

WAS PAUL ANTISEMITIC?

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Thank You, Father, for Your mercy, for Your kindness. Thank You that You love us greatly! I thank You that You have opened our hearts, by Your Holy Spirit, for the truth of Your Gospel, that we can understand it and that we can have insight into it and then have the purpose of it which is to experience Your life and the fruit it brings forth. That it is all by You and nothing else. Thank You for that, Lord. And thank You that You speak powerfully through me today. Amen

This web church is all about teaching the Gospel and also providing a place where like-minded people gather around the Word and where they encourage one another in the Gospel. I want you to know that you are only going to hear the message of Grace today. Grace defined as the message where God is not dealing with you based on your ability to please Him but He's dealing with you on the basis of Him empowering you so that you can share in His life wherein all the glory belongs to God and that He, by His glory, will glorify you to share in His life. So, it is not a works, sin consciousness message, but it is a message that focuses on what God has come to do for us. So many times, in the church, we have our focus on what we need to do for God so that we can get God to bless us. or that we can be acceptable for Him, so that we can have a place in heaven one day.

The message that you are going to hear today and every Sunday as you slot in here or going to my website and listening to all my messages be it by YouTube, it is all focused on God and what He has done and is doing for us today. It is not sin-conscious... it is God's power, His grace, His resurrection power conscious.

The title of today's message is basically, "Antisemitism and the Gospel of Paul." Paul's message might sound antisemitic. Some of you might say, "What is antisemitism?" Antisemitism simply means that you are antisemitic people. The way we understand it today or the way Wikipedia would basically define it is to be anti the Jewish people... to be hostile towards them. It is something like what Hitler was. He was definitely antisemitic! But in today's thinking towards antisemitism or anything that is anti-Jew, we are so scared that what has happened between the Hitler and the Jews should never happen again. We are very scared of saying anything negative about the Jewish people. I also believe that it brings us to a place where it would be difficult for us to truly understand what the Apostle Paul has said because there is a lot of things that he says which is seemingly antisemitic or anti the Jewish people.

One of the titles that I had on one of my messages two weeks ago was on the judgment of God towards the Jews. Just titling a message like that will immediately cause dislikes on your YouTube videos and negative comments and so forth, without any person listening to the message.

Now, when we look at the Apostle Paul and what he said to the Jews might even be judged today as very anti the Jewish people. But, was Paul truly anti the Jewish people? Was he against the Jewish people? He said things like, "Your circumcision has become an un-circumcision." To the Jews it would sound like, and it was basically what he said is, "You were the people of God but you are not the people of God anymore." Now, if I would go today and say that the Jewish people are not the people of God, it would sound very antisemitic. It would sound as if I am saying that God has rejected the Jews.

The Apostle Paul, in Romans, basically states that the Jews were called the vessel of dishonor. Let us put it in today's terms so that people can understand the power of what Paul was saying in Romans. Imagine I go and I say that blacks are vessels of dishonor... used by God as vessels of dishonor. You can get yourself in jail for saying something like that. You are not allowed to say something like that because it is called racism. It is a racist remark and yet the Apostle Paul comes in his understanding of the Gospel and he calls the Jews, "Vessels of dishonor". It tells them that they are sinners. He basically comes and says that their circumcision is an uncircumcision. What they would have heard was that it would be bordering to blasphemy against God for they knew that the Scriptures states that Israel is the apple of His eye... "Israel is My son."

But now it says that God has basically rejected His son, that he isn't the son anymore. What does that mean? Paul comes and he says that he is not a Jew. He is one outwardly but one that is one inwardly. He goes on in other places and says that not all that are of Israel are Israelites, saying that the physical Jewish people is not the Israel of God. That is really antisemitic statements that he is making.

Why would Paul make such statements and what was he trying to communicate in that message? We are going to look at that today and I trust that this will help you to understand the depths of the simplicity of the Gospel. The Bible says that we should not, like Eve, be deceived from the simplicity that there is in Jesus Christ. This message is very simple and today we are going to look at the simple Gospel in Romans.

What we are basically going to say today is, let us start with the end and then extrapolate and explain it. At the end what I am going to tell you is that Paul was not antisemitic. But to a person who puts his trust in the flesh or thinks he is special as a certain group of people, it would definitely qualify as antisemitic. But Paul was actually for the Jewish people and he wanted the Jewish people to be saved. That is why he came and put a focus on how useless boasting in your flesh is before God. What Paul was basically saying was, "It is absolutely useless to stand before God and think that you have a ticket into salvation just because, in the flesh, you are of a certain people group or, in this case, if you think you are of the stock of Israel or a Jew. If you think that or believe that, it means absolutely nothing. He says that it also, basically, means nothing to God for being a Jew in the flesh cannot save you! Nothing can save you outside of Jesus and Him bringing forth life to you.

In **Romans 2**, Paul came and said something very powerful.

:22 You say that a man should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You say that you should not abhor idols, but do you commit sacrilege?

:23 You that make your boast in the law, through breaking the law, dishonor God.

He is basically saying, “You boast in the Law. You say that God is our God and He gave us the Law and these Gentiles should serve our God for He is the only true God. These Gentiles are dishonoring God in not worshipping Him by worshipping idols.”

But now Paul comes and he says, “You that are not obeying the Law that the God you say you have, gave you, are you not dishonoring God basically in the very same way as what the Gentiles dishonor God?” So, he is basically defaming them here telling them, “You are just as bad as the Gentiles. You are in the same sinking ship!”

24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

He is now quoting the passage now saying that the scripture states that God is blasphemed through you and you are dishonoring God. Imagine how terrible that would be. Imagine I go today and I say, “I just want to say to the Jewish people that you that boast in the flesh and in the Law: The Scripture says that the heathen nations are blaspheming God because of you!” That would be a terrible thing to say. We cannot even think of saying that today... not publicly because you can get into deep trouble for that. But here we find the Apostle Paul saying it. Was he antisemitic? No, he was **for** the Jewish people and he wanted to remove a wrong mindset from them because he loves them and he wants them to be saved. For God has not rejected His people. That means that since they disobeyed the Lord in not doing what God has told them to do through the Law, in their disobedience that has not disabled God to bring salvation to them as well. And through Jesus Christ, as Jesus is a way for the Gentiles to eternal life, He also provided the same Jesus now, as a way to the Jews. Where the Jews do not have to bear the burden anymore of being the Jewish people having physical circumcision and therefore have access to the Law. And now they stand under the Law to do all the commandments of the Law and everything that goes with that.

It is actually Paul showing and having a love for the people of God. But, to the Jew it would sound as if this guy hates me. And to the person that would honor someone in the flesh, the Gentile then, if you want to call it like that, that thinks the Jew is special because he is a Jew which we find everywhere in the church today. I’ve seen it. I remember I was like that years ago until I started to understand the true Gospel. I would think, “Man, this person is a Jew and there’s just something special. Because he is a Jew, he has a mind that connects with God and he understands the old customs very well and he just knows God kind of a bit better. He’s “the real Rolex” and I am the fake one although we look the same. But, glory to God, we can now be put in the same showcase.

But, as I started to understand the true Gospel, I found that God loves all people the same. And He is not going to discriminate against the Jewish people and tell them that they find their righteousness in the flesh and the rest just have it by Grace. No, He is a loving God who is going to give it to all people the same. Yet, we find that Paul's approach in Romans is very harsh to the Jewish ear and to the person who loves the Jewish system, even if he is a Gentile, which we have in the Church today.

Paul goes on ...

:25 For circumcision there is profit if you keep the law.

:26 but if you are a breaker of the Law, your circumcision is made uncircumcision.

That is really saying a lot. Imagine today I go and I say to the Jewish people, "Can you keep the whole law?" If he says, "No", then I tell him, "Then you are not the people of God. Then you are just like a filthy heathen." People say, "We should never say that!" But here the Apostle Paul comes and says that. But why is he saying that? He breaks down the whole traditional Jewish system where the Jews boast in their flesh in such a powerful way in Romans that he has to answer the question which would then come naturally to the Jewish mind which we find in **Romans 3:1**. The question would be: ***What advantage then has the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?***

Because he immediately knows the Jewish people would say, "Paul, you want to say that we, as Jews, are not the special people of God. You want to say that we cannot boast in our flesh. You want to say that we are just as much sinners as the Gentiles. You want to tell me that everything that God had shown us and all the things that God has spoken to us, the whole promise that came from Abraham and everything that happened to Moses and how He led us out---- that means nothing? Do you want to tell me that there's no advantage? What advantage is there then in being a Jew? What profit is there in being a Jew?" That is the question.

Before we answer that question, I want you to keep in mind of where the whole debate started.

The whole debate started in **Romans 1:16-17**, where Paul said that the Gospel, the message that Jesus was raised from the dead, is the power of God unto salvation to whosoever believes... be he a Jew or a Gentile. Then he went on and he establishes and explains the wrath of God over humanity where it said that if you want to live by your own power and you don't find the life of God in you, it means that God is not involved and God is not "pulling your wagon". He is not giving you life. That is a sign that you, in yourself, don't have God and that you are in need of God. Whosoever, then, calls on God and doesn't trust in his own power, be it a Jew or a Gentile, will have salvation as a free gift. We need to understand that is where it comes from.

He is now continuing to answer this: The whole of chapter 2, especially the latter part into chapter 3, he, as a Jew, would reason with the Jew that he is himself and knows what the natural Jewish mind would say.

It would be like in **Romans 3:1** where the Jews say, “**What advantage is then in being a Jew** because God has given us all these things?” Then Paul answers that in **Romans. 3:2: Much in every way: but mainly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.**

When we look at **Romans 3:1**, it says, **What advantage...** That word, advantage, is also used in **John 10:10 The thief comes not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.**

That word, more **abundantly**, is the same word as advantage. What he is basically saying in **John 10:10** is that the thief comes to steal, to kill and to destroy but I’ve come to give them life and that they might have the advantage of life... the advantage of living from the life source that God has provided. That is what they’re basically saying. They are saying, “What benefit is there for us? What advantage is there for us in being Jews?” Paul says that in every way it is an advantage for you as it is an advantage to know God for every nation but, chiefly the main thing that makes you different from the other people is simply that the oracles of God was given to you.

We all know what an oracle is. An oracle is a medium or a prophet or a priest. So, what he says here is, “The oracles, the messages that God has given via a mediator, via priests, via prophets... it was given to you. The advantage that you had was that you had this message which was now the message of Jesus and His death and His resurrection, where we will not be saved by our works but by reliance upon Him.” That was the advantage and that was, basically, what he was saying there.

You can go and look at **1Peter1:10-12**. It simply says that there were prophets that looked at these oracles of God, that looked at these prophetic words, and they wanted to know when these things are now going to take place. When are they going to manifest?

So, what advantage does the Jew have? It is simply this: To them were given the message. What makes them special? They were the messengers. But the message they carried for Gentiles was the very same message for them. And they thought that being a messenger is what saves you. It is the same as I said in the previous two Sundays concerning a police man. Imagine a policeman thinks because the message of the law, the country’s law, was given to him and he can now go and enforce this law. If he thinks that because he’s got the message, that the message is not for him and that it puts him in a different category where he is not subject to that message, we will find that he would be in trouble very soon. He would simply be in error. He would simply believe a lie and he will not have true freedom. That is what Paul is saying here.

So, if you go to a police officer and you say to him, “I want to tell you something. The fact that you are here as an officer, a representative of the court or of the country’s law, or whatever, does not make you above the Law. You are also not allowed to speed. You are also not allowed to text and drive or any of those things.” If you tell that to that police officer, what is he going to do? He is going to become very upset. That’s just the natural thing to do and he would think that you are against him.

He would immediately think, "Who are you to tell me that? Don't you know that I am special as pertaining to the Law?" No, he is not special as pertaining to the Law. He is under the Law but what advantage does he have? He was trained in the Law and in the application of the Law so he has the only advantage. The only thing that he has that makes him different from anything else or anyone else, is the fact that he has that message and that he carries that message to other people.

So as much as what a police officer is not exempt from obedience to the Law, that he is subject to that, in the very same way when Paul comes and in his writing in Romans here, he basically breaks down the system. He tells the Jews, "You are as much subject to the Law as anyone else. The Law is actually written for you, so that you, as the people of God, can also know that you are as much sinners as what the Gentiles are. So that you can know that since God has chosen you to carry the message that the message is also for you, condemning you to the point where you have to say, "By my own power I cannot be saved. I need a Savior." That is how it is.

The Law that's given to the police officer is also given for him because inside him is also a will to speed and a will not to stop at the traffic light. As he now applies that Law to other people, as he applies that where the other people don't stop, where the other people speed, that very same message is preaching to him. It is telling him that he is also in need of salvation from speeding and not stopping properly. He is also in need of salvation from being delivered from the temptation of texting and driving and whatsoever. I think that basically settles chapter 3:1-2.

The first question in the Jewish mind was, "Well, if God did all of this through us, what benefit does this have for us? Do you want to tell me that this has no benefit... that we are not special?" Then Paul said, "Well, the only thing that made you special is that you were the carriers of the message which was for all people as well as to you. That's the only thing that makes you special but you are not special unto the point where you don't need the Savior to save you from sin and death. You're not special to the point where you are exempt from death and sin just because you are in the flesh circumcised and of the stock of Israel."

This is the next question Paul addresses here:

Romans 3:3 For what if some of them did not believe (have faith, or have been unfaithful?) shall their unbelief (unfaithfulness) make the faith (the faithfulness) of God without effect?

The next thing the Jew says is, "Okay, so what you are now saying is that if we are seen as unfaithful, if we are rejected as the people of God, that means that since God has promised that He will bring salvation to all nations through the Jewish people. If the Jewish people be rejected as unfaithful, that immediately means that God cannot keep His promise.

If God rejects the Jews, and the promises that through the Jews God is going to bring salvation to the Gentiles, and the Jew is now rejected as the people of God, that means that God cannot bring salvation to all nations.” That is what is in the mind of the Jew and Paul is now addressing that.

Let’s read that again: ***For what if some of them did not believe shall their unbelief make the faith*** (faithfulness should be seen as God’s faithfulness to provide salvation to the nations) ***of God*** (to bring salvation to all nations) ***without effect?***

That is what he is basically addressing here. The Jew would say, “Well, it is impossible that God would say to us that we are not the special people of God because, should God say that, it means that He cannot save the nations and He is going back on His Word that He promised Abraham and promised through Moses and all those kind of things. So, it is impossible that we cannot be the people of God.”

Now Paul addresses that and says, “Do you think that God cannot still fulfill His promise even if you are rejected as ‘the special people of God’? That you fall into the category of all people are the special people of God?” He says, “God’s faithfulness cannot stop. It can still accomplish that in the midst of the disobedience of the Jews.” And how did God do that? He got one Jew, called Jesus and that Jew was called the faithful Israelite and through His faithfulness, God, through a Jew, brought forth what is promised in the beginning. So, God did fulfill His promise. Therefore, all the other Jewish people who were unfaithful, in the midst of their unfaithfulness, God was faithful and He still fulfilled what He has promised. Therefore, there is no need for these people to stand in their own faithfulness to the Law anymore. And they are now, actually, released from all these heavy burdens and they are now at a place where they simply have to trust God that God can give salvation to them from physical death and sin, by His doing. That is all! That is how simple it is.

In my notes in verse 3:

A) We need to remember Chapter 2 in order to understand this verse. In chapter 2 the Jews were defamed by not obeying the LAW to the level of a Gentile that is lost and without God in this world according to Paul’s reasoning. (See Rom 2:23-25)

B) ***What then, if some did not believe***...If some of the Jewish nation have abused their privileges, and acted contrary to their obligations, shall their wickedness annul the Promise which God made to Abraham, that he would, by an everlasting covenant, be a God to him and to his seed after him, including the Gentiles?

Genesis 17:7 Shall God, therefore, by stripping the Jews of their peculiar honor, as you know he will and has done, falsify his promise to the nations, including the Jewish nation because some of the Jews are bad men?

No, He is not! He is still going to save both Jew and Gentile, but not through the Jew boasting in his flesh. I am saying this and the Apostle Paul found it very needful to mention this because he wants to break down all people groups to the point where the Law tells the Gentiles, "You are worshipping the wrong God!" And he's telling the Jews, "You are not truly worshipping God. You are dishonoring Him and that all people are therefore now sinners and the only thing that can save a man is God's faithfulness towards man. That's the only thing." That's what he wants to establish so that he can bring his point clear that he made in Romans 1 saying that all people are simply saved by Grace through faith and nothing else. That is what he is saying. He has to address this in a very complex way (It sounds complex to the Gentiles or to us that are non-Jews). But it is actually very simple for a Jewish person to understand that. So, he was just thinking, "What could these Jews ask and let me answer that." That is what he was doing.

C) The argument is that the Jews cannot be rejected. Should that be the case God would be unfaithful – which we all know he is not the case.

I think in points A to C is clear on what on what Paul is addressing in verse 3. It is very difficult to see it that way if you don't put yourself into what Paul was thinking at that moment in being a true Jew. If you don't think inside the shoes of being fully Jew and don't understand what it is all about you will never understand Romans 3. It would be impossible. We would not understand the wrath of God. We would not understand any of those things unless you put yourself fully into the Jewish understanding of what wrath is, how wrath works, put it into Adam and Eve, what took place there, we will not understand how beautiful this part of the letter is.

Romans 3:4 God forbid: yes, let God be true, and every man a liar; as it is written, that you may be justified in your sayings, and might overcome when you are judged.

That also sounds complicated but let me try and explain the simplicity of that. The simple Gospel is this: Remember last time I said that if you believe that there was a man, Jesus. He died, He physically died. He was physically buried and He physically came back from the dead. He came in the flesh physically in the resurrection and that He is Lord and that you acknowledge His lordship over you, you shall be saved. If you do that, if you truly believe that from the depth of your heart, there is basically nothing more I can teach you. All you can have now is a life born from that and from that truth understand the scriptures but you've already reached the depth, the utter depth of the Gospel. You are in salvation, my friend. You're having the very life of God from that belief and from that truth. Amen

Paul comes here, and this is the simple Gospel: God said to Adam and Eve, "You cannot live by your own works." I am not oversimplifying. I am just putting it as simply as what it is. God said, "You cannot live by your own works and without Me." Man said, "God is a liar." In believing what the devil told them, they made God out to be a liar. Now God said, "If you believe this, you are walking in the lie and you are in sin."

So if you say to God, "God, you're lying!", you are continuing to walk in blasphemy and you are continuing to reject God. But, if you say, "I am a sinner", then at least you have now agreed with God. If you say, "I cannot live by my own works and I messed up by my own works. I am flooded with sin and death by my own power", you have now agreed with God. You have declared God to speak the truth. Now he is using an example here: In the day when you are judged, when it says that you are a sinner, if you can say, "Yes, I am and You are the Savior!", what would you do? You would overcome in the day of your judgment because you truthfully answered and agreed with God.

To me, if I can confess my sin, meaning that I can confess that it is impossible for me to be saved by my own works. I confess that I cannot obey the Law, I confess that in myself I don't have eternal life, I confess that Jesus became sin and had to die because I am too weak to bring salvation to myself and I will never be able to live, not even a little bit of holiness, by my own power. If it is not His gift, I cannot. I, in myself, like that man who was beating on his chest says, "Be merciful to me a sinner." When you say that, what are you doing? You are agreeing with God because God's knowledge about man is that man is missing the mark. Man, in his own ability, can never make it! That does not cause God to reject man. The fact that man has that weakness wherein he can only live by the power of God, that is not offensive to God.

What God does not want is for us to say, "God, You are a liar. I can live by my own power and I will not trust in You!" God is not in favor of that and He is against that. That is what the Bible also calls, "frustrating the grace of God", grieving the Holy Spirit. That means that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life, comes to you as a free gift and now you don't want the free gift because you want to continue in the Law. You want to continue by your own works and you are not willing to come to the place where you say, "Let God be true and every man a liar." I hope that gives a bit of an introduction on what verse four is all about.

Rom. 3:4 God forbid: yes, let God be true, and every man a liar; as it is written, That you may be justified in your sayings, and that you may overcome when you are judged.

If you say, "I have been a liar in thinking that I am special because I am of Jewish descent, I've lied. It's not true!" In saying that you have now overcome in your saying because you've now acknowledged the truth in believing what God says.

a.) Paul uses the passage in Ps. 51:4 as a way out of declaring that you are a sinner in the presence of God.

b.) The only correct thing you can do is to say you are wrong and so make God out as the one that is in the right.

This is what it is all about from the beginning clearly seen in the story of Adam and Eve. Glory to God!

If you don't get this at this moment, it's not a problem. What you do is and I think many of us come and we just sit and we read Romans 3 together but we're not familiar with Romans 3. Go and read through the whole of chapter 2 and the whole of chapter 3 if you have time. If you don't like to read let your wife read it to you if she likes to read. If the wife doesn't like to read, let the husband read it or someone. Read it together or get an audio Bible and just let it read through Romans 1-3 to just get a bit of a bigger picture and this will make a lot of sense.

We are not going to go into verse 5 which is just going into another question which he basically says. ***But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous to take vengeance?***

We can just answer this one quickly. The next question that you would have is, "If we, as Jewish people, let's reason like this. We want to stay the special people of God. We are not going to let go of this easily. Paul, if your argument is that we are rejected by God and that the goodness of God is now actually seen that even in our disobedience His goodness is shown in Him remaining faithful in bringing salvation to Gentiles, through us and our disobedience. And that God is now actually seen as a very good God through our disobedience, do you think it is right that He now rejects us as His people because we actually made Him look good." Can you see how they are "grasping at straws", grabbing on to every little bit of straw, a little bit of nothing, to have a point to stay as the special people of God.

Romans 3:5 But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who takes vengeance?

Vengeance means to say, "I am burning you up as my own people." That is not to literally burn in hell because we find that God didn't burn up the Jewish people, physically burning them up. but the whole system where they were thinking, "I'm a child of Abraham." That was burnt up. We find that in John the Baptist who said, "The ax is already laid at the root. Every tree that does not bear fruit will be cut down and will be put into the fire and burnt up. What was he talking about?"

The next verses say, "Don't say that you are the children of Abraham or that you have Abraham as your father because the physical descent being in the physical limit where Abraham was your forefather. You are the stock of Israel. If you think that that can save you then you are wrong for that cannot bring forth fruit in you." What he is saying is that the family tree of physical descent, the ax is already at the root and that is being cut out. Why? Because it cannot produce fruit in people. That is why God is now bringing forth a tender plant that comes out of the stem of Jesse that is growing up and it will become a forest. This plant is Jesus which will cause fruit in both Jew and Gentile. That is what it is all about.

Let me end off with this: Was Paul anti-Semitic? No, he was not anti-Semitic and as we continue and get into Romans 9, we will see that Paul was actually trying to get the Gentile people in Rome not to be antisemitic thinking that God has rejected the Jews to the point that it's impossible for them to even be saved by Jesus. But that Paul was coming and actually standing up in the face of the Jews in the fulness of the letter. But he also in chapters 2 and 3 breaks down the Jewish mindset should there be a Jew that thinks, "I am special because of my flesh."

I also believe that he is setting up the Gentiles because he is luring them into them thinking this Paul guy is really good. He is talking our language. We are antisemitic. He is talking our language. We are opening our heart." And as they opened their hearts in the letter and you get into chapters 8 and 9 and especially chapters 10 and 11, then he takes out the big whip and he whoops the Gentiles in thinking. Now they've already accepted him. They know he understands what we understand and then he comes and tells them in chapter 11, "Listen, the salvation is also for the Jews.

So, did Paul use antisemitic language? Definitely! Was he antisemitic? No! But was he pro Jewish flesh? Not at all! He was pro salvation for all people since all people are under the power of sin and death without God. That is what it is all about.

I want to thank you that you've allowed me to serve you with this message. I trust that it has blessed you greatly and that it's great food for thought and that it brings greater understanding to the letter to the Romans. God bless....