

Paul and the Gifts of Israel **(19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)**

Romans 9:1-5—Paul’s Love for His Fellow Israelites

¹ I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit, ² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ *For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race* (Greek *kata sarka*, “according to the flesh”). ⁴ *They are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises;* ⁵ to them belong *the patriarchs, and of their race* (Greek *ex hōn*), *according to the flesh* (Greek *kata sarka*), *is the Christ, who is God over all, be blessed forever.* Amen. (Romans 9:1-5)

1. Israelites: Paul’s “brethren” (Greek *syngennēs*) according to “the flesh” (9:3)
2. Sonship: Israel is God’s “firstborn son” (Exod 4:22-24)
3. Glory: the “glory-cloud” of God’s presence (Exodus 40:34; 1 Kings 8:11)
4. Covenants: sacred family bond with God (Gen 15:18; Gen 26:3-5; Exod 24:7-8)
5. Law: especially the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-7; Deut 5:1-22)
6. Worship: the sacrifices and feasts in the Temple (cf. Leviticus 1-7, 23)
7. Promises: prophecies of a “new covenant” (Jer 31:31-33)
8. Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exod 3:13)
9. Christ: “the anointed one” (Greek *ho christos*) = the Messiah (cf. Jer 30:9; 33:15)
10. God: Does Paul refer to Jesus as “God” here? (Rom 9:5)
 - a. *Yes*: “the Christ, who is God over all, be blessed forever.”
 - b. *No*: “the Christ. God who is over all be blessed forever.”

The Living Tradition

Vatican II: As the sacred synod searches into *the mystery of the Church*, it remembers *the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham’s stock*. Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God’s saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets... *The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant*. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles. Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ, Our Peace, reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making both one in Himself. *The Church keeps ever in mind the words of the Apostle about his kinsmen: “theirs is the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the law and the worship and the promises; theirs are the fathers and from them is the Christ according to the flesh”* (Rom. 9:4-5), the Son of the Virgin Mary. She also recalls that the Apostles, the Church’s main-stay and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ’s Gospel to the world, sprang from the Jewish people. (Vatican II,

Nostra Aetate, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, no. 4)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

1. Which of the privileges of Israel listed by Paul stands out to you the most? Why?

2. Why did the Second Vatican Council say that the Church needs to remember the words of Paul in Romans 9:1-5?

For Further Reading

1. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans* (trans. F. R. Larcher, O.P.; eds. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón; Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2012).
2. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Volume 11 (ed. Philip Schaff; repr.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994).