

**Where Are The Promises of God?**  
**Romans 9:1-9**  
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**INTRODUCTION**

Romans chapter eight is a theological triumph full of joy and gladness. But not all join in this triumph. And now, from the glory of chapter eight, Paul remembers the lost and deceived among his own family. He opens his heart and speaks very personally about his very own loved ones who are still rejecting Jesus.

Pouring out the sorrow of his heart over his lost family, Paul addresses a reasonable question: have God's promises failed because they have been rejected? In the end, we see that God's promises stand firm even if people reject them to their own destruction. The promise of God to save all that trust Jesus is as strong as ever, but we must depend on it.

*Depend completely on the promises of God and encourage your unsaved loved ones to do the same!*

**Romans 9:1-3 Sorrow Over The Lost**

**Vs 1 “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not...”** This is a jarring change of tone. Just a verse before Paul was rejoicing in the love of God, but now Paul weeps to heaven over his lost family.

**Vs 1-2 “my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,”** Paul says that He is telling the truth three times in **Vs 1** invoking God with two oaths. Why is he so insistent that he is not lying?

Paul was dogged by people accusing him of rejecting Judaism and despising his Jewish heritage (Acts 20). He loved his people and never stopped "being Jewish" (1 Cor 9:20, 2 Cor 11:22), but those that he loved called him a traitor. So he mourns with...

**“great heaviness and continual sorrow...”** Paul's grief is great and his sorrow is endless even to the point that...

**Vs 3 “I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren”** Paul almost wishes that he could be cut off from Christ; taken out of Christ for the sake of his unsaved family. Paul may be thinking about Moses similar request in Exodus 32. After Israel has sinned with the golden calf, Moses interceded for the people and suggests that if God could not forgive their sin then he would die for it instead of Israel.

“Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! "Yet now, if You will forgive their sin but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written." (Ex 32:31-32)."

**“For my brethren”** has the idea of "on behalf of" in the same way that Christ "died for us" in Romans 5:8. Paul knows that it is impossible, but in his grief, he almost wishes that he could go to hell in the place of unbelieving Israel.

*Know that sorrow over lost loved ones, and even being hated by those that you love, is a normal part of the Christian life! In your sorrow, lean on Jesus and look forward to His return, knowing that He suffers the same sorrow!*

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (1 Peter 3:9).”

### **Romans 9:4-5 Sorrow Tempered by God's Enduring Promise**

Paul looks up from his sorrow and remembers God's good and irrevocable promises. Paul lists the grace that God has shown His people.

**the adoption**, God has adopted the nation of Israel (Ex 4:22) like he adopts all who have trusted Christ (Rom 8). For this adoption to be effective in any individual life, a person must have faith like Abraham. Nevertheless, the national adoption stands firm even as it does with individuals who “have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father (Rom 8:15).”

**the glory**, this the glory, weight, and significance of God's presence. Israel was uniquely privileged as the place of God's glory on earth during the Old Covenant (Isa 60:1-3). As the stewards of glory, Israel would be used to cover the world in the glory of God.

“O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth. Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people (Psl 96:1-3).”

**the covenants**, God made many covenants with Israel. The first and greatest of these is the unconditional, eternal covenant that God made concerning Abraham in Genesis 15.

In Moses' day, God gave Israel another covenant that would be called the Law (Exd 19). The Law was a conditional covenant; God would bless Israel in so far as they kept the Law. But Israel could not fulfill this the covenant of the Law and it became a great snare to them until they were conquered and carried off to Babylon as slaves.

But Israel's failure to keep the conditional covenant of the Law did not cancel the older unconditional covenant of grace. And even in the ruins of the covenant of the Law, God promised a new covenant.

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah...I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jer 31:31-33).”

**the giving of the law**, The Law was part of the Covenant at Sinai (Exd 19) but it was also its own special blessing. "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes (Psl 19:7-8)."

**the service of God**, This was the worship in the Tabernacle and Temple. In a world filled with false religion, Israel enjoyed true religion. They alone worshiped a God who valued them and heard their prayers (Lev 26).

**and the promises**; In addition to the major covenants, Israel received many promises of God. The greatest of these promises was that an anointed King would come – a messiah to rule the world in righteousness (Isa Ch 42).

**“of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came...”** God promised to bless the world through Abraham (Gen Ch 12) and through him God Himself came into the world (John ch 8).

**“...who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.”** Christ is greater than all of the other blessings that Israel has received from God. This is why it is so heartbreaking to see Israel rejecting Him for now.

**Vs 5** could be understood as calling the Christ “blessed by God, forever” or saying that the “Christ is God, blessed forever.” Either interpretation is possible with what Paul says but the second, that Christ is the eternally blessed God, is the more likely in context. There are two reasons for this:

First, pointing out Jesus' divinity explains why Paul says that Christ came from the fathers “according to the flesh” in **Vs 5**. Don't all mere humans come into the world “according to the flesh?” of their parents? So, **Vs 5** nicely balances Jesus' humanity and deity.

Second, Paul does not hesitate to put Jesus in the place of God in Romans. One powerful example is Romans 14:9-12.

“For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us shall give account of himself to God (Rom 14:9-12).”

Here Paul calls Jesus the Lord of the living and the dead. And Paul takes an Old Testament prophecy (Isa 45:23) about God judging the world and applies it directly to Jesus. Compare the first and last sentences of Romans 14:9-12.

The biblical teaching that Jesus is God does not depend on this understanding of Romans 9:5, but this understanding makes the most sense in context.

*See all that God does for His people and know that He is not unfaithful or unloving!*

Even as Paul contemplates the goodness of God, he enters back into a feeling of worship with **Vs 5**.

*In the face of human failures, remind yourself and those you love of God's faithfulness!*

### **Romans 9:6-9 So, Has God's Promise Failed?**

**Vs 6 “But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect.”**

When we see a loved one, one who has every reason and every chance to do right, live and die in their sins, The natural question is: where is God?

Has His promise failed? That is what Paul means by the Word of God “taking no effect” - God's promise failing.

The answer is “no!” Many people have all of the advantages but still alienate themselves from God. In fact, “advantages” can hinder our relationship with God by leading us to smug pride.

## **Vs 6 “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:”**

Your background and advantages (or disadvantages) do not make you a child of God, rather the children of God are according to faith in the promise of God.

As Jesus taught "...Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3)." And He said this to a high born and noble decedent of Abraham, because **“they are not all Israel who are of Israel.”**

A good background does not make you a child of God, to be in the family of God you must be a “child of the promise” by trusting the promises of God though Jesus.

*“confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved (Rom 10:9)!”*

**Vs 7-8** This is the answer to Paul's question in **Vs 6**, God's promises remain faithful and powerful for all who trust in them. The problem is that people sometimes reject God's promises because they want to follow their own way.

“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (Prov 16:25).” To illustrate this Paul recalls a part of Old Testament history (Genesis 16-22) that his readers knew very well.

God promised Abraham a son when both he and his wife Sarah were already old (Genesis 15). So they waited for the son of promise until Abraham was in his mid-80s. Now old and fearful, they tried to force God's promise by their own strength. Sarah had Abraham go to her servant to bear a child for them; this was Ishmael, the child of the flesh (Genesis 16).

God would bless Ishmael (Genesis 21), but he was not the child of promise. Ishmael represented Abraham looking to human strength rather than to the promise of God.

**Vs 9 For this is the word of promise, “At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son.”**

Fourteen years later, when Abraham was 100 years old and as good as dead, God came to him and told Him that the promise would so be fulfilled. A year later, Issac, the son of promise, would be born Sarah, and 90-year-old Sarah would nurse him (Genesis 21).

God had waited until Abraham and Sarah's physical strength was completely gone to show them (as well as you and I) that it was the promise and power of God that makes someone a child of Abraham, not human strength.

In fact, when we try to force our own way, we often cause harm. The birth of Ishmael immediately caused strife in the home (Genesis 16). That strife would turn to violence, and even today many Arabic speaking people identify themselves as decedents of Ishmael and still wage their feud with the other children of Abraham - the Jewish people.

**Vs 8** As it is today, so it was in Paul's time. People want to believe that their pedigree, background, or nationality make them a child of God. We talk about being raised in Church, being brought up baptist, or coming from a Christian family. But that is all trivial in the face of one important question: have you been born again?

Are you just a child of God “in the flesh” through your background and lifestyle, or have you personally trusted in God's promises as a “child of promise?”

*Be saved through the promises of God, and place no confidence in the flesh!*

## CONCLUSION

Deep and profound sorrow over loved ones who have estranged themselves from God is normal. When you have “**great heaviness and continual sorrow**” like Paul, you are not alone. And also know that Paul was not the first. Jesus wept over His people that would reject salvation, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not (Luke 13:34).”

*Pour out your heart to God, and know that you are not alone in sorrow!*

*God loves your family even more than you could! In your grieving love, you can draw closer to Jesus because being Christlike involves loving the lost.*

Dwell on the promises of God, because the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. You will find great comfort in the promises and love of God know that they are unchanging and eternal. As Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away (Mark 13:31)."

*Know that God's promises endure even if they are rejected for a time! Sustain yourself on those promises! Constantly encourage the dying, especially “church kids,” to personally cling to the promises of God!*

*Teach your family that God's promises and our personal response matter more than family heritage, background, or upbringing! Through teaching and love, help your kids see that they must take personal ownership of the faith for it to do them any lasting good!*

Some people have all of the advantages and they become proud, bitter, or smug – they are not children of Promise. Others have absolutely nothing and they know that they have nothing so they cling with all of their strength on the promises – these are children of the Promise.

Are you a child of God through His promises? If you are depending on your upbringing, church attendance, good works, political values, or any other work of human strength, then you are not of promise and you are not a child of God.

*Depend completely on the promises of God and encourage your unsaved loved ones to do the same!*