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Heartsick

Romans 9.1-5

Series: The Pure Gospel

Rev. Andrew Hawkins, Ph.D.

The Village Church

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- I. Introduction
 - A. Let me introduce you to two friends of mine
 - 1. Actually, I believe you probably know them as well
 - B. The first one's name is **Melpomene**
 - 1. The second one is **Thalia**
 - C. What? You haven't heard of them?
 - 1. Well, I think you have
 - a. Although their names may not be familiar to you
 - D. They are Greek
 - 1. Some people say, "I know a little Greek"
 - a. I say that because I study the Bible and I have to know at least a little about the Greek language – the original language of the New Testament
 - b. But I don't really know much
 - c. So I say, "I know a *little* Greek"
 - d. Other's say that because they know a guy who's Greek
 - 2. So, in this case I would say I know a couple of Greeks
 - E. To remind you of who they are, let me show you their **pictures**
 - 1. Melpomene is the frowning mask
 - 2. Thalia is the laughing mask
 - 3. Their origin is the Greek theater
 - a. They are muses who, in Greek mythology, were daughters of Zeus
 - b. They personify emotions
 - 4. Melpomene is the muse of tragedy
 - a. Thalia is the muse of comedy
 - 5. Melpomene represents sadness, distress, disappointment – the darker side of human emotions – tragedy
 - a. Thalia represents joy and happiness, the lighter side of our countenances – comedy
 - F. The reason why I say that I think you know them too, is because most all of you have been around enough to have experienced both comedy and tragedy in your lives
 - 1. Both triumph and disappointment
 - a. Both successes and failures
 - b. Both great delights and deep losses

- G. That's how I feel about Romans
1. It's like the Greek theater
- H. We have climbed the highest mountain of the gospel
1. We've seen the view from the top
 2. We've basked in the sunlight of thrilling triumph
 3. **Romans 8:31** (ESV) —
 - a. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?
 4. **Romans 8:32** (ESV) —
 - a. 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?
 5. **Romans 8:35** (ESV) —
 - a. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ...
 6. **Romans 8:37** (ESV) —
 - a. 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
 7. **Romans 8:38–39** (ESV) —
 - a. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,
 - b. 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 8. It's all comedy
 - a. Now, not comedy in the superficial, paltry modern way in which our popular culture uses the term
 - b. But comedy in its classic sense of that which evokes true joy and happiness
- I. But now, like whiplash, we're struck by another reality
1. **Romans 9:1–2** (ESV) —
 - a. 1 I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—
 - b. 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.
 2. There's nothing comedic about that!
 - a. It's all tragedy
 - b. "Great sorrow and unceasing anguish"
 - c. Melpomene couldn't have said it better
- J. How does that happen?
1. How did we go from Thalia to Melpomene in the space of an instant?
 2. But, dear friends, you can relate to that, I'm sure
 - a. You have ridden that roller coaster before
 - b. You have found that often our deepest contradictory emotions can find expression in the same moment of time
 3. And as believers, you and I shouldn't be afraid of it
 - a. Indeed, we should embrace it
 - b. Because those impulses both come from God
- K. Consider Jesus

1. **Hebrews 12:2** (ESV) —
 - a. 2 ... Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith,
 - b. who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,
 - c. and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.
2. “The joy that was set before him...” – Thalia
 - a. “Enduring the cross, despising the shame...” – Melpomene
- L. But there’s a difference between this transition in Romans and Thalia and Melpomene
 1. Because for Thalia and Melpomene, it’s all theater
 - a. It’s play-acting
 - b. It’s actors performing for the purpose of evoking an audience response
 2. But in Romans, it’s reality
 - a. It’s the truth of God in the Gospel of His Son
 - b. And the emotions that flow from hearts devoted to Christ are genuine
 3. That is, if you do genuinely belong to Christ
- M. Romans 9 can be a challenging chapter
 1. But it’s emotional whiplash is perfectly understandable
 2. The glorious gospel, in which our salvation – secure in the sovereign grace of our Lord – nevertheless evokes a certain tragic mood
 3. This glorious salvation – not everyone knows this gospel
 - a. Not everyone knows the love of the Father, who so loved the world that He sent His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life
 - b. Not everyone knows that Jesus Christ, out of love, was willing to suffer on the cross, taking upon Himself the just penalty for all our sin – the wrath of God that we so genuinely deserved
 - c. Not everyone has been born again of the Holy Spirit, having received the new life, the transforming and sanctifying work of God in the hearts of believers
 4. Not everyone knows that it’s all by grace through faith in Jesus Christ
 - a. Not by works, so that no one may boast
- N. And that’s why we can move from joy to anguish in a moment
 1. And why we can resonate with Paul as he expresses his heart
 2. Not the heart of a theological academadician
 - a. But the heart of a pastor who loves his people
 - b. Indeed, the heart of the Savior who indwells the believer
- O. Let’s explore Paul’s heart this morning

II. **Paul’s Sorrow**

- A. First, let’s examine Paul’s sorrow
- B. **Romans 9:1-2** (ESV) —
 1. 1 **I am speaking the truth in Christ—**

2. I am not lying;
 3. my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—
 4. 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.
- C. Paul begins in an unusual way – almost like he’s swearing an oath
1. And in doing so he separates himself from the Greek theater
 - a. He’s not performing
 - b. This is no act
- D. “I am speaking the truth in Christ”
1. “In Christ” – he invokes what he’s been teaching in the glorious gospel
 - a. That all who believe in Jesus are united with Christ
 - b. Indwelt by the Spirit of Christ
 - c. And when Paul exclaims he’s speaking the truth in Christ, he’s expressing the very mind and heart of Jesus Himself!
- E. “I am not lying” he says
1. As a master logician – he never loses his mind even as he’s expressing his heart!
 - a. As a master logician, he affirms the truthfulness in what he says both positively and uses the art of negation to remove all doubt
 2. “I am speaking the truth”
 - a. And it’s negation: “I am not lying”
- F. But he goes even further
1. “My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit”
 2. The conscience – the internal moral compass that we all have
 - a. But our consciences can sometimes lead us astray
 - b. They can bear false witness
 3. But not when it is infused with the Holy Spirit
 4. Paul has submitted himself to the Spirit’s work over the years
 - a. By the time he writes this, he’s had more than two decades of practice in training his conscience
 5. So that what he’s about to express, he is confident that it is from the Lord Himself
- G. But look at the magnitude of his sorrow
1. “I have great sorrow...”
 - a. Megas lume – mega sorrow
 - b. This is not some minor, inconsequential disappointment
 - c. This is not finding out that the event you were looking forward to was canceled
 - d. This is an overwhelming sense of loss
 2. “And unceasing anguish”
 - a. He can’t stop thinking about it
 - b. Every day it occupies his mind
 - c. He wakes up in the middle of the night thinking about it
 - d. A day doesn’t seem to go by when its disturbance doesn’t raise its ugly head
 3. “In my heart”

- a. And the depth of his anguish!
 - b. It's not a surface phenomenon
 - c. No superficial disappointment
 - d. It pierces to the depth of his soul
- H. We'll explore the reason for his sorrow in a moment
- 1. But I've already alluded to it
 - a. That this glorious gospel is not known or embraced by everyone!
 - 2. Does that truth grab your heart also?
 - a. Does it disturb you that your friends and neighbors don't know the love of God for them?
 - b. Does it bother you to your core that your loved ones don't realize that Jesus died for them?
 - c. Does it cause you sleepless nights to realize that your acquaintances do not embrace the Savior?
 - 3. Does your heart similarly break when you realize there are people all over the world who have never even heard of this Jesus?
 - a. Unreached people?
- I. That's the depth of Paul's sorrow
- 1. Do you share in his sorrow?

III. Paul's Wish

- A. But let's see how deep Paul's sorrow really goes
- B. **Romans 9:3** (ESV) —
 - 1. **3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ**
 - 2. **for the sake of my brothers,**
 - 3. **my kinsmen according to the flesh.**
- C. Do you realize what he's saying here?
 - 1. He's saying, "I'm so disturbed that my own kinsmen do not know the salvation of Jesus Christ, that if I could, and if it would mean their salvation, I would be happy to go to hell in their place."
 - 2. "I could wish that I myself were accursed (anathema) and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers"
 - a. He would gladly take upon himself the curse of sin
- D. Now he knows that he can't do
 - 1. Only Jesus Christ can do that
 - a. Only the God-man, the only Son of the Father, qualifies to take upon Himself the just penalty for our sin
 - b. Paul knows he doesn't qualify to be anyone's savior
 - c. Not his own or anybody else's
 - 2. But that's the depth of his love and concern for his kinsmen
- E. Paul, by the way, in his sentiments, is the New Testament Moses
 - 1. What Paul says echoes what Moses says about the stubborn and recalcitrant Israelites in the wilderness
- F. You'll recall that Moses was called to Mt. Sinai to receive the Law after God had led the people out of Egypt

1. He was up there for a while – weeks to more than a month
 - a. And the natives were restless
 2. The people worked on Aaron to make a substitute god for them
 - a. So Aaron collected gold from them
 - b. And he fashioned it into a little calf
 3. And the celebrated around this paltry calf
 - a. They probably wanted a bull, but the best they could do under the circumstances was a baby calf
 4. **Exodus 32:4** (ESV) —
 - a. ... And they said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!”
- G. Well, Moses didn’t know what was going on down below – but God certainly did
1. **Exodus 32:7–8** (ESV) —
 - a. 7 And the LORD said to Moses, “Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.
 - b. 8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them.
 - c. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’ ”
 2. Remember, God had just given them the Ten Commandments
 - a. And you know the first one (I won’t ask you to recite them all)
 - b. (**Exodus 20.2-6**) “You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them...”
 3. But these people – the people God had just freed from slavery in Egypt – were doing the exact thing God had expressly prohibited
- H. So this is what God told Moses:
1. **Exodus 32:10** (ESV) —
 - a. 10 “Now therefore let me alone,
 - b. that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you.”
- I. Moses pleaded with God for the people
1. **Exodus 32:11–13** (ESV) —
 - a. 11 But Moses implored the LORD his God and said, “O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?
 - b. 12 Why should the Egyptians say, ‘With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people.

- c. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.’ ”
 - 2. He pleads with God on the basis of God’s reputation
 - a. What will the Egyptians say when God had to destroy the very people he had saved?
 - 3. And he pleads with them on the basis of God’s covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Israel
 - a. The promises of God would be null and void if He were to do away with these people
- J. Well, Moses came down the mountain, crashed the party, destroyed the golden calf, and chastened Aaron, punished the leaders
 - 1. Then the next morning he ascended the mountain to meet with God
 - a. He had been thinking of what God had said
 - b. God had told him He would destroy this people and start over with Moses and make another nation – Israel 2.0
 - 2. But Moses was in anguish – much like Paul
 - 3. **Exodus 32:31–32** (ESV) —
 - a. 31 So Moses returned to the LORD and said, “Alas, this people has sinned a great sin.
 - b. They have made for themselves gods of gold.
 - c. 32 But now, if you will forgive their sin—
 - d. but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written.”
 - 4. Moses would rather go to hell than become the new Abraham
- K. Now Moses didn’t know, at that stage of divine revelation, what Paul knew
 - 1. That Moses couldn’t personally atone for the sins of the people, any more than Paul for his kinsmen
- L. So, Paul’s heart and Moses heart are one
 - 1. They are kindred spirits
 - a. They are overcome with anguish over their people’s rejection of the grace of God that they would, if they could, be willing to become cursed of God in their place
- M. That’s the magnitude of Paul’s anguish

IV. **Paul’s Kinsmen**

- A. Now what is it about Paul’s kinsmen that raises his anguish to the level of heartbreak?
 - 1. We all, I believe, have similar anguish over our own families
 - a. And I would hope that this anguish would spill over to others we have never known
 - 2. But Paul’s kinsmen are such that his disappointments in their lack of trust in Messiah Jesus are greatly exacerbated

3. And that's because his kinsmen, the Jewish people, have had enormous advantages in the realm of religion
- B. A story is told of Benjamin Disraeli, the British statesman who was prime minister of England in the late 19th Century
1. When he was elected to Parliament at the age of 33, in a moment of anti-Semitism, he was verbally attacked by another politician
 2. It is reported that Disraeli replied:
 - a. "Yes, sir, I am a Jew. And I remind my illustrious opponent that when the ancestors of that right honorable gentleman were brutal savages eating nuts in a German forest, my ancestors were serving as priests in the temple of Solomon and were giving law and religion to the world."
 3. Talk about advantages!
 - a. So Paul lists them
- C. **Romans 9:4-5** (ESV) —
1. 4 They are Israelites,
 2. and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants,
 3. the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.
 4. 5 To them belong the patriarchs,
 5. and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ...
- D. To them belong the **adoption**
1. Paul, of course, has used adoption to describe believers in Jesus
 - a. It is a glorious thing to be included in the family of God by faith in Jesus Christ
 2. But when it is used of Israel it refers to God's choice of Israel as the nation through whom He would bring salvation to the world
 - a. And their adoption was all of grace
 3. **Deuteronomy 7:7-8** (ESV) —
 - a. 7 It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples,
 - b. 8 but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.
 4. In other words, it was not anything in the character of Israel that God chose them
 - a. He chose them because He loved them!
 - b. Period!
 - c. It was all of God's sovereign and gracious choice
 5. It is an extraordinary privilege to be adopted by God
- E. The **glory**
1. This refers to the Shekinah glory, the manifestation of the presence of God as He led them through the wilderness by a pillar of cloud and pillar of fire
 2. And as He settled into the Holy of holies in the tabernacle

- a. And later in the temple
 - 3. The presence of God with this people was an extraordinary and gratuitous blessing for this people
 - a. What an advantage!
- F. The **covenants**
 - 1. The covenants refer to God's promises to Abraham
 - a. Confirmed successively with Isaac and Israel
 - 2. And then extended in the covenant with Moses in the giving of the Law
 - a. And finally with David, including the promise of the eternal kingdom through his progeny
 - 3. Covenant is the central means by which God demonstrates His commitment to shepherd and care for His people
 - a. The word is used in the OT more than 250 times!
 - 4. And only Israel was the recipient of the covenants of God
 - a. What a privilege!
- G. The **giving of the law**
 - 1. While Paul is jealous to point out that obedience to the Law could not save anyone, nevertheless, the Law is critical to what it means to be the people of God
 - 2. The Law expresses the character of God
 - a. Even as it lays down the moral compass for His people
 - 3. Paul has already expressed the importance of the Law for His people in Romans
 - 4. **Romans 3:1–2** (ESV) —
 - a. 1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?
 - b. 2 Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.
 - 5. The Jewish people alone have the very words of God
 - a. It comes down to us in the Jewish Bible – the Old Testament
 - b. The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings
 - 6. Of all the people in the world, only the Jewish people were entrusted with the law of God
 - a. Others get the general revelation of God in the natural world
 - b. The heavens declare the glory of God
 - c. But general revelation is not enough to define the relation of the holy God with a sinful people
 - d. Only the word of God, the law of God, can do that
 - 7. This is an incredible privilege
- H. The **worship**
 - 1. The worship involves the regulations involving the tabernacle and the temple
 - a. The ways in which God, in His grace, enabled a sinful people to have a relationship with God

- b. You may have had to read the Bible and to through confirmation
 - 3. You may have spent decades in church
 - a. Going through the liturgies
 - b. Receiving the communion elements
 - c. Hearing the scriptures read
 - d. Singing the great songs of the faith
 - 4. You can do all of that without ever submitting to Jesus Christ
 - a. Without ever casting yourself on the mercy of the Savior
 - 5. And to spend decades doing the religious things of Christianity, without ever casting your lot with Jesus Christ
 - a. Without ever being born again by the Spirit of God
 - b. Without ever receiving Christ by faith
 - 6. Now that would be real tragedy
 - a. That would be heartbreaking
 - 7. Oh dear friends, your time is limited
 - a. You are not long for this world
 - b. You are on the homestretch of this world
 - 8. Are you ready to meet Christ?
 - a. Will He be your Savior or your Judge?
 - 9. That's what keeps Paul up at night
 - a. That what wakes me up at night too!
- N. Will you trust Christ alone for your salvation?
 - 1. Paul, in Philippians 3, recounted many of these same advantages
 - a. But he moved from the asset column to the liability column
 - b. He counted them all as rubbish, as loss
 - 2. All for the sake of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord
 - 3. Have you, like Paul, cast yourself on His mercy?

V. **Paul's Christ**

- A. Finally, one more thing
 - 1. (Dangerous for a pastor to say one more thing...)
- B. Paul's Christ
 - 1. **Romans 9:5** (ESV) —
 - a. 5 To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh,
 - b. **is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.**
- C. We've seen Paul sorrow, his wish, and his kinsmen
 - 1. Now we see his Christ
 - 2. Christ – the Greek name for Messiah
 - 3. “Who is God over all”
- D. This is Paul's Christ
 - 1. Christ is God; God in the flesh; God incarnate
- E. This is not the only time Paul and the other NT writers speak of Christ as God
- F. **Titus 2:13** (ESV) —

1. 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ...
- G. **Hebrews 1:8** (ESV) —
 1. 8 But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.”
 2. He (Paul?) quotes Psalm 45 and applies it to Jesus Christ – “Your throne, O God...”
- H. **John 1:1** (ESV) —
 1. 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
 2. **John 1:14** (ESV) —
 - a. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
- I. **John 20:28** (ESV) —
 1. 28 Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”
- J. **Acts 20:28** (ESV) —
 1. 28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.
 2. [the blood of God redeemed the church – the blood of Christ]
- K. So the NT authors speak repeatedly of Christ as God
 1. So when Paul concludes this outpoured heart-song with this benediction of Christ “who is God over all” he is making one of the most profound statements of Christ’s deity
 2. In fact, in this verse, we see the God-man – the deity and the humanity – of our Savior Jesus Christ
 3. “From their race, according to the flesh” – His humanity
 - a. “Who is God over all, blessed forever” – His deity
- L. To which we can only reply, as does Paul – Amen!

VI. Conclusion

- A. What generates sorrow and anguish in your Christian heart?
- B. Do your advantages distract you from your trust in Jesus alone?
- C. Is Jesus Christ your God over all?