

In preparation for today's message... I found in my files an article that I want to introduce today's passage with. I did not make a note of who wrote it (and I'm sorry for that)... but it speaks so well to our passage. The author of the article wrote:

On a short flight from Tucson to Phoenix... I noticed a young woman with her baby. They were both dressed in white overalls. The mother was smiling... and the little baby was saying "*Dada... Dada.*" The little baby was darling. She wore a pink bow... where there would probably be hair soon... and it was just darling. ... And they sat down opposite me. ... Every time somebody went by... the baby would squeal "*Dada... dada...*"

The young mother said they were going home... and Daddy was waiting for them. I think they had been gone overnight. It was a long... long time (like that.)

Everybody was so happy... and we all enjoyed the little baby. The mother had a little Thermos with orange juice in it. She kept feeding the baby – a little fruit... and then a little juice. ... It was a rough flight. Every time the baby cried... the mother fed her a little bit more orange juice... and a little more fruit.

I don't know how to get this story out without telling you the truth. The flight was turbulent. (The flight was so rough that the attendants had to remain seated.) ... Well... all of the fruit that had gone down – came up! (I think more came up... than had gone down. ... I think there was more that came up... then there was baby. Baby sputum was everywhere.

Those of us on the opposite side of the isle were not spared. In fact we were not in good condition at all. We kept trying to tell the young mother –

“it was just fine.” We were handing her tissue and things. (Most of us have been babies.) ... It was a very loving time – but a mess! The baby was crying and she looked awful. We couldn't cry... even though we looked awful. The mother was so sorry about it.

We landed. The minute we landed... the baby was fine. “*Dada... dada!*” The rest of us were just awful. We began to get off the plane... and we all moved very carefully. I had on a suit... and I was trying to decide whether to burn it... or just cut off the sleeve. Have you ever tried to get away from something that was very unpleasant – and it was you? ... Well... that is the way we were. It was really bad.

I looked out of the plane... and (there) waiting was the young man... who had to be “Daddy.” (White slacks... white shirt... white flowers... and a little green paper.) I thought – “I know what’s going to happen. He’s going to run to that baby... who now looks awful. (I mean the hair and overalls were dreadful!) He’s going to run to that baby... get one look... and keep on running... saying... “*Not my kid!*”

As he ran to the young mother... I wouldn’t say she threw the baby at him... but she did leave quickly to go get cleaned up. He picked up that baby... and I watched him as he hugged that baby... and kissed that baby... and stroked that baby’s hair. He said... “*Daddy’s baby’s come home!... Daddy’s baby’s come home!*”

I watched them all the way to the luggage claim area. ... He never stopped kissing the baby. He never stopped welcoming the baby back home. ... I thought: “*Where did I ever get the idea that my Father (God) is less loving*

than a young Daddy in white slacks... and a white shirt... with white flowers... and a green paper...?” [P A U S E]

Last week we ended with two verses in which the Apostle Paul did the best he could to describe the love that God has for every believer in Christ. ... Do you believe God has such a love for you...? But let me tell you something that may surprise you. I don't think that there are very many of us... who fully believe it. [P A U S E] Here (once again) are those unbelievable verses that we ended with last week...

Romans 8:38-39

Now let me tell you why I said that I don't think many of us believe that God loves us as much as Paul describes it here... .. Because in the next five verses which immediately follow... (which is our passage for today)... we find the Apostle Paul's description (through his own life)... of what - a dynamic believing in God's love for us -actually **looks** like. As we study our passage... please know that what you are seeing is a full belief... in Christ's unbelievable love. ... And I want you to ask yourself – “*does my life look anything like this...?*”

But let me say a word about proper Bible study. I don't intend this message to be: “*Hey look at the Apostle Paul! What a great guy. Let's all try to be a lot more like him...*” ... Any study of God's Word needs to put our eyes on Christ... and that is what we need to do here. Our focus will be on a full belief of Christ's love. ... Under divine inspiration... Paul wrote about Christ's incredible love... and was then directed to share his heart with us. We see what flows from a heart that really believes what he wrote. So... here's what - a dynamic believing in God's love for us - looks like...

Romans 9:1-5

I want you to notice four things about full belief about Christ's love.

I. It Has A Conscientious Concern for the Lost

Paul had a conscientious concern. Look at it again in verse 1:

Romans 9:1 (ESV)

*¹ I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; **my conscience bears me witness** in the Holy Spirit—*

Now... (let's just pretend... I won't actually do this... but pretend with me)... Pretend that I asked this audience... "*How many of you have a burden for lost souls? Do you care that so many people are dying around the world – without Christ in their lives... ? How many have a burden for your neighbors... or for lost family members?*" ... If I were to ask this series of questions... and then call for a "show of hands"... my guess is... that almost everybody... (if not this entire congregation)... would have their hand in the air.

Having such a burden for the lost... is expected of us... isn't it? ... But now (keep pretending with me)... Suppose the next thing I did... was to go up to each and every person who had their hand up... look them directly in the eye... with the tenacity of a Marine drill-sergeant... and ask them personally... "*Do you **really**...?*" ... My guess is that most would still answer yes... and here's why I think you would say "yes." ... I think they would be too embarrassed to say "no."

(Unlike the Apostle Paul) their conscience would not bear them witness. ... On the inside... many... would feel a twinge of conscience. and their

conscience would be telling them, “*That’s a lie. You don’t really have that much care about souls.*”

If we fully believed how much Christ loves us... I should be able to ask you... “*When’s the last time you ever shed a tear over some soul that was running headlong to Hell? ... Do you care? ... Do you really care?*” ...and you could say “yes” without even the slightest twinge in your conscious.

Paul writes in verses 1 and 2:

Romans 9:1-2 (ESV)

*¹ I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; **my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.***

His conscience could bear witness with him... to that truth. The first thing that motivates a person who fully believes that Christ loves them... is **a conscientious concern for the lost.** #2. Is...

II. A Compassionate Concern for the Lost

Not only did Paul have a conscientious concern... but he also had a compassionate concern. Look again at verses 1 and 2...

Romans 9:1-2 (ESV)

*¹ I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; **my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—² that I have **great sorrow** and unceasing anguish in my heart.***

The Apostle Paul was heartbroken. This was a compassionate concern. He knew what it was to weep over lost souls.

Now... I say this to my shame... but I have to say it... otherwise I am being very hypocritical. ... I am preaching just as much to **you**... as I am to

myself. Romans 9:1-5 convicts me deeply. So when I am done here today... I think we are going to need to do church-wide repenting! I need your prayers... and we all need each other's' prayers... that we would fully believe how much Christ loves us... and then live lives that show evidence of that.

Do you know what's missing in our church... and (probably most churches)...? Tears! ... I believe when our eyes are sincerely filled with tears... Christ's church will be filled with souls. (I am not talking about crocodile-tears that can be humanly produced... turned on and turned off on cue... as an outward appearance of compassionate concern. I am talking about tears that only God can elicit... when He moves in our hearts. ... We need to pray for this kind of moving of our hearts. I believe that something is wrong... when we don't have it.

Now... some of us don't cry outwardly very easily... that's not who we are. And some might be wondering... *"Pastor... you seem to want to make this church into something we have never been. Expressing strong emotions here has never been something we've ever done..."* (That may be true. Perhaps we have not showed much emotion in the past. ... But can you show me where that is Biblical...? Do you think Biblical teaching and Biblical example would not have us be more broken-hearted over the lost... than we are...?)

It takes me way out of my comfort zone... to think that God may just want us to look a little more like the MANY Biblical examples of those who've been used of God... (who have been blessed of God)... and other

believers down through church history. These were men of compassion... they were men of concern... they were men of a broken heart.

Listen to Moses as Moses prays and intercedes for his people. Moses said:

Exodus 32:32 (ESV)

³² *But now, if you will forgive their sin — but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written.”*

Please notice how Moses got so caught-up with his emotion... that he could not even complete his sentence. “*But now, if You will forgive their sin...*” – (What, Moses? Finish your sentence.) ... Then he just comes right out and says... “*O God, if you don’t forgive these people; if you’re not willing to take them back; Lord, if they’re not going to heaven, then,*” he says, “*I don’t want to go. Just wipe my name out of the book that You have written.*” ... This reminds us of Paul’s prayer in our passage today... doesn’t it?

Listen to Jeremiah (“the weeping prophet!”) Jeremiah said...

Jeremiah 9:1 (ESV)

¹ *Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!*

And... (of course) we have the example of Jesus.... When He got to the top of Mt. Olivet... on His final trip to Jerusalem... when they seized Him and crucified Him. He knew what was about to happen. Listen to the Lord Jesus Christ as Jesus weeps over Jerusalem. And... with big salty tears... and a heart broken... He says:

Matthew 23:37 (ESV)

³⁷ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

We need to learn what it is to weep over lost people! ... We need to learn what it is to have a compassionate concern! ... (LISTEN!) The world can tell when we mean business. You know as well as I do... that the people of this world can look around... and they can see whether or not a church has a concern for people. They can discern a conscientious concern that is also a compassionate concern. ... Please stay a few extra minutes after our time in the Word to pray for this.

Jesus was a man of tears. The apostle Paul was a man of tears. Jeremiah (the weeping prophet) was a man of tears. Jesus wept over Jerusalem. We need to ask God... that the things that break the heart of Jesus would break the heart of all of us.

Let's pray (simply) that we would be profoundly moved by God with concern over lost souls. Why? Because we want the church to grow? No. ... Because America's in trouble, and America needs criminals to be locked-up? No. Both of those things are true true... but neither is reason enough. Because God has such compassionate concern – is our reason. We need to earnestly pray that God would simply give us His compassionate concern for our lost friends and neighbors... and strangers that we meet.

Someone has described the church today as “a dry-eyed church in a hell-bent world.” ... [P A U S E] ... A full belief about Christ's love has...

III. A Continual Concern for lost souls

Not only does it have a conscientious concern and not only does it have a compassionate concern... it also has a continual concern. Look at verses 1 and 2 again:

Romans 9:1-2 (ESV)

*my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—² that I have great sorrow and **unceasing** anguish in my heart.*

You know human nature... and I know human nature. ... We get excited for a little while... but then it just dwindles away. ... We blow hot... while we sit here in church. But then we get in our cars... and before we even get out of the parking lot... we blow cold. ... There's no consistency.

We hear a message from the Word of God... and we get moved emotionally. ... But no sooner do we get back inside our homes... get back to the news... get back to the Netflix movie... get back to our Facebook page... back to preparing the meal... to the game on TV... or whatever it is - and we lose that concern. ... But a full belief in Christ's love... (which we need to pray for)... has a "continual concern" for the lost.

If God answers our prayers... then we are about to see many opportunities that He will be giving us to tell people about Jesus. It is not going to wear off – as we have gotten so used to. He won't let us forget. He will show us our many opportunities.

Will you have the boldness to ask Him for this? Are you nervous? ... A little excited? (Good! Me too.) ... Here is our next description...

IV. A Costly Concern for the Lost

Romans 9:1-3 (ESV)

my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 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.

Does this say what I think it says? There are some scholars who try to explain it away because of the impact of what Paul said. ... But the best scholarship that I've read says that you can't explain it away. Paul says in plain English, "*I would be willing to go to hell if they could go to heaven.*"

Stop and consider... that when Paul proclaimed Jesus as Israel's promised Messiah... the Jews considered Paul their **enemy!** Paul (who was one of Israel's most promising up-and-coming Pharisees) was not only viewed by his Jewish brethren as being dreadfully wrong... he was a full-on **traitor** in their eyes. (He was looked on as trying to destroy the very Judaism... that he once affirmed.)

That is why the Jews made such an effort to harass... hinder... and destroy the Apostle Paul... by any means possible. Several times when Paul succeeded in starting a new church... the Jews stirred up an angry mob and drove him out of that city. They sent in false teachers following after Paul to neutralize his efforts whenever he moved to a different city. ... In Acts 23... we read an account where a group of zealous Jews bound themselves with an oath to not eat any food or have any drink... until they had killed Paul. ... And also we have this...

2 Corinthians 11:24-26 (ESV)

²⁴ Five times I received at the hands **of the Jews** the forty lashes less one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; ²⁶ on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers,

danger **from my own people**, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers;

(You know)... the truly remarkable thing... is **not** that the Jews hated Paul. The truly remarkable thing... is **Paul's** overwhelming love for the very people that treated him this way.

This is a **supernatural** kind of love. It cannot be faked. And that is one of the main points that I am trying to make. We can never drum up ANY kind of continual... compassionate... costly concern... for the lost... on our own. We need a supernatural ability. It is something that God must develop in us. Just think about the kind of concern we see here.

Paul said "*I would go to hell if it would bring them to heaven.*" ... Now... such a thing is impossible. ... No man could ever go to hell... that another might go to heaven — no man other than the Lord Jesus (Who **did** that.)

(Honestly)... I don't understand a love as deep as that. I don't think I've ever come to that place where I've been so moved... that I would be willing to sacrifice my secure place in Heaven... if it meant that my **enemy** could go. I (probably) will never reach such a point. ... (You know) sometimes I am barely willing to suffer an inconvenience – for someone who isn't even an enemy. (I'm just being honest here.)

Is God pin-pointing your own heart defect through this... as He is mine...? Would you be willing to ask Him turn your heart whichever way that He wants...? ... Today's passage reveals to me that I have such a long way to go. Has it done the same to you? ... Folks... we need a compassionate... continuous... costly concern for lost souls! We have seen (today) what it would look like – if we fully believed the strength of Christ's love for us.

... ..

In 1928... a very interesting case came before the supreme court of Massachusetts. It concerned a man who had been walking on a boat dock... when suddenly he tripped and fell into the icy cold waters of the bay.

He came up sputtering and yelling desperately for help... "*Help! I can't swim!*" ... His friends were too far away. ... But there was one young man only a few yards away... sprawled-out on a deck chair... sunbathing. ... He heard the cries of the desperate man in the water. And the sunbather (who was an excellent swimmer)... simply turned his head so that he could have a better view to watch him flounder in the water... sink.. come up sputtering... and plea for help. The sunbather watched him do this several times... until finally the man went under and disappeared forever.

The family of the drowned man was so upset by this display of callous indifference... that they sued the sunbather. ... They lost! ... The court reluctantly ruled that the man on the dock had no legal responsibility (what-so-ever) to try to save the other man's life.

But Folks! How could we become indignant about the sunbather's indifference – if we are indifferent and casual about the thousands (around us) who are dying and going to Hell? Where is our anguish over those we are watching - as they flounder?

If God is speaking to you (right now) about a cold indifference in your heart toward the lost... then would you please join with me... and others... in one of two rooms... immediately after the service. (The side room and the fellowship room.) The meeting's agenda is simple. It might last 10

minutes... It might last 30. ... We are going to confess... and ask God to do a work in our hearts. Ask God to remove a heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ... And then... if God speaks to you about a particular person that He wants you to share the Gospel with... give the first name of the person to your group and ask them to pray for you and for them.