

Sunday Sermon 8/20/23

Chosen, not forsaken.

Romans 9:1-5 & Isaiah 49:15-23

Have you heard the saying, “The grass always seems greener on the other side of the fence.” Sometimes human beings imagine a life outside of what they have been blessed with and covet what is out there, sometimes without knowing that there is a whole rough terrain and the seemingly green grass is all fake. This reminds me of a kid in our neighborhood a few years ago. He was from a very loving and caring family, but he chose to run away with a friend to Colorado just because they would be able to access some substance there. You can imagine the family's anguish in looking for their loved one. I heard that they found and brought him home, only to run away again a few days later. I don't know whether they were successful in bringing him home in the long run. However, their love for him was evident in their actions.

BODY: This is the scenario in **Romans 9**, where we see Paul in agony as he wrestles with the rejection of Jesus by his people. Remember, he himself had been a persecutor of Christians, but now, after meeting the savior, he understands their struggle and feels the pain of seeing those whom God chose as heirs of His benefits reject him, as espoused in **V4 &5**, which says, *“They are Israelites and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenant, the giving of laws, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and according to the flesh comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever”* [Rom 9:5-5]. Paul is now standing at a higher ground through the grace of God and grieving when he sees how his brothers and sisters have rejected the means of grace, the incarnate word of God, by whom and through whom God intends to redeem.

At some point, Paul wishes he sacrificed by trading places with his kinsmen so that they don't miss out on the grace of God. He knew that Jesus was the only sacrifice we have, but he says this to show the deep desire he had for the salvation of the Jews.

So, what does this mean to us here today?

At this point, we have to look back to where we were last week in chapter 8 when Paul told us a very reassuring truth that nothing in all creation *“will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord”* [8:39], to today's lament on the state of the chosen people. Does it mean the people who got last

week's message are the Gentles like you and me, and should the Jews be forsaken? Far from it. Paul is awakening us to the reality that takes us way back to the **prophet Isaiah**, who reminds us that a mother may forget the baby at her breast, but God cannot, for they are engraved on his palms (**Isaiah 49:15**).

When we look at our families, churches, and communities, our hearts grieve for those who have not accepted the grace of God. Like that child who runs away from home, they wander away from their creator who chose them among other nations. We see them making wrong choices every day, and like Paul, we cry for them to come to God's saving grace. God reassures us again this week that he will not forsake his chosen ones. **Psalms 94:14** says, "The Lord will not reject his people; he will never forsake his inheritance." So, it does not matter what you think about yourself, what you may have done, or where you find yourself today. Let us be reminded by Paul's words to the **Ephesians** that "*It is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God...*" **Eph 2:8**. Yes, even those who have chosen to run away from home are still loved and not forsaken by their loving savior. Like Paul, are there people we love so much that we would want to be in their place so that we could make better choices on their behalf? We cannot write any person, no matter where they are, we cannot be comfortable until everybody is in. As such, we are called to reach out to them today with this message of hope and grace. Let us remind them that the arms of our savior are open wide. Indeed they are chosen and loved, not forsaken. **Amen.**