

Study Guide



Community Groups

Life Happens Here!

Romans 9:1-5

“Anguish Over Unbelief”

January 31, 2016

Welcome (40 Minutes)

As you fellowship with one another, please be intentional about sharing prayer requests and talking about what the Lord is doing in your lives.

Worship (5 Minutes)

As the group transitions from of a time of fellowship to a time of intentional study of the word, it is important to facilitate that transition with a time of worship. This week, we suggest that you worship to **God With Us** by *Jesus Culture*.

Word (45 Minutes)

Paul concludes Romans 8 with an awe-inspiring surge of confidence as he celebrates the hopeful truth that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. Instead of riding this triumphant wave into the next chapter, Paul takes a break to address an issue that can wait no longer. Specifically, has the word of God failed? In Romans 9-11, Paul will write primarily to address this question. Romans 9 begins with Paul lamenting over the unbelief of his “kinsmen.” If God’s chosen people (i.e., the Israelites) could largely reject Jesus, then has God not kept his promise? Although this quandary will not be answered in the first 5 verses of Romans 9, we will begin to see Paul’s “great sorrow and unceasing anguish” for his Jewish brothers. We will also see how Paul’s grief is deepened because the Jews’ unbelief occurs in the face of remarkable blessing (vs. 4-5).

Walk

Prayer & Missions

June 18-25 - Guatemala Mission Trip

Calendar

Welcome (40 Minutes)

As you fellowship with one another, please be intentional about sharing prayer requests and talking about what the Lord is doing in your lives.

Worship (5 Minutes)

As the group transitions from of a time of fellowship to a time of intentional study of the word, it is important to facilitate that transition with a time of worship. This week, we suggest that you worship to **God With Us** by *Jesus Culture* (here is a link to a lyric video for the song if you would like to use it <https://youtu.be/FEyRoj2sFc4>):

*You are matchless in grace and mercy
There is nowhere we can hide from Your love
You are steadfast, never failing, You are faithful
All creation is in awe of who You are*

*You're the healer of the sick and the broken
You are comfort for every heart in loss
Our King and our Savior forever
For eternity we will sing of all You've done
For eternity we will sing of all You've done
We sing*

*God with us, God for us
Nothing can come against,
no one can stand between us
God with us, God for us
Nothing can come against,
no one can stand between us*

*Your heart, it moves with compassion
There is life, there is healing in Your love
You're the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit
For eternity we will sing of all You've done
We sing*

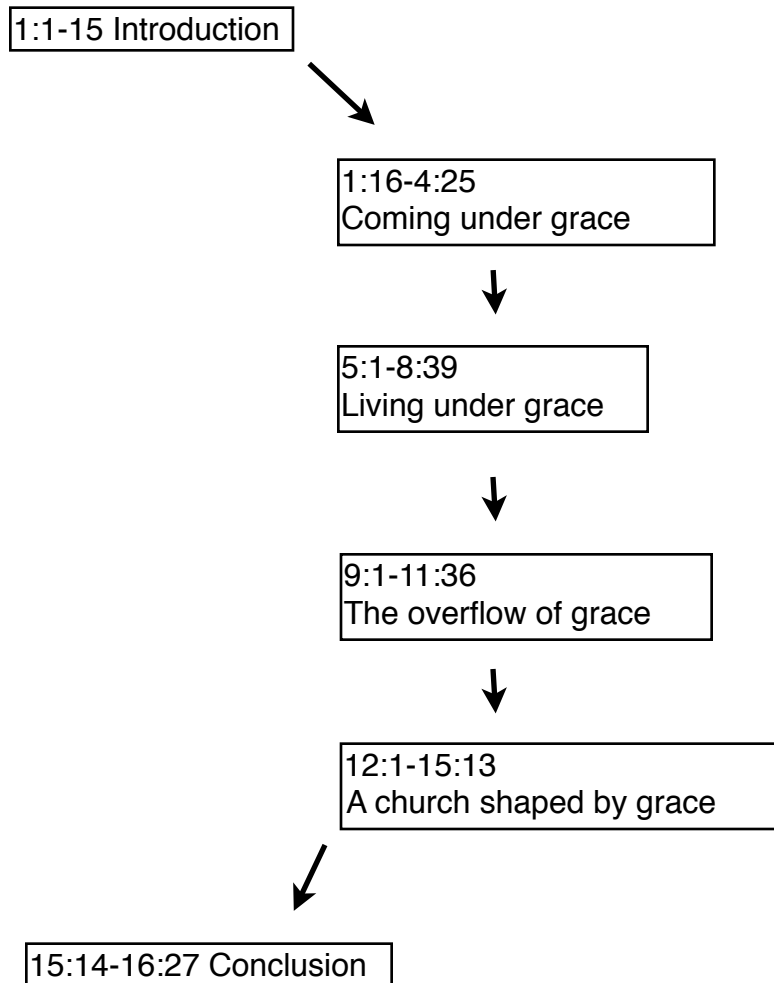
*Where there was death, You brought life, Lord
Where there was fear, You brought courage
When I was afraid, You were with me
And You lifted me up, and You lifted me up*

Word (45 Minutes)

Commentary

Broad Structure and Flow of the Book of Romans

Christopher Ash provides the following picture in his commentary of the structure and flow of the book of Romans. I thought it was very helpful and wanted to share it with you so you will have a basic roadmap of the flow of Romans our journey through this great book.



Approaching Romans 9 with Biblical Balance

One of the most highly disputed chapters in the Bible, the perplexity of Romans 9 can leave the reader in two potentially dangerous positions. First, it can frustrate the reader to the point of apathy. It is possible for us to encounter the unfamiliar language and interpretive difficulties layered throughout Romans 9, and simply dismiss it. Yet, reading this text with glazed eyes and an apathetic

heart would be a tragic, premature settling. I write this because Romans 9 contains glorious truths regarding God's sovereign grace and unwavering faithfulness. If we bypass this chapter, we forfeit a great opportunity for the Holy Spirit to unlock in us newfound affections for God. Secondly, and equally as dangerous, readers of Romans 9 can find themselves on the other end of the spectrum: partiality. There are many who base a disproportionate amount of their theology on this one chapter. 2 Timothy 3:16 repudiates this approach in one word: ALL – "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness..." If ALL scripture is God-breathed and profitable/useful for us, then we should not consider any one passage as more inspired or valuable than another. Rather, we must consult the whole of Scripture as we form our beliefs about God. The key in interpreting and applying Romans 9 is biblical balance and humility. May we pray to that end before, during, and after our encounter with this weighty but glorious text.

In his commentary, Timothy Keller introduces his chapter on Romans 9 with the following paragraph:

Romans 8 ends in a tremendous crescendo of confidence, as Paul explains that God guarantees our final perseverance because our salvation is not based on our will and strength. Rather, God has called us, opened our minds to the truth and now carries us on to final glory. "Those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified" (Romans 8:30). But now Paul can imagine someone coming and saying: Hold on, Paul! You say that when God calls someone, he always brings them all the way home. But what about the Jews? God called them and came to them but most Jews have rejected Christ at the present time. So maybe God's calling and purpose can be rejected! **If God promised that Israel would be his people, yet the majority did not believe in Christ, does that mean God's promise, power, or mercy is failing?**

Paul uses the next 3 chapters (Romans 9-11) to deal with this particular issue. Namely, has the word of God failed? If the Jews are God's chosen people and have been offered all of the privileges mentioned in Romans 9:4-5, why do they largely reject Jesus? As you may have guessed, God's word has not failed, nor will it ever. In the coming weeks, Paul has a vital mission as he sets out in these chapters to demonstrate that despite Jewish unbelief, God's word is true and trustworthy, for He is gloriously working all things together for the good of those that love Him and are called according to His purpose. John Piper foreshadows, "...the issue of divine election, and human will, and God's justice, and human blame, and God's sovereignty are all here in this chapter. But they are not here for their own sake. They are here to explain this burning question: How can God's elect people, Israel, be accursed and cut off from Christ if the word of God is reliable?" Although this "burning question" will not be resolved in Romans 9:1-5, it is wise to read Romans 9-11 with this purpose in mind, in order to grasp fully the heart behind Paul's defense.

For the Sake of My Brothers (Romans 9:1-3)

In **verse 1**, Paul begins by taking every measure to assure his readers that what he is about to say in the following verses is absolutely true and authentic. In the last half of verse 1, he makes a statement that can be difficult to interpret—"my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit."

Douglas Moo, in his commentary, enriches our understanding of this phrase: “‘Conscience’ in Paul is an inborn faculty that monitors a person’s conformity to a moral standard. The word thus has much the same meaning as it has in modern usage, when we speak, for instance, of having a ‘good conscience’ or ‘bad conscience’. Paul assures the Romans that he has a good, or ‘clear’, conscience about the truthfulness of what he is about to tell them. But one’s conscience is only as good as the moral standards that it monitors. Hence Paul reminds the Romans that, as a believer with a “renewed mind” (Romans 12:1-2), his conscience testifies ‘by means of’ the Holy Spirit.” Thus, we can be inclined to trust the clear “conscience” of Paul in these verses, as his conscience is moved and measured by the Holy Spirit.

But why did Paul find it so necessary to defend his authenticity at this point in Romans? John Piper answers this question: “Because some doubted his love and the genuineness of his sorrow. Why? Because Paul has said things that could be taken as anti-Jewish. Back in [Romans 2:24](#) he quoted the prophets, ‘The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.’ In [Romans 3:9](#) he said, ‘Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin.’ In the next verse (vs. 3) he is about to say that Israel is accursed and cut off from Christ. And then, most amazingly, he is about to say in verse 6: Not all Israel is Israel.” These seemingly Anti-Jewish statements have likely led Paul’s Jewish readers to doubt the sincerity of his feelings for them. For this reason, Paul begins the chapter by writing with great conviction in order to convey to his kinsman (i.e. the Jews) and others that he is telling the truth.

After establishing integrity, he dives deeply into the core of his concerns. In **verses 2-3**, Paul bewails over his fellow Jews’ staunch rejection of the gospel. At the time of Paul’s letter to the Romans, the Jewish people were pursuing salvation “as though it were by works.” They had stumbled over the stumbling stone (namely, Jesus) and had missed the gospel completely. (Romans 9:30-33) For this reason, Paul expresses a willingness to be “accursed” if only it would result in the salvation of his kinsman. The term “accursed” is from the Greek word anathema, which is translated to mean ‘eternal damnation.’ Paul’s great sorrow and unceasing anguish in this passage should leave us deeply convicted and inspired. If we start to become desensitized to the urgency of the gospel and the plight of the unregenerate, then meditating on the first 3 verses of this chapter can rapidly restore our evangelistic burden. Do we have such a love for our kinsmen (i.e. family, friends, coworkers) to know Christ? Does it cause us great sorrow and unceasing anguish? This text should lead us to grieve over those who don’t know Christ.

They Are Israelites (Romans 9:4-5)

Continually throughout Romans 9-11, the distinction must be made between ethnic Israel and true Israel (Romans 9:6—“For not all who descended from Israel belong to Israel”). Ethnic Israel refers to the direct, blood-related descendants of Abraham, while true Israel refers to the spiritual descendants of Abraham (i.e. God’s elect, or those who have experienced spiritual regeneration by placing their faith wholly in the person and work of Jesus Christ). In verse 4, when Paul makes the statement, “They are Israelites,” he is likely referring to ethnic Israel. The language of verses 2-3 supports this—perhaps most definitively in verse 3, when he calls them, “kinsman according to the flesh.” This phrase, “according to the flesh,” emphasizes Paul’s physical relationship to the Israelites. Paul uses the same phrase in Romans 1:3 to describe Jesus’ physical descent from, and

relationship to, David (“...concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh...”). Even though many of them had rejected Christ, Paul still considered those who were ethnically Jewish “his ‘kindred’ in the sphere of human relationships.” (Moo) Simply put, they were his flesh and blood.

He then proceeds to enumerate several privileges that were offered to the Israelites, and one that comes from their race. Further, it is these privileges that make their unbelief especially distressing to Paul. How could they reject Christ in the face of such blessing? Although there is not sufficient space within this commentary to discuss all of the privileges in the detail they deserve, below I have listed the privileges and quotes/references from the Old Testament that illustrate when and how these blessings were bestowed to the Israelites:

1) “To them belong the **adoption**”: We last saw the term “adoption” in Romans 8, where Paul spoke of adoption as sons of God, a status that is rendered to the regenerate believer who has genuine faith in Jesus. However, Israel’s adoption in Romans 9:4 is not compatible with this meaning, since most Jews had not placed their faith in Christ and thus could not enjoy the adoption that comes through the justifying work of the Cross. Moo specifies its use in this text: “The term is Paul’s way of summing up the OT teaching about Israel as ‘God’s son’ (see Exodus 4:22-23). The privilege is one that adheres to the nation as a whole, branding the people as set aside by God from other peoples for blessing and service. God’s ‘adoption’ of Christians gives to every believer in Christ all the rights and privileges that are included within new covenant blessings. God’s adoption of Israel, on the other hand, conveys to that nation all the rights and privileges included within the Old Covenant.”

2) “To them belong the **glory**”: This conceivably refers to shekinah glory, or the manifestation of God’s presence given to the Israelites in the Old Testament. We see an example of this in Exodus 40:34-35: “Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.”

3) “To them belong the **covenants**”: According to Christopher Ash, “...‘the covenants’ mean all the different times and ways in which God said to them (Israel), ‘You will be my people, and I will be your God’ (the strapline of the Covenant), to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the people led by Moses, and later by David, and so on.”

4) “To them belong the **giving of the Law**”: In Exodus 20, God gave the 10 commandments specifically to the Israelites through Moses. Israel’s exclusivity in this regard is further illustrated in Deuteronomy 4:8: “And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?” Earlier in Romans, Paul mentions, “...the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God (3:2).”

5) “To them belong the **worship**”: In the NIV, it is translated “temple worship”, and in the NASB, “temple service.” Thus, this speaks to the temple worship that enabled the Old Testament Israelites to be in the presence of God (see Hebrews 9:1-5).

6) “To them belong the **promises**”: Keller clarifies this point, “The ‘promises’ refer to the numerous Old Testament prophecies and promises about the coming of a Messiah (See Genesis 3:14-19, Genesis 49:10, Psalm 2:2-7, Psalm 16:9-10, Psalm 22, Isaiah 7:14/9:6-7/52:13-15, Micah 5:2).”

7) “To them belong the **patriarchs**”: The “fathers”, or the “patriarchs”, included the men whom God used in Israel’s history to lead them and speak to them on His behalf; for example—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, as well as Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, etc.

8) The final, and greatest, privilege is one of a different nature: “from their race, according to the flesh, is the **Christ**, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.” Douglas Moo explains, “Rather than ‘belonging’ to the Israelites, the Messiah ‘is from’ them. The shift is significant, suggesting, as do vv. 2-3, that the Israelites, for all the privileges they enjoy, have not, as a group, come into genuine relationship with God’s Messiah and the salvation he has brought.” Simply put, Paul could not write, “To them belong the Messiah”, because it was not true. Many Jews had rejected Christ and His gospel. The only association that Christ shared with unbelieving Jews was that he was “from their race.”

The New Covenant beauty in this is that all of the privileges offered to ethnic Israel in the Old Testament are now fulfilled in Christ for the true Israel, who are God’s elect in Christ. For those who are in Christ, the Spirit testifies of our eternal **adoption** as the sons and daughters of God (Romans 8). We can embrace suffering, as it is “not worth comparing to the **glory** that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18). Moreover, the New **Covenant** is the fulfillment of the Old Covenants, just as Jesus has not come to abolish the **law**, but to fulfill it. In the same way that the priests were over the **temple worship** and offered sacrifices on behalf of the Israelites, so also Jesus now reigns as our great High Priest and has offered Himself as the atoning blood sacrifice through which we have unlimited access to God Almighty. All of the **promises** of the Old Testament made to the patriarchs point to, and are accomplished by, the Messiah.

In conclusion, many questions remain, but for now the applications of Romans 9:1-5 are many. Most notably, are we burdened for the lost? Does it pain us deeply that many of our kinsmen (friends/family/coworkers) are anathema (accursed) and cut off from God? May we pray ceaselessly that the Holy Spirit would increase our love for the lost and help us to feel the weight and urgency of the gospel. Secondly, are you or your kinsmen what Christopher Ash labels “a religious unbeliever”? Many of us have enjoyed privilege upon privilege. We have gone to church our entire lives and heard scripture time and time again, yet these “privileges” haven’t softened our hearts towards God. So, let us search our hearts and make certain that we are not simply going through the motions or hoping in our religious tradition. Instead, may we cling to Christ alone, the hope of glory.

A Brief Note on Sources

Three sources are typically used in the preparation of this guide: (1) Christopher Ash, *Teaching Romans* (London: Proclamation Trust Media, 2014), (2) Timothy Keller, *Romans for You* (The Good Book Company, 2014), and (3) Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans - New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

This week the commentary was written by Clint McFerren and edited and formatted by David Hamm. Thanks so much for your hard work, Clint! If you have any questions about the sources used or about the method of citation, please feel free to give me (David Hamm) a call (318.423.7243) or send me an e-mail (hamm@norrisferrychurch.org). I am happy to help clarify any questions that you might have.

Sermon Questions

What Does it Say?

1. How does Paul describe the condition of his heart in Romans 9:2?
2. What is Paul's wish in Romans 9:3?
3. What is the current state of Paul's "kinsmen according to the flesh" according to Romans 9:3?
4. What advantages were given to Paul's "kinsmen according to the flesh" according to Romans 9:4-5?

What Does it Mean?

1. How is the term "adoption" in Romans 9:4 used differently than it was in Romans 8 (see verses 15, 23)?
2. What is the significance of Paul describing Jesus as coming from Paul's "kinsmen according to the flesh" rather than belonging to Paul's "kinsmen according to the flesh"?
3. How do the advantages listed in Romans 9:4-5 ultimately point to the person and work of Jesus Christ?
4. What (or who) is the ultimate cause of Paul's heart for his "kinsmen according to the flesh"?

How Does it Apply?

1. Do you have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in your heart for the lost people around you?
2. How can your heart for the lost become more like Paul's heart for his "kinsmen according to the flesh"?
3. Who are five people who are in your sphere of influence (i.e., family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, etc.) who don't know Christ?
4. How can you practically and intentionally share the Gospel with those five people?

Walk (30 Minutes)

After enjoying times of fellowship, worship, and time in God's word together, it is now time to pray together as a group and encourage one another in the faith. In addition to praying for, and encouraging one another, this portion of the group time should also be used for planning how your group can participate in God's work outside the walls of our church – "**neighbors and nations.**"

Here is a list of local ministries and the folks at Norris Ferry who are actively involved in those local ministries that can serve as a contact person for your community groups as you think and pray about becoming involved:

Ministries

Adoption/Foster Care
Allendale friendship house
Central America mission trip
Community Renewal
Crisis pregnancy center
FCA
First priority
Ghana medical mission trip
GriefShare
Heart of Hope
Hub/Purchased
Last Call Ministries
Luke's Lighthouse
NOLA church plant
Reach Global camps
Rescue mission
Samaritan counseling
South Sudan Mission trip
World Race mission trip
Young Life
Zion Ridge

Contact

Various members
Bob and Dianne Nida
Jared Clary
Paige Hoffpauir
Melody Roussel
Stephanie Springer
Jared Clary
Nicolette Rogers
Jan Crain
Alicia Lambert
Various members
Joe and Liz Spell
Ben and Lori Garmon
Jared Clary
Matt and Angie Johnson
Jerry Planchock
Wavely Cunningham
Jared Clary
Jami Williams
Luke and Kristi Johnson
Robert Smitherman

Model Answers to Sermon Questions

What Does it Say?

1. Paul describes his heart as having "great sorrow" and "unceasing anguish." However, Paul's sorrow and anguish are not without hope. A believer in Christ always has hope and joy available to them in the midst of sorrow and anguish. Paul clearly sets forth this seeming paradox in 2 Corinthians 6:9-10: "[W]e live . . . as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing . . ." The Bible is also clear that one day there will be an end to all sorrow and anguish for the Christian: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4)

2. Paul wishes that he could be accursed and cut off from Christ instead of his “kinsmen according to the flesh.”

3. Paul’s “kinsmen according to the flesh” are accursed and cut off from Christ.

4. Paul’s “kinsmen according to the flesh” were given several advantages: (1) adoption, (2) glory, (3) covenants, (4) law, (5) worship, (6) promises, (7) patriarchs, and (8) the honor of providing the human lineage of Christ.

What Does it Mean?

1. Excerpt from commentary: “We last saw the term “adoption” in Romans 8, where Paul spoke of adoption as sons of God, a status that is rendered to the regenerate believer who has genuine faith in Jesus. However, Israel’s adoption in Romans 9:4 is not compatible with this meaning, since most Jews had not placed their faith in Christ and thus could not enjoy the adoption that comes through the justifying work of the Cross. Moo specifies its use in this text: “The term is Paul’s way of summing up the OT teaching about Israel as ‘God’s son’ (see Exodus 4:22-23). The privilege is one that adheres to the nation as a whole, branding the people as set aside by God from other peoples for blessing and service. God’s ‘adoption’ of Christians gives to every believer in Christ all the rights and privileges that are included within new covenant blessings. God’s adoption of Israel, on the other hand, conveys to that nation all the rights and privileges included within the Old Covenant.”

2. Excerpt from commentary: “The final, and greatest, privilege is one of a different nature: ‘from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.’ Douglas Moo explains, ‘Rather than ‘belonging’ to the Israelites, the Messiah ‘is from’ them. The shift is significant, suggesting, as do vv. 2-3, that the Israelites, for all the privileges they enjoy, have not, as a group, come into genuine relationship with God’s Messiah and the salvation he has brought.’ Simply put, Paul could not write, ‘To them belong the Messiah’, because it was not true. Many Jews had rejected Christ and His gospel. The only association that Christ shared with unbelieving Jews was that he was ‘from their race.’” What a tragedy.

3. Excerpt from commentary: “The New Covenant beauty in this is that all of the privileges offered to ethnic Israel in the Old Testament are now fulfilled in Christ for the true Israel, who are God’s elect in Christ. For those who are in Christ, the Spirit testifies of our eternal adoption as the sons and daughters of God (Romans 8). We can embrace suffering, as it is “not worth comparing to the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18). Moreover, the New Covenant is the fulfillment of the Old Covenants, just as Jesus has not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. In the same way that the priests were over the temple worship and offered sacrifices on behalf of the Israelites, so also Jesus now reigns as our great High Priest and has offered Himself as the atoning blood sacrifice through which we have unlimited access to God Almighty. All of the promises of the Old Testament made to the patriarchs point to, and are accomplished by, the Messiah.”

4. God (the who) and the Gospel (the what) are the ultimate causes of Paul’s heart for his “kinsmen according to the flesh.” If we limit our reflection of this passage to how wonderful Paul was for having such a heart for his people, we miss the ultimate point and this passage can actually be a

source of discouragement for us. We need to go further back to Acts 9 where we see Jesus encounter and radically change Paul's (then Saul) heart: "Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.'" (Acts 9:3-6) It was that encounter that began the transformation of Paul's heart and eventually got him to a place where he could say: "[W]hatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ . . ." (Philippians 3:7-8) God, through the power of the Gospel, changed Paul's heart and burdened him with a deep love for his people and a strong desire for them to encounter the Christ who encountered him on the road to Damascus. May the Lord do such a work in us!