

Romans 9:5

Christ, who is God over all, be praised. (*NIV*)

1. The student of the Bible should be aware that the original text had no punctuation, and thus in some instances there is more than one way a verse can be translated without violating the grammar of the text (see the notes on Heb. 1:8). Then how do we arrive at the correct translation and meaning, the one that God, the Author, meant us to believe? In the majority of cases, the context, both immediate and remote, will reveal to us what He is trying to say. The entire Bible fits together in such a way that one part can give us clues to interpret another part. The serious student of the Bible will glean information from the scope of Scripture to assist in the interpretation of any one verse. Romans 9:5 is one of the verses that can be translated different ways, and thus the context and scope of Scripture will help us determine the correct interpretation. Note from the examples below that translators and translating committees vary greatly in their handling of Romans 9:5:

- *RSV*: “to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed forever. Amen.”
- *Moffatt*: “the patriarchs are theirs, and theirs too (so far as natural descent goes) is the Christ. (Blessed for evermore be the God who is over all! Amen.)”
- *KJV*: “Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came*, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”
- *NAS*: “whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.”
- *NIV*: “Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.”

Although the exact wording of the above translations differs, they fall into two basic categories: those that are worded to make Christ into God, and those that make the final phrase into a type of eulogy or doxology referring to God the Father. The *RSV* and *Moffatt* are outstanding examples of the latter.

2. In *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, R. S. Franks, a Trinitarian and the Principal *Emeritus* of Western College in Bristol, writes:

It should be added that Rom. 9:5 cannot be adduced to prove that Paul ever thought of Christ as God. The state of the case is found in the R.V. margin...He [Paul] never leaves the ground of Jewish monotheism. It has been pointed out that Rom. 9:5 cannot be brought in to question this statement. On the contrary, God is spoken of by the Apostle as not only the Father, but also the God of our Lord Jesus Christ”¹

3. There is good evidence from both the immediate remote contexts that the last phrase of this verse is a eulogy or doxology to God the Father. “God over all” and “God blessed forever” are both used of God the Father elsewhere in the New Testament (Rom. 1:25; 2 Cor. 11:31; Eph. 1:3; 4:6; 1 Tim. 6:15). In contrast, neither phrase is ever used of Christ.

It would be highly unusual to take eulogies that were commonly used of God and, abruptly and without comment or explanation, apply them to Christ.

4. Asking why the words are even in the text gives us a key to understanding them. Paul is writing about the way that God has especially blessed the Jews. The verses immediately before Romans 9:5 point out that God has given them the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the law, the worship, the promises, the patriarchs and even the human ancestry of Jesus Christ. How blessed they are! No wonder a eulogy to God is inserted: “God, who is over all, be blessed forever! Amen.”

5. The entire context of Romans 9:5 is describing God’s blessings to the Jews, who have a heritage of being aggressively monotheistic. An insert about Christ being God seems most inappropriate. This is especially true when we understand that Paul is writing in a way designed to win the Jews. For example, he calls them “my kindred in the flesh” (v. 3 - *NRSV*), and says he has sorrow and anguish in his heart for them (v. 2 - *NRSV*). Would he then put into this section a phrase that he knew would be offensive to the very Jews for whom he is sorrowing and who he is trying to win? Certainly not. On the contrary, after just saying that Christ came from the line of the Patriarchs, something about which the Jews were suspicious, a eulogy to the Father would assure the Jews that there was no idolatry or false elevation of Christ intended, but that he was part of the great blessing of God.

Buzzard, pp. 131 and 132

Farley, pp. 67-69

Morgridge, pp. 111-114

Norton, pp. 203-214

Snedeker, pp. 434-440

Endnotes:

1. R. S. Franks, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, (Gerald Duckworth and Co., London, 1953), pp. 34-36.

This document was taken from Appendix A of *One God & One Lord: Reconsidering the Cornerstone of the Christian Faith* (copyright 2003) by Christian Educational Services, a division of [Spirit & Truth Fellowship International](http://www.Spirit&TruthFellowshipInternational.com).

You may use any or all of this document as long as proper credit is given to the [One God & One Lord](http://www.BiblicalUnitarian.com) book and www.BiblicalUnitarian.com.

To order a copy of *One God & One Lord*, please visit STFonline.org/store or call us toll free at 1-888-255-6189 (317-255-6189), M-F 8:30-5 (EST)