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## Anathema.

(2019)

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# Anathema.

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## Topics.

- Paul wishes he were anathema from Christ for his kinsmen.
- No one speaking in the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is anathema."
- If anyone loves not the Lord, let them be anathema. Maranatha.
- If anyone preaches another Gospel let them be anathema.

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## PAUL WISHES HE WERE ANATHEMA FROM CHRIST FOR HIS KINSMEN

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- **Romans 9:1-3:** I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, <sup>2</sup>That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. <sup>3</sup>For I could wish that myself were accursed (anathema) from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

Paul's words, "I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit," means that Paul has a clear conscience before God in saying that he has great sorrow and unceasing anguish in his heart for the people of his nation Israel. It means that before God he knows he is telling the truth. Paul had a brilliant knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures he would have been fully aware that his nation Israel had always been God's special and unique people as the following Scriptures show. God said:

- Israel was his son who he called out of Egypt and he loved them when they were a child (Hosea 11:1).
- He gave birth to Israel and carried them from the womb even to their old age. (Isaiah 46:3-4).
- Israel is his allotted heritage (Deut. 32:9) and the apple of his eye. (Deut. 32:10).
- Israel is a people holy to him (Deut. 7:6) and his treasured possession. (Deut. 14:2).

The LORD has not spoken this way with any other nation, but God has not only spoken of Israel differently, but always dealt with them differently to any other nation:

- To Israel God gave the Ten Commandments and showed his great power.
- To Israel God declared his word, statutes and his rules.
- To Israel God gave the prophets, the worship and the promises.
- To Israel belonged the covenant, the adoption, the patriarchs and the glory.
- To Israel the oracles of God were entrusted.
- The people of Israel are the offspring of Abraham the father of faith.
- From Israel's race came the Christ the Saviour of the World.
- The LORD has not given any other nations such great privileges.

**Anathema:** in the King James Bible the word is anathema is translated accursed anathema comes from the Greek word (anathernia). When used biblically it refers to a religious ban and carries the idea of excommunicating a person from religious services and fellowship.

Following are the two most likely thoughts of what Paul meant when he said, "I could wish that I was accursed (anathema) from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen.

1. Paul so greatly loved the nation of Israel and his kinsmen who he had grown up with that upon seeing how far they had fallen from God was so troubled and hurt in his spirit to see his own people and kinsman separated from God that if it were possible he would gladly excommunicate himself from Christ if laying aside his own salvation meant the nation of Israel could be saved. Some might think Paul was boldly saying this because he knew it was impossible to do since everyone has to make their own individual decision, but Paul had previously stated that before God he has a clear conscience in expressing his deep sorrow and declaring his love for Israel. Perhaps to help understand the sincerity of Paul's words one only has to look at the enormous persecution, beatings, imprisonments etc., he suffered at the hand of the Jews in his continued attempts to proclaim to them the Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Paul loved his nation Israel and his Kinsmen so much he almost wished he could be excommunicated from Christ to be in unity with them. Much like a brother or sister becoming a Christian, but all their family who they have grown up with and greatly love is totally against their faith and therefore the warm unity of love and fellowship they once had is ruined. Because of the great love in the heart of the brother or sister in Christ for their own family it would be perfectly natural for them to wish that they could be severed from Christ so as to be bonded once again in the warm fellowship they once had with their own family members. This of course is an impossibility for those who know the love of Christ since his love surpasses all other love so even though there might be the heartfelt desire for the fellowship the brother or sister once had with their own family members it can never be while their family is aggressively against the Lord Jesus Christ as the religious leaders of the nation of Israel were.

Though Paul loved his nation and his kinsmen the love of God dwelling in his heart was so much greater that it was impossible for him to compromise his faith to accommodate those he loved, but were antagonistic toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

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## THE BEAUTY, MAJESTIC AND STUNNING WONDER OF GOD

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Israel was God's chosen people, so much so that from them came the Christ we all love with overwhelming devotion and glory. Yet the nation that was chosen to be exalted above all nations rejected their promised King and Messiah, which resulted in God (through the apostles, especially Paul) turning His eternal favour toward the Gentiles (everyone who is not a Hebrew or Jew) and is now building a totally new nation made up of Jews and Gentiles in Christ. This new nation is also called a new creation, the Kingdom of God, the church and the body of Christ.

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## NO ONE SPEAKING IN THE SPIRIT OF GOD SAYS, "JESUS IS ANATHEMA"

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- **1 Corinthians 12:3:** Wherefore I (Paul) make known unto you that no man speaking in the Spirit of God saith, Jesus is anathema; and no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit.

**Anathema:** means putting a religious ban on a person or excommunicating them.

The Jewish religious leaders, (the scribes and priests) of the nation of Israel were esteemed by the great majority of the people of Israel as holy men of God, because they read and studied the scrolls and performed all

the services of the temple. These religious leaders had great authority and power and claimed to be God's true representatives on earth, but not only denied Israel Messiah, the Christ the Saviour of the world, but actually plotted ways in which they could have him put to death. Paul is saying that it matters not how holy and religious men might appear, how glorious their building is or how much religious authority and power they have if they refuse to make Christ the centre of their faith, they are not God's people.

The words:

- No man speaking in the Spirit of God says, Jesus is anathema.

Means no one who has the Spirit of God dwelling in them would ever put a religious ban on Christ or excommunicate him from their services as the religious leaders of Jesus generation did and no one who has the Spirit of God will cast out from their services and from their fellowship those who are faithfully confessing and teaching Christ. The words:

- No one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.

Obviously does not mean that no one has the physical ability to say that Jesus is Lord unless aided by the Holy Spirit, since all people can say physically say Jesus is Lord. The meaning is that only those who are truly influenced by the Holy Spirit would willingly and joyfully acknowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ is their King and Saviour. It means no one would acknowledge Jesus as their Lord who has does not know him as such and is not influenced by the Holy Spirit. Unless a man or woman has the Spirit of Christ and the word of Christ and his love and grace dwelling in them, they will never confess Jesus as their Lord.

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## IF ANYONE LOVES NOT THE LORD, LET THEM BE ANATHEMA MARANATHA

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- **1 Corinthians 16:20-22:** All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. <sup>21</sup>The greeting is in my own hand—Paul. <sup>22</sup>If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be anathema Maranatha (Our Lord, come! in the ESV).

It is proper and right for faithful brothers and sisters in Christ and those who minister in the faith to greet each other heartily in the Lord with a holy kiss and with affection and love (as you would kiss a brother or sister). The words:

- If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed (anathema).

Means don't greet religious men or women who have no love for Christ with the same affection that you would greet a faithful brother and sister in Christ with, but rather let them be excommunicated from the church and from fellowship. Most churches during the time of the apostles and Paul were in the homes of faithful brothers and sisters, it was the custom for travelling evangelist and teachers who were passing through the town or village to visit these homes and share the knowledge they had gained on their travels, Paul is saying if they teach Christ give them a warm welcome, but if they have no love for Christ don't allow them into your home or fellowship to teach and excommunicate them from all other fellowships.

The word:

- Maranatha (Our Lord, come! in the ESV).

The word Maranatha is of Chaldian origin and means our Lord has come, our Lord cometh and our Lord will come and carries the idea of approaching divine judgment. Paul is simply saying, "May the Lord Jesus Christ come with his judgment.

- **Galatians 1:6-9:** <sup>6</sup>I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— <sup>7</sup>not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup>But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. <sup>9</sup>As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

**Accused:** in verse eight and nine is from the Greek word (anathema) it means a religious ban (i.e., to excommunicate a person).

For the Galatian brothers and sisters to be deceived by a different Gospel, those who are proclaiming it would have to be teaching a lot that was right since the Galatians had been taught by Paul. So, what was the different Gospel they were turning to? That was offensive that Paul said:

- Let those who teach it be anathema and excommunicated from Christian fellowship.

Even though it is most likely this distorted Gospel embodies almost of what faithful Christians believe there is something about it that makes it grossly offensive. To discover what it was about this distorted Gospel that was so offensive to Paul all we have to do is go to chapter three and read his following words:

- Foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (Gal 3:1-3).

The religious Jewish leaders were teaching those who had accepted Christ through faith and grace that no-one could be saved or maintain their salvation without adhering to God's covenant of circumcision, Jewish ceremonial rites and holy days or without keeping Jewish customs and traditions even if they did believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. These teachers were teaching a Gospel without grace they were totally robbing God's majestic and graceful plan of salvation from all its glory, wonder, mercy and grace. This idea is also supported by the fact Paul said:

- I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ (Gal. 1:6).

This was one of the great difficulties Paul had to contend with. Jewish teachers were teaching new converts to Christ that, faith alone was not enough to be saved, they must add to it. Though this teaching totally distorts the Gospel it was nevertheless very deceptive especially to Jewish converts, because Israel had followed the Law of Moses for over 4000 years therefore it made sense to many of them that faith in Christ alone was enough to save to eternal life. Thousands of Jews accepted Christ, but many of them were still zealous for the Law of Moses, Jewish customs and Jewish traditions. It was no-doubt these passionate and zealous Jews who were telling Paul's converts at Galatia that they must add to their faith because the Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ was not enough on its own to save. These teachers were teaching the Gospel of Christ plus religious rites, customs and good works to be counted worthy of salvation and to earn righteousness that leads to eternal life. This is what Paul was struggling with and anxious about; he feared his converts were going to be enticed back under the law to be saved and since no one can be saved by the law why he said:

- Let those who teach it be anathema and excommunicated from Christian fellowship.

Today Christians who faithfully attend church each Sunday, read their Bible every-day and pray, attend all the Bible study meetings or those who sing in a church choir and faithfully go to every practice lesson and even ministers who hold positions of great leadership and authority can all fall into the danger of thinking they are made righteous and saved by their faithful conduct in their service to the Lord Jesus Christ. Though all these things are good in themselves and will bring their own reward now and in eternity, not one of them has any power to save us or even add to our eternal salvation. This is because as good as they might all be, they are not only useless in making us righteous before God, but also rob the Good News of the Gospel from its glory, beauty, wonder and God's infinite love and grace that is without walls and boundaries to save to eternal life. Paul who received the Good News of the Gospel by revelation considered any form of self-effort to earn righteousness to be counted worthy of being saved to eternal life no matter how good to be an abomination to God, to Christ and to the Gospel. This is because not one of us can by self-effort attain to the perfect standard the Law demands or the perfect standard of God's Holiness and the instant we think we can attain to God's Holy standard of righteousness by self-effort and good works is the instant we nullify what Christ achieved for us on the cross of Calvary.

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### **THE FOLLOWING WORDS OF PAUL SHOW THE ENORMOUS IMPORTANCE OF TRUSTING IN GOD'S GRACE IN CHRIST**

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Paul in his letters wrote:

- I do not nullify the GRACE of God, for if justification were through the law (or any form of religious self-effort), then Christ died for no purpose (Gal. 2:21).

This means, when a brother or sister in Christ begin to justify themselves through the law and self-effort, they nullify the grace of God and by their actions declare that Christ's death was of no value.

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Equally as horrific as this Paul states:

- When we forsake GRACE we separate ourselves from Christ because it was only by GRACE that God made us alive in Christ (Gal. 5:4) (Eph. 2:5).

Paul to highlight even more the majestic glory of grace wrote with absolute boldness that:

- It is only by GRACE that any brother or sister has been saved (Eph. 2:8).

Paul in these verses is shining a brilliant floodlight on the truth that every brother and sister in Christ is saved, solely by faith and by grace and it is not their own doing, but the gift of God. This means that without grace no-one can be united to Christ and whoever is without Christ is separated from God and without God no-one can be saved to eternal life, which means in regards to eternal salvation, Christ, God, Grace and Faith, are all on an equal par with each other since no-one can be saved to eternal life without any one of them.