***Paul's Anguish for the Jews, No. 1
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This morning, we begin a new section of the book of Romans. Please turn with me to Romans 9, as we begin with the first three verses. Our subject is Paul's Anguish for the Jews.

In Romans chapters 1-8, the Apostle Paul has been in a logical, formal way dealing with the problem of human sin which condemns everyone to an eternity in hell and then with the divine solution which offers Heaven as a gift. The whole point of the first eight chapters of the book of Romans is that everybody is headed for the lake of fire by natural birth, but God has a solution which no one can provide for Himself but which He must receive as a gift from God.

**The Jews' Rejection of the Gospel**

Paul has shown in these first eight chapters that all types of people without Christ are doomed to eternal death in the lake of fire. The immoral people (obviously), the moral people (not so obviously), and the religious people (even less obviously), all of them are headed for the lake of fire if they do not have Christ as personal Savior. The great solution which is based on the death of Jesus Christ on the cross in payment for the sin of mankind is a permanent solution which provides a salvation which cannot be cancelled again.

And, we ended up on that high note of confidence at the end of chapter 8. Paul has proclaimed that the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior is designed for both Jews and Gentiles. He pointed this out early on in the book in chapter 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile."

In reality, however, the Gospel that was designed for the Jew first has been by and large rejected by the Jews in Paul's day. You might get the idea, actually, from Romans chapter 1-8, that the church, made up of Jews and Gentiles, was the plan of God in the Old Testament. As you read those first eight chapters, and it talks about this Gospel applying to Jews and Gentiles, you might just get the idea that everything that was told the Jews in the Old Testament was a preparation for what was taking place in the church. Do not make that mistake. Jew and Gentile and Christian plans that God has are all distinct, separate one from another. The great delusion that came out of the Reformation era was that the Old Testament had in mind the New Testament church. That is not true.

And, that is what you will find as you go through Romans 9, 10, and 11. You will discover that indeed, God has a program for the Jews. It was the program revealed in the Old Testament. He has not executed it, and He has not abandoned it. So, get that point up front that Romans 9, 10, and 11 tell you that God has not abandoned the program for the Jews which He outlined in the Old Testament through the Abrahamic, and consequently, through the Palestinian, the Davidic, and the new covenants to the Jewish people.

So, in reality, the Jews themselves for whom this Gospel has been designed by and large have rejected the person of Jesus Christ. Although the Jew has a special relationship to God, Paul says that He cannot go to Heaven unless He has received Jesus Christ as His personal Savior. Immediately, in the New Testament church following the Day of Pentecost, this principle was stressed by Peter who, at that time, was the prominent leader in the New Testament church in the brand new church which had just begun on the Day of Pentecost.

And the principle which Paul has been stressing in the early part of the book of Romans was stated by Peter in Acts 4:10-12, when in his sermon, in which he was addressing the Jewish leadership, the Sanhedrin, he said, "'Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you well. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Immediately that the church began, Paul takes up the same theme in the book of Romans and hammers home the fact that no Jew goes to Heaven apart from Jesus Christ. So, you can have a synagogue full of Jews who met yesterday all over the Dallas Metroplex, and you have an assemblage of people who have one thing in common: they're all headed for the lake of fire. They are doomed because they all have in common their rejection of Jesus Christ.

**God's Promises to the Nation of Israel**

So, the rejection of the Lord by the Jews raises the question, indeed, of the status of the Jews before God today and of the consequence to all those covenant promises which God made to the nation of Israel. The Jews aren't accepting Jesus Christ; they're turning their back on Him. If He's the only way to Heaven, what about all those promises that God is going to make a great, earthly kingdom out of the Jewish people? They're going to be the leading nation of the world, that all the nations of the world will one day rally to the Jews to learn about God. What happened to all that?

Well, that's what he's going to take up now. There, of course, is no question that God made certain covenants with the Jewish people. The basic covenant, as you know, and we have studied in detail, is the covenant we call The Abrahamic Covenant, which was made with Abraham, and which was recorded in Genesis 12:1-3. In those verses, Abraham is promised a land forever. He is promised a seed, a posterity forever, and he is promised a blessing that is a basis for eternal life.

This Abrahamic covenant was later expanded in the Palestinian, which later explained more about the extent of their land, in the Davidic covenant, which explained more about the extent of their national entity, their political structure; and in the new covenant, which explained how they were to be saved by faith in a coming Savior.

These covenants, I remind you, were all unconditional. That is, none of these covenants had the word "if" inserted in them. They were not covenants which they would enjoy the blessings of if they, the people, did something. It was just, God says, "I'm going to do this for you." And there were no "ifs" added. So, we called it an unconditional covenant. So, even if the people rebel and turn against God, the covenant has to be fulfilled, because God says He's going to do it on His own.

These covenant promises, furthermore, we should observe, were never made to Gentiles. They were made with the Jewish nation only, and they were given to Jews alone. Do not be trapped by that nonsensical, reformed theology talk about Christian Israel. There is no such thing as a Christian Israel. The Bible never, never, never uses the word "Israel" and applies it to the church. Some Jews become Christians. They have a Jewish background, and they are Jewish Christians, we call. That's not really true either, because you are either a Gentile, a Jew, or a Christian. You can't be a crossover with any of the three categories. You're one or the other. But there is never the application of the word "Israel" to the church. The church is distinct from Israel.

And this is what Paul is going to try to point out. Yes, the Jew does have covenant promises based upon that Abrahamic covenant, and God is still going to come through. "Do not confuse," Paul says, "everything that I've said in the first eight chapters of Romans as suggesting that what God had in mind in those Old Testament covenants was the New Testament church." He did not have that in mind at all. The Bible is very clear that the New Testament church was a mystery. And the word "mystery" in the New Testament means it was a hidden truth to be revealed later on. So, the Old Testament prophets didn't know a thing about the church, and they had no connection with it whatsoever.

You cannot, therefore, take the special covenant promises and relationships which God made between Himself and the Jews and apply them to the Gentiles of the church age. That is an arbitrary assumption. Unfortunately, the reformers fell into that trap. They picked it up from Roman Catholicism. They made the tragic mistake of assuming that the promises that were made to Israel in the Old Testament were being fulfilled in the church. Not true.

Today, God is not dealing with the Jews as His special people, though they're still His special people. He is dealing with the Jews simply as He deals with all Gentiles: they're all sinners who need to be saved by grace. So, a Jew today who trusts in Christ as Savior becomes part of the church, and he's no longer a Jew in God's eyes. The church does not take over, in short, Israel's covenant blessings. In Romans 9, 10, and 11, Paul wants to make clear that God has a future program still for the Jewish nation which will fulfill all of those covenant promises of the Old Testament.

A brief outline as we go through these chapters, you will discover, is that basically chapter 9 of the book of Romans takes a review of Israel's past situation with God. Chapter 10 is an overview of where they stand today in human society. And chapter 11 is a preview of where they are going and what God is ultimately going to do with the Jewish nation again.

That is why, you see, after thousands of years and enormous persecution, a Jew is still a Jew. Why he is still an entity. He has not been dissolved, even though dispersed all over the world, he has not been dissolved and lost among all other humanity. He is still a distinct people, and today he even has his homeland, in part, back again.

The Apostle Paul knew that the Jewish nation was doomed for what it had done to its Messiah, Jesus Christ. But he also knew that the covenant promises were not cancelled; they were just delayed in their fulfillment. The demise of the Jewish nation was their consequence of their rejection of Jesus Christ. But God has not indicated that He has changed His mind about the plan that He has for Israel as a nation who is to lead this earth. All Jewish covenants are to be fulfilled after the church age is completed, after the church, the body of Christ, has been removed from this earth at the rapture. Then, God turns His attention back to the Jews as a people and begins dealing with them as a nation again.

And Paul takes up this subject of the Jews and their present state with a great feeling of emotion. That's why it's almost awkward when you get to chapter 9, because he just jumps in. There's no transition. He finishes chapter 8, we're on the mountaintop of exaltation that a person once saved can never lose that salvation and that we are secure. And then, all of a sudden, he jumps in with great emotion in expressing great sorrow as he looks upon the Jews, because he knows they are not on that mountaintop experience of an absolutely certain salvation. They're down in the valley of death. And when that hits him, he just jumps into this chapter 9.

**Paul's Use of "Conscience"**

So, in verse 1, Paul says, "I say the truth in Christ." He begins with the word "lego." This is the word that stresses the content of a statement. He is using this word in order to stress he wants us to pay attention to a particular message he is about to declare. It is in the present tense, which is a constant expression that he is going to present. Active voice: true of Paul himself. A statement of fact.

What he is going to say, he describes by the word "truth:" "aletheia." "Aletheia" is a word that refers to compatibility with reality. In the Greek Bible, this word stands first in the sentence. That is a place of emphasis. So, Greek sentence begins with, "Truth I say to you." He hits this with emphasis because he wants you to understand that he is not conning you. He is going to express something that's very genuine. Furthermore, he does not say, "the truth," as if he's speaking about a specific doctrine, just, "truth," meaning the quality of integrity. Paul says, "Trust me, in what I'm saying here. I'm making a positive statement about my veracity."

Furthermore, he says, "I'm making this statement as in. The word "in" is the Greek word "en," and it means "in connection with Christ," "Christos." This is the word for the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul here suddenly then switches from his mountaintop of joy at the end of chapter 8, and he jumps right down into a valley of sorrow at the beginning of chapter 9. Paul speaks as one who is in Christ, and so he is united to Jesus Christ who is the truth. John 14:6 tells us Jesus Himself says that He is the Truth. And so, Paul says, "I am speaking to you now truth in Christ. I am speaking to you as one who is a member of the body of Christ. I am speaking to you as one who is in the presence of Jesus Christ who's listening to what I'm saying and who knows what I am telling you and who is the paragon of truth and who will not tolerate my deceiving you."

Paul is speaking with the integrity befitting one who is united to Jesus Christ and who is acting as His representative. Paul speaks here with great emotion as he speaks of the eternal doom in hell which is faced by the fellow Jews who have rejected Jesus Christ. God has now replaced the lambs of Aaron's altar with the final Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, on the cross, but the Jews are still making their useless animal sacrifices. And when Paul thinks about that and the consequences of their doing that, he is crushed with great sorrow.

So, this is a positive statement. Paul says, "I say the truth in Christ." Then, he makes a negative statement to emphasize his integrity even more when he says, "I lie not." This is the Greek word "pseudomai." This word refers to what is not true, and it has the strong negative "ou" in front of it, so that he is in strong language saying, "I am absolutely not lying. At no point do I lie. What I am telling you is true about myself." So, he adds this negative statement to stress his veracity.

The Bible often uses this technique. God the Holy Spirit uses this technique of trying to stress something by saying something in a positive way and right after it with a negative way. You can find a couple of those in Isaiah 31:1 and in John 1:20 where that style of making a statement is found.

In order to establish what Paul is saying as truth, he has brought about, first of all, the witness of the fact that he is speaking in the presence of the one who is the truth, the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, he comes along and says, "I'm also bringing to you the witness of my own conscience that I am telling you the truth of how I feel about this thing." The word "conscience" is an important word. It looks like this in the Greek Bible: "suneidasis."

"Suneidasis" is a faculty in the directive mind for evaluating one's conduct. In the mentality of the soul, there is the function of the perceptive mind where we learn things and the function of the directive mind which produces the actions that we take based upon what we think and believe. Here in the directive mind, we have the conscience, the "suneidasis." The "suneidasis" has certain standards by which it guides our actions. These standards may be good, or they may be bad. They may be true, or they may be false. The mind functions with the understanding and with the conscience. Titus 1:15 tells us that. The conscience influences, then, the directive side of the mind which governs our actions.

There's a lot of mistaken ideas about the conscience. Some people treat the conscience as something that you can really trust. All of us have heard the advice, "Let your conscience be your guide." That can be good advice, or it can be bad advice, depending on the status of your conscience. That is, depending upon the content of your conscience.

In order to understand what "conscience" is, let's notice a verse in the book of Proverbs 23:7. 23:7 says, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." The word "thinketh" is the Hebrew word "shar." "Shar." "Shar" means, "to cut or to divide." In time, this word meaning to cut or to divide something came to connote thinking, because in thinking you separate things. You separate things into decisions one way or another. So, "shar" came to refer to thinking and to actions that cause you to divide things into one category or another. We would say today that this word indicates how you look at things.

So, here in Proverbs, we have the statement that how you look at things in your heart is the way you are. So, if you look at things in an immoral way, if that's how you have divided your mind to the decision of certain things that are immoral and acceptable to you, then your actions will be immoral. But, if your way of looking at things is the biblical way which condemns certain immoralities, then your actions will be guided by that. However your mind divides things is the basis upon which you will act.

That was true in the Old Testament. This is the same idea that we have in the New Testament in this word "suneidasis," or conscience. The word "conscience," here in the Greek Bible, actually comes from two words. The word "sun" is a preposition that means "with," and the word "eidasis," which comes from the word "oida," which means "to know." So that the word "conscience" is a word that indicates that you know something with something else. That is, it is a joint knowledge. The conscience is something that has knowledge in it. The conscience is something in your mind that is associated with some information, information in the way of guidelines and standards.

Now, if your conscience has guidelines and standards that are counter to the principles to the Word of God, then you're going to act like that. If your conscience is in line with biblical principles, then you will act like that. And so, you will have either a good conscience or a bad conscience. A person's sense of ethics results from information which is fed into his conscience.

And so, he may have what 1 Timothy 1:19 calls "good conscience," or in 1 Timothy 4:2 calls "a bad conscience." A good conscience is the result of programming that conscience with Bible doctrine which you have learned, and it has cycled up from your human spirit here into your directive mind, and therefore gives a frame of reference for your conscience to act upon divine rules and divine standards. How a Christian divides things in his thinking will be determined by what is in his conscience in the way of information, this joint information.

The unsaved person, you can see immediately, has nothing coming from his perceptive mind except human viewpoint. He just puts all human viewpoint into his directive mind so the person who is not a believer does not have a conscience that he can trust. He does not have a conscience which will guide him into that which is beneficial. He will have a conscience which will guide him into that which is self-destructive, because all he can function on is these human values and standards, and those are all relative.

So, the lack of divine viewpoint in the human spirit leaves a person with nothing but the sin nature resources to guide. Titus 1:15 points that out to us. A person will only act on his human viewpoint sin nature instincts, impressions, and that's all that he'll have to guide him.

Proverbs 14:12, therefore, says that the person who does not have God's guidance for his conscience is the person who makes decisions that seem right to him. But Proverbs 14:12 says that the result of those decisions is death. And that's exactly where conscience, which is not oriented to God's thinking, will take you.

So, be careful when you pronounce some action that you have taken with firm conviction that you really believe this, that your conscience is really guiding you, that this is how you really feel you should do things, that you just feel that this is what you must do. You better be sure that you have a conscience that is oriented to Biblical principles before you start mouthing off and sounding off and taking off on your own, because you just discover yourself being taken right out of the blessing and honor of God and finding yourself taking the road to the poor house in terms of eternal rewards. Your conscience is a very tricky thing.

But the Apostle Paul says, "Your conscience is a legitimate thing. It is a thing that you cannot ignore, and you should not ignore." But you must understand how it functions, how it works in your mind, how it's constructed, and how it must be treated in order that it may be considered a reliable guide. A Christian who is out of fellowship short-circuits the flow of divine viewpoint to his conscience. Then, he does not have an adequate guide. He does not have something appear in his mind that says, "That's wrong. That's right. That's pleasing to God. That's displeasing to God." When your conscience is functioning on the Word of God and you are filled with the spirit, that marvelous conscience is there always signaling you. "Ok. Go ahead. No, stop. That's wrong. Don't do that. Go this way." The conscience is there working, and it's a precious, valuable thing. But it must not be, as the Bible says, seared. If you take part of your body and you burn it, you'll destroy the nerve ends. It will be seared, and it will be insensitive. You do that to your conscience with human viewpoint thinking, and it will be insensitive to all of the things God wants you to do.

So, Paul says, "I have brought to witness before you what I am about to tell you about how I personally view and feel about the matter of the Jews. I brought to bear the witness of my position in Christ. I also bring to you the witness of my conscience." And he says that his consciences bears a witness to him. This is the Greek word "summartureo." "Summartureo" means to bear a testimony along to another. Paul's conscience is clear on the truthfulness of what he is going to say. He says there is no lie.

This is present tense. His conscience is constantly clear, confirming the truthfulness of his statement that he's going to make. It's active. It's his own conscience. He's stating a spiritual principle. The reason he says this conscience can be trusted is because it is one that is functioning in - and again, the same word we had before, "en," meaning, "in connection with the Holy Spirit." And he's referring here to God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit bears witness to Paul's conscience of his truthfulness.

Conscience apart from doctrine will lead you to condone what is false and evil. It is the Word of God that gives you a conscience that you can trust and which you must then obey. If your conscience is functioning on God's Word, then it will witness to you the confirmation of what the Holy Spirit thinks, and the Holy Spirit thinks what is in scripture. A Christian who is filled with the Holy Spirit will have his conscience governed by divine viewpoint so that the leading of the conscience can be trusted. Paul's truthfulness, then, is verified by his speaking as one who is in Christ as one whose conscience is clear in the Holy Spirit.

**Martin Luther's Use of "Conscience"**

One great historic example of this use of conscience (and there is, again, I stress, a legitimate use of conscience) is the classic example of Martin Luther who after he finally became a national problem in Germany with his opposition to Roman Catholic church and the principle of authority as residing in the Pope and the church rather than in the scripture and had written many books. He was a prolific writer in which he was setting forth these biblical doctrines, most of which were the result, as you remember, when he was assigned as a professor as the University of Wittenberg to teach a course on Romans.

And he decided that he would teach the course on Romans by explaining to his students what the Greek text was saying, which had not been done before. Instead of explaining the book of Romans on the basis of what all the church fathers had written in the past and what the church had taught about it, he threw all that out, and he opened his Greek New Testament, which, in the providence of God, another scholar Erasmus had finally put together for the first time a Greek New Testament which was now in print thanks to Gutenberg's invention of the printing press. So that, Luther and these scholars had a Greek New Testament complete in hand so that they could sit down and start to study. And boy, they knew the language of the scriptures.

And so, Luther, as a result of teaching the book of Romans out of the Greek New Testament, discovered what is common knowledge to us about how God saves the souls out of the lake of fire. And that's when the fat hit the fan, and everything came apart as he became proclaiming these truths.

Well, it came to the point where finally, the holy Roman emperor Charles V and the Pope ordered Luther to an examination on this subject of what he was teaching. Because the German princes who were in sympathy with Luther did not trust the holy Roman emperor nor the Pope, they refused to let this examination take place outside of Germany. So, they decided to meet in a city called Worms, and their Parliament was called the Diet, and it's called the Diet of Worms. Kind of offensive idea, but it was a great moment. It's the name of the city, parliament at the city of Worms.

So, the great day finally came about, and Luther was now faced with what he had done in taking a stand against Roman Catholic doctrine. The year was 1521. Luther was going to be tried now for, first of all, on the teachings primarily that the Bible alone was the source of information concerning what God thinks - not the Pope, not church councils, not church tradition. Secondly, his teaching that a person was saved by trusting in Christ as Savior - he was justified by faith alone apart from doing anything else. Those were the two primary issues being brought to trial for.

The Diet first of all demanded, as the session began, whether the books which were piled up on the table - and they had a pile of them there, all of them written by Luther - whether those indeed were his books (which he said, "Yes, they were,"), and whether he would not recant (take back) what he had taught in those books. Luther was a little shocked by this, because he came expecting to have a scholarly discussion, because when he walked into this assemblage, you must understand, this was the cream of the political and the religious world was gathered in this room. This was the high point in human civilization. But they said, "No, we're not going to debate it. You just answer us, "Yes or no." It was just a strictly Perry Mason type of thing: "Yes or no. Answer my question. Do not expand upon it."

So, Luther says, "Yes, those are my books. The second question, I want to think about." Charles V says, "Ok, I'll give you 24 hours. Come back tomorrow." So, the next day, they all gathered again. It was April the 18th, 1521. They again asked him, "Are you going to take back what you wrote in these books?"

And the, Luther made his famous reply to this distinguished assembly of political and religious leaders of the holy Roman Empire. While these discussions had been conducted in Latin, because they could all understand that and communicate that with one another, Luther gave his answer in German. And he said, "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of sacred scripture or by evident reason, I do not accept the authority of Popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other. My conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot, and I will not recant anything. For to go against my conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen."

And you see, while Luther appealed to his conscience, he qualified it by saying that it was a conscience which was captive to the Word. Because all the Roman Catholic leaders also believe that they were acting on conscience. But their consciences were not captive to scripture; they were captive to human authorities. And that's what made the difference.

So, Luther stood in this room with a good conscience that the Spirit of God could guide to a right decision, whereas the high and the mighty of the empire - political and religious - stood there with bad consciences, devoid of the Word of God, and they could not make a right decision.

This is the official transcript of the proceedings. There is a memorial in the city of Worms that adds that famous phrase at the end that came out when Luther's reply was published, and which puts the icing on the cake of this dramatic statement, when in Germany he said, "Hier stehe ich, ich kann nicht anders." "Here I stand. I can do no other." And, boy, that room was silent, and that assemblage was shocked. And, whether he said those words or not, they're on that memorial. You can go read them in the city of Worms today. And that famous phrase in German is there, and it's a dramatic, final statement.

What was it he said, "Here I stand, I can do no other"? I can stand on the conscience governed by the Holy Spirit, and I can do no other. So, you see, Luther was ready. He told them to admit that his conscience was in error if it could be demonstrated that it was from scripture. His conscience, if it were not bound by scripture, he would abandon. He told them, "I'll change my mind."

**Paul's Attitude Toward the Jewish People**

So, Paul is using strong terms here when he tells us that he has a feeling now that he's going to explain to us which is based upon a conscience which is governed by the Spirit of God. And, it is Paul speaking in the, what was later imitated by Martin Luther in that great confrontation at the Diet of Worms that broke up to humanity after a thousand years of spiritual backwardness and darkness under Roman Catholic domination finally broke the light of the Word of God. Because here was a man whose conscience governed by the Word of God had the courage to stand, and he knew what he was talking about. That's what you want to remember. It is the Word of God that gives us the principles that enables us to know what we're talking about.

In verse 2 of Romans 9, Paul says what it is that he is making such an effort to stress that he is telling us something that is really true. That, "hoti." This is a conjunction introducing what Paul has been verifying as true. He tells us, "This is what I want to stress is true about an attitude I have." "I have." This is the word "eimi" which means, "actually to be." Instead of "have," he's saying, "I am something." He is constant state. His personal condition.

He has a great, what he calls a "lupe," a great "lupe," which means, "a sorrow." A great sorrow. A great, emotional grief possesses his thinking. And he says, he also has a continual, an "adialeiptos." An "adialeiptos" sorrow, continual sorrow, it's the word "adialeiptos" means it's always there. It's just continually there. Anytime he thinks about it, this sorrow is there.

This word is used in 2 Timothy 1:3, where we have it illustrated, "I thank God, whom I serve from my forebears with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day." "Without ceasing," "adialeiptos," the same word.

So, Paul says, I have a continual, and then he uses the word, "odune," which means, "mental anguish." I have a deep feeling of sorrow within me, and I have a great mental anguish. And he identifies the anguish as being in his "kardia," the "kardia," which refers to the mentality of the soul. Whenever the Apostle Paul thought about the Jewish people in their rejection of Jesus Christ, it caused him great mental anguish. It caused him great internal sorrow. Although Paul had personally rejected Judaism and he had accepted Christianity, he did not turn against his fellow Jews. Paul as a Christian himself had, of course, suffered a lot of abuse at the hand of the Jews, but this did not make him bitter toward the Jews.

I have heard Christians who have treated the destiny of the lost with that kind of good indifference. I have heard them tell us how, in meetings, how they have testified to somebody, and they have laid the Gospel out, and the person arrogantly rejected it. And they said, "Ok, fine. Just go to hell." And to pass a person off goodly, well that's exactly where he is going. But to realize what the consequences is going to be to that person when he finds himself in that condition, you would probably recoil from passing it off that lightly. His destiny is not going to be any picnic.

And that's what the Apostle Paul had here. He knew that the Jews were headed for the lake of fire, and it did not cause him any satisfaction, in spite of the fact that they had so abused him and hounded him from city to city. Paul, after all, you see, himself, knew how the Jews felt about Jesus Christ, because he himself in his own unsaved days had felt about Jesus Christ the same way. And it's important that you and I remember to think back on how we used to act before we came into enlightenment - how you used to act before you were a Christian when you have to deal with these unsaved clowns, how you have acted as a Christian when you have to deal with some other Christian who is acting in some stupid way. Keep your perspective.

Paul says, "I remember how I felt toward Jesus Christ. I remember how in my unsaved days, I zealously persecuted Christians in my blindness." The Bible is full of that evidence about Paul. For example, Acts 7:58, we read, "They cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul." Here, describing the death of the first Christian martyr Stephen. Saul (Paul) was right there with the murderers having part in the stoning of this innocent young Christian.

In Acts 22:4, we read, Paul says, "And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women." Acts 26:11, "And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme [that is, I tortured them]; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities."

In the book of Galatians 1:13-14, Paul has this to say, "For ye have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews' religion [in Judaism], how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it. And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers."

You know the modern colloquial term about taking a person's life, the term "waste the person." It's used in military terms. It's used in civil, secular terms. You're going to "waste the person." You're going to take his life. Here it is. It comes here from scripture. It's here in this verse 13. Paul says, "I've persecuted the church of God, and I wasted it. I rubbed it out."

And then, the final example, in 1 Timothy 1:12-13, Paul says, "I thank Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, and that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Paul says, "Yes, I was even a murderer of Christians. I took innocent lives, and I justified it on the basis that they were guilty of blasphemy, and the Old Testament law says when you are guilty of blasphemy, the penalty for that is death. These people were calling Jesus Christ 'God,' and they were worshipping Him, and I considered them blasphemers."

But, he said, "I was a fool. I was blinded." The Apostle Paul has all this in the back of his mind when he looks at the Jews who have been beating up on him. He knows where they are going, and he takes no satisfaction in it. They are going to get their just desserts. While Paul's ministry was primarily to the Gentiles, he never did lose his love for the Jews and his concern that they, too, might escape hell through Jesus Christ. It distressed Paul to think that the people to whom Jesus Christ came first and primarily the Jewish people were the ones who were going to be left out of that great promise of blessing through Abraham, the blessing of eternal life.

In Galatians 3:7-14, the Apostle Paul is pointing this very point. The Jews who should be the ones first in line for the blessing of salvation through Abraham are the ones who are being left out. And I cannot pass a Jewish synagogue without having something of the same qualms of regret as I look at all those talented, gifted, prosperous people sitting in that synagogue and realizing that he who came for them first of all, the Godman Jesus Christ, is the one that they spit upon and that they will have nothing to do with. And all of them making that decision remember on the basis of a decision of their forbearers, their rabbis, and the people who lived in New Testament times, the ones who yell for the crucifixion of Jesus.

Can you believe that a Jew today would be so sloppy and so careless in his thinking of assuming that those people were right? And when I have posed that question to intelligent Jews: it is possible your rabbis and the people of that time were wrong about Jesus Christ? They are ready to snap right back, "No, they were right." How do they know? They will never know unless God the Holy Spirit comes through and breaks through the blindness that rests upon them. Then, they will see it.

And Paul said, "That's what I wish. There is a double blindness upon the Jew. There is a blindness of the sin nature, and there is the blindness of the curse of God because of what you did to Jesus Christ. And I long for you to have that blindness removed so that the Savior who came for you, you might respond to." The intensity indicated here of Paul's sorrow shows the seriousness of the consequence for the Jews of their rejection of Jesus Christ. It's no fun to spend eternity in the pain of hell, and we pray God that none of you would be so foolish as to follow the pattern of the Jews to reject this Savior and to share that terror and that agony with them.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

[**Back to the Romans index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/romans.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)