

What is Anguish ?

I would cut off my hand if I could... Romans 9:1-5

I speak the truth in Christ – I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit – I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, for ever praised! Amen.

This is the word of the Lord **Thanks be to God**

I speak the truth – I am not lying...

Your faith is fading, it's lukewarm, you're losing it.

I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart for you.

If only I could be cursed by God and cut off from Christ I would do it for you.

You are the Holy people of God – Jesus died for you.

Strong words.

Clearly Paul's love – his anguish - is for God's people – they are Lukewarm – in danger of losing their faith.

He would rather be cursed and cut off than have his people lose their faith – and their eternal life.

The key word is anguish – what is anguish?

Maybe “anguish” is a form of love – my love for you is so great that I am prepared to die to save you from apathy, lukewarmness.

I would rather be cut off than you be cut off – that's anguish.

In that song from “Dead man Dying” Matthew Poncelet regrets what he did. A terrible assault on a young couple and then to killed them in cold blood. It's a true storey.

In that first song, as we were coming in, he explains he was just like everyone else, “born, baptised, and raised in Saint James Parish”.

He says he doesn't know what came over him.

Drugs – were a part of it for sure.

Now in the light of day and sober **he is in anguish** – he says,

“I don't know what came over me”.

“if only God would allow me to cut off a finger to gain redemption –then I would gladly cut of my hand whole hand”.

A bit like Paul – if only God would allow him to be cursed and cut him off from Jesus (certain eternal death) he would do it to save his people.

What parent in hasn't thought – if only I could take away the pain, the sickness, the hurt my child is going through I would take it on myself.
That's anguish!

I wonder if Trevor ever thought, “why her – let it be me”?

On Friday I went to see my life-long mate in Greenhill Lodge, on Greenhill Road, – It's a kind of resort where country people can stay with their partners while they're having cancer treatment.

It really is like a resort – restaurants, Gyms, private places – and it is made very affordable for country couples.

My mate, Rick, kept on running to the toilet to throw up – Nausea 24/7.

There were lots of couples.

I could sense their anguish.

The feeling - I got is that if one could take some of the pain away from the other – they would.

I am really learning that anguish is the deepest kind of love.

The harsh reality is that no one can take on someone else's pain.

We can share the pain – we can be there – we can lighten the pain – but we cannot take it away.

No one can take someone else's sin away.

You know where this is going – there's only one who gave his life as a ransom for many.

Paul was having a bad day/ sad day when he said he wished he be cursed to save God's people who are slack and lukewarm.

It was his anguish – his love for them.

If we read the whole chapter we hear the real Paul and the truth.

He knows the heart of God – he knows only God must and will – “muss und sollen” - save his people.

In this same Romans (9) Chapter we hear Paul at his best as he explains the heart of God:

*“I will have mercy on whom I have mercy,
and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”*

Salvation does not, depend on human desire or effort [or anguish] but on God's mercy.

Despite Paul's anguish- his longing for his friends to be saved - he knows only God can do it.

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” **2 Corinthians 5:21:**

The Lord Jesus Christ is the One “who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father. **Galatians 1:4:**

“For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” **Romans 5:6-8**

This is Paul.

I looked up the word “anguish” in connection with God.

I couldn't find the word anguish and God together.

Remember anguish is the deepest form of love there is.

Does God do anguish?

I found the same **intent** even though it wasn't the same word – see if you can pick it:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

“So-Loved” the world.

So-loved = anguish.

God anguished over us so much that he gave his one and only Son...

God is like Paul lamenting over the people he loves who are sinners, who are cut off from his presence.

God anguishes.

God, so-loved us he gave his one and only son.

God does what Paul wished he could do.

He gives his son to be cursed and cut off – exactly what Paul wanted to do.

Let's take this home – our salvation is in God's hands alone – it is his will to save us – it is his will to have us with him in eternity.

Isaiah already said it as he introduced the world to Jesus:

He took up our pain

and bore our suffering,

He was pierced for our transgressions,

*he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are
healed.*

I'm sure each and every one of us has compassion so great that it becomes
anguish.

Let's not waste that anguish.

Let's use it for what it was intended – to lead others to the one who died for
them.

Let's turn the mighty power of anguish into the will to share what Jesus has
done for us.

Use anguish for good – to lead us to the one who was given by the father for
us.

Then we get to know the love and grace of the father.

Seriously Paul knows his stuff – as he writes in Ephesians:

*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins... gratifying the
cravings of our bodies... Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of
wrath. But because of his great love for us, (there is that Anguish) God, who is
rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in
transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved..., through faith—and this is
not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can
boast*

I think we need to hear this today – If our salvation depended on Paul
offering himself to be cursed on our behalf, or someone chopping off their
hand for us, as noble as it might seem, the truth is we have no hope.

Our hope is in Christ alone.

**The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have
life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays
down his life for the sheep.**

No-one wants to see their loved ones suffer and die.

We can help, we can pray, we can comfort, we can encourage and get the
best medical help but we can't take their pain, their suffering, their sin, on
our-selves – Jesus can and does with love.

*Lord in the worst of times – when our compassion and anguish is at its highest –
let us use this powerful love to lead people to Jesus – whose unlimited anguish
and compassion led him to die for us. Amen.*