

Accursed from Christ?

Edited by Leon King

Romans 9:3 *For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:*

The Apostle Paul sincerely desired and fervently prayed for the salvation of his fellow Israelites (Ro 10:1; 11:12-14).

Romans 10:1 (KJV) *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*

Romans 11:12-14 (KJV) *Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? **13** For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: **14** If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.*

The fact that most all of them were rejecters of the Lord Jesus Christ caused Paul terrible grief and uninterrupted pain at the very core of his being. It was so hard on him that he said he "could wish that he himself were accursed from Christ for his flesh-and-blood Jewish brethren."

The question is, did Paul mean this in a literal, absolute sense, or only in a figurative relative sense? Did he mean that he would have been willing to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire if it had meant that his Jewish brethren could spend eternity in Heaven? There are differences of opinion among sovereign grace Baptists as to the exact meaning of Paul's words in Ro 9:3.

I. Should Paul's words in Ro 9:3 should be interpreted in a literal, absolute sense? If so, this means that –

A. Paul loved his fellow Israelites so much that he was literally and absolutely willing to exchange places with them.

B. He had the same attitude toward his Jewish brethren that Moses and Jesus had (Ex 32:31-32; Mt 23:37).

Exodus 32:31-32 (KJV) *And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. 32 Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.*

Matthew 23:37 (KJV) *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*

II. Should Paul's words in Ro 9:3 should be interpreted in a figurative, relative sense. If so, this means that –

A. If this were a case of hyperbole* and was designed only to make a very strong point. Hyperbole is a figure of speech in the English language; here are some examples: (“I would give my right arm to have that car.” “I would sell the shirt on my back to be able to buy that book.” “I would do anything I can to help my church and pastor.” “I would give anything to see my loved ones saved.”) [*Hyperbole is exaggeration for the purpose of emphasis and without any intention of being taken literally: Example: I am *completely* starved.]

B. This was a case of Paul being willing to become a martyr for Christ if it would produce the salvation of his fellow Jews (Joh 15:13).

John 15:13 (KJV) *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

C. This was a case of Paul being willing to be excommunicated or excluded from New Testament church membership and its privileges if it would produce the salvation of his fellow Jews (1Co 9:27; 12:12; Ga 3:27).

1 Corinthians 9:27 (KJV) *But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*

1 Corinthians 12:12 (KJV) *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.*

Galatians 3:27 (KJV) *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

D. Paul would not have wished for something he knew to be an utter impossibility. This is probably the actual center of the argument. Paul did not say he "wished himself accursed," but that "he could wish himself accursed..." Though he may have done so, it would not have accursed him, for he was a child of God who had passed from death unto life. He would never again come into condemnation before God.

E. Paul would have contradicted what he had just written in Ro 8:35-39 about the fact that the true Christian can never and will never be separated from the love of God in Christ.

Romans 8:35-39 (KJV) *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? **36** As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. **37** Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. **38** For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, **39** Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

F. Paul would have been expressing a greater love for his fellow Jews than for the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, which would be a form of idolatry.

G. Paul, as a true Christian, would have had a God-given desire to spend eternity with the Lord Jesus, not to be eternally separated from Him in the Lake of Fire.

H. Paul, as a true Christian, would never desire his own eternal damnation.