

Paul the New II

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[0 : 00] Paul the Apostle remains one of the very most controversial figures in all of human history. And the controversy centers primarily upon what Paul has said and done regarding the person of Jesus Christ.

It is not what Paul says about himself that has caused so much controversy. It is what he has said about the person of Christ.

A familiar complaint among Jewish people, and some have registered this complaint with me personally. I have talked over the years with some of the Jewish rabbis about this.

And almost to a person, they say the same thing. And that is, they have often been heard to say, We have little problem with Jesus the rabbi from Nazareth.

We have great problems with what the Apostle Paul has done with Jesus. Very interesting observation.

[1 : 12] And I tried as kindly as I could to inform them as to where I think their real problem lies. And their real problem is not in what Paul has done with Jesus.

Their real problem is with what Jesus has done with Paul. When you understand the essence of that, you will know why there is such a great divide that remains today between Christians and Jews.

Christ's declaration of what he would do with Saul of Tarsus, later to become Paul the Apostle, surfaces even before Paul was privy to it.

And that requires us to take at least a brief look at Acts chapter 9, the account of Paul's conversion. And I want to share with you just a couple of verses from that that will point out how it is that Paul, even from the very beginning, had this utterly unique ministry.

And if you were with us for our last session, you will recall the great conflict that we revealed regarding Jews and Gentiles.

[2 : 33] How that when our Lord went back to the town where he grew up, Nazareth, and was in the synagogue, and he opened the portion of scripture from Isaiah and read that passage, prophetically speaking, and then said to the people, this day is this saying fulfilled in your ears.

He, of course, was saying that he was the fulfillment of what Isaiah was talking about. And he went on and gave this startling illustration about Naaman the leper.

There were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha's prophecy. And yet Naaman, who was a Gentile, was the only one who was healed of leprosy.

And during the days of Elijah, there were many widows throughout the land of Israel who were in great need. And yet, it was the widow of Zepth, a Gentile, to whom Elijah ministered.

And when Christ gave those two examples and invoked God's dealing with Gentiles, the people rose up in anger. They bodily laid hold of Jesus and hustled him out of the synagogue, out to the brow of a hill where they had planned to throw him over headlong.

[3 : 53] And the only reason they didn't was because his hour had not yet come. So, this great conflict that exists between Jew and Gentile has Old Testament roots, and it continues even to this present day.

The animosity that exists between Jew and Gentile has been responsible for anti-Semitism. It has also been responsible for Jewish misunderstanding of what Christianity is really all about, because they have gotten bad, bad representation of it, all the way from the Inquisition and the Crusades and persecution that has taken place regarding the Jews for literally centuries.

And it has caused them to have a natural fear, if not a hatred, of many who are Gentiles. And many who call themselves Christians were at the forefront of the persecution of Jews.

So, it ought not to surprise us that our Jewish friends have great skepticism, sometimes downright fear, animosity, etc., against those who call themselves Christians.

I maintain that the common Jewish misperception that they have of Christians is probably the single greatest impediment that prevents them from embracing Jesus as their Messiah.

[5 : 23] They just have a gross, gross misunderstanding of what biblical Christianity really is. But they don't think they do.

They are convinced that they have it quite right. Truth of the matter is, they have it quite wrong. And one reason they do is because there is a judicial blindness imposed upon the nation of Israel during this time of their rebellion and unbelief.

And Romans 9, 10, and 11 make that clear. We'll be looking at that a little later. While you're in Acts chapter 9, and before Saul of Tarsus has his sight restored to him, we are told in verse 15, well, let's look at verse 13.

Ananias, not to be confused with the Ananias and Sapphira of Acts chapter 5, this is an entirely different man, had been called to go to Saul of Tarsus and lay his hands on him that he might receive his sight.

And Ananias didn't want to do it, understandably. And in verse 13 he said, Lord, I have heard from many about this man and how much harm he did to thy saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priest to bind all who call upon your name.

[6 : 44] But the Lord said to him, Ananias, go, for he, Saul, is a chosen instrument of mine to bear my name before the Gentiles.

And here these non-Jew people come into focus again. And remember, a Gentile is anyone who is not a Jew.

Bear my name before Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake.

That's the ministry that is laid out for Saul of Tarsus who is going to become Paul the apostle. And at this point in time, he doesn't have a clue. Ananias wouldn't have a clue either, except the Lord revealed this to him.

And he simply told Ananias, You go and do what I told you to do regarding Saul of Tarsus because I have great plans for this man. He has no idea what's in store for him.

[7 : 54] I am going to send him to bear witness to me to kings and world leaders and Gentiles throughout the world.

Now, you may be sure that Saul of Tarsus has absolutely no interest at all in taking any information about Jesus of Nazareth to, of all people, Gentiles.

He was already put into death and hauling into prison and persecuting Jews who had embraced Jesus as the Messiah. He certainly wasn't going to propagate that which he considered an error to non-Jews or to Gentiles.

That was absolutely out of the question. But that is precisely what God had in mind all along. And the mystery of Christ has to do with the rebellion and rejection of the Jews leading to a pathway for the gospel to the Gentiles.

Now, the way the plan developed originally, the way it was set forth in the Old Testament, particularly with Isaiah, was that God was raising up the Jew, the Jewish nation to be a light to the Gentiles.

[9 : 29] But quite frankly, they weren't interested. They saw themselves as becoming contaminated if they had anything at all to do with Gentiles. And in their rebellion and rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, that plan for the Jew to be the light to the Gentiles really kind of went down the tube.

And it seems like the Gentiles are just hung out to dry with nobody being able to communicate anything to them. They are just what Paul described in Ephesians 2.

Without God, without hope in this present world, Gentiles under the curse, strangers to the covenant, didn't have a prayer. They were completely out of it. So, originally it seemed that God was raising up the Jewish nation to be a light to the Gentiles, but with their lack of interest and rebellion and refusal, if God cannot reach the Gentiles through the cooperation of Israel, how then is he going to do it?

He's going to do it through the lack of cooperation of Israel. And this surfaces in Romans chapter 9, just a couple of verses.

Look at them if you will, please. Romans 9. This sheds more light on the present status of the nation Israel than perhaps any other portion of Scripture in all of the New Testament.

[11 : 01] Just the first few verses of Romans 9, Romans 10, Romans 11, all deal with the same subject. Look at this, if you will. Romans 9, verse 1. I am telling the truth in Christ.

I am not lying. My conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.

For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ, for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the temple services, and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ, according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever.

Amen. So here, he is unloading the great burden that he has for his own countrymen. Paul says, I know exactly how these people think, because that's exactly the way I thought before I came to faith in Jesus as the Messiah.

I know exactly what their objections are, because I had the same objections. I know their mindset. I know their fears. I know all about them. I can identify with them.

[12 : 34] And I know and remember how utterly blind I was. And they are too. This is one of the reasons that Paul had such great patience, and such long suffering with his own people.

Though they were so stubborn, and so rebellion, and they beat him. They thrashed him within an inch of his life. They imprisoned him. They persecuted him. They stoned him, and left him for dead. All of this came from his countrymen. You could almost call this friendly fire. At least they were supposed to have been on the same side.

But alas, in reality they weren't, because Jesus Christ is the great divider among men. Those who have him, and those who don't. And Paul did, and his countrymen did not.

But he could so, so fully identify with them, that his heart just went out to him. And I'm sure he wept tears day and night, because he knows how desperately they need this truth, and he knows how much they reject it and rebel against it, because he was one of them.

[13 : 49] And you know, while I'm saying this, just by way of a corollary, let me say this to grace people, who have become steeped in the Pauline message, and the doctrines of grace, and the scriptures as we interpret them dispensationally, we need to be patient and long-suffering with other believers who do not see these great truths as we do, rather than be angry with them, upset with them, condemn them for their blindness and lack of openness.

And it's easy to do, because we need to remember, and I'm often reminded of this myself, how blinded I was to these truths. And I didn't see this for many, many years.

Although, you know what? It was right there all the time. It was right there in the book. And yet, it somehow just escaped me. I didn't see it. When I came to this glorious truth about the mystery that the Apostle Paul was raised up to proclaim, and the liberties and the freedom that comes with it, and what the grace message really consists of, it just swelled my heart to overflowing.

And now, I keep asking myself sometimes, well, why is it that so-and-so, to whom I have spoken about this, and another, and another, why is it that they can't see it?

Well, they couldn't see it for the same reason I couldn't see it. And it just takes repeated hearings. In a way, it's almost a corollary to the gospel.

[15 : 42] When people hear the gospel that Christ died for their sins, usually the initial reaction is to reject it. Certainly not to apply it, or dismiss it, or whatever. Because it usually takes repeated hearings to break down the stubbornness of the human heart.

We get locked in to what we know is true. Only sometimes it isn't. And it's very hard to unlock it. It's very hard to unlearn things that we have learned in the past. And that's exactly where the Jew was coming from. He was so steeped in the law of Moses, in the commandments, of which there were 633, the sacrificial system, and all the rest.

And the main accusation they had against Paul, the apostle was, he teaches against the law of Moses. He is unraveling Israel. He is a cancer that is growing on Israel.

And that's exactly the way Paul felt about believers, Jews, who were believers in Christ before he was. So, this idea of human blindness being unable to see it is something that potentially afflicts all of us.

[16 : 57] We just get tunnel vision and we focus on something and we will not allow any deviation from that because this is what I've always believed. Therefore, that makes it right.

No, it doesn't. Sometimes, we need to change our position. And the only reason, the only valid reason for changing it is learning truth that conflicts with it that we cannot coordinate with it and something's got to go.

So, as I've often said, probably the most dangerous thing a Christian can do is to be confronted with something that he knows in his heart is true but is unwilling to embrace it because of whatever. May I just say there is no adequate justification for rejecting or walking away from what you know to be true.

There is no adequate justification for turning your back on truth. It's the most perilous thing you can do.

[18 : 19] And one thing that happens when you hear and receive spiritual truth and you shut it out, that prevents other truth from coming to you.

The thing that paves the way for learning more truth is embracing what you already know to be true. That creates a learning mode for accepting more truth.

That is walking in the truth. And anytime we confront the truth and we stop, I will not go there. Well, it might be true, but that is perilous.

We ought not to do it. And it's intellectually dishonest. It is intellectually dishonest. We need to go wherever the truth leads us. And here in Romans 9, we'll come over to chapter 10, first few verses of that.

All these three chapters deal with disobedient Israel. Chapter 10, brethren, brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.

[19 : 34] For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. You know what you could almost say there in connection with that zeal? The zeal for God is also a present sincerity.

It might be a wonderful thing if sincerity was a guarantee for truth, if he were just sincere about it. But that doesn't cut it. You can be sincere in what you believe and be very wrong. So they had a zeal, and I'm sure they were sincere.

Do you think these people who rejected Christ did so knowingly? Of course not. They did so like Paul said he did ignorantly and in unbelief.

Ignorantly and in unbelief. It wasn't that, well, he really knew that Jesus was them. No, he didn't. He really didn't believe it until that encounter on the Damascus Road, which didn't leave him much choice then.

[20 : 47] Talk about being confronted with the truth. Paul said they have a zeal for God but not in accordance with knowledge. Sincerity is great but it's no guarantee for truth and zealotry is great.

You ought to be zealous for what you believe but you're being zealous for it doesn't guarantee that it's true. Jehovah's witnesses who peddle their literature day by day, door by door, knocking on doors.

Do you think these people are not zealous? Of course they're zealous. Do you think they're not sincere? They're very sincere. They really believe in what they're doing. But that doesn't make them right.

And by the way, it doesn't make us right either because we believe what we're doing and we believe what we're teaching. That doesn't guarantee that it's right. It always has to be checked with scripture.

It always has to come back to scripture. Nothing I say from this pulpit is true because I say it. There's only one person who could stand behind this pulpit and you could take anything and everything he said to be absolutely true and not even question it.

[21 : 59] But Jesus Christ is not here. So everything that man says from every source you get it, you've got to constantly check it with scripture. So they have a zeal for God but not in accordance with knowledge.

For not knowing about God's righteousness, what's their problem? Lack of information. Not knowing. Ignorance. So you give them the information and what's the response? Sometimes it's acceptance. Wonderful. Usually it isn't. It isn't. Usually it's rejection.

Why? Because it conflicts with what people have previously believed. And we tend to be more comfortable with previous beliefs. We tend to be more comfortable with something that we've always believed.

And when we hear something that contradicts it, we tend to automatically think, well, that can't be right because this is what I've always believed. So we need to weigh, evaluate, think, investigate.

[23 : 02] not knowing about God's righteousness, seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. And then the last reference in Romans, and that's chapter 11, over just a couple of more verses.

Romans 11, and Paul's conclusion. He's been dealing with this issue about what happens now regarding Israel, and he's answering it in Romans 9, 10, and 11.

And here he is wrapping up. And when he says, I say then, in other words, so what is my conclusion about this? Where does all this lead to? My question is, I say then, God has not rejected his people, has he?

Who are his people? It's real. The Jew. They remain his chosen people. Has God rejected them? Has God just written them off?

[24 : 09] Well, yes and no. He has written them off temporarily. He has not written them off permanently.

He has unfinished business with the Jew. And he says, has God rejected his people? May it never be. In the Greek, this is a negative form.

It is the strongest negative that can be given in the Greek language, and it's called meganoito. Perish the thought. Don't entertain the idea for a moment. It requires an absolute negative answer.

No. In no way. Meganoito. May it never be. And here, he gives an illustration that God has not rejected his people. For I, too, Paul says, I, too, am an Israelite.

I am a descendant of Abraham of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Or do you not know what the scripture says in the passage about Elijah?

[25 : 13] How he pleads with God against Israel? Lord, Elijah says, Lord, they have killed your prophets, they've torn down your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life.

This is the famous Elijah complex. This is when a man is having severe problems with rejection. And his conclusion is, you know what?

It sure is lonely here, because I'm the only one who is standing for the truth. Out of all the people, I'm the only one.

And Elijah sat down to a big pity party. Oh, it's tough when you're the only one in the front lines for God. Everyone else has forsaken him and fled.

And here I am, standing here with my little sword, all by myself, ready to take on this horrendous foe. Poor little me, woe is me.

[26 : 22] What is the divine response to Elijah? Elijah, I've kept for myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

You may feel like you're the only one, but you're not. I've got 7,000 other allies. In the same way then, there has also come to be, at the present time, a remnant according to God's gracious choice.

Who is this remnant? Well, it started with the 12, it multiplied with the 3,000 on the day of Pentecost, and a couple of thousand more that were added later on.

So, you're talking about thousands of Jews, all Jews, who have come to embrace Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus the Messiah, as their very own.

But, they constitute a very tiny percentage of the nation of Israel. That's why they're called a remnant. You ladies who are familiar with sewing and bolts of cloth, you know, when you go to the fabric store, they've got a big roll of cloth, maybe it's 48 or 54 inches wide, and it's all rolled up, and it's yards and yards and yards of material, maybe a couple of hundred yards of material in that thing, all rolled up like that.

[27 : 54] But, when it gets down to where there's just a little bit left, a few yards left, and maybe you can't do a whole lot with it, it's called a remnant off the bolt of cloth.

The majority of it's already gone, but there's a little remnant left. Well, when you're talking about people, it's just a minority, and the apostle Paul was saying that God has a remnant left in Israel.

Oh, it's true, the majority of the people have rejected Christ as their Messiah. But don't you understand that God has always worked with the minority.

God has never had the majority of anything on his side. It's always been a minority. I mean, how much of a minority, was Noah and his three sons and their wives.

That was a real minority too. Calling Abraham, that was a minority. Raising up the twelve tribes, they're a minority. And you know something? The Jews are still a minority.

[28 : 58] The body of Christ is a minority. We're not the majority. We're just a small increment of the total of humanity. we are a remnant.

It is a remnant according to God's gracious choice. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works. Otherwise, grace is no longer grace.

What then? What's the conclusion then? Where is all this going? Paul says, that which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained. But those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened.

Just as it is written, God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not, and ears to hear not, down to this very day. And David says, let their table become a snare and a trap, and a stumbling block, and retribution to them.

Let their eyes be darkened to see not, and bend their backs forever. What is all of this? Why is this brought upon these people? Because of their rejection. What God is doing is saying, that's the way you want it?

[30 : 09] Israel, your rejection of my son as your Messiah, is that your final answer? And Israel said, yes, that's our final answer.

We will not have this man to reign over us. Crucify him. And God said, all right, so be it.

And this pale of blindness has descended over Israel. They are in judicial blindness that was activated by their willing blindness.

saints. I say then, verse 11, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? Now, that's not terribly enlightening, the way it is worded there.

So, let me explain what I am confident the text is saying. they did stumble. No question about it, they stumbled.

[31 : 22] And, as a result of the stumbling, they fell. But, the fall is not permanent. It's temporary.

In other words, they did not stumble so as to fall, and the fall is their final end. No! They did stumble, and they did fall.

But, they're going to get up again. God is not finished with them. May it never be. Here's another negative in the Greek, meganoito.

They did not stumble so as to fall with a fall of finality, did they? Meganoito. May it never be. But, by their transgression, what was their transgression?

Away with this man! Crucify him! Peter dressed them down on the day of Pentecost, and he says, You have by wicked hands slain and crucified the Lord of glory.

[32 : 30] That was their transgression. But, by their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make them jealous.

Now, if their transgression be riches for the world, oh, my dear friends, do you understand what is happening here? If their transgression, Israel's rejection, Israel's unbelief, Israel's hardness of heart, their transgression turns out to be richness for the world.

How does that work? It works because God raised up this man, Saul of Tarsus, to be Paul the Apostle, and he is going to do single-handedly what the whole nation of Israel refused to do corporately.

One man, one apostle, Israel had twelve, name them, they're all there in Matthew chapter 10, Peter, James, John, Thomas, all the rest of them.

Twelve apostles for the twelve tribes of Israel. God raises up one apostle for all the rest of the world.

[34 : 09] Does that make any sense? It sure doesn't to me. That makes absolutely no sense at all. But do you know there is a divine arithmetic that transcends human arithmetic and God in his sovereignty and in his wisdom knew full well what he was doing and he raised up this one man and he gave him a job description of taking the gospel the good news of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.

Oh one other thing Paul you are going to go to the Jew first and also to the Gentile and this is what he did. This is why every time Paul came into a new town what did he do?

Made a beeline for the synagogue went right to the Jewish synagogue and he was always there on the Sabbath because he knew there would be a crowd there and he proclaimed the gospel of the

grace of God to these Jews in the synagogue and in most cases with negative results. That's okay. They need to hear it and they'll reject it but they need to hear it and when Paul would go to the next town and go to the Jewish synagogue and in Acts chapter 13 he makes this statement as he preached to his Jewish countrymen but seeing as how you fellows consider yourselves unworthy disinterested in eternal life don't want anything to do with this gospel of the grace of God you will not embrace Jesus as your Messiah that's your decision I turn to the Gentiles and they will hear it and they did and they still do this is so simple it is so plain it is so clearly taught this apostle to the Gentiles with a different gospel not a gospel of the kingdom not a gospel that is found in the

Beatitudes not a gospel that is found in the four gospels but a gospel that comes directly from a risen glorified Lord gospel of the grace of God it wasn't well received then it isn't well received now because it counters what we've always believed and always thought it's remarkable how something so simple yet defies understanding someone has said that the gospel of Jesus Christ is so simple that even a child can embrace it but it can also be so profound that it staggers the greatest intellect that's the gospel of the grace of

[37 : 24] God and Paul is raised up of God to proclaim this gospel and when he says things like but to him but to him who does not work but believes on him who justifies the ungodly his faith is counted as righteousness that is the best good news the world has ever heard and at the same time some describe it as the greatest heresy ever propagated think of that a salvation that is available simply on the basis of believing that can't be that's too easy you've got to live this you've got to do this you've got to do that you've got to jump through these hoops you've got to find a church you've got to be baptized you've got to do this you've got all of this stuff all of these add ons that are completely foreign to the truth of the gospel and yet it gives man something to do whereby he can claim some bragging rights but when you embrace the gospel of the grace of

God you don't have a thing to boast about not a thing you've got everything to be thankful for and nothing to brag about this gospel of the grace of God Paul is going to become so enamored with this gospel you know what he's going to call it he's going to call it now get ready for this I'm glad you're all sitting down he's going to call it my gospel well la tida who do you think you are your gospel Paul's gospel what do you mean my gospel and he uses that phrase repeatedly uses it over and over why does he do that is is Paul hijacking the gospel no how does he have the audacity to call it my gospel what would you think what would you think of your pastor

Marv Wiseman if I called this this is Marv's gospel if you have your wits about you you would head for the exit but Paul unashamedly calls it my gospel why does he do that who does he think he is he may be an apostle but he's still a human being as the old saying goes he just puts his pants on one leg at a time like the rest of where does he get off calling this my gospel well unfortunately time will not permit me to answer that now but we will in an upcoming session and I'll just say this I'll just say this and you can research it a little on your own and and those of you familiar with the grace gospel message already know where we're coming from but the reason Paul uses the term my gospel is because it represented such a stark contrast to what was commonly accepted and understood to be the gospel up to that time now that's not terribly complicated so

Paul is calling this my gospel deliberately contrasting the content of his message from the content of the message that went before so what we've got heaven forbid in the minds of some at least what we've got multiple gospels and contrary to what many would insist on today there's only one gospel that is not true there are multiple gospels in the bible and I'm not talking about Matthew Mark Luke and John I'm talking about the essence of the gospel message the good news message there's more than one good news but the good news that Paul arrives on the scene and begins proclaiming is a different good news from the good news that was proclaimed before so we've got a different kind of gospel and then think about this and put it in the mix when you come to Galatians chapter one he opens with a scathing rebuke of the people to whom he's addressing this letter when he says I marvel I am absolutely flabbergasted that you are so soon removed from the gospel which I preach to you if anyone comes to you with a different gospel than what I have proclaimed to you let him be accursed as I said before so say I now again if anyone proclaims a different gospel to you than that which I have preached let him be accursed that is very strong language he is here isolating his gospel and giving it a preeminent position and he's saying that everything contrary to it constitutes another gospel which is not in reality a legitimate gospel at all

[43 : 32] Paul is claiming an exclusivity and a legitimacy for the message that he is proclaiming and he's saying this is what you have to believe let everything else be disregarded now that is strong medicine that is really strong stuff but is it true is it supportable as God is my witness it is magnificently true and we will see the upshot of this in our next session are there questions or comments in the moment closing anyone would you stand please father we are grateful for the great clarity that is set forth regarding these truths in scripture and we again humbly offer our apology for having been so obtuse and so blinded to it for so many years thank you for those who ministered to us patiently and untiringly until we were able to see the glorious truth of this glorious gospel and we pray that as a congregation and as individuals we will be able to distinguish between these see the contrast and see why understanding the gospel of the grace of

God is so critically important thank you for having raised up this man for his placing his life on the line for the persecution and the injury and the suffering that he gladly endured for the privilege of propagating this gospel may we see it in the same light and intensity with which Paul saw it and thank you for giving him that precious update of information for our blessing and benefit and father if there is anyone here today struggling with this issue of becoming acceptable to you wondering what must they do to be saved we pray you will impress upon them the simple truth that Jesus Christ already did everything that's necessary for their salvation and all they have to do is put their trust and their confidence in him as their substitute we bless you for this glorious truth and we look forward to it being spelled out more fully in Christ's wonderful name amen