

## 96-10-04a

Let's begin by going to the Lord in prayer. Father, we thank you as always for the great privilege that we have of being saved by your grace, of being called by the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, and of having all of the opportunities and all of the provisions that you have put before us in this age. We pray tonight as we look into the truth of your Word that God the Holy Spirit will guide us and enlighten us and lead us into all truth.

We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen. We resume our study tonight in Romans chapter 9, starting a new chapter and a new section in this letter this evening. But if you thought you were going to get away without a review, you were wrong.

Because we do want to see where we are and why Paul is going to introduce this new section into his letter. It has often been observed that the flow of argument would continue unbroken in this letter if the next three chapters were omitted. And I have been through studies where the teacher actually went straight from chapter 8 to chapter 12 and finished the thought contained in those chapters and then went back and picked up 9, 10, and 11 almost as a parenthesis.

But as we are going to see, there is an important reason why Paul digresses at this point to address the issue of Israel. But you might just notice, you know the argument in the book as it has developed up to this point. And Paul has addressed the issue of how we please God as believers, not by attempting to perform works of righteousness, but by, through faith, letting God create righteousness in us.

Inner transformation rather than outer works is the contrast that Paul has drawn and illustrated and argued for in the first eight chapters. And he has concluded that by talking about the great purpose, the reason that God has done that, in this age he has a special point to make. And he has a special destiny for us in this age.

And if we respond to that call to righteousness by faith, we can be the brethren that surround Jesus Christ and reflect his glory. We can share that justification and glorification that are a part of our calling in this life. And he says, if you pursue this, you can take anything that comes.

It doesn't matter if people misunderstand, if people misjudge, if they bring a charge against us and say that we're not holy or we don't care about the lost or we don't care about ministry and so forth. If God is happy, who can bring a charge is how he has concluded chapter eight. He says there's nothing in the created universe that can separate us from the love of God.

And he gives a list of all of the different things, and he is persuaded that none of these things can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Now if you go from Romans 8, 39 to chapter 12, verse 1, you have a beautiful continuation of this thought, because he goes on to, after having given us this truth, he says, therefore I beseech you, put this into practice. And this is where, as is often the case in Paul's letters, he goes from the theological argument and the

presentation of truth to the application of those things.

If these things are so, then here's how you should live. And so it does make a nice transition, and you could eliminate chapters 9, 10 and 11 and have a very fine letter, and you wouldn't even notice the break if you chose to do that. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God.

He's just talked about the mercy of God and the love of God, and in the light of this calling and all of the provision God has made, present yourself as a living sacrifice and so forth. However, if we did that, there would be a great unanswered question in our minds, and maybe not in our minds, but certainly in the minds of the original listeners. And after we think about it a while, this same question arises in our mind.

If he has effectively demolished the viewpoint that many of the Jewish believers have about righteousness, and if he has argued effectively that this has been the wrong way to please God all along, then what about the nation of Israel? What about the people who have had the Mosaic Law and who have had the covenant from God? And so forth for roughly 1,000 years, actually for 1,400 years. Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt in something slightly more than 1,400 years before the time of Christ. David ruled in Israel around 1,000 years before the time of Christ, and so they've had many, many generations of people who have had the Law of Moses, and they have had many generations of people who have misunderstood it and have tried to use it as a means of attaining righteousness rather than as a means of expressing righteousness in the age of Israel.

And now, in Paul's day and in Paul's generation, you have people that have flatly rejected the idea that righteousness comes any other way than by keeping the Law. They are believers. They are saved.

But they do not believe that this is the way to achieve righteousness. Now, do we have that same situation today? Yes, we do. We have people who are saved by God's grace, saved by the blood of Christ, and who are going to be in the eternal future, not in the lake of fire, but who completely do not understand or agree with the idea that the priority in the Christian life is to pursue inner transformation and that that is the key to pleasing God and being declared righteous in this age.

People think, well, you're only presenting a part of the picture. That can't be the whole thing. Nothing would get done.

No one would be witness to it. If you just sit around and say, well, I'm just in it for myself, and I just want to be transformed in the inner man. What about love? What about the expressions of ministry and the examples that you have in the Apostles and so forth? And, of course, this is an exaggeration and a misunderstanding of what Scripture is teaching and what we are attempting to pursue.

It isn't that we leave those things off or fail to do them. It is that we do them after having been

changed and been motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit on the inside. It is possible to do those things or to pursue them without learning and growing in grace and knowledge of our Savior.

And when you do that, you mess it up. And we have great televised spectacles of how to mess up the Gospel and how to mess up ministry, people coming forward and pursuing the healing of their physical ailments and so forth. And we don't want to err in that way.

At the same time, we don't want to think that the academic pursuit of the study of the Bible is sufficient to create inner transformation. You can measure the progress of your inner transformation by seeing the fruit that it produces. And the key there is defining fruit.

We've seen in our study that the fruit is the fruit of the Spirit that the Bible defines as a change in mental attitude. We can measure our progress as believers not by how many souls we win, which to me is like counting cou, you know, how many scalps are on your belt, how many planes have you painted on your fuselage, how many kills do you have in the air. The measure of whether or not we're making progress is do we see change in our daily life.

We all know that there are areas in our life where we lack patience, where we lack joy. We get in a certain set of circumstances or around a certain person and the joy just evaporates and we immediately start being impatient and the dark black clouds of mental attitude sins obscure who we are and why we're here and all of the work that God is doing on the inside of us. Well, are we ever going to get over that? Are we ever going to get better? There are certain things that always jerk our chain.

There are certain things that always get our goat. There are certain things that always throw us off balance. It can be people.

It can be circumstances. It can be our own failure in some particular area. Whatever it is, that's the place to look for progress.

But we come back to the question and somebody looking at this from the outside and not having been through the eight chapters that we've been through might say, but what about the Great Commission? What about the lost? What about church and ministry and the getting things done that is the primary occupation of the church in their view? Stop and think about it. If we're changed on the inside and if we do make progress in the area of our attitudes, who is better equipped to do the work of ministry? Who is better equipped to do the work of evangelism than someone that has genuine divine love and joy and peace and patience and forbearance and long-suffering, self-control, knows when to speak, when not to speak, doesn't get their temper riled up when somebody starts coming back with objections and questions and so forth, has the patience to love someone without being loved back, to return good for evil, that is the light that's supposed to shine in the world. It's a supernatural way of living and it can't be faked.

It can't be put on like an outer garment. It has to shine forth from the inside and God has to put it there. We want to be those who are equipped for every good work.

We want to be those who are used by God to share the gospel and to minister to the needs of the saints. That's the exercise of our spiritual gift. Our spiritual gift, whatever it is, whether it has a label or not, is designed to minister to the needs of fellow believers and in some cases to minister to the needs of the lost by communicating the gospel verbally or non-verbally.

But it can't happen if we just go out and say, I want to do that, any more than if you want to go out and bench press 375 pounds, you walk out and say, well, this weight needs lifting. I'm just going to get underneath it and push it up. It takes preparation.

It takes growth. It takes strength that you develop over time and that's what God wants to do with us. So, to those who think that this approach belittles evangelism or belittles ministry, the answer of scripture is, it is the man who is thoroughly equipped or the woman who is thoroughly equipped for every good work that God is going to use in those endeavors and oftentimes use in ways that they're not even aware of.

So, this is the only way to truly be used by God and not wind up being used in spite of ourselves to where it is as though we wrote the gospel on the bathroom wall and someone happened to read it. Fortunately, the word of God carries its own power and whatever vessel carries it, it's still going to do its work. And God the Holy Spirit, as we have seen, is the primary witness and does the primary work of evangelism in the world.

We are privileged to participate in that endeavor, but God can do it all by himself and do a far better job than if he included us. Now, we say all of that to say this. Righteousness by faith is a hard concept for us to accept.

It's hard to communicate. It's hard to keep a hold of in our own mind, much less convince someone else. In Paul's day, when he wrote this letter, he knows this full well.

He knows that there are Jewish believers out there who say, well, you're throwing over the whole Old Testament. You're throwing over the law and the prophets. You're just making light of Israel and the covenant that God has made with them and the statements that God made about Israel, that they are the chosen people and that through Israel all the world is going to be illuminated and so forth.

And here we are trying to be Israel, and you're saying, no, you're doing it all wrong. There's a completely different way. So the question comes up in the course of this argument.

After Paul has successfully shown the flaw in the thinking of Jewish Christianity and Jewish culture in general, that the law is the way to please God, the law is the way to accomplish God's purpose, the question starts bubbling to the surface, well then, what about Israel? And doesn't

this happen in the discussions and arguments that you have? If you think of any recent discussion or any recent, argument might be a strong term, but any recent strongly opinionated discussion that you might have had recently, and you express a viewpoint on one side, somebody else has a viewpoint on the other side, don't they typically take your viewpoint and just push it to an extreme and say, well then, you just don't care anything about that anymore, do you? You're arguing against this. You just don't care about it. I mean, you can pick anything in politics.

You can pick this handing out of condoms in high schools, and a lot of us think, well, that's not a good answer to the problem. We say, we don't think you ought to be handing out free condoms in high schools. People say, oh, well, you just don't care if teens engage in unprotected sex and get AIDS and die and have babies out of wedlock and stuff.

You just don't care. And, of course, that's pushing the argument to an extreme and saying, well, you're some kind of a monster, when in fact you're trying to make a more subtle point. Well, the same thing can happen here when Paul is arguing for righteousness by faith and is demonstrating it in all these different ways, and he says, there's nobody that can bring a charge against you if you go this route.

If you attempt to please God, nothing can separate you from the love of God, and it's the love of God that counts. Now, what are all the Jewish believers in the audience going to say? Well, you don't care anything about Israel. You've forsaken your heritage.

You're supposed to be a Jew, and you're off here taking care of the Gentiles and teaching them they don't have to keep the law. You're throwing Israel, Moses, the Old Testament, and everything overboard. So Paul stops right here at the end of section in chapter 8, and he says, not so.

It's as though he's responding to somebody who stands up right in the middle. He might have gone on to chapter 12, verse 1, but he stops right here and he says, wait a minute. It's as though someone raises this objection, and he says, look, if you think that I don't care about Israel and that I'm not concerned or that I don't understand what God is doing with Israel, let me set you straight, and he's going to do that in the next three chapters.

So he begins in chapter 9, verse 1, And then he's going to continue and launch into his discussion of Israel and where this new system that God has put in place leaves Israel. What about the covenant to Israel? What about God's promises? What about the Old Testament and the law of Moses? But he introduces this in these first five verses, and he breaks right into the middle of this otherwise very wonderful discussion of church age truth to address that particular issue. So we want to start tonight, and I suspect we will only get through the first three verses, not because we're going to dig a deep post hole here, but these verses are going to lead us into some very interesting places from which I fear we will not return until next time.

So let's begin here in chapter 9, verse 1, when Paul says, I tell you the truth in Christ. I am not lying. My conscience also is bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit.

Now, why do you think he says all that? He must be about to make a very important point, we would guess, to begin with. It's fascinating to look at the places where Paul uses this sort of statement. This is the strongest of this type of statement anywhere in the New Testament, and I have looked them all up, and we are going to look them all up tonight because it helps us understand the break in the argument right here.

And I reassure you there are not very many, but there are enough that it illuminates what we're looking at here. For example, turn over a few pages to the book of 2 Corinthians. Paul uses this four different times, or this type of thing, four different times in 2 Corinthians, beginning in 2 Corinthians 1.23. In 2 Corinthians chapter 1, Paul is addressing the same group, of course, that he addressed in 1 Corinthians, but he is telling them that he's going to come and visit them.

And he says, starting in verse 19, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, by me, Silvanus, and Timothy, was not yes or no, but in him it was yes. For all the promises of God in him are yes, and in him, amen, to the glory of God through us. Now, he who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Moreover, I call God as witness against my soul. Now, this is another one of this category of statement. Paul is about to say something, and this is almost like an oath.

He says, I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. There were people that were thinking up all kinds of reasons why Paul didn't return to Corinth and give them the benefit of his presence. There were all kinds of speculation and all kinds of rumors floating around that Paul had an issue or that Paul favored some other group more or whatever.

And so, to reassure them, he sort of puts himself on oath, and he says, I call God as witness against my soul, that the reason I did not come any more to Corinth was to spare you, not to humiliate you, not to denigrate you, not to give you short shrift, but to spare you. Not that we have dominion over your faith. We are fellow workers for your joy, and by faith you stand.

Now, the point here is that when Paul uses this oath here in 2 Corinthians 1.23, he is about to make a statement about himself. He is about to confirm something that's in his own soul. He says, I'm calling God as witness against my soul, that my personal reason for not coming and visiting you in Corinth was to spare you.

Without getting deeply into what was going on in Corinth, the point here is that Paul is confirming something in his own motivation, something in his own heart, and so he puts himself on oath to emphasize what he is saying about himself. If you turn over a few pages to chapter 11, verse 10, starting in verse 9, he says, When I was present with you and in need, I was a burden to no one.

For what I lacked, the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied.

And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself. And then he says, As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia. He's saying, I didn't make myself a burden, I didn't take up a collection, I didn't force you to support me, even though that's my right as an apostle.

And then he says, No one is going to stop me from continuing to be able to make this boast that I have taken from no one, that I've been a burden to no one. And he puts himself on oath again here when he says, As the truth of Christ is in me. This is another oath type of statement.

He's saying, If there's any truth of Christ in me, this is true. And of course these people know that he's an apostle and the truth of Christ is in him. So this is another oath sort of statement.

And once again we see that Paul is confirming something in his own soul. He is not at this point making a doctrinal statement, is he? He's not saying, As God is my witness, Jesus Christ is the Son of God, or Jesus Christ died for your sins. He's saying, This is something in my soul, this is something pertaining to me personally.

This same chapter down in verse 30. He says, If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

Now he has not just made a doctrinal statement, has he? He says, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. And then he puts himself on oath. He says, The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

And so he's using an oath to confirm something that he's making as a personal statement. Look in chapter 12, verse 19. Again, do you think that we are making an excuse for ourselves to you? When he says, I urged Titus and sent our brother with him.

Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same steps in verse 18? Again, do you think that we're making some sort of excuse for ourselves? We speak before God in Christ. For we do all things, beloved, for your edification. He says, My personal motivation, and I call God as my witness.

I speak before God in Christ when I tell you that we did this for your edification. So you begin to see a pattern here, don't you, in the oath statements of Paul. When he uses an oath, it always seems to be when he's confirming something about himself.

When he's trying to get across his motivation, his personal feeling, his personal priorities. You can see this same thing in Galatians chapter 1, verse 20. In Galatians 1.20, we were here not long ago, he is talking about this confrontation that he had with Peter and James and so forth.

And that the gospel he has of grace, he didn't get from the other apostles. He got it straight from God. And he says, I didn't see any of these other apostles.

I saw Peter for 15 days, and the only other person I saw was James, the Lord's brother. And concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie. Why does he say that? None of us would accuse Paul of being a liar.

It seems like an unnecessary or superfluous statement. But once again, Paul is confirming a personal truth about himself from his own soul. And he says, before God, I tell you, I'm not lying when I write this to you.

You can see the same thing in 1 Timothy 2.6. Now, I don't know about you, but I have run across these passages before. And it always makes me scratch my head and say, why this seems superfluous? You could subtract it out and the passage would flow just fine. Look at 1 Timothy 2.6. He says, he's talking about the gospel.

And he says, concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie. I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying. I am a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

This is actually in 6 and 7. He's talking about Christ and he says, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle. I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying. A teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Why does he need to say that? Why does he say he's speaking the truth and not lying? Once again, this is a personal fact. It's a personal motivation on the inside. And he confirms it with an oath.

You can look all through the epistles of Paul. You can look all through Acts and his speeches and everything else. And when he's communicating straight doctrinal truth, he never needs to back it up with an oath.

He says, he never has to say, I'm speaking the truth and not lying when I tell you this doctrinal fact. He always uses it when he's talking about himself. And it is a means of emphasis.

It is a means of... It's very similar to when you're called as a witness in a court case and you lay your hand on the Bible and you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Because it's your personal testimony. It's your personal statement of the truth.

And so that's what he's doing here when we get back to Romans chapter 9 and verse 1. But look at the oath that he stacks up here. He says, I tell the truth in Christ. I am not lying.

My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit. If there was any time or any place where Paul wanted to confirm and assure people that this is an absolute fact in his own soul, this is it. And so he's got a triple oath here.

He says, I'm telling the truth in Christ. I am not lying. My conscience is bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit.

So he's got two members of the Trinity here backing up his story, as it were. Why does he do this? We've already seen that in our introduction. This would be a prime place in his argument for someone to stand up and say, well, you just don't care anything about Israel anymore.

You're throwing out the law and the prophets and the covenants and all of these things that pertain to Israel. You're saying that this is a whole new thing, that God pre-designated certain people to belong to Christ, and this has nothing to do with our Old Testament. You're just throwing out Israel.

So Paul stops here and he confirms this with a triple oath. And what is it he's confirming? That's what we find in verse 2. He says, I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. The first word there for sorrow is the word *lupe*.

I was working on a lady's machine last week, and her name is *Lupe*. It's a proper name in Spanish. But it comes from the Greek originally, and *lupe* is a strong word for sorrow.

It became the source over in Latin, where it is *lupus*, of the formal name of the wolf. When you look at the genus and species names for a wolf, it's *lupus*. And the reason is because of the mournful howling that a wolf does.

As they said, he's the picture of sorrow, and so it comes from that derivation. Great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. These words express the tremendous sense of depression that Paul feels when he thinks about Israel.

This word for continual means that it's an ongoing thing that does not stop. It's a perpetual condition in his soul. Now, we all have our ups and downs in life, don't we? We never maintain a continual mood.

I was in Oklahoma City shortly after the bombing, and a good friend of mine who is an active-duty Marine commanded a recruiting headquarters that was located in the Murrah building there in Oklahoma City. And when the bombing took place and the building was brought down, he happened to be out of town doing his duty as a recruiter and visiting the sites all around the area, which includes Oklahoma and southern Kansas and so forth. And he was actually on his way up to Kansas to visit one of the recruiting stations up there when the bombing took place.

But several of his Marines were badly injured, and a couple of them were killed in this tragic event. And so he, of course, immediately came back and asked if I would come and be with him and with the Marines there in the first few days after that traumatic event. And so I was down there, and I saw this very good friend.

And it was a tragic occurrence, and it was a tragic occasion for being there. But nevertheless, when you see a friend, there is joy in rekindling your fellowship and in spending time together. Even if the occasion is a tragedy, even if you meet family members at a funeral, you'll still see smiles, and there will still be laughter, and there will be joy at reuniting with people you haven't seen in a long time.

And as the days, a few days went by and so forth, and the commandant of the Marine Corps came down and went around and visited the hospitals, and we went with him, and just before the commandant left, they had an official Marine Corps photographer there. And so on the runway, just before the commandant got back on the plane to go back to Washington, D.C., we stopped, and there was a picture taken. Well, when you look at the picture, all of us have something of a smile on our face.

It's not a hilarity type of smile, but the commandant is smiling, my friend is smiling, and I'm smiling. And yet this picture is taken on the occasion of a visit that was brought about by a tragedy. What am I saying? You can have any time, even now, when I think about that, when I think about the people that I saw badly injured, and when I saw the families of the Marines that were killed, and we went and visited with the widows and the children of these men who were never coming home, it is still a source of sadness and sorrow every time I think about it, and that sadness will never go away.

One of the Marine officers who was killed, I was acquainted with. I had met him before and had spent time with him. I have his card that he had given me there in my desk drawer, and he was killed, and it was a couple of days before they removed enough rubble.

Every time I think about that, there is a sadness in my heart that his life was cut short and that his family is fatherless and husbandless now, and that a good Marine officer is gone. But it doesn't mean that I am now a sad person for the rest of my life, but any time I think about that particular subject, there is a continual ongoing sorrow. That's the idea here.

Paul had joy and peace in his life. Even when he was in prison, they sang hymns and so forth. But this is a subject, any time it came to his mind, it was a source of sorrow.

Whenever he thought about all of his fellow Israelites who should have responded to Jesus Christ and should have responded to the calling that he has just talked about in chapter 8, with all of its promise and all of its expectation and future hope and reflection of eternal glory and the great motivation and the wonderful participation in God's plan that it represents, when he thinks about all of his fellow Israelites who are diligent students of the law who are missing out on this, it's a source of sorrow. You can think about this in terms of your family. All of us have family members that may not know Christ, or if they do know Christ, they're off in some different version of life than what the Bible teaches.

And any time we think about it, it can make us sad. Well, that's the situation Paul is in. He says, these are my kinsmen, my brethren in the flesh.

And he says, I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren. Now, we need to stop here and think for a minute.

It's their sadness and their sorrow, and all of us have experienced deep sadness and deep sorrow. But have you had sorrow so deep that you would exchange your salvation to make it go away, which is what this appears to say. That is a strong statement.

That is a sorrow that goes beyond the pale. And in fact, that's not exactly what Paul is saying here. Vocabulary-wise, when he says, I could wish, this is in the imperfect tense, and it's in the middle voice.

And it has the idea that this has been an attitude that he has had for some time. The imperfect is normally translated as a past tense. I was wishing would be the simple translation.

I was wishing that I myself could be accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen, according to the flesh. But this is something of an idiomatic usage, and it has the implication that if it were possible, I could wish that I were accursed from Christ for the sake of my brethren. And the word here for accursed is a word that's familiar to all of us.

It's anathema. It's the Greek word anathema, which is a very interesting word. And so we have two concepts to look at here.

First of all, what does it mean to be anathema? And secondly, how can Paul wish that he would be anathema from Christ for the sake of his brethren, the Israelites? This is a powerful statement to make. Well, let's first of all look at the idea of anathema. What does it mean to be anathema? One of the first places this word shows up in the New Testament is Luke chapter 21 and verse 5. Luke 21.5, this is the occasion where Jesus and the disciples are walking in the vicinity of the temple, and as they walk along, there are people marveling at the beauty of this structure.

They look up and see the rich putting gifts into the treasury. They saw a poor widow putting in the two mites. You remember this occasion where they're down at the temple and he talks about the widow with the two mites.

Then in verse 5, some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations. All of us have been in churches where somebody has donated money and they've dedicated a pew or they've put in a stained glass window or an organ or a piano or whatever. Well, these donations were adornments to the temple.

But it's interesting because the word donations there is anathema. These are anathema. And what the word means, what it meant originally in Greek, was something that had been set aside

and carved out to be dedicated to a god.

It had no longer any attachment to the earth or the things of the earth. This might be a sacrifice. It could be a person that was taken from a family and was dedicated completely to Diana or to Aphrodite or to some other Greek divine entity.

And the idea came to mean that this thing is completely taken out of its normal place and context and has been thoroughly given over to something else, completely devoted. It's not far from the idea of sanctification, being set apart to God. And this is one of the cases where you see that original usage of it coming out.

These were things that people had dedicated to the temple, had given to the temple as an adornment. One of the next places that you see this word in the New Testament is in Acts 23-24. This is an interesting episode in the history recorded in Acts.

Paul was out preaching the gospel. Much of it was the gospel that we've seen in Romans. And in Acts 23, we find out in verse 12, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink until they had killed Paul.

You can see now the sort of environment that Paul is writing the book of Romans into. There are people that violently disagree with his presentation of God's plan, with where Jesus Christ fits into it, and where faith and righteousness by faith fit in. So here are some Jews, these brethren, these kinsmen according to the flesh, who have bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink until they had killed Paul.

There are two usages of anathema here. One is a verb and one is a noun. When it says they bound themselves by an oath, that's the verb form of anathema, anathematizo, to pledge oneself.

And once again, you see the idea of devotion, of separating out, cutting all strings. And this is what these men had done. They anathematized themselves with an anathema, that they would not eat or drink until they had killed Paul.

And this means no family visits, no visits with their spouses, no food, no drink. They've cut themselves off from the world and everything in it and dedicated themselves completely to this one goal, to end the life of the Apostle Paul. And so you have a double usage of anathema there as a noun and a verb.

And so the idea from the original Greek word there is completely disassociating and cutting off from one's surroundings. We see the more customary usage of this when Paul uses it in 1 Corinthians 12. 1 Corinthians 12, verse 3, he is talking about spiritual gifts.

He's talking about the fact that when the Corinthians were heathens, in verse 2, they were led astray to dumb idols. And in verse 3 he says, therefore I want you to understand something. I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says Jesus is anathema.

And no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. So we have two polar opposites here. Acknowledging Jesus as Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit or pronouncing Jesus as accursed, that can't be done in the power of the Spirit.

And literally it's saying Jesus is anathema. And this goes beyond the idea of completely cut off. The idea was that anything that was that completely isolated and ripped out by the roots, that that was a bad thing, that that was a curse.

And so for Jesus to be completely disassociated from everything that's holy, that he's not a part of the plan of God, he's not the Son of God, he is not the Messiah, he's not the Savior, he didn't die and redeem us, that cuts Jesus Christ completely off from all of the truth. And to say that Jesus is none of the things that he claimed to be or that scripture says he is, you can't do that and be speaking in the Spirit of God. So it isn't just the idea.

We think of a curse as bringing some kind of bad karma on something or some kind of bad circumstances. Or if you're cursed, you're going to have problems. Obviously you can't bring problems on Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, as he sits at the right hand of God the Father.

But when you say Jesus is anathema, you cut him off from everything that he is. You deny everything about him. And you can't do that and be speaking in the Spirit of God.

Anyone who's speaking in the Spirit of God is going to acknowledge who and what Jesus Christ is. So that's what this statement means. And we have a similar usage four chapters over in 1 Corinthians 16.22. 1 Corinthians 16.22, the very end of the letter, in verse 21 he says, I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.

Everything from this point forward is in the autograph of Paul. He's scribbling it down with his own hand. I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.

If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be anathema. If anyone has no love for the Lord. Now this has some ring to it since we've just been through Romans 8.28. All things work together for good to those who love God.

And we saw that love for God and love for Christ is not automatic in the camp of believers. It's something we have to pursue and develop through growth. It is a command of God to love him.

Jesus said that love for him would be manifested in obedience and would result in his indwelling presence over in John 15. So here Paul says, if anyone, and he's talking about believers, if anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be anathema. Now what does that mean? That means breaking fellowship.

That means putting distance between ourselves and someone that has no love for the Lord. This is a hard thing, but we have several teachings in Scripture, several places in Scripture that teach

us that there is a time to distance ourselves from fellow believers. And this is one of them.

If there is no love for the Lord, let them be anathema. Cut them off. It doesn't mean go throw trash at their house or toilet paper their trees or egg their car or somehow make their life miserable, put some kind of a hex or a curse on them.

It means let them be completely isolated. Let them cut the strings, put the distance in between, let them be anathema if they have no love for the Lord. When we engage in our fundamentals study that's going to be starting here in a couple of weeks, this is one of the topics that we're going to cover.

When is there a time to put distance between ourselves and fellow believers? What is the doctrine of separation, if you will? This is one of the passages we'll be returning to. So, finally, take a look at Galatians 1, verses 8 and 9. Galatians 1, 8 and 9. Paul tells them in verse 6, I'm astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel. That's the issue in Galatians.

It's the issue in Romans.