

Evergreen Presbyterian Church

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August 2, 2026

Sermon Title: Loving Unbelievers

Sermon Text: Romans 9:1-5

Rom. 9:1 ¶ I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—

Rom. 9:2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

Rom. 9:3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

Rom. 9:4 They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.

Rom. 9:5 To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

Main Point: Our sharpest theological critiques belong inside the church to protect the gospel, while our deepest compassion and tears belong outside the church to reach the lost.

Outline:

1. Christ's Attitude Toward Unbelievers

- a. Fierce Confrontation of Religious Hypocrisy (Matt. 23:13)
- b. Indignation at the profaning of worship (John 2:13-17)
- c. Profound Sorrow Over Willful Unbelief (Luke 19:41-44)
- d. Grace in the Face of Hostility (Luke 22:50-51; Luke 23:34)

2. The Apostles' Attitudes Toward Unbelievers

- a. Boldness Without Bitterness (Acts 4:19, 29-30; 5:41)

- b. Forgiveness in the Face of Execution (Acts 7:60)
- c. Grace in the Place of Vengeance (Acts 16:28)
- d. Deep Anguish That Motivates Persuasion (Acts 17)

3. Paul's Attitude Toward Unbelievers

- a. Paul Never Forgot He Used to be an Enemy (1 Tim. 1:13-15)
- b. Paul Returned Abuse with Blessing (1 Cor. 4:12-13)
- c. Paul Saved Sharp and Harsh Words for Internal False Teachers (Gal. 1 & 5)
- d. Paul Did Not Regard the Jews with Hatred
 - i. Validated their zeal (Rom. 10:1-2)
 - ii. Prioritized Evangelizing them (Rom. 1:16)
 - iii. Honored their Covenant Heritage (Rom. 9:4-5)
 - iv. Forbid the church from Arrogance Toward Them (Rom. 11:17-20)

4. Applications:

- a. Jews are Not to be Treated Like Judaizers.
- b. Christians Aren't to be Arrogant Toward Broken Branches
- c. Christians Must Replace Hostility Toward Unbelievers with Anguish

Introduction

If you have paid any attention to our cultural discourse over the last few years, you have likely noticed a deeply troubling and historic trend: a visible, rising tide of hatred directed toward the Jewish people. The statistics are staggering. Recent reports show that antisemitic incidents have skyrocketed to their highest levels in decades, with over half of Jewish Americans experiencing some form of targeted harassment or hostility in the past year alone.

We are seeing this spring up from almost every corner of the political spectrum. On the political left, we see hatred disguised as social justice. We see it on college campuses where Jewish students are subjected to ideological "purity tests" or physically blocked from being in public spaces. We see it when local, Jewish-owned businesses are boycotted, vandalized, or harassed online simply because the owners are Jewish.

But as your pastor, I have to be clear with you this morning: the hatred coming from the political left is not what distresses me the most, because it generally

doesn't come from within our own household of faith. What is far more significant to me as a minister is the hatred coming from the political right, because it is ostensibly being done in the name of Christ, and supposedly from inside the body of Christ.

There is a growing subculture of people who claim to be believers, yet they use the historic Jewish rejection of Jesus as a justification for vitriol. The claim is that their hostility toward unbelieving Jews is actually motivated by a *love* for Christ. Under the guise of "defending Christian civilization," they don't simply treat the Jews as unbelievers; they treat them with genuine hatred. We see beautiful, historic Christian confessions like "Christ is King" hijacked and weaponized as hate memes to harass Jewish people online. We see prominent voices on the right reviving age-old slanders, conspiracies, and stereotypes, treating the Jewish people with a deep, cynical suspicion. They participate in mockery and cruel jokes, all while claiming to read the same Bible that the rest of us are reading.

Seeing this behavior from inside the house of faith is profoundly distressing. It reveals a catastrophic failure to understand the heart of God. It shows me that those participating in this behavior—and anyone in the church who might be tempted to join them—are in desperate need of clear, serious teaching on what the New Testament actually commands regarding our attitude toward the unbelieving world – which includes of course Jews who do not (or may not yet) believe in Jesus.

If you think a love for Christ permits (or even compels) you to mock Jewish people, or any unbeliever for that matter, you do not understand your own Bible.

And that is exactly why we are looking at Romans chapter 9 this morning. Because here, the Apostle Paul directly addresses the unbelief of his own Jewish kinsmen. And as we will see today, the biblical posture toward the unbelieving world is never mockery, arrogance, or hostility. Instead, our sharpest theological critiques belong inside the church to protect the gospel, while our deepest compassion and tears belong outside the church to reach the lost.

And that's what I want to show you from God's word today.

1. Christ's Attitude Toward Unbelievers

First this morning, I want us to take note of Christ's own attitude toward unbelievers. If we actually believe that Christ is King then our hearts have to mirror our King's heart. So let's look at what he shows us.

Now, let's be clear: Jesus was absolutely capable of fierce confrontation. But look closely at *who* he aimed that fierceness *at*. In Matthew 23, Jesus gives those seven devastating "woes." But when he did this, he wasn't yelling at the pagan Romans. He wasn't mocking the secular tax collectors. He was condemning the religious insiders—the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees.

Why? Because, he says, they "shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces." It's the same thing in John 2. When Jesus makes a whip of cords and clears out the temple, his righteous indignation is aimed at people who are profaning the worship of God from the inside. His harshest words and his sharpest critiques were always reserved for those *inside* of the house of faith.

But how did Jesus respond to the lost, unbelieving masses outside? He didn't mock them. He wept for them.

In Luke 19, Jesus is approaching Jerusalem. He knows this city is about to reject him. He knows they are going to execute him. And he doesn't look out over the city and shake his fist in triumph or rage. He doesn't call down fire. Luke says he wept over it. He cries out, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace!" Do you see that? Jesus looks at the willful, tragic unbelief of his own people, and it breaks his heart. He knew better. And he knew that they knew better, too. And it still didn't make him arrogant; it made him weep. Christian, do you think that you have a greater right to hate unbelievers than Christ did?

Maybe you'd say, "Well Christ's compassion has its limits." But does it at any point in his earthly ministry?

What we actually see is that his compassion keeps going, even when they become violent against him and his people. Think about the Garden of Gethsemane. The mob comes to arrest Jesus, Peter pulls a sword to fight back, and what does Jesus do? He rebukes the violence and he heals the ear of his enemy who is conspiring

to kill him. Hours later, he is hanging in agony on the cross. He is looking down at the very unbelievers who drove the nails into his hands. And he doesn't hurl insults at them. He prays for them: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

This is what Jesus was like. He guarded the truth fiercely against religious hypocrisy, but he met the unbelieving world with tears and grace. How do you speak about or think about unbelievers? With scorn? Or with the sort of big-hearted love that we see from Christ here?

It does not make you more masculine or more dedicated to the cause of Christ to hate or despise or mock people that Jesus does not and will not hate, despise, or mock. Instead it makes you more like the devil, not like Jesus. The devil loves his friends and hates his enemies.

That's the attitude of Jesus toward unbelievers.

2. The Apostles' Attitudes Toward Unbelievers

Second, I want you to see the attitude of the Apostles. Notice the way they lived out the example they learned from Christ. Read through the book of Acts. What you'll find there is this incredible boldness in the face of unbelief, but you never see them veer into bitterness. It's remarkable just how patient and kind they are. And patience and kindness are fruits of the Spirit, so that makes sense.

Think about it: in Acts 4 and 5, Peter and John get arrested, threatened, and beaten by the religious authorities. How do they respond? They don't gather the church for a prayer meeting and ask God to rain down fire on the Sanhedrin. They pray for boldness to keep preaching, and the text says they left the council *rejoicing* that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. Usually when we suffer, we try to figure out: who is to blame. Here they seem to say, God is to blame, and they thank him for it!

When Stephen is being crushed to death by rocks in Acts 7, he doesn't curse the men who are killing him. He falls to his knees and cries out with his last breath, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" He is perfectly mirroring the heart of Christ.

Or think of Paul and Silas in Acts 16. They are stripped, beaten, and thrown into a dungeon in Philippi. When the earthquake hits and the prison doors fly open, the jailer draws his sword to kill himself. This man was responsible for locking them in the dark! Paul could have let him die. That would have been justice, right? This is a guy who was not a friend. He was a pagan. An enemy.

But instead, Paul yells into the dark, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.” Grace instead of vengeance. Paul is more manly and brave for his response here. I’m afraid some today would call Paul a squish or a coward, but Paul was none of those things. He was a biblical Christian. “We don’t do things the way the world does. I don’t hate you jailer. I don’t care if you work for the enemy. I don’t care if you chained us up. I don’t hate you... Do not harm yourself.”

And then look at how Paul treats the wider world in the rest of the Book of Acts. In Acts 17, when he sees the rampant idolatry in Athens, his spirit is provoked—but not to mockery or hatred or rage. He despises their idols, but he doesn’t despise them. He doesn’t run around Athens with a sword killing the idolators, instituting God’s law by force. Instead, his distress drives him to the marketplace so that he can reason with them... persuade them.

Or look at Acts 26. There, Paul is standing in chains before King Agrippa, who is a corrupt, unbelieving ruler. Does Paul insult him? No. He looks at his captor and when Agrippa goes, “Are you trying to convert me?” Paul says back to him, “I pray to God that... all who are listening to me today might become such as I am—except for these chains.” The Apostles were hunted, beaten, and killed by unbelievers. But they *never hated* them. They only wanted to save them.

They loved them so much that they wanted them to come to the Lord Jesus. And not by force, but by persuasion, and reason, and by the power of preaching.

Do not listen to those voices when they try to convince you that it is manly to hate your enemies or to curse those who hate you. It is not manly. It’s childish, immature, and profoundly unchristlike. And it’s very much not the way the Apostles lived.

3. Paul’s Attitude Toward Unbelievers

Third this morning, let's look at the Apostle Paul himself. How did the man who wrote half the New Testament treat the unbelieving world? We already saw his practice in Acts, but look at what he teaches in his letters.

One thing you see really clearly is that Paul *never* forgot where he came from or the debt that he owed. In 1 Timothy 1, he looks back at his life before Christ and says, "I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent opponent." He calls himself the foremost of sinners. Paul knew exactly what it was like to be a hostile enemy of the cross. And because he never got over what God did for him on the Damascus road, it completely rewired how he handled the hostility of others. Persecuting his enemies was how Paul used to handle dissent and disagreement. He was in favor of force to stomp out unbelief. That's why Stephen got killed. But this change is part of the new life that God worked in him.

So when the unbelieving world attacked him, he didn't retaliate with the kind of tools and weapons that the world used. In 1 Corinthians 4, he tells us exactly how he responded: "When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we entreat." Paul was a man who returned abuse with blessing. Just like Jesus.

Now, wait a minute. Didn't Paul use sharp, harsh language? Didn't he write some incredibly combative things? Yes, he absolutely did. But just like Jesus, we have to look at *who* those words were aimed at. Read the book of Galatians. Paul uses devastating language—even saying he wishes the people troubling the church would emasculate themselves! Not to be crude, but he's saying, "These judaizers are so obsessed with circumcision, I wish their knife would slip and they'd just cut the whole thing off." He is not being nice here. That's not a very gentle thing to say. Are we supposed to learn from this that this is how we treat all unbelievers?

Well no. Here's why: Notice who is he talking about when he says this. Paul is talking about the Judaizers. You might think of them as Jews, but in fact they were false teachers who had crept *inside* the bounds of the church and were professing faith in Jesus Christ, but trying to twist the gospel by adding ceremonies and works to the grace of Christ. So what we *actually* see is that Paul saved his sharpest, most aggressive theological knives for protecting the flock from wolves *inside* the house.

But when Paul looked at the unbelieving Jews *outside* the church—the very people who were stoning him and running him out of town—he did not regard them with hatred or scorn or mockery. He doesn't treat them like he treats the Judaizers. Not for a single second.

Just look at how he talks about unbelieving Jews right here in the book of Romans. Notice these are not people who profess Christ. These are actual unbelievers. He actually validates their passion. In chapter 10, he says, "I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." His priority was reaching them, declaring in Romans 1 that the gospel is "for the Jew first."

And look back at our text today in Romans 9. Look at how he honors their covenant heritage. He lists the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, the patriarchs. He doesn't mock their history or treat them with cynical suspicion. He exalts the grace God showed to them, and he *weeps*—with the sort of unceasing anguish that we can scarcely imagine. He is in acute distress when he thinks about the fact that they are missing the Messiah that all of those blessings had always been pointing towards.

In fact, he was so protective of the Jews that in Romans 11, Paul explicitly commands the Gentile church not to become puffed up and proud against the Jews. He warns us, "Do not be arrogant toward the branches." Think about that phrase. Even in the first century Paul knows that Christians might be tempted towards hating the Jews, and he says, "Do not be arrogant toward the branches." Are you arrogant toward the branches? Do you hate the Jews? Do you hate other unbelievers as well? You need to know that when you do, you're not being a zealous Christian. Instead, you're living in sin.

I want you to see the distinction that Paul lived by. He fought fiercely against false brothers inside the church. But when he looked out at his unbelieving kinsmen, his heart broke. He knows who deserves scorn and who doesn't, and it's false teachers within the church who get Paul's fiercest response.

4. Applications:

Fourth, I want us to consider some applications of what we've seen here. This is really important to me.

Here is the first application I want to make: The Jewish people are not to be treated in the same way Paul treated the Judaizers. The Jewish people are to be treated as unbelievers. The first three chapters of Romans was Paul making the case that Jews and Gentiles both are sinners and both need forgiveness in Christ. There is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles in the sense that for all of us, it is faith in Jesus Christ alone that is the instrumental cause of justification by God.

Being a physical descendant of Abraham doesn't relieve someone of the call to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. We are all saved in the same way: through faith in the Lord Jesus.

If a person is Jewish but does not believe in the Messiah, they stand condemned. They are unbelievers. They are unbelievers, but they aren't Judaizers. They are not inside the church. And what this means is that if we *do* speak with scorn of the Jews, if we *hate* the Jews, *if* we make fun of the Jews or speak of them with caricatures, then we *don't* have the love that Paul had for them. We are not living up to what we saw modeled in the life of Christ, the life of Paul, or in the lives of the other Apostles.

I want to add something else to this application. I'll talk about this more when we get to Romans 11. We are meant to love the Jewish people and to have an attitude of brokenheartedness toward their. That does not necessarily mean that we are required to support the state of Israel no matter what. What we have in this text is a theological point, not a political point.

This passage doesn't mean that we have to approve of any of the things the modern state of Israel does. Those are political questions that are separate from this. You can support Israel for political reasons. You can oppose Israel for political reasons. But when you start to say, "You're supposed to love the Jewish people. And so that means you have to agree with everything Israel does," you have gone beyond the text, and beyond what God's word tells us. We will address this even more when we get to Romans 11, because this whole discussion really comes alive

there. But I wanted to make clear: nothing we're seeing here requires specific political positions toward the modern state of Israel.

But it is one thing to disagree with a nation and its positions and actions. It's another thing to hate a people. Paul loved the Jews. So should we.

Here is my Second Application: Christians must never be arrogant toward the broken branches. It is a dangerous spiritual temptation to look at the historical unbelief of the Jewish people and feel a sense of superiority. Paul has already warned us about this. That is dangerous.

We read the Old Testament, we see their rebellion, we see their rejection of the Messiah, and we think, "*Well, I would never have done that.*" But Paul absolutely forbids that kind of pride. Because it turns out, because of the doctrine of God's election, the only reason you and I are part of God's family is because of grace, not because we are naturally better, more righteous, or smarter.

My Third Application is this: God is calling us to replace our hostility toward *all* unbelievers with anguish. We live in a culture that models and teaches us to be outraged. We are trained by the world to look at our opponents and respond with sarcasm, mockery, and anger. The nastiest, loudest, attention-seeking voices tell us that if we love our cause enough, we'll swear, we'll scream, we'll cry, we'll attack, we'll name-call, and we'll do anything we can to get our way. But doesn't that kind of behavior sound more like a baby or a little kid throwing a hissy fit than a mature person who lives with dependence upon the Spirit?

That sort of behavior and attitude really is the way of the flesh, not the Spirit. It's why a part of you *likes* it when you see someone on Youtube or Tik Tok or whatever, acting that way. Because you *do* have that old man. And that person is scratching that sinful itch. Satan *loves* to take those fleshly urges in your heart and to turn you into a walking humiliation of the gospel instead of a source of light. Satan loves angry, mocking, hateful Christians. They are his favorite kind of Christians. They bring shame on the gospel, and that is what Satan loves.

I want this vision to capture your imagination. Instead of constantly looking for a fight, I would love all of us to want this instead: real maturity. When Paul looked at a hostile world, he didn't feel the need to mock their blindness. He felt an agonizing ache in his chest for their souls. An ache so deep that he was willing to die for them and even (if it was possible) to go to hell for them. Do not look to the angry internet ranters for this. They are feeding your flesh and appealing to your worst instincts. Answer them instead with Jesus Christ and his love for the lost; Paul and his love for the lost; the disciples and their willingness to die rather than ever tell a lie. Let those be your heroes.

Let them be your model of manliness and godliness.

Conclusion

We began this morning by looking at a dark and distressing trend in our culture: the rise of hatred, mockery, and suspicion directed at the Jewish people, especially when it is dressed up in the language of Christianity. We see people weaponizing the phrase "Christ is King" to harass the descendants of Abraham.

But if we actually believe that Christ is King, then we must look at how the King treated His enemies. He did not mock them from a throne; He wept over them from a hillside, and He bled for them on a cross.

If you are tempted to look at the Jewish people, or at any unbelieving neighbor, coworker, or family member, with a sense of superiority or scorn, I want you to hear the devastating warning of the Apostle Paul in Romans 11. Speaking to us—the Gentile church—about the unbelief of the Jews, he says, "Do not be arrogant toward the branches... For you stand fast only through faith. So do not become proud, but fear."

Church, we have as much right to mock the Jewish people as we have to brag about being in Christ. Remember how we got here. We are wild olive shoots. We brought nothing to the table. We were grafted into the covenant promises of God by sheer, unmerited, astonishing grace. You do not support the root; the root supports you. When a Christian mocks an unbelieving Jew, they are not just being

cruel; they are demonstrating that they have forgotten how they themselves were saved. Grace leaves absolutely no room for arrogance.

So, what do we do with our unbelieving neighbors? What do we do with a hostile world? We do exactly what Paul did in Romans 9. We put away our sarcasm, we put down our cultural outrage, and we ask God to break our hearts.

Paul looked at the very people who were trying to kill him, and his response was “great sorrow and unceasing anguish.” He loved them so much that he wished he could be accursed and cut off from Christ if it meant they could be saved.

You and I cannot be cut off to save our neighbors. But the good news of the gospel is that we don’t have to be. Because the King that we serve actually did it. Jesus Christ stepped out of heaven, took the curse, and was cut off on the cross so that hostile, mocking enemies like you and me could be grafted in.

If that grace has truly captured your heart, it will kill your pride. It will end your mockery. And it will send you out into this hostile world not with a clenched fist, but with a weeping heart and an open hand, pleading with sinners to come to the King.

Let’s Pray.