

9<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

8/2/20

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### **Are You Willing To Be Accursed?**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The text is Romans 9, 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. (Rom 9:3 ESV)

The question for this sermon is who of you wish with the apostle Paul that you were accursed and cut off from Christ so someone else could be saved? Now although such a wish seems ridiculous, some of you get close to such an attitude towards a loved one. Most pastors can recount more than once when a parent could not stop the death of a beloved child from disease and would wish that he or she could be the one to die.

And how many times does a husband or wife ask God to keep the ill spouse from dying willing even to give up one's own life for the life of their life? A true story involved a little boy who needed a blood transfusion from his sister. As the two of them lay side by side in the room where the transfusion would take place, the little boy began to cry. When asked why he was weeping he thought that the blood he was getting from his sister would kill her and he was getting ready to refuse the transfusion.

However, the apostle Paul is not asking to be accursed for a spouse, a parent, a brother or sister. He is referring instead to being cut off from Christ for the sake of his relatives according to the flesh. What does that mean, according to the flesh? He explains that not all of Israel is of Israel. He is referring to the fact that not all who descended from Abraham are now counted as God's people but rather those who believe the promise given to Abraham that from the seed of Isaac would come the Messiah, the Savior. So Paul distinguishes the two kinds of children Abraham begot in verse 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. (Rom 9:8 ESV)

On KFUE's Law and Gospel Marilyn phoned the program because she was confused by whether the land of Israel today is what God refers to as His promised land and people. I explained that is incorrect and used this verse from Romans 9 to explain that the new Israel includes not just Jews but any Jew or Gentile who believes in Jesus Christ as Savior. These are the children of the promise. But did you notice that Paul is willing to die even for the children of the flesh of Abraham. The children of the flesh are unbelievers.

Now Paul is in good company when he wishes to be accused for unbelievers. Listen to the words of Moses after the people in the wilderness worshiped a golden calf. It is chapter 32 of Exodus, verses 30 to 32:

<sup>30</sup> The next day Moses said to the people, "You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin."

<sup>31</sup> So Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Alas, this people has sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold.

<sup>32</sup> But now, if you will forgive their sin--but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written."

Clearly God did not curse Moses by blotting him out of the book of life. For even if Moses or Paul could be accused, either one of them would have to be accused for his own sins and not the sins of another. I remember when one of our children needed emergency surgery soon after birth, Louise or I would have gladly experienced in his place what was about to happen. But we could not for obvious reasons.

So while we appreciate the love both Moses and Paul had for even unbelievers, and while at times that kind of love toward others may be present, because of their sin and our sin it is impossible for the curse of the Law to be removed by us. So how does the curse of the Law get removed? I'll give you a hint. It's found in Deuteronomy 21 (:22-23):

<sup>22</sup> "And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree,

<sup>23</sup> his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God.

Is it becoming clearer to you Who is responsible for taking upon Himself the curse you should receive? Another verse that in the English uses the term hanged is found in Luke 23:39: One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

Jesus Christ was the third man being hanged that day called Good Friday. And what was the purpose of his hanging from the cross. It was to take care for us the curse of the Law that was upon each of us. And what is that curse of the Law? The earliest verse mentioning it is in Genesis 3:3:

God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'

Then we have Deuteronomy 27:26

"Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

And finally we have Galatians 3: (13-14):

<sup>13</sup> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"--

<sup>14</sup> so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. (Gal 3:13-14 ESV)

Yes, while Moses and Paul did wish to be accursed for unbelievers, the only One Who was cursed by the Father in being forsaken was none other than Jesus Christ. This means that no matter what is happening in your life today, there will never be an occasion for you as a believer that God will curse you eternally. For you have a Savior and His name is Jesus. Amen.

And may the peace of God that passes all understanding, sustain and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

**Prayer of the Church      Ninth Sunday after Pentecost      2 August 2020**

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.                      *Brief silence*

Almighty God, heavenly Father, You are gracious beyond measure. In the wilderness, Your Son healed the sick, miraculously fed over 5,000 and satisfied them. We give You thanks for all that You provide to support our bodies and lives. Lead us always to look to You as a loving Father who will never forsake us eternally because Jesus was willing to be forsaken by You to save us from eternal destruction. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious Lord, You have made us children of the promise on account of Your Son. Let Your promises continue to go to the ends of the earth. Incline the ears of all to listen, that their souls may live. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, we pray for this land, that we may have devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, faithful neighbors and the like. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of comfort, as Your Son healed the sick, so also heal those who are ill in our midst [*especially all who have asked for our prayers: \_\_\_\_\_*]. If it be Your will, restore them to health, or give them strength to accept their affliction, as well as a hope for the day when the corruptible will put on incorruption. And until that day continue to protect us both at home and abroad. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, as Your Son fed the crowd with bread and meat, so also today He feeds us His body and blood. Let us receive these worthily, trusting in Your promise of forgiveness, that we may be strengthened in faith toward You and in love toward others. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**