and you probably believe as I do that people without a saving faith in Jesus are right now sliding inescapably into the anguish of Hell. It's not that you don't believe that. I suspect that the urgency of everyday life has smothered your burden for people and so we substitute more immediate burdens. Some are political burdens, social burdens, sexual burdens, family burdens, career burdens, and school burdens. And that little incessant army of micro-burdens makes us so busy and takes up such energy that we just forget. All the media and social media noise has drowned out the death drum beating in eternity as people you love are coasting ever so slightly into the utter anguish of an eternal Hell. That's a burden worth putting your shoulder into. We've come right off the mountaintop in Romans Chapter 8 and then we drop into the darkness of Romans Chapter 9. And in this chapter there really are only two things at issue.

The first thing at stake is the unassailable justice and prerogative of our holy and good God. The second thing is the lostness of God's chosen people Israel if they persist without Christ. And it's this second one—the lost condition of Paul's people if they continue living without faith in Jesus – this is the Christian burden of love that must rise up and dominate all other burdens. We must join ranks with the Apostle Paul. The burden in his mind is eternal destiny. You hear it in his tone, you feel it in his words. So, brothers and sisters, let us rejoice in our secure salvation in Romans 8 and let us put our shoulders to the burden in Chapter 9 and open our mouths with the good news that, at the cross, Jesus saves sinners.

### **The Blessing of Security Must Lead to the Burden of Sharing**

I want to join you in this.

#### **We need an authentic burden for people**

Go with me to verse 1 and you will hear Paul immediately on the defensive. He begins verse 1 with a threefold affirmation intended to put his sincerity beyond question; trying to persuade his readers to believe him. And he's defending it so hard because he probably had a reputation as being anti-Jewish since he was the Apostle to the gentiles and knows that he needed to gain their trust in order for them to believe the truth. Look with me at verse 1 as Paul authenticates his burden. *I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—* Do you see the triple witness? I am speaking the truth in Christ. The words of my mouth are backed up by Christ in me. I'm not a Christian just by the doctrine I confess, but it shows in the life I live.

And if you want people to ever believe the Jesus you preach, it had better be seen in the life you live, the words you say and the things you post on social media. And then Paul uses a word he uses about 20 other times. It's "conscience," an inborn faculty that monitors a person's conformity to right and wrong. And in this verse, Paul says "my Holy Spirit-dominated conscience is clear." And then to round it out in the middle of the verse, he says it negatively: "I am not lying." I'm showing you this because it feels like Paul is going to great lengths just to prove he really does love his un-Christian hearers and he really does authentically want them to know the soul-freeing joy of being in Christ, to believe in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and thereby be saved from their sins.

What happened to us? Why don't we anguish and hurt for lost people anymore? Do you anguish for those you are enemies with, or do you just hate them? How much patience are you

willing to have and how much scrutiny are you willing to undergo to establish trust enough to share the saving news of the Gospel? Think of the grace God showed you before you came to the cross. Now let's extend some of that as we develop an authentic burden for people.

### **We need an intense burden for people**

Let me show you what I mean. You will feel it in verse 2. Let's read it and talk about it a bit.

*2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.* Look at the double grief in his heart. Great sorrow and unceasing anguish. This is Paul's deep concern over the Jewish people, Israel, and their lack of response to the Gospel he is preaching! Donald Grey Barnhouse said this is one of the most poignant cries that ever rose from a human heart. Paul's burden has three layers. His burden is *profound*. His burden is *constant*. And his burden is *heartfelt*.

Profound. Great sorrow. Great equals *mega*. *Mega* sorrow. *Deep* pain. *Real* hurt. This is a great yearning desire for his fellow man and that desire is to see them come to Christ and to hurt for them until they do come to Christ. Listen, if this city and the 2,000,000 people living around it are ever going to have an adequate witness for Christ, then some of us in this room are going to have to get in anguish.

Are you? Do you? This has bothered me all week just about myself. Do you anguish over others? Do you feel sorrow for those who do not know Jesus and are therefore perishing without Him? Do you have great sorrow for those closest to you? In this passage, Paul is talking about his own people, his kinsman according to the flesh. He has a deep bone bruise kind of sorrow when he thinks about the people he loves and the fact that they have not yet come to Christ. His burden is profound, but it is also constant.

Constant. Notice the text in verse 2. "I have great sorrow." Unceasing. Anguish. Those of us in this room who have loved ones who are lost know a little bit about this unceasing anguish. It's not crippling. It doesn't incapacitate us. It's just there, a dull painful sorrow that is always there and never far below the surface as you hurt for someone you love, wanting him to know the joy and forgiveness and freedom and love of God found at the cross. Ask God to give you a motivating burden, one that Paul describes in his heart, one you physically feel and one that will press you to gain trust and show love and share Christ. We need an authentic burden for people. We need an intense burden for people.

### **We need a compelling burden for people**

We need a compelling burden, one that is radical and desperate and makes us act. Listen to Paul speak with desperation in verse 3. <sup>3</sup>*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.* "Could wish." This is written in the middle voice because it is impossible.

Remember in Chapter 8 where we heard that nothing can separate us from God. Accursed. Paul is saying, "If I could, I would go to Hell for my people. That's how bad I want them to know Christ." Paul's consuming desire was to bring his brothers into fellowship with Christ. He even lists their advantages; there are eight of them in verses 4-5. <sup>4</sup>*They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.* <sup>5</sup>*To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.*

It's so frustrating for Paul. Israel had all the advantages. Israel was God's elect people and were the recipients of God's special affections in the past and were promised His blessings in the future. And yet, they hadn't believed in Jesus and, because of that, they are not in Christ and not yet saved.

This is reminding us that advantages and privileges are not the same as being born again to salvation. Just because you live in the most churchified city in North Carolina with Bibles all around you at home and maybe you went to a Christian school and were raised in a Christian home: upbringing doesn't make you a believer. It just gives you an advantage. Only those who believe in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus will be saved. Do you pray for people who have advantages? Privilege? Privilege is a distraction from need and need drives us to the cross. Let me give you one last burden we need.

### **We need a Christ-centered burden**

Notice the flourish at the end of 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.*

Paul points us to Christ. He's sovereign over all, conquering sin, saving souls and reaching people. He's divine. He's the God-man and the only one who can and will save. He's eternal and should be praised. Blessed forever. Amen. He is our security.

The blessing of security must lead to the burden of sharing. We need an *authentic* burden for people. We need an *intense* burden for people. We need a *compelling* burden for people. We need a *Christ-centered* burden for people.

Maybe today you should ask God to give you a burden.

*(Pastor prays)*