

A People Blessed to Be a Blessing

Romans 9: 4 – 5

“It ain’t what you got, it’s what you do with what you got.”

- Being gifted means nothing if you waste the giftedness.
 - Or, being blessed means nothing if you waste the blessings.
- This is the situation that the Apostle Paul is addressing in the verses we are considering this morning from Romans chapter 9. If you were here last week, you may recall that in verse 3 of Romans 9, the Apostle Paul talked about the state that many of his fellow Israelites found themselves in.

Romans 9: 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.

- What was it that put the Israelites into the position of being accursed and cut off from Christ? They wasted the blessings that God had poured out on them.

Romans 9: 4 – 5 They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. ⁵To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

1. What were the blessings that Israel wasted?

- In verses 4 and 5, Paul lists 8 blessings that belonged to the Jews simply because they were Israelites.

Romans 9: 4 They are Israelites, and to them belong (the blessings)

- What did it mean to be an Israelite?
 - Israel was the name that God gave to Jacob in Genesis 32. It was Jacob’s twelve sons that would become the twelve tribes of Israel.
 - Everyone who descended from Jacob, that is Israel, was an Israelite by birth, which meant that anyone who was born into Jacob’s family lineage was born into these blessings that Paul lists here in Romans 9.
 - Think why that is true. Who was Jacob’s father? Isaac. Who was Isaac’s father? Abraham. What did God promise Abraham and his offspring?

Genesis 12: 2 – 3 I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

- God promised to bless Abraham, and his offspring. Therefore, the promise of God’s blessing passed from Abraham to Isaac, and then from Isaac to Jacob, and then from Jacob to his twelve sons, and from the 12 sons to their offspring.
- And why did God promise to bless Abraham and his offspring? So that they would be a blessing. So that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through them. How would that happen? Jesus.

Matthew 1: 2 - 16 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³and Judah the father of.....Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

○ All of these blessings that Paul lists here in Romans 9 were given by God to bring forth Jesus from Abraham's family line to be the redeemer of all of God's elect—Jew and Gentile alike.

- So, what was the first blessing that God bestowed on the Israelites? God made them His chosen people by adopting them as His own—"theirs is the adoption."

Hosea 11: 1 - 4 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.... it was I who taught Ephraim (another name for Israel) to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love

○ Earlier in the book of Deuteronomy, this is how God speaks of Israel, his child.

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 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, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers.

- Because God adopted Israel as His son, Israel was brought into a new and special relationship with God that no other people could lay claim to.
- But Israel never valued this new special relationship with God.

Hosea 11: 2 The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols.

- Rather than enjoying and taking advantage of their special relationship with God, Israel turned away from God.
 - Out of Israel would come God's true son, Jesus, but because Israel had rejected the Father, they also would reject the Son.
- Being adopted as sons, meant that Israel could enjoy the presence of God in their midst in a way that no other people could. "The divine glory" refers to God's visible glory cloud—called the shekinah—the manifestation of his presence, dwelling in their midst in the tabernacle and temple.

1 Kings 8:10-11 when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, ¹¹so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.

○ The visible glory of God dwelt among the Israelites. But as amazing as that is, Jesus is an even greater manifestation of God's presence.

1 John 1: 14 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.

- Throughout their history Israel would continually turn away from the glory of the Lord to pursue other gods, trying to be like all the nations around them rather than being the Lord's chosen possession.
- "The covenants" were the way God made a special relationship with the people.
 - We already have touched on an example of this with Abraham. In Genesis 12, 15, and again in 17, God establishes a covenant with Abraham, in which God not only promised to bless Abraham, but also his offspring and ultimately all of the nations of the earth.

- But God also made a covenant with Moses and the Israelites as God gave them the law at Mt Sinai.

Exodus 24:8 And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

- Why did Moses throw blood on the Israelites? As you read the passage that took place after Moses read the law to the Israelites and the Israelites promised to keep the law. The blood showed the penalty for breaking the law. If there was disobedience, then a blood sacrifice would be necessary to take away sin. The sacrifice of blood obviously points to Jesus and what God would do to save us from our sins.
- But God wasn’t done making covenants with Israel. Years later God would make one more covenant with Israel and their king, David.

2 Samuel 7: 12 – 13 I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

- That covenant promise, in a way, refers to Solomon, David’s son. Solomon would build a house for the Lord, the Temple, but Solomon’s throne would not be established forever. Clearly God’s covenant promise is pointing to a future offspring from David’s line, who would also build a house for God’s name, the church, and who would reign forever as king of kings and Lord of lords. His name is Jesus.

Matthew 1: 2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.... ⁶and Jesse the father of David the king... ¹⁶and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

- As God makes each of these covenants with Israel, He is creating a special relationship with them and promises to bless them. But in every case, these covenants point to a future Messiah who would bless all nations by saving them through his blood and ruling over them as their king.
- But the history of the Old Testament is that Israel continually turned away from the covenant promises of God, and were covenant breakers, because they valued these covenant promises so little.
- “The receiving of the law” refers to God giving the Ten Commandments and all of the law by revelation to Israel.

Deuteronomy 4: 5 – 7 See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ⁶Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ ⁷For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?

- The law that God gave Israel had a twofold purpose, one is that the Law set Israel apart from the nations around them. As God’s chosen possession, they were to be a light to the Gentiles, so it was important that they live in obedience to God.

- But the Law also was given to Israel to show them their inability to keep the Law perfectly and truly be holy before the Lord. God's intention was that as Israel saw their inability, they would also see God's provision of a sacrifice that would both take away their sin and clothe them in real righteousness.

Galatians 3: 24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

- Which brings us to the next blessing—"The temple worship." It outlined how the people could approach God. Hebrews 9:1-7 describes it well.

Hebrews 9: 1 – 7 Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. ²For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. ³Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place....the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, ⁷but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people.

- Everything in the earthly Tabernacle and later the Temple, pointed to the need of a blood sacrifice, a washing and preparation for purification, and a priest to go in on your behalf. All these God-given rituals showed that we could not approach God in just any manner—we needed blood to atone for sin, and a priest-substitute. Jesus is our sacrifice, our priest, and our righteousness.
 - But by the time of Jesus, the Jews had turned away from the sacrifice, and sought to have a righteousness of their own, rather than faith in the sacrifice that God provided.
- Because Israel continually strayed from God, God raised up prophets to warn them and call them back to a right relationship with God. This is the next blessing that Paul lists in Romans 9: 4—"The promises," which refer to the numerous Old Testament prophecies and promises about the coming of a Messiah that God gave to Israel.
 - These promise and prophecies are scattered throughout the Old Testament in verses like 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; 53; Micah 5:2.
- And along with the promises and the prophecies, God also gave Israel the blessing of "The patriarchs"—fathers of the faith who would point Israel to Jesus. The patriarchs obviously include men like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but also men like Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and David.
 - All nations have great leaders, but Israel's great leaders were different because God spoke to Israel through these men. Virtually all of them predicted and foreshadowed the coming of the Messiah, in some way.
- All of these blessings were blessings designed to point Israel to the ultimate blessing that God was promising to them—Jesus the Messiah.
 - "From them is traced the human ancestry of Christ." Jesus was Jewish by birth. He was born into Israel. For the Son of God to become human, he had to become part of some race and culture. By becoming a Jew, God was giving

the Jews not only a great honor but making it “easier” for them to relate to the Son of God than anyone else.

- What are we doing with all of the blessings that God has given to us?
 - If all we will do is shake our heads in disbelief and feel prideful that we aren’t like Israel, then we learn nothing from all of this. Aren’t we at least a little like them? Maybe even more than we would like to think?
 - The Israelites had it all, but we have even more.
 - In Christ, we are God’s chosen possession.

1 Peter 2: 9 – 10 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

- In Christ, we have the adoption.

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”

- In Christ, we have the glory of the Lord within us.

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

- In Christ, we have the fulfillment of every covenant promise God has made.

2 Corinthians 1: 20 For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

- In Christ and his righteousness, we have met all the righteous requirements of the law.

Romans 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes

- In Christ, we have the true Temple and perfect sacrifice.

Hebrews 8:1 – 2 Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.

- We don’t have the shadows and symbols of our redeemer that the Old Testament Israelites had. We have the real thing—Jesus.

2 Peter 1: 19 we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,

- Are we paying attention, or are we like Israel just frittering it all away?

It ain’t what you’ve got, it is what you do with what you got.

Luke 12: 48 For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

- Before we shake our heads at the Israelites and their failure, we need to ask, “What about me?” Am I wasting the blessings that are mine through Christ?

2. What did Israel do that caused them to waste the blessings that were theirs?



There are probably more, but I think we can focus on three specific things that caused Israel to waste the blessings that God bestowed upon them, and as we focus on these three, we will see what causes us to waste the blessings that God gives us through faith in Christ.

- You see the truth is, we are not that different from the Israelites. We are the same people, living in the same world, afflicted by the same sins of ingratitude, unbelief, and pride.
 - These three things are the underlying sins that drive all of our surface sins. They are the sins that caused Israel to waste all of the blessings.
- As Israel entered the promised land, God warned them to remember all He had done for them and to continually give thanks for His blessings. We too are admonished to:

1 Thessalonians 5: 18 give thanks in all circumstances

- Think what happens when we forget to be thankful.

Romans 1: 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

- Failure to give thanks for the blessings that God has bestowed on us will cause us to turn away from God and become delusional in our thinking. Rather than humbly receiving God's blessings as gifts of grace, we will think we have earned it all, and we deserve it all.
- The less grateful we are, the more our hearts will swell with pride.
 - Over and over again in their history we can see that happen to Old Testament Israel. Blinded by their pride in being God's chosen people, rather than using the law to point them to their need for righteousness, they used the law to be their righteousness.

Matthew 23: 27 – 28 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

- In their pride, rather than allowing the Temple worship to point them to salvation through Christ's sacrifice, they instead saw the Temple as their salvation and the Law as their righteousness.
- Rather than believing God and repenting of their sin they trusted in their religious rituals instead.
- But it wasn't just a lack of gratitude and pride that caused Israel to waste the blessings God gave to them. It was also unbelief.
 - They did not trust God, or God's promises.
 - Rather than delighting in being God's people and living under His rule, they instead longed to be like the nations around them, and because of that, over and over again, they gave up worshipping God to instead worship the idols of the neighboring nations.
- Ingratitude, pride, and unbelief caused them to miss the point of all of the blessings—Jesus.

- And because they missed Jesus, they became a people accursed and cutoff from Christ.

“It ain’t what you got; it is what you do with what you got”

To whom much is given, much is expected.

- All the blessings God gave to Old Testament Israel pointed to Jesus, if the Jews became accursed and cut off because in their ingratitude, pride, and unbelief they wasted the blessings that God had given them, how much more serious will it be for us, if we waste the blessings that are ours because Christ has come as the final fulfillment of all of the Old Testament blessings?
 - The blessing the Israelites had were shadows and symbols, we have the real thing—Jesus.

3. How do we keep from falling into the same trap?

- On the surface, the answer is obvious. Gratitude, faith, and humility. Those were the things that Israel lacked that caused them to waste the blessing God had poured out on them, and they are also the things that will cause us to waste the blessings God has given us in Jesus.
 - But how do we cultivate gratitude, faith, and humility, in our lives?
 - The answer is by living each day in close relationship to Christ, and the community Christ has given to us—the church. .
- The best way for you to experience and hold onto the blessings of Christ is in his church. I know that might sound a little self-serving, but it is true.
 - My job each week isn’t merely to teach you doctrine. It is to preach the Gospel. The Gospel isn’t just the means by which you get saved, it is the means by which you live your life. It is faith in the Gospel that will give you a heart that is humble and full of gratitude.
 - When I had college chemistry, we had lecture and lab. In some ways church is like that. I hate to think of our teaching times together as lectures, but I guess they kind of are. It is where we hear the truths of the Gospel. The truth of who God is, who we are, and what God has done for us.
 - Hearing the Gospel in our times of study together humbles us and reminds us that we are sinners saved by grace, and as we are reminded of what Christ has done for us, our hearts are filled with gratitude.
 - That is what should be taking place in every study, every “lecture” we have here at church, because each of us needs to hear and be reminded of all the blessings that are ours in Christ on a regular basis. If we are not hearing the Gospel, we will soon become ungrateful and proud.
 - But where is the lab? It is living life together here in the church. The lab is where we apply what we are learning. If you just come for the lecture, if that is the extent of the involvement, then you are missing out and

honestly you are wasting the blessing that God has poured out on you in Christ.

➤ The Christian life is designed by God to be lived in community.

"It is easily forgotten that the fellowship of Christian brethren is a gift of grace, a gift of the Kingdom of God that any day may be taken from us, that the time that still separates us from utter loneliness may be brief indeed. Therefore, let him who until now has had the privilege of living a common Christian life with other Christians praise God's grace from the bottom of his heart. Let him thank God on his knees and declare: It is grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in community with Christian brethren." — Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together

➤ The Christian life is a life of one anothering in the name of Christ—loving one another as Christ has loved us, forgiving one another as Christ has forgiven us, being merciful to one another as Christ has been merciful to us. As we fellowship together, as we minister together, we will have to do the very things for others that Christ has done for us.

- ◆ You cannot one another, without another. The Christian life is made to be lived in community, and that community is the church.
- ◆ When we choose to not be engaged in the life of the church, we are depriving ourselves and others from experiencing Christ, and when we stop experiencing Christ, when we forget all his benefits, we will soon begin to live lives marked with ingratitude, pride, and unbelief.

- This is why one of our goals as a church is to have every member be a minister. This is how we experience all the blessings that are ours in Christ.
 - We have worked hard to have lots of different lab experiences here at Foothills—places where you can apply the Gospel that we are faithfully endeavoring to teach each week.
 - Sunday morning is vitally important, your family needs to be in worship with other believers, but church, living life together in Christ isn't just an hour on Sunday morning. Church is living life together in a way that lets us do the one anothering of the Gospel.
 - Where can you use all of the benefits of the Gospel that are yours in Christ to one another here at Foothills? The opportunities abound. What small group or study will you choose to be part of to make yourself available to be part of one anothering?
 - What ministry team will you be part of not just to serve Christ and his church, but to put into practice the blessings that are yours in Christ?
- In a very real sense, today marks the beginning of a new year of ministry at Foothills. As the fall season commences all of our ministries start back up again.
 - Where will you plug in so you and others can experience the blessings that are yours in Christ?

It ain't what you got, it's what you do with what you got.