

The Proudful Conclusion

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[0:00] Have your Bible with you. Open it, open it rather, if you would, to Romans chapter 2 and find verse 17.

! We'll read it here in just a moment. In fact, I'm going to read verses 17 all the way through chapter 3, verse 8. And no, we're not going to get that far tonight. Not even near that.

But I want to read, and we'll read here in a moment, that larger text. Because the focus is the same. Well, really the focus has been the same for a number of verses.

The focus has been condemnation, condemnation of unbelievers. And Paul has, as I mentioned last week, has kind of segregated them to focus on various groups of unbelievers.

And so, this one we're going to be starting to look at tonight, starting with chapter 17, will run all the way through chapter 3, verse 8.

[1:19] So, the same group, per se, is in focus here. I'll get to that here in just a minute. Just quickly, again, by way of review, we're talking about the condemnation.

That's the subject, or the basis of condemnation. In view here is not salvation. And so, you could not take these passages and reverse it to come up with the grounds or the basis for salvation. Condemnation. That's not it. We're not saved by works, but we will be judged by them. Or man will be. And so, that's the focus here, condemnation.

And the various groups of people in focus here, or the recipients of this condemnation. First of all, the heathen. Just the heathen in general.

In chapter 1, verses 19 to 32, we're talking there about, again, about the unabashed pagans. Unabashed pagans.

[2:21] No pretense about them. No religious trappings about them, although many of them have a sort of a religion.

But we're talking about the heathen, both crude and civilized. Or uncivilized and civilized. The second group would be the hypocrites, or what I've called the hypocrites, both Jews and Gentiles. Chapter 2, verses 1 through 16. And the only difference, really, between the hypocrite and the heathen is, one is an unabashed pagan, and the other is a respectable pagan.

Or religious, some have called it a virtuous pagan. Like, for example, the lady in the car in front of me this evening.

What are you laughing at? You don't even know what I'm going to say here yet. No, actually, it's a pretty sad testimony. I'm smiling, but it wasn't funny. I'm sorry. If I led you astray, Mike over there.

[3:22] Mike thinks he knows what this story is about, but he doesn't. Believe me. Anyway, I was driving to the church this afternoon, and came up to the intersection over here of Washington and Frank Phillips.

That's the guy's name. Pretty important fella, isn't he? Or was he? Anyway, and I'm there in the turn lane, and there's a car right in front of me, and this young lady had a decal on her back window that was appalling.

I mean, it was extremely vulgar, just in big letters, and the words I will not repeat here tonight. But as I was sitting there thinking about that, I think, you know, what kind of person puts that kind of thing on the window, you know, for all to see?

And I'm kind of looking through the rear view mirror, or rear window, and I see the lady seated there in the back of her, and hanging from the rear view mirror was a cross.

Extreme contradiction, wouldn't you say? And so I guess maybe I would classify her under the, quote, hypocrite. Unbeliever, I can't judge her heart, but I'm just using her as an example of what I'm talking about here, what Paul is talking about here.

[4:56] Kind of a, well, I don't know about virtuous, but a pagan. But with some religious trappings, a facade of Christianity, so to speak.

And it would be difficult for me to just isolate that example and plug her into this category, when she may very easily be plugged into the third category, the one we're going to be looking at, or starting to look at tonight.

And that is not the heathen or hypocrite, but the Hebrew. The Hebrew. And that is, starting with chapter 2, verse 17, God's specific condemnation of the Jews.

The Jews are in focus here. From verse 17 all the way through to verse 8 of chapter 3. Now, let me just go ahead and read that very lengthy text.

You can follow along in your Bibles. Indeed, you are called a Jew, he says. Now, we know the focus has shifted here. You are called a Jew. He's speaking directly to Jews.

[6:05] And rest or rely on the law and make your boast in God and know his will and approve the things that are excellent being instructed out of the law and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.

You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal?

You who say, do not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?

For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, as it is written, for circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law, but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code in circumcision, are a transgressor of the law?

[7:41] For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew who is one inwardly. And circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not from men, but from God.

What advantage then has the Jew? Or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way. Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.

For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?

Certainly not. Indeed, let God be true, but every man a liar, as it is written, that you may be justified in your words, and may overcome when you are judged.

But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust to inflict wrath? I speak as a man.

Certainly not. For then, how will God judge the world? For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to his glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner?

[8:54] And why not say, let us do evil that good may come, as we are slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say, their condemnation is just.

All right. So we'll just stop right there as far as the reading, and we're not going to get anywhere near that. Let me just begin by saying that the Hebrew is in focus here, okay?

The Jew. This is the basis of God's condemnation upon the Jew. All right? And sadly, I think we could say that when Paul described what God, or described that God is just in his condemnation of the heathen and the hypocrite, I would imagine the Hebrew readers would have said, amen, amen. They would have been in complete agreement with that. And therein lies the problem, the problem that is addressed here. And for the Jews looked at the heathen nations, the Gentile nations, and affirmed God being just in their condemnation, and yet did not look at their own hearts, their own lives.

And God's condemnation was just and is just toward the Hebrew, the Hebrew unbelievers. All right? And we'll make sure we're talking about unbelievers here. All right?

[10:21] Now, the application, though, because we need to make an application here, and I think we can rightly make an application. The application of God's condemnation toward the unbelieving Hebrews really goes beyond.

The application would go beyond just the Jewish people, per se. And the application, I think, would include all religious people. Religious unsaved.

All right? Now, I'm not talking about pagans here. And here's where we make the distinction. In fact, we can identify the progress in Paul's thought from the rank pagan to the pagan that has some respectability or even some religiosity to now the religious person in the sense of orthodox religion. He's not speaking to pagans here. Jews were not pagans. They were very religious people. And their religion was per se. Orthodox.

And I think we can go beyond that and make this application to those who are orthodox or have embraced, to some degree, orthodox Christianity.

[11:41] Namely, Americans. Americans. Now, when I say embracing Christianity, I'm not talking about saved people necessarily.

In fact, I'm not talking about saved. Genuine, born-again believers. I'm talking about those who are practicing a religion. In the Jews' case, of course, Judaism.

Judaism. Orthodox Judaism. In many lives of Americans, in the lives of Americans, it would be orthodox Christianity.

And yet, the reality of the heart is they're not saved. Not saved. but have an appearance of Christianity.

See, that's why I said I have difficulty maybe applying the little example of the young lady that I pulled up behind earlier this afternoon. And maybe she would fit into this category.

[12:39] I don't know, she might be a member of a church somewhere here in the community. Maybe it's even a Baptist church, though I doubt it. And so, we're talking here about the Jew, but making application to the religious person.

All right? In the orthodox sense. See, the Jews, I think, represented the quintessential worshipers of religion. They weren't worshiping, really worshiping the one true God, but they were worshiping religion itself.

Its form. Its various rituals. of the religion. Some prescribed by Scripture, but many, many countless others added on through the history of the Jewish nation.

And so, they were worshiping the religion, the form, the ritual, the ceremony, all of the trappings of religion. And I think we can readily see that. It's not hard to connect that in our minds with the Jews, and we can see that very clearly, and yet, I would venture to say that that's very much like some American Christians who worship their religion and not worship the one true God.

And the reason they don't is because there's no reality, no reality of Christ in their hearts and lives. all right? So, the Jews and the application to some in America today, they worship for worship's sake and whatever they may see as a benefit to that.

[14:29] and perhaps more egregious is the coming to the place where they embrace a false assurance of salvation grounded solely on the, in the shadow or in the shadow or the soil of the religion.

Okay? That kind of religion, by the way, will send you to hell. Has for many years and is with many today.

In fact, I happen to believe that a large part of hell will be populated by some of the most religious people you would ever hope to meet in this life and I hope you don't meet them there anyway.

So, Romans chapter 2, 17 through 20, well, all the way through verse 8 of chapter 3 tells us why God condemns the religious man or woman.

The religious man that has no reality of faith. Represented, though, by the Jewish nation. All right, now let's get into the text and the first thing I want you to see, first thing I believe Paul reveals in verses 17 through 20, is the prideful conclusion of the religious man.

[15:56] The prideful conclusion, in fact, that will be our focus tonight. We'll not get to the other two tonight. I'll give them to you. Secondly, he's going to reveal here in the text the shameful contradiction of the religious man.

And then finally, the rightful condemnation of the religious man. All right, but tonight, the prideful conclusion of the religious man.

Just look at verse 17 again and following. He says, indeed, you're called a Jew and rest.

You see that word there? Rest, or maybe you're a particular copy of God's word or version of God's word. You might have the word rely there. There may be some other words that are used.

The idea behind the word is that they are banking on their possession of the law. That is, they have a prideful, they've come to a prideful conclusion that they're saved because they are possessors of the law.

[17:03] All right, so let me go on because I want to point out a couple of the words here that really reveal pride. Rest is one of them and make your boast. There's another word.

Make your boast in God. Anything wrong with boasting in God? Not really, per se. I want to answer that quickly because I know I'd catch some of you thinking, oh yeah, there's something wrong with that. Nothing wrong with boasting in God, per se.

But now, we're not talking about just boasting in Him as our Lord in that sense. But boasting in the sense of a prideful confidence that because they know or know about the one true God, that that means they're saved.

That means just on that basis alone, they have a confidence that they're saved. All right, so there's the word. Rest on the law.

Boast in God and know His will and approve the things that are excellent being instructed out of the law and are confident. See all these words that really convey clearly the idea of pride.

[18:20] And yet, yet there isn't anything wrong with relying upon God's word. Is there? nothing wrong with that.

There isn't anything wrong with, again, boasting not in self, not as others, not in achievements, but boasting in the Lord. Nothing wrong with that per se. Nothing really wrong, nothing inherently wrong with having a confident, you know, being confident and so forth.

God's but the idea here is the basis of God's condemnation of the Jew and what the Jews were doing. They had come to a conclusion about their salvation or the guarantee of their salvation and they had come to a prideful confidence about that.

And there was no reality of salvation in their lives. Now, let's just consider then some of these things that Paul says they were boasting in.

It's really very easy to see and follow along in the text. In the first place, they boasted in their Jewishness. Or, put it this way, they boasted in their lineage as Jews, didn't they?

[19:41] I think that's what he's saying here. Indeed, you are called a Jew. Or maybe I could use my voice to inflect a little bit different and give maybe the gist of it.

Indeed, you are called a Jew. And the implication being that they were very prideful, very proud of their lineage.

They could trace it all the way back to Abraham or maybe even further back than Abraham. very proud of that and put a lot of stock in that. Indeed, you are called a Jew.

And the Jews, you see, were filled with a prideful confidence in their lineage and it led them to make this conclusion because of their lineage, their salvation was guaranteed.

That's the idea here. Why don't you look at Micah in the Old Testament, Micah chapter 3 verse 11. In fact, I might just start with verse 9, Micah chapter 3.

[20:55] Now hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob, rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity, everything that's right, who build up Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with iniquity, her heads judge for a bribe, her priests teach for pay, her profits divine for money, that is, they foretell for money, yet they lean on the Lord.

Do you catch what's behind this? And yet, I mean, you're doing all of these things, terrible things. I mean, your government leaders, they are making decisions for bribes, kickbacks. Sounds kind of familiar, doesn't it?

Your priests, they're out there teaching for what they can get out of it, the financial benefit from it. your prophets, they too are prophesying for money, and yet they lean on the Lord, and they say, listen to this, is not the Lord among us?

No harm can come upon us. See, the pride of the Jews, the pride, and primarily based upon their Jewishness, who they are.

[22:39] I mean, they're God's chosen people, and so nobody can harm us. We can do what we want, and yet we have our salvation, our relationship with God guaranteed.

It's just very clear to see. Matthew chapter three, and verse seven, we get on into the New Testament. This time, John the Baptist is speaking, and a prophet, the last of the Old Testament prophets.

In verse seven, but when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, this is Matthew chapter three, by the way, did I tell you that?

He said to them, brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come, therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, we have Abraham as our father.

See the pride there? There's no need for us to repent, no need for salvation, because it's guaranteed.

[23 : 55] we have Abraham as our father. See, the lineage, the boasting in their lineage. Let me give you one other example, a really good one. John chapter eight.

This is a dialogue between Jesus and the Pharisees. John chapter eight, and really verse thirty-three, verse thirty-two.

And you shall know the truth, Jesus speaking, you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, we are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone.

Oh, that's a big fat lie. Can you imagine them saying something like that? I mean, they've been in bondage for nearly all of their history. How can you say, you will be made free?

And Jesus answered them, most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave to sin. You see, Jesus is not talking about earthly bondage or being slaves to nations or people as the Jewish people were nearly all of their history again.

[25 : 10] He's talking about spiritual things here. He's talking about salvation. And you skip on down to verse thirty-nine. If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.

Abraham, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father.

You see, their real lineage was not Abraham, not in a spiritual lineage sense. If God were your father, you would love me. Verse 44, you are of your father, the devil.

So here are the Jews. I mean, just very clear. And we don't really have to just go to Romans chapter two to find this. Jesus revealed this over and over again in the Gospels and other places in the Bible.

The Jews had a problem. They boasted in their lineage. They had a prideful, had come to a prideful conclusion about their salvation, that it was guaranteed because they were descendants of Abraham.

[26 : 15] Abraham. All right, very clear. Well, what's the application? Well, today, some people in America, really in other parts of the world too, think they are above judgment, the judgment of God or somehow that their salvation is guaranteed based upon their birth.

You say that can't be. It's true. I tell you, there are many Americans, many Americans, who think that they're Christians because they are citizens of a Christian nation.

They're born Christians. So we have this kind of idea and it's reinforced on the evening news. The more we hear about world events, you see, in some of these other countries, like in the Middle East particularly, where there are two categories of people, there are Muslim and there are Christians. And the Muslims usually are that. But those that are categorized as Christian aren't necessarily Christian. It's the same mentality that many Americans have had over the years, that because I'm born in America and because America is a Christian nation, then that means I'm a Christian.

That's not true, is it? As one preacher said, I heard about some kittens born in a bread basket, but that didn't make them biscuits. And being born in America doesn't make you a Christian.

[27 : 50] I know I'm preaching to the crowd tonight, you know that. But there are many today, some people, thinking that their lineage, or we could go further, maybe they are born into a certain family.

And so maybe it's not because I'm born an American, but because I was born in a Christian family. My father was a preacher. My grandfather was a preacher.

My great grandfather was a preacher. Born in some traditions, my great grandmother might have been a preacher. And so that makes me a Christian. It's not by birth or being born into a certain family, certainly not baptism.

how many in America think they're Christians because they were baptized or belong to the right church.

I mean, we can make that application. It's not necessarily strictly their lineage, but just sets of circumstances, whether it's birth or baptism or belonging to a church or believing a certain doctrinal system makes you a Christian.

[29 : 07] I mean, you can know doctrine front words and backwards and know it in detail and be just as lost.

They say some have come to a prideful conclusion about salvation, just like the Jews. Jews are examples of this. And yet the truth of that goes way, way beyond.

So they boasted in their lineage. Secondly, they boasted in the law. The law. The rest, or they rest. See that here? Verse 17. They rest or rely on the law. Now, the word law there is not a reference to just the Ten Commandments.

In fact, very rarely in Bible when you see the word law is it just simply a reference to the Ten Commandments. It's also not just a reference to the first five books that are commonly termed the law, the books of the law, the books of Moses, the Pentateuch.

[30 : 18] But the idea here, the reference here, is to the whole of God's revelation, God's special revelation. We have it right here. Now, for those to whom Jesus was speaking, it was the Old Testament because that's all they had then.

It was the whole of God's revelation to that point, the Old Testament. And the Jews were the, in a sense, in a very real sense, the exclusive recipients of God's special revelation.

We talked about that last week when we were looking at the Gentiles and Jews and the basis of God's judgment of Gentiles and Jews would be upon their revelation, the light that they have received, that they have had access to.

And so the Jews had a special advantage in a sense. They had been given the law. It came to them, came through them. Now, they were to, of course, proclaim it and teach it to the world, which is something they refused to do.

But, nevertheless, they were the exclusive recipients of God's word. Psalm 147 and verse 19, he declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and his judgments to Israel.

[31 : 37] He has not dealt thus with any nation, any other nation. And as for his judgments, they have not known them. That is, the other nations have not known them. And it kind of closes with praise the Lord.

That's how David closes that. Now, the Jews took that to an ungodly level. To this level.

That they thought their salvation was guaranteed because they were the recipients of God's revelation, God's law. And yet, there was a disconnect.

There's the problem, the disconnect with the Jews. Their emphasis, well, it really was threefold.

Their emphasis in regard to the law was on possession of the law, first of all.

That they possessed it. It was their personal possession. It was given to them. They were granted that. As David said, praise the Lord. No, the nation has it. You've been given it. Now, David's intent was not the same intention that the Jews evolved to.

[32 : 46] But they had possession of it. And they thought the mere possession of the scrolls was enough. Isn't that cockeyed?

They really worshipped the material representation of God's revelation. salvation. They were Bible-olators in that sense.

I know that's not a word. You caught me. But it does convey meaning. All right, so as long as you understand what I'm talking about.

They worshipped the Bible. Or they worshipped God's word. And you know, some people today find a measure of false security.

through owning a copy of God's word. Oh, yes, they do. They might even carry it with them. Some people kind of come to a false conclusion, a prideful conclusion, because maybe they have scripture hanging on their walls, too, in their homes.

[34 : 06] you know, they have God's word. And so there is just some false sense of security because I have the Bible. Maybe they even display it prominently.

I probably told this story, but I heard about a lady whose pastor was coming to visit. She looked out the window and she saw him pull up to the house and he was getting out of the car and coming to the house.

and she said to her daughter, quick, quick, go get the most important book in the house and put it right here on the coffee table. You know, the most important book of the house. And so she let the preacher in and they went into the living room and there on the coffee table was the Sears Roebuck catalog.

Okay. Got to interject a little humor in here. but really, isn't it strange that there would be that kind of emphasis on just the mere possession of God's word that in a diabolical way and this is the way Satan works and our flesh works in a way we would find some kind of security there.

They also emphasized not only the possession of God's law but the proficiency their proficiency in the law. And they were very proficient.

[35 : 38] I mean the Jews boasted in their memorization of scripture. Boasted in it. They boasted in their ability to quote large portions of scripture and to be the interpreters of scripture and to be the applicers of scripture to every part of your life.

That's what the Pharisees loved to do. They like to apply God's word to your life. And add on to God's word layers and layers and layers of ordinances and all kinds of other laws so that you could obey scripture.

And they prided themselves in that. Their proficiency scripture. And thirdly their emphasis was on the preservation of the law. I mean we can see this very readily with the Jews.

Their preservation of it. The work of the scribes that was highly revered among the Jews. And the Jewish leadership especially the scribes and Pharisees and the priests and they were the self-appointed guardians of God's word.

And they came to a prideful conclusion that because they were the preservers of God's law, they were the possessors, they were very proficient in it, and they were the preservers of God's word, they came to this conclusion that their salvation was guaranteed.

[37 : 16] They boasted in their law. They boasted thirdly, in the Lord. They boasted in the Lord. Paul said, and make your boast, this is what you do, you make your boast in God.

You know, the Jews, really, they were little more than just spiritual name droppers, many of them, when it came to Yahweh God.

because as we saw there in John chapter 8, they didn't even know him, not really. But they liked to talk about him.

And they were void of any vital saving relationship with God. And you know, today, a lot of people today that you would meet constantly talking about God.

Americans love to talk about God. Don't they? They don't like to talk about Jesus very much. And when they do talk about Jesus, it's as if they were talking about somebody you didn't even know.

[38 : 38] Certainly not the Jesus of the Bible. But Americans do like to talk about God. And people like to drop his name. and people like to invoke his name, thinking that somehow, whether it's some plan they have or some activity they're involved in or some need they have.

And so just simply invoking God's name will somehow grant his blessing. And yet they don't even know. And yet they feel many people feel a sense of security.

because they are speaking about God. And thinking that just merely speaking his name is going to bring some privilege from him or some special blessing or or or some feeling of spirituality, chiefly that.

In fact, I think that is the the primary way a person breaks the third commandment. I don't think anybody ought to just use God's name as a curse word.

But the primary meaning of thou shalt not take the Lord thy God, the Lord's name in vain, is that a person who does not know him would invoke his name.

[39 : 57] Invoke his name. So they boasted in their Lord. They boasted also in their learning. Look at verse 18 again.

and know his will and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law.

Being instructed out of the law is the primary idea you need to get there. All the others lead up to that phrase.

they were boasting in their learning. Now the word translated instructed is the Greek word katekato.

Does it sound like anything? We get our word catechism from it. You know what a catechism is? It's primarily something that you teach scriptural teachings that are taught by repetition.

[41 : 04] Catechism. Some of you might have learned some catechisms over the years. Maybe in other denominations that require catechizing their children, young people.

There's nothing wrong with catechisms. I'm not saying that. I think some of them are very valuable. They're correct. That's the idea here. They were catechized. Taught by repetition, wrote memory. Now what was the problem with this? Well the problem was that the Jews in Jesus' day began to think very Greek because the Greek culture was dominant in that day of course.

So they started thinking in a Greek way. That is, this is what they began to think. They began to equate wisdom with knowledge. And so then the catechism or being instructed by, you know, learning by repetition and just learning and learning by rote memory and repetition in this way somehow brought wisdom automatically.

But it does not. might bring knowledge, but not wisdom. And this is Paul's point here. They, yeah, they were learning scripture, learning it, learning and learning and they are making the mistake. [42 : 36] They had come to a very prideful conclusion that because they had memorized this scripture, that they had knowledge of God's word, God's will, God's ways, that that automatically guaranteed their salvation, that in itself.

And it never does. Never does. I tell you, there are unbelievers. believers. I mean, those who, by their own testimony, make no qualms, they do not believe in Jesus.

And yet, some of them know more about the Bible than most of us in this room. I tell you, I read, just in the way of research, some of the greatest of research tools about the Bible were written by men who most likely were not even believers.

Yet they painstakingly wrote their books and they were accurate and that's why we use them as references, some of the reference tools and dictionaries.

They were very deliberate about making sure they were accurate and yet that did not bring them salvation, did it? Just because they were able to interpret words and such accurately.

[43 : 58] And the Jews thought they were saved because they had been instructed in God's word. And there are many people today who equate spirituality with mere knowledge and memorization of Scripture.

I can't tell you how many times when I was involved with the jail ministry there in Tennessee that I would sit down one-on-one with some of these inmates, share the gospel with them, and many of them could quote the Scriptures that I was using in my gospel presentation.

And yet they were not saved. And they knew they were not saved. Some of them coming weeping and just broken. And yet all I would do is begin to quote Scriptures in regard to sin and lostness in regard to God's grace and salvation.

And they could quote many of them. It did not save them. Didn't save the Jews either. They boasted in their lineage, the law, the Lord, the learning, and then one more.

They boasted in their leadership. Their unique place of leadership, we might say influence, in the world of man.

[45 : 32] Look at verse 19. And are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes or infants, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.

They're confident. In a very strange way, the Jews possessed all of these things. And it was initially, and according to God's original plan, His blessing upon them, that they could be the recipients of His law, and that they could learn it, and they could be leaders and influencers to guide the blind and be a light to those in darkness, and the corrector of the foolish, and the teacher of the immature, the infants.

They had been given that task. And yet, instead of understanding the purpose of God giving them those blessings, they instead equated just the mere possession of those things as their salvation. And so they didn't need Jesus, didn't need a cross, didn't need to repent of sin, they didn't need to be saved, they were already saved, it was guaranteed because of who they were. And really, it says that they were a guide to the blind, but were they?

You see, the idea here, the implication is that they were to do these things for the Gentile nations. They were to be a guide to the blind, the Gentiles were blind, but were they?

[47 : 26] Well, Matthew chapter 23, and verse 24, just listen to this. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you pay tithe of mint and ice and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of law, justice and mercy and faith.

These you ought to have done without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, he says. How could they guide the blind when they themselves were blind?

Blind leading the blind and both end up in the ditch, you know. Blind guides who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.

Blind Pharisees? See, they were to be, and they boasted in the fact that they had been given this great privilege, this great task to be a guide to the blind, and yet they weren't even that.

And yet the fact that they had been given that commission, they turned it in a prideful way to come to this conclusion that they were already saved, that their salvation was guaranteed.

[48:50] They were to be a light to those in darkness. Again, referenced specifically to the Gentiles. But were they a light to the Gentiles? Well, no, they weren't really. Yet they were supposed to be.

Isaiah chapter 42 verse 6 tells us so. I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness and will hold your hand. I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people as a light to the Gentiles to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house. They've clearly been given the task because they've been given the revelation, they've been given God's law and it was not to be the source in and of itself for their salvation or any confidence in their salvation.

It was to be a resource. It was to be something they were to take to the Gentiles to open the eyes of the blind and they didn't even do that. They were to be the corrector of the foolish and yet again, I read that passage a moment ago.

Jesus said, you're fools. You're foolish Jews. Teacher of the immature, the infants. And here again, here's the sad irony of it all.

[50:04] What they thought was the source of their salvation, the guarantee of their salvation, that is the mere possession of all these things, their lineage, their law, the Lord, their learning, their leadership.

God had intended these things to be their mission and ministry to the world. But the sources of salvation, not the sources of salvation, but rather the resources for revealing Yahweh and his will and his salvation to the world of man, the Gentile world.

But the Jew began to boast in the possession of these things. how would we apply this to America, do you think?

America is not a Jewish nation, and yet we have been given much, haven't we? We have been given God's word in a unique way.

The witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ America has been granted a tremendous influence to share the gospel, and yet most Americans, not only are they not sharing the gospel, but they have never even received it themselves, and yet in a diabolical way, think they're saved because they have it.

[51:42] It's a Christian nation, and there's such a disconnect isn't there. It's an appalling disconnect of a orthodox Christian talk, and yet a life and a reality that is antithetical to Christianity.

How do we explain that? remember a deacon that I had in a church and some churches past, it was one of those deacons, you know.

You know, you can't nudge Paul over there, he's not one of those kind of deacons. We don't have any of these kind of deacons here, I can tell you that, and I never will forget.

we're having a revival and the evangelist was there and that Sunday after the service, shaking hands people as they're going out.

And this deacon introduces himself to the evangelist and he said, I'm the meanest man in this town. And he really was, by the way.

[52:54] I'll never forget what that evangelist said. He said, well, maybe you'll get saved this week and stop all that. Isn't that interesting?

What do you think would happen to our church roles in America if suddenly Christianity became a capital offense? what would it reveal do you think?

It would reveal something, the reality of something or the reality of something missing a lot of people's lives.

I heard a story some years ago about an underground church in Russia and you probably have heard this story. It's been told many, many times. and this church was meeting in secret, in private, not in fear so much, but guarded because at any moment they might be caught and might be either arrested, maybe even killed.

And as they were meeting, suddenly several soldiers barged in, broke in to their meeting place with machine guns. You heard the story.

[54:27] And he made all of them line up and he said, the guy who was in charge said, if you will renounce your Christianity, we'll let you live.

If you will renounce your Christianity, you may leave right now and be free. And about half of the group left. the rest were standing there, holding to their faith in Christ boldly.

And the soldiers put their guns down and said, now that all the fake Christians are gone, now we'll have worship together. I wonder what would happen in America, you think, if suddenly Christianity became a capital offense.

See, the basis of God's condemnation on the Hebrew applies to all, quote, religious who've made a prideful conclusion because of the mere possession of God's word, some trappings of religion, their salvation is guaranteed.

Thank you.