



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 9:1-5

"Christ Over All"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] ...It is true though that Romans 9, 10, and 11 happens to be one of my favorite sections, but it also is a very difficult section too. I would like very much for you to turn with me to Romans chapter 9, and this morning as a kind of introduction to the study of these three important chapters, we want to look at the first five verses. Romans 9, verse 1 through verse 5. The apostle has just finished this magnificent exposition of the doctrine of salvation in the first eight chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, and now he is going to consider a question that undoubtedly a reader with knowledge of Scripture would have in his mind, "Just what relationship does the nation Israel have to this salvation program that you have been talking about?" Because do we not understand from the reading of Scripture that the Old Testament revelation was a revelation committed into the hands of Israel and the fathers. Just what place do they play in this program of salvation, which you have unfolded for with the exception of a brief mention in the third chapter, the nation Israel has been largely omitted? So the apostle now turns to consider that question, but the opening verses of chapter 9 are something of an introduction. He writes,

"I say the truth in Christ, I do not lie, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants (Some of the manuscripts have the singular here, "the covenant," but I think it is probably more likely he wrote the plural as we have it in the Authorized Version text, "and the covenants"), and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Messiah came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."

Now that last statement in verse 5 in which the apostle writes, "of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever" has been the subject of quite a bit of discussion. It is possible to translate the last words "Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever" in at least four different ways. Now it is not a problem of the text. The text is plain and clear, and while there is one case a slight variation in one of the minor manuscripts or so, it's essentially a matter of translation, which in turn is a problem of punctuation. When the apostle wrote and when ancient men wrote Greek at this time, they did not ordinarily put any punctuation marks at all in the text. Furthermore, they would string their letters together one right after the other and, of course, individuals who were used to reading that would not have problems. We would probably have problems if we just have all of our words strung together without any spaces between them without any paragraphing. But, ancient texts were like that and so it was the work of a reader in his mind to look at the passage and make the punctuation marks as the sense of the text to him required.

Now when editors gave us an English translation of those manuscripts after practicing the principles of textual criticism, looking at the context, they would translate in a certain way. Translation involves punctuation, and so this is a problem of punctuation.

It is possible to punctuate that text in at least in ways that will produce at least four different translations. It is possible, for example, to translate it "Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is overall, God blessed for ever." That would attribute deity to Christ. That is what we have in the Authorized Version. That is what we have in the New International Version essentially, and what we have in the New American Standard Bible essentially. The Revised Standard Version, however, has a different translation, which is perfectly legitimate so far as punctuation in concerned. It reads something like, "Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is overall. God be blessed forever." In that case, the term God is not applied to Christ, but is a reference to the Father. And there are other slight variations possible which make for four different translations of the same Greek text.

Now when we deal with this, we will give you some reasons why it seems to me the context demands that we attribute deity to Christ, but it's a question of punctuation not a question of the text itself and punctuation is dependent ultimately upon interpretation. May the Lord bless this reading and explanation of his word.

[Prayer removed from audio]

[Message] We're turning to Romans chapter 9, verse 1 through verse 5 with our subject this morning, "God over All." Paul has completed the first eight chapters of his letter to the Romans on the note of the supreme joy that we have in the salvation that God has provided us. He has concluded those eight chapters with, " For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, who is in Christ Jesus our Lord." In fact, the apostle says that not even we are able to separate ourselves for we belong to the creation. We

are created beings and no creation shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

One might say at this point, "What joy to be a Christian." But now the apostle says immediately afterwards, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart." "What sorrow!" "What joy!" In the next breath, "What sorrow!" Why? How is it that the apostle who has expressed such assurance may now suddenly speak of the pain that has come to him? That, of course, is a problem. We say problem in the sense that it raises a question. In fact, there are several questions that arise here and the first is, "Is Paul's gospel true?" He's pictured an election according to grace in chapters 1 through 8, but as you survey these chapters, you discover that Israel, except for a brief mention in the 3rd chapter, Israel is missing from among the elect.

Now anyone who reads the Bible would know that Israel must be among the elect. The story of the Bible is the story of the call of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the centering of the promises of God in that line, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," Jacob, the patriarchs, the great men of faith, but they seem to be missing from the eight chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. "What about the promises about God?" an Israelite would ask or, in fact, anyone who read the Bible. And we must then pose the question something like this, either Paul's gospel is true and the promises have been nullified, or the promises are true and Paul's gospel is false and Christ is an imposter. So we're faced with a problem. Either his gospel is true and the promises are nullified or the promises are true and Paul's gospel is false, and Jesus Christ is not what Paul has made him out to be, Messiah, Savior, and Lord.

Now as we read through Romans 9, 10, and 11, it will become plain that Paul would say to us, "Well, it is not a question of either/or. It is really a question of both/and." That is, "The promises are true and my gospel is true." But that raises another more fundamental question, has God failed? Ultimately that's really the question that is

before us because he gave those great promises to the patriarchs, and he promised them that they would have a land, and they would have a king, and there would be a kingdom, and they would have the forgiveness of sins, and that they could expect a glorious future called a golden age or the millennium.

But, has God failed? Israel has turned away. Israel has been partner with the Gentiles in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. So do God's promises fail? Is it possible that man's "no" cancels out God's "yes"? Is it possible that man's "no" is stronger than God's "yes"? Is it possible for men to reject unconditional promises from God? That's ultimately a question of biblical interpretation. In fact, that's the ultimate question of theology, "Is it possible that we have a God whose purposes can be overthrown by men, or do we have a God who accomplishes his purposes?" And, in fact, as you know that question really is the question around which hinges two systems of believing theology.

Now we have opted, I have opted, we have opted generally in Believers Chapel for the doctrine that man's "no" cannot cancel God's "yes" and that he does unconditional promises and he does bring those unconditional promises to their fulfillment. This is Paul's theodicy, Romans 9, 10, and 11. A vindication of God according to the principles of justice, and he will show us that those promises have not been nullified. In fact, they have been in effect down through the years and we may look forward to that day when all Israel shall be saved. The apostle will come to that eventually in Romans chapter 11. This then is a theodicy. C. H. Dodd, the well-known Cambridge scholar, spoke of this section as unveiling the divine purpose in history. William Manson, a very well known New Testament scholar from New College and the University of Edinburgh in the last generation spoke of these chapters as "unfolding the righteousness of God in history." It is a theodicy and a beautiful theodicy.

One last question that arises as a result of the reading of these verses is "Who then is Jesus Christ?" Yesterday and the day before, I was reading a few articles and a

collection of articles on Jesus Christ and one of the editors said, "How much can you remove from a car and still possess what is properly called a car?" And he went on to speak about the fact that it's possible for us to do without our lights, for example, on our car and still have a car. We could drive it in the daytime at least. It's possible for us to do without a horn. We can do without a few fenders, a bumper, and a few other things. We all see cars going around without some of these things and they're still cars, but when we come to questions of the elimination of things like the chassis and the motor then we, of course, raise the question, "Is this a car?"

Now something of this kind of thing has been transpiring in theology because a few centuries ago Christianity was thought of as being built upon an inspired Scripture, upon the doctrine of a living God, upon the doctrine of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity in flesh of humanity apart from sin, and ultimately an atonement, and then finally, of course, of a second coming. But, in the history of theology in recent years, these things have been gradually eroded by the comments of our apparently professing Christian theologians. The inspiration of the Scriptures, particularly in their inherency, has largely departed. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a resurrection that is not believed in today. The incarnation of the second person of the Trinity, a divine incarnation, that is that God became man in Jesus Christ, has been largely discounted by many well known and prominent theologians. The idea of an atonement has been eroded away, so that the atonement that is preached about is not the atonement of the Scriptures. If we eliminate the motor from a car and do not have a car, what do we have if we eliminate these great doctrines from Christianity? Well, of course, we really don't have a Christianity at all.

Now the apostle will make three points in Romans 9, 10, and 11. He will first of all say that Israel's failure was due to spiritual pride and self-sufficiency. They have not read the Scriptures properly and due to the fact that they have not read them properly, they have trusted in their own possession of promises for their salvation. They've trusted

in their own self-sufficiency. They have sought to be justified by works rather than by grace. A few years ago in Dallas, there appeared an article in the paper and I'm going to read it to you because it was an expression of something that the author thought was really a beautiful sentiment. It's entitled *Be a Brother*, "Try to be a real good brother," he says, "to each person on the street. Speak with kindness to the other, every time you chance to meet. Put your promise into action to assist some other one, and derive the satisfaction of a noble deed well done. Though it be the smallest favor that involves no sacrifice, it will have the finest flavor far beyond the highest price. Just a drop of your devotion to the least upon this sod will become a boundless ocean on the record kept by God. Be of service, be a brother, in the struggle and the strife. Do your best to help another and receive eternal life." That, of course, is an expression of the thoughts of a natural man.

I heard once of a woman who went into a shop to buy a dog. She said, "I don't care whether it's a Yorkshire terrier or a Pekingese, or even a Bulldog, but it must match my new carpet." [Laughter] I'm afraid that many people in their spiritual thinking are very much like that lady. That is, they are not very particular about the thought or the ideas or the principles of the things to which they give outward adherence. They really just choose on the basis of other principles. But, the Scriptures make it plain that salvation is a work of grace, and the eternal life of which the Bible speaks is received as a free gift. So Paul will ring the changes on Israel's failure is by spiritual pride and self-sufficiency, a desire to seek salvation on the basis of works and not on the basis of grace. Israel's failure is not total, however, he will go on to point out in chapter 11. There are Israelites being saved today. There is a remnant according to the election of grace. And, finally, he says, "Israel's failure is not final, but all Israel shall be saved in the glorious future that lies before us."

We turn now to Romans chapter 9, verse 1 through verse 3 in which Paul expresses his great grief over the failure of Israel. Now if you will look carefully at

chapter 9, verse 1, you will notice he does not say "therefore" or "on account of this" or any other kind of connective of that nature. But he simply blurts out, "I say the truth in Christ, I do not lie" and that lack of a connective, called by the technical name of asyndeton, is an expression of lively emotion on the part of the apostle. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bears witness with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart." Now the apostle was not weeping with crocodile tears. He's not saying, "I'm only telling you this because I love you" as so many people occasionally tell us and then proceed to cut us up a bit. But, he is speaking about the deep pain that he has and he traces it to the Holy Spirit. It is something that is deep and it has come from God himself, "I have great heaviness and I have continual sorrow in my heart for my people according to my flesh."

Now what makes this even more touching is the fact that these for whom Paul is yearning are those who have frequently said that they wish they had his life. In Acts chapter 25 and verse 24, we read these words, "And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men who are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer." So here is the nation asking for Paul's blood, but Paul at the same time saying, "I have great grief and continual sorrow in my heart" wishing that they might be saved. In Acts chapter 22, we read, "And they listened to him until this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, 'Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.'" So this is particularly touching that the apostle should express his pain and sorrow over Israel's disobedience in the light of the fact that they have been hating him and mistreating him.

Now he explains what he is talking about in the third verse. He says, "For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Now the apostle, of course, is expressing something that is unattainable. It is clear when one reads the Scriptures that it is impossible for an individual to give himself

for someone else in the way that the apostle speaks here. But, he is saying in effect, "If it were possible, if I could take the curse of Israel upon myself, I would do it in order that my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh might be saved." It's a great picture of a soul winner's heart. I think many of us probably can say within our hearts, "Well, I would be willing to give the rest of my life if a certain member of my family for whom we felt deep love might be saved who are lost now." But, the apostle is saying more than that. He is saying that, "I could wish that I should be accursed forever. Not give my physical life, but give my eternal life in order that my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh might be saved." Such a thing is impossible, and so the apostle puts it in that way. He knows it's not possible.

But, following in this line, he follows in the line of one of the great men of the Old Testament and that man, of course, is Moses. For when Moses went up in the mountain to receive the law and had received it, he was away from Israel for a considerable period of time. And, finally, the children of Israel came to Aaron and they said, "Up, Aaron, make us gods, which shall go before us; for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what's become of him." And so, he had not been in the mount but that those few days before Israel is turned from the God who brought them out of Egypt and now wants Aaron to make gods. Well, Aaron was a rather weak man and so he suggested, "All right, bring your precious things, bring your earrings, bring your bracelets." And so, the gold and silver was melted down, and Aaron describes it later, he said, "We put this in the fire and out came this calf." It's almost as if he is trying to dissociate himself from it suggesting that here comes the calf walking out of the fire as if he didn't have anything to do with it. But God, of course, knows what is going on down on the earth and while Moses is with him, the Lord said unto Moses,

"I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. (What a temptation for Moses in the mount with the Lord. God saying, "I'm going to do away with Israel and I'll take you, Moses, and from you I will make a great nation." But Moses, for love for Israel said, "Lord, why doth Thy wrath burn against Thy people?" God had said, "Moses, they are your people." But, Moses said, "Lord, they are your people." [Laughter]) Why doth Thy wrath burn against Thy people whom Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants, to whom Thou didst swear by Thine own self, and saidst unto them, 'I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give to your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. (And we read) And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people."

Well, you know the remainder of the story is that when Moses came down with the tables of the law in his hand, and he found the children of Israel dancing in idolatry around the golden calf, he broke the tables. And he went up the next day into the presence of God after saying to the people, "You've sinned a great sin," he said, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou, Lord, wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written." It's the same sentiment, "Oh, God, if it be possible blot my name out, but forgive Israel for this great sin." The Lord said to Moses, "Whoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee." The apostle speaks like Moses.

David Brainerd was one of the great missionaries of this country. During the early years of eighteen hundred, he went out to speak to the American Indians. He graduated from one of the Eastern universities of that day and instead of accepting a call to an

influential church, an opportunity that he had, he went as a missionary to the Indians that were without Christ and he dedicated his life totally to them and ultimately died of tuberculosis from his ministry to them. He would cross over streams, take off his clothes, dry his clothes, put them on again, and still go on preaching the gospel. And he wrote later on, "I dream of lost souls. I care not what suffering I undergo, as long as I see souls saved." That's the sentiment of the apostle, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." What a magnificent picture of man who loves the lost to that extent.

I heard the story of man who said to his friend, "I hear you dismissed your pastor from your church. What was wrong?" "Well," his friend said, "he kept telling us we were going to hell." "Well, what does the new pastor say?" He said, "Well, the new pastor keeps saying we're going to hell too." "So what's the difference?" his friend said. "Well," he said, "the difference is this, that when the first one said it, he sounded like he was glad of it [laughter], but when the new man says it, he sounds as if it's breaking his heart for him to tell us." Well, the new man was like the apostle. He said, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish myself to be accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." And I do think it is true that whenever we preach about hell, whenever we talk about hell, we ought to do it as Richard Baxter [ph28:20] used to say, "With tears in our voice," because it is a most solemn thing and the apostle is a good illustration here of a soul winner who loves those to whom he has been sent.

But now one might ask Paul, "Why do you have such great emotion? Why do you have such great heaviness of heart? Why such continual sorrow? Why the deep pain?" Well, Paul would say, "Listen, listen to the advantages that they had." And now he describes the favored lot of Israel, "Eight great blessings that they have," and he speaks of each one of them. He says, "First of all, they are Israelites to whom pertaineth the

adoption." That is, there was a time when they were not sons of God as a nation, but there came a time when God laid his hand upon Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and then came to call them, "Israel, my son." They have been adopted as a national son of God. Now we read in the New Testament right here in the Epistle to the Romans in the 8th chapter that we have received the adoption of sonship, but Israel as a nation was the son of God, the adoption.

And then, secondly, the glory. Now that is a magnificent blessing. Think when the children of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, God said, "There will be a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire. And the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire will be the guiding force in your life. When the pillar of cloud moves, you move. When the pillar of cloud stays still, you stay still. The pillar of cloud will shield you from the sun. The pillar of fire at night will give you light. If you move out at night when the fire has not moved, you will move into darkness. If the fire moves and you don't move, you will enter into darkness." Light and protection and health was dependent upon the relationship to the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. It was a magnificent thing. It was not a normal cloud.

We often when we think about the tremendous miracle of the mushroom clouds of atomic explosion, as we see the pictures of them going up into the sky, what a wonder working miracle that is. I heard the story of a Indian out West who was talking to his engaged wife to be, and he was talking by smoke signals to her. And he was sending up his little smoke signals, which were designed to tell her how much he loved her, and it just so happened that one of those first atomic explosions took place out there and suddenly he looked and he saw this great mass of cloud go up into the sky with looking like a vast mushroom and he said, "Oh, I wish I had said that." [Laughter] Well, anyway, we think of this of a great mighty miracle, but it was an even greater miracle for the children of Israel to be guided through the wilderness. A hundred and fifty degrees in the day time, that's even hotter than Texas. Thirty degrees at night, a hundred and twenty

degrees of change of temperature, and yet in spite of that the children of Israel grew and magnified, multiplied as a nation until there were two to three million of them and God protected them. The glory that was a wonderful miracle and a wonderful protection for them.

But, he goes on and speaks of even great things. He says, "The covenants, the condition covenant of the Mosaic law and the unconditional covenants of the Abrahamic, the Davidic, and the New Covenants, those were promises that God gave to the children of Israel, and he said in those promises, he would make Abraham's name great. He would give him a land and, furthermore, in Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed." So that Israel was not only to be saved, but Gentiles as well through the Abrahamic promises. Then the Davidic promises were given and God guaranteed that they would have a king from the line of David and the new covenant came which was supplied the redemptive under girding of that covenantal scheme and the forgiveness of sins was promised to them. These magnificent promises in which God in effect says the "yes" toward the seed of Abraham. And when he says here, "He has given them the covenants," those were unconditional covenants guaranteed to be fulfilled, magnificent promises.

The fact that they were unconditional is found right in the beginning when Abraham was told to wait to take the pieces of the animals, put half of the animals over here and the other half over here and wait. And he waited, remember, until the sun went down and just about as the sun was going down, he fell into a deep sleep, something like a nightmare. And he looked off into the distance and as he looked off in the distance, he saw a burning lamp with smoke and fire proceeding from it, kind of like a furnace, coming toward the pieces of the animals. And it passed between the pieces of the animals and, as all the perceptive commentators point out, Abraham was not invited to follow because this is not a mutual covenant in which God has certain responsibilities and man has certain works to perform too, but it is an unconditional covenant, and God walks

between the pieces of the animals in assurance that he will fulfill all the conditions of them. So Israel has the covenants and yet as a nation now they are abiding in unbelief. They have the giving of the law.

Now we are, in our day, not able it seems often to appreciate what a magnificent blessings the giving of the Law of Moses was, but it was a great blessing. The Psalmist and others in the Old Testament speak of the joy of having the law of God. Chaim Potok has written a book called *In the Beginning* and this contemporary Jewish author has described a service, which is set aside among the Jewish people of a particular congregation, in which they take the scrolls of the law and dance around with them. And Potok records how one of the young lads says to himself, "I wonder if the Goyim (that is the Gentiles, "I wonder if the Goyim,") ever feel this way about the word of God." Well, I'd like to answer Mr. Potok. Yes, we do feel that way about the word of God. We love the Law of Moses, but we love all of the word of God. We love it from its beginning to its end. It is a magnificent promise to have the law of God. Israel has the Mosaic law. It was a magnificent promise and in the light of their rejection of the Messiah now, it's no wonder Paul has great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart.

He says, furthermore, "They have the service of God," and we think of the temple, the tabernacle, the priesthood, the offerings. Isn't it interesting that today people will go to churches because of the beauties of buildings? But, no building was more beautiful than the temple. It was a magnificent building. It was said, "If you've never seen the temple, you've never seen a beautiful building." The tabernacle itself, even though it was temporary, was a beautiful structure. With the colors and the significance of it, it was a magnificent display of beauty on the part of the God who gave it to them. And as far as the priesthood is concerned, there are people who love to go to churches today for the ritual. They love the show. They sit in the audience and they see the priests and the rectors and others carrying out their little ministries on a platform, and they think because of what they see and feel that they have really been to church.

Well, if anybody really had been to church, it was the Israelites. They had that magnificent ceremony of the levitical cultus. Day after day the priests in their garments carrying out their ministries, and then on the day of atonement the garments of glory and beauty and all of the other things that made for the sacrifices, and that particular day were designed to impress and teach. Mainly they were designed to teach. They were designed to teach Israel that there was coming someone who would fulfill all of this and all of it would be done away and the time would come when we would worship God in spirit and in truth. One of the great errors of Protestantism and also of all of professing Christianity is to carry over into the New Testament days certain remnants of the Old Testament liturgy. We are to worship in the spirit and in the truth. But, for Israel, it was magnificent to have the service of God, the priesthood, the offerings, and the temple.

But, not only that Paul says, "and the promises." These were the Messianic promises. What reform people would call the Covenant of Grace, the great covenant made between the triune God and the elect. Paul calls them the promises, the Messianic promises. Those that begin in Genesis 3:15, where it is stated that the seed of the woman shall crush the serpent's head and then they're unfolded through the promises of the Priest to come, the Prophet to come, the King to come, and what he would do in the great passages having to do with the Servant of Jehovah expounded so fully in Isaiah chapter 53. These great promises of redemption, which reach their climax in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, with John the Baptist saying "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." And then our Lord dying on the cross for the sins of sinners. Promises, great Messianic promises, "Whose are the fathers." Ah, it's great to have Washington, Adams, Madison, Monroe, Lincoln, Lee. [Laughter] That's an ascending scale of importance [laughter] you understand. But, how much more wonderful to have Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, David, etcetera – the fathers. Israel had the fathers. And, finally, he says, "Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, (or the Messiah came,) who is over all, God blessed for ever." "Salvation is of the Jews,"

Jesus Christ said, "Salvation is of the Messiah, and this Messiah is God over all blessed forever."

Now I said in the reading of the Scripture that there were four ways to punctuate this text that Paul wrote, but I think you will see that the context suggests that Paul is talking about a lament. He's lamenting the fact that Israel is disobedient in the light of the possession of these blessings, the greatest and most magnificent of which is that they have the Messiah according to the flesh, who is God overall blessed forever. He belongs to them, and in spite of that they stand in rejection today. This is not a reference or an ascription of praise primarily, but it's a lament on Paul's part, a lament in the light of the greatness of the Son of God. Exegesis makes it quite plain that this ought to be rendered as it is rendered here, "Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." It's a magnificent tribute to Jesus Christ as the God-man. He's the God-man who was sent at a particular point made of a woman. His humanity expressed in, "He came to be of a woman." His deity expressed in the fact that he was sent. He existed before he came. He was sent on his mission or as he puts it, "I came." I've often said to you Jesus Christ never said that he was born but once and he said that in the presence of a Gentile, Pilate, and went on to say after he said he was born, that he was also sent. Because he speaks of himself as a divine being who, at a particular came, was sent, took to himself an additional nature, but he had existed from the ages past, the God-man. What a magnificent picture we find in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. We could talk for a long time about this, but what is more human than to pay taxes? And what is more distressing then to talk about it at this time of the year? [Laughter] But, what is more human than to pay taxes? Do you realize that Jesus Christ paid taxes? Peter raised the question. Someone said, "Does your master pay taxes?" He said, "Oh, yes." Our Lord rebuked him because strictly speaking, he was the divine Son. He really didn't have to pay taxes ultimately, but nevertheless because of his true humanity, he said, "Peter, we'll pay the taxes all right." Nothing more human than paying

taxes. But, have you ever paid taxes like Jesus Christ paid them? Is there a more divine way to pay taxes than this? What did he tell Peter? He said, "Peter, we'll pay the taxes all right.

Now, what I want you to do is to go down to the Sea of Galilee. I want you to get in a boat and get out in the lake there and take your line and drop it over. And the first fish that you catch, open its mouth, and take the coin out of it and go pay our taxes." What a wonderful way to pay taxes. [Laughter] How'd you like to pay taxes like that? Wouldn't that be great? Go out to White Rock Lake, drop a line in [Laughter] and it come up first fish with a lot of Kruggerands in his mouth. [Laughter] You could pay your taxes. What is more human than paying taxes? But, what is more divine than that way to pay them? He is the divine Son of God. In the future, Israel will sing as Isaiah put it, "For unto us a child is born (the human side). Unto us a Son is given (The Son, eternal Son given) and the government shall be upon his shoulder."

Well, now what are the consequences if Paul is wrong? If Paul is wrong here when he says, "Israel had all of these blessings" and if it's not really true that Jesus Christ is the Messiah according to the flesh of the seed of David, but nevertheless God over all, blessed for ever, the second person of the Trinity, these disastrous things become true. We have no knowledge of God. Why not turn to one of the Hindu avatars rather than to Jesus Christ. How do we really know that God is really a God of love? There is no evidence of that ultimately if we do not have a direct word from God. Even prophets cannot settle such questions for us unless they themselves anticipate the great prophet to come who will make things plain. How do we know? We don't have any knowledge of God ultimately. If Paul is wrong we do not have any atonement, the reconciliation between God and man is only a myth. I am just as alienated as if I ever was and if I am lost naturally I'm just as lost now as I always was. If Paul is wrong there is no resurrection.

Bertrand Russell is right when he gibed Christianity. "The belief in fairy tales is pleasant," Mr. Russell said. Furthermore, if Paul is wrong we have no Holy Spirit who has come to be our companion and guide and teacher of the word of God. If Paul is wrong, we have gospel. Why not the Hindu or Muslim sacred books as well as the Hebrew Christian books of the holy Scripture. We don't have any gospel. We don't have any message. We don't have any revelation. We don't have any bodily resurrection. In fact, we don't have any Christianity. We have the Creeds, but they would be myths. No revelation, no Trinity, no cross, no blood, no Second Advent, no heavenly home. We are of all men most miserable if Paul is wrong.

But, if Paul is right, if Israel had these blessings and if the climactic blessing was to have the Messiah according to the flesh, who is God over all, blessed for ever, who has given us a magnificent revelation and through his apostles has expanded it, then having received him, "we are of all men most blessed" for we have life. We have hope. We have a cross. We have an atonement. We have a resurrection and we look forward to a resurrection. We have a revelation from God in which we can count. If you are here this morning and you have never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, let me remind you that the Son of God came as the seed of David according to the flesh. As God over all blessed for ever, went to the cross at Calvary, there cried out bearing the sin of sinners, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" "For the judgment for sin was meted out upon him," as Isaiah puts it in chapter 53. And now the free gift of eternal life is offered to men who have been brought to the knowledge of the fact that they are sinners.

If you are here this morning and God has brought to you the knowledge of your sinnerhood, that you are guilty, that you stand under divine condemnation, that the wages of sin is death, eternal death, flee to Christ. He's the true city of refuge. Come to him. Trust him. Lean upon the cross and the blood, and you shall have the assurance of everlasting life, the assurance of the resurrection of the body, the assurance of a heavenly home, and a great hope and the presence of a companion, the Holy Spirit throughout the

intervening time. Come to Christ. Believe in him. Trust him. May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the assurance from the word of God that the apostle was speaking truth. We thank Thee for his concern for Israel, his kinsmen according to the flesh. O God, give us that concern too. And we thank Thee for the lament, which came from his heart, for we recognize, Lord, that there is something of that within our own hearts, not only for Israel, but for the many Gentiles, the nations of the earth that are lost and wondering about in darkness. We recognize that we ourselves for so long wandered in that darkness. We praise Thee for the measure of light that we have and for the assurance and the blessing of it and we desire, O God, that others may have this too. If there are some here in this audience, and we sense, Lord that there are some, who have not come to Christ, O God, give them no rest nor peace until they rest in Jesus our Messiah. We bring them to Thee. We pray, O God, that Thou wilt bring...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]