

### Christ's Blessings

Toward the end of C.S. Lewis's *The Last Battle*, Lucy tries to show some unbelievers that Christ's blessings are right in front of them:

*She stooped and picked some wild violets. ... She leaned across and held the fresh, damp flowers to Diggle's ugly nose. But she had to jump back quickly in order to avoid a blow from his hard little fist.*

*"None of that!" he shouted. "How dare you! What do you mean by shoving a lot of filthy stable-litter in my face? There was a thistle in it too." ...*

*"Oh dear!" said Lucy. "What are we to do for them?"*

Lucy's anguish for Diggle, who rejected God's blessing even when it was right under his nose, echoes that felt by the apostle Paul. In this week's passage, we'll see how he ached for those who do not know God.

#### Monday – Tell the Truth

*"It is by all means vital for the lover of truth, regardless of the threat of death, to choose to do and say what is right even before saving his own life."* A.W. Tozer, 20<sup>th</sup> c. American pastor and writer

1. Please read Romans 9:1-5. What is Paul's point in verse 1?
2. See John 14:17, where Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit's work after Jesus leaves. What does this tell you about the Holy Spirit's ability to confirm the truth of Paul's assertions?
3. Compare John 8:31-32 with Romans 9:1-5. What can the truth do for those Paul is concerned about?

**Digging Deeper:** Read Psalm 31:1-24, which would have been familiar to Jesus' listeners (in John 8) and Paul's readers (in Romans 9). How does that Psalm (particularly verses 5, 14 and 23) help you understand the importance of rejecting lies and relying on the truth?

#### Tuesday – Anguish

*"Compassion costs. It is easy enough to argue, criticize and condemn, but redemption is costly, and comfort draws from the deep."* Samuel Chadwick (1860-1932), English pastor and educator

1. Please read Romans 9:1-5. What does Paul express in verse 2? Have you ever felt that passionately about something? When?
2. God himself expressed similar anguish in Matthew 23:37-39. What is the context for Jesus' words there?

**Text insight:** Shortly before Jesus' comments in Matthew 23:39, the crowds in Jerusalem had praised him with "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." (See Matthew 21:1-11.) They would be screaming for his death by the end of the week. (See Matthew 27:11-26.)

3. What crushing burdens did Jesus identify in Matthew 23:1-4? What does Matthew 11:28-30 tell you about bearing those burdens?

**Making it Personal:** Do you have an aching burden for anyone? Should you?

#### Wednesday – Cursed and Cut Off

*"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."* Jesus, John 15:13

1. Please read Romans 9:1-5. What is Paul's wish in verse 3? What do you think motivated Paul to say something like this?
2. To be cursed and cut off from God is an extreme position to take. See Matthew 25:41-46 for the destiny of those who reject God.
3. Take a look at Psalm 139:5-12. While we yet live, is it possible for us to find a place outside of God's presence? What encouragement does this give you for those who do not presently know God?

**Prayer Focus:** Pray for God to show you someone you should have a burden for, someone God wants you to pray for and share your faith with. Then pray for God to use you, even if you don't know how that will happen.

#### Thursday – God's Promises

*Covenant:* a binding agreement. It comes from the Latin for "come together", as in to reach an understanding.

1. Please read Romans 9:1-5. What has God given the people of Israel, according to verse 4?
2. Paul would have been very familiar with the Old Testament covenants between God and those who belong to him. What is God's promise, and the people's response, in Exodus 19:3-8? How does 2 Chronicles 7:11-22 lay out what it means to follow God, and what it means to reject him?
3. How do you think 2 Chronicles 7:11-22 and Exodus 19:3-8 shaped Paul's thoughts in Romans 9:4?

**Making it Personal:** What promises from the Bible do you treasure? Pray for God to guide you in your scripture reading to show you the riches of his promises there.

#### Friday – Christ: God and Man

*"Jesus was God and man in one person, that God and man might be happy together again."* George Whitefield, 18<sup>th</sup> c. English pastor and revivalist

1. Please read Romans 9:1-5. What two assertions does Paul make about Jesus in verse 5?
2. How does Matthew 1:1-16 support Paul's statement that Jesus has human ancestry? Do you recognize any of his ancestors' names? Where do you think Paul got the idea that Jesus is also "God over all"?
3. John 8:54-59 is often cited for the proposition that Jesus himself said he is God. How do his words "I am" in verse 58 support this proposition, when seen in light of Exodus 3:13-14?

**Text Insight:** The people listening to Jesus certainly understood this as an audacious and blasphemous claim to be God; that's why they picked up stones in verse 59, since blasphemy was punishable by immediate death.

**For the Weekend:** Read Romans 9:1-5, Psalm 57:1-11 and Isaiah 26:7-10. These passages make plain that God cares about you, those you know, and those you don't. Pray for God to develop in you a desire for his name to be known and revered by all people.