

Sermon Romans 9 1 5 8th Sunday after Pentecost Series A

Sermon: 8th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Romans 9:1-5 (v.5)

Theme: How do you manage the blessings God gives you?

Goal: That we don't squander the gifts of God (as Israel did), but use them to proclaim Christ for all.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Paul shows his great sorrow for his kinsmen, the Israelites, who rejected the Messiah. Like Moses, who interceded for his people and was ready to give even his own life for them to save them when they had gone astray in the episode of the Golden Calf (Exodus 32:30-32); and like Jesus, who wept over Jerusalem because of her impenitence (Luke 19:41); so Paul was now ready to be condemned by God if it was possible, to swap his salvation with the salvation of his people, the Israelites, who had squandered the many opportunities God had given them and had even killed the promised Messiah, Christ, the Lord!

It is easy for us now to condemn the Israelites for their unbelief and impenitence. They had everything they needed for their salvation and they rejected it. Rejecting Christ, they rejected everything God had prepared for them, even if they clinged to the OT and to the tradition. But we have to learn from this. “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as a warning for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages come” (1 Corinthians 10:11). Therefore, we cannot simply condemn the Israelites for squandering God's gifts. As God's people now, the Israel of the New Testament, we have received similar and even bigger gifts. How do we manage them?

Let's first go through the gifts the Israelites received, as listed by Paul in our text:

I – Israel’s gifts: there are several of them

A) *The first one* is the adoption: God said: “When Israel was a child, I loved him” (Hosea 11:1). Moses said to them: “You are the children of the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 14:1). Among all the nations, Israel was God’s chosen people.

B) *The second* is the Glory: They had the revealed manifestation of God. When the Tabernacle was dedicated in the wilderness, “the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of the Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:34). And it happened again when Solomon’s temple was dedicated (1 Kings 8:10-11). To none of the other peoples God revealed Himself in such a glorious way!

C) *The third* gift is the Covenants: The Covenant done with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) was repeated several times to other leaders, building up a golden chain throughout the Old Testament leading to the main Covenant made by the blood of Jesus.

D) The *fourth* is giving of the Law: The written Law given to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 20) was a privilege granted to the Israelites. They knew the Law of God in details. Other peoples had just a shadow of the Law written in their hearts, but they didn’t have the complete Law of God.

E) The *fifth* gift is the temple of worship: God Himself instructed the Israelites how He wanted to be worshiped. He gave even the details of the building of the Tabernacle and of Salomon’s temple. It was something unique to the Israelites.

F) The *sixth* is the promises: Surely the most important gift received from God! The promises about the Messiah, God’s Son, are part of God’s Covenant with His people. God would send His Son to be born from this people, and He would save His people from their sins. (Isaiah 9 and 11).

G) The *seventh* is the fathers: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all other forefathers. Israel was proud to have these fathers; but the people didn't follow the paths of these fathers. They claimed they were "children of Abraham", but Jesus called them "children of the devil"

(John 8:33, 44).

H) *Finally the eighth* gift of Israel is Christ, who is the culmination of all the gifts received from God! They got Christ in first hand! But they rejected Him...

II – Our gifts

Now, about us: We can put together a similar bunch of gifts and blessings that God bestows upon us:

A) *Adoption*: We preached about this some weeks ago. "In love God predestined us to be adopted as his children through Jesus Christ"

(Ephesians 1:5). No doubt that we are God's beloved children!

B) *Glory*: Jesus was manifested in Glory to His disciples at the Transfiguration Mountain. John testifies: "We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

C) *The Covenant*: We received a New Covenant from Christ in His Body and Blood (Luke 22:20), and God renews His Covenant with us every time we celebrate the Holy Communion!

D) *The Law*: Jesus gave us a new and bigger Law: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34, 35).

E) *The worship*: We are not bound to worship in only one place any more, as the Jews were. Jesus says: "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23,

24).

F) *The promises*: The promises of the Old Testament were fulfilled in Christ; but He gave us new promises about our future: The resurrection of the body and the life everlasting in the New Heaven and the New earth (Revelation 21:1).

G) *The fathers*: We are called as “children of Abraham” because we have the same faith that Abraham had. Not the natural children of Abraham are God’s children, but the children of the promise, like Isaac and all believers, says Paul right after our text. “So, then, He (Abraham) is the father of all who believe, ... who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had...” (Romans 4:11, 12).

H) *Christ*, the culmination of all, “who is God over all, forever praised. Amen!” We have Christ richly in His Word and in the Sacraments. He is not far, but He is among us!

Conclusion: What are we doing with all these blessings? They are much bigger than the blessings the Israelites received. Do we appreciate them rightly? Do we use them and do we share them with all? How are we managing them in our personal life and as a church body? God is good and patient and we still have His blessings abundantly. Some of the first Christian churches of the Biblical time, founded by Paul and the other apostles, lost these blessings because they didn’t manage them well, going astray from the truth, - like it had happened to the Jews. Several Christian churches nowadays are going astray, far from the truth, following the tendency of the society. May God preserve us in His grace in truth and faithfulness, never removing from our midst His blessings listed in this text, but maintaining Christ as the real centre of our faith and of our life. Amen.

(Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 03 August 2014 – Based on ABC, Series A, pp. 185,186)