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Jewish & Gentile Response To The Cross

We've been working through the death of Christ, and just to review, we have said that as always when we look at some anything; any subject, any topic, any doctrine, whatever it is, we have to encircle that in a Biblical frame of reference. That goes for the cross of Christ. We'll see some very bizarre interpretations of the cross of Christ because they do not encircle that event in a Biblical frame of reference. And you can't understand the cross of Christ if you don't understand the Biblical frame of reference. We spent time showing how this Biblical frame of reference that's so necessary to understand the cross depends upon us understanding God's attribute of holiness; His justice and righteousness, that cluster that theologians refer to as holiness.

That means that whatever happens to us as creatures, whatever happens by way of salvation or condemnation, it always hinges on our adjustment to His holiness. God never adjusts to man; man has to adjust to God. His character and His attributes form the reference point. So whatever we say, however we look at the cross, it always demonstrates holiness, because God is not going to compromise His holiness in any way, shape or fashion. Men may desire a psychological gospel; men may desire therapeutic approaches to life that ignore the holiness of God, but that doesn't make God's holiness, or righteousness or justice obsolete. It's still there. The stubborn fact is that no matter how men try to design a plan of salvation, they have got to, in the final analysis, either pass or flunk the test of does it or does it not conform to the justice of God. There are hundreds of religions on the face of the planet; we live in a day when everybody wants an equal voice, all religions are valid. This is the age of pluralism and we have to give due respect to every idea that comes down the pike as some sort of religious answer to life.

However, the point remains that God's holiness is the standard by which we judge plans of salvation. That's why we spent a lot of time developing the Biblical idea of justice, and we've noticed some characteristics of that Biblical idea of justice. For example, we notice that it's restitutionary. He demands that the broken order be restored. He doesn't let damaged goods just remain, they have to be restored. It's true in eternity when He finally separates the good and evil, there will be an eternal trash heap. But there will also be an eternal city of God. So it's not true that once something is damaged He just leaves it in a pile of rubbish. Restitutionary justice demands that it be fixed somehow. Our second concept was that God's justice is linked in Scripture with the Messiah. Right from Gen 3 we see that the Messiah will somehow be linked into restoring all things.

Then we covered the NT presentation of the cross. We said at least five things about how the NT presents the cross of Christ. The first thing we said is that it's presented as an instance of OT criminal law at work. So obviously you have to know OT criminal law. The whole passage in Gal 3 assumes that we understand Deut 21. Nobody can come close to Gal 3 unless they understand Hebrew criminal law. The criminal law said that when a capital crime was committed and the criminal was executed, his body had to remain on a post on display as an emblem of God's justice, God's judgment. They didn't hide it some place, they had an execution that was public; that was almost a religious ceremony. And it was done not to be gory or gruesome; it was done in order to demonstrate that God's holiness is not going to be compromised.

Jesus Christ on the cross fulfilled that pattern because His body was on display, and Paul said, because He was on the cross he inferred that Jesus Christ therefore [fulfilled] the OT criminal law code that said, "cursed" of God. It demonstrated God's holiness. So there's a practical conclusion to this. How serious do we take God's righteousness and justice? We ought to take it pretty seriously, because if we want a picture of His righteousness and justice we have to look at what He did to His own Son - that's a picture. He is not going to compromise, and if we have any lurking ideas that God softens His righteousness and justice in the NT we better get rid of them. People have the idea that in the OT God is a cruel God, in the NT He somehow got with the program and now He's a loving God, He evolved a little bit. Yet in the NT we have one of the most horrifying examples of His justice, His own Son on

the cross. God hasn't changed; He's still the God who will not compromise His integrity.

We further said that if you look at the cross of Christ you notice that it has a unique characteristic. It's the only instance in human history where a man, a human being, chose the moment of His own death. Jesus Christ gave up His spirit. That's a phrase that's never found elsewhere in the Scripture of a human person dying. It's an absolutely unique phrase, reserved to communicate that when Jesus Christ died, He did not die because of the Romans, He did not die because of the Jews, He died because the work was finished, and He was checking out. So He chose the moment of His death, an utterly unique death.

A third thing we said is that the cross of Christ changes the basis of condemnation, that prior to the cross of Christ, it was at least theoretically true that people who died in unbelief died under the judgment of their sins. But since the cross of Christ provides an atonement sufficient to cover the sins, then when a person who dies in unbelief this side of the cross he's condemned because he did not believe...because had he believed his personal sins would not have been an issue because they were borne by the Savior. So the cross of Christ is a watershed of history, it changes the basis of condemnation. Men are condemned because of failure to trust in Christ.

If you want a picture in Exodus it would be like we were all Egyptian families, and we all had first-born sons, and we knew the angel of death was going to come. If there were no blood on the doors by way of salvation, our sons would die because of the angel of death. But in the case of the Exodus there was an escape. What we would have had to have done was identify ourselves by faith with the Jewish people, and have blood on the door. Since that way of escape came into existence and was offered, why do our first-born sons die? Is it because of the angel of death or is it because we have forsaken the way of salvation. It's the same with Noah and the ark, again judgment/salvation. We're going back to the frame of reference. Each event in the Scripture has doctrine with it, and what were the two events of judgment/salvation? One was Noah's flood, one was the Exodus. Why were people drowned in the flood? Because they weren't in the ark. If there hadn't been an ark then they would have drowned because of the water. But now there was an ark, and yes, they drowned in the water but only because there

was an ark that they rejected. So the cross of Christ removes one of the arguments for why I'm being condemned.

The fourth principle is that the cross is a strategic victory in this larger angelic conflict that goes on down through history - the forces of good and evil in the background that we can't see. But the cross of Christ has repercussions in the unseen realm. That's reiterated several places in the NT.

Finally, the NT presents the cross of Christ as the most commemorated OT ceremony, Passover. Christ fulfills Passover, Christ is our Passover. What does that mean? Pass-over, it means when the judgment comes because we're in Christ we're passed over because the blood covers us, just like the families that night in Egypt who put the blood over the door, they were in covered homes.

Today we want to deal with the problem of unbelief. We want to examine this unbelief in the cross of Christ because it's the watershed issue in defining orthodox Christianity. Christianity is divided into a modernist approach and a Biblical approach. The watershed of division between those two approaches is "What does the cross of Christ accomplish?" Every cult, every modernist position differs from the Bible in that they deny the essence of what happened on the cross. So the cross now becomes a critical issue. Before we go further and deal with the doctrines associated with the cross we want to look at the unbelief.

When I envelop the cross in an foreign frame of reference, so that instead of looking at it from a Biblical point of view, I now look at it from an unbelieving point of view, when I surround the cross with that kind of a frame of reference, or surround any of the truths of the Lord Jesus Christ, I wind up with something radically different. Here we have the cross of Christ. What is really going on in people who re-explain the cross of Christ? Unbelief, stubborn unbelief. They can't come to bring themselves to believe that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life and no man comes to the Father but by Me. That idea, that exclusivism is repugnant to unbelief. Remember how we started the NT? What did Jesus ask? "Who do men say I am?" And they responded, some say you're John the Baptist, some say you're a prophet, some say this, some say that. "But who do you say I am?" Jesus requires a response. His presence in history requires men to respond to His person and

our answer forces us out into the open. And in the final analysis men do not want to come to the light. Why don't they want to come? Lest their deeds be reproved, because to come to Christ means we come and we confess our sin, and we're drawn to Him. But if we turn away from Christ we confirm our unbelief.

Now we're going to show examples of unbelief among the Jews and among the Gentiles. Turn to the Biblical passage that deals most with the issue of unbelief, Rom 11, because Paul was constrained in his ministry, as a Jew, to explain the fact that Israel, as a nation, rejected the Messiah. We'll look at what the apostle is doing with respect to unbelief; he's got to deal with unbelief. Notice he doesn't approach it this way; this is the way modern evangelical Christians would try to approach it: well, you know, we just didn't use the right technique, we need a church growth movement, we need a rock band, we're just not relevant to our culture, we've got to get culturally tuned, we've got to take surveys of our neighborhood, find out what people want in a church so we know what to say on Sunday. Paul is not saying you know, I don't know, Peter and John and those guys, I think they just needed to put a positive spin on the gospel, if they would just attend this seminar on positive thinking then they could win Israel to Christ. And that's why Israel didn't believe in Jesus. Notice his explanation of why people reject Christ. He says in verse 2, "God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in *the passage about* Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? ³"Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE."⁴But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL." In other words, what it means is that God always has people who believe. God always has a remnant. So now the issue has changed hasn't it? The issue isn't, well, we need to change our technique of presenting the gospel because, gee, there were some who didn't believe, so the issue now is, why didn't most believe? The answer is this is God's way; the reason is because of God's sovereignty. So in verse 5 he says, "In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God's* gracious choice. ⁶But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. ⁷What then?" Now watch it, here's his explanation of the unbelief, "What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened." We're back to what?

God's sovereignty. He's choosy and the rest remain in their sin and are hardened. What's unbelief do? It hardens the heart. The gospel is a two-edged sword, it softens hearts and it hardens hearts. Then it says in verse 8, "just as it is written, "GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY." That's the explanation for their unbelief. God sovereignly gave them eyes to see not and ears to hear not. And it's a citation of Isaiah. So we want to turn back to Isaiah 6 where this thought originates.

In Isa 6:9-12, this is a strange commission that God gives His prophet. Just so we remember, what was the role of the OT prophets? As we went into the OT we said that the OT period involved the discipline of the king upon the nation. The prophets were not social reformers as liberal theology would have it. They weren't politicians. They weren't people who inspired the masses. The prophets were spokesmen of God that acted legally like prosecuting attorneys. They came to the nation, not in their own name, they came to the nation in the name of the Lord, they came and said you have violated the commandment of the King, and now you shall be cursed, but before God cursed His nation, grace before judgment, He announced the coming judgment to the nation, and the judgments that were to come upon Israel were because of their violation of the covenant. God is faithful; man isn't. So all during this period under the kingdom divided and the kingdom decline was this chastening and repentance, chastening and repentance, and during this period of chastening and repentance is when Isa 6 was written. Watch what God tells Isaiah to do. Here's this prosecuting attorney...God tells him in verse 9, "And He said, 'Go, and tell this people,'" and there's sarcasm here, it doesn't come across so much in the translation but it's clear in the original language. "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.' ¹⁰"Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Otherwise they might see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed." ¹¹Then I said, "Lord, how long?" And He answered, "Until cities are devastated *and* without inhabitant, Houses are without people And the land is utterly desolate," now how would you like to be given that ministry? Go teach the word to people. It's not a popular passage. But Isaiah was commissioned to preach to the nation in order to blind it, to preach the word of God so people would reject it, to teach the word of God over and over so that every time a person would heard the word of God they

would go negative, negative, negative toward the word of God and it would harden their hearts till finally when the nation's heart was as hard as concrete, God could judge.

So Isaiah is to bring about the judgments by hardening men's hearts through the teaching of the word of God. How did Isaiah do this? If you do a statistical check of the preaching of Isaiah, what you find is it tells you the relative frequency with which he preached the First and Second Coming of the Messiah. By First Coming, I mean the coming of the suffering Messiah and by the Second Coming, the glorious reigning Messiah. That's the ratio, for every time that Isaiah mentioned the suffering Messiah, ten to fifteen times he preached the glorious coming of the Messiah that would bring victory to the nation Israel. Why is his preaching skewed this way? It's to lead the people down a primrose path. They've gone on negative volition; they didn't understand the preaching of Isaiah in the first place. If they had understood the issue of sin and atonement they would have understood that it's this that they should pay attention to, the Isaiah 53 kind of passage. But they turned against that. So what you do to a people hardened in unbelief is keep pumping them with all this great expectations of victory, blessing, etc. And finally what it does is set their hardened hearts in concrete.

Now let's come to the NT, Luke 1:46, Mary's Magnificat. Here you get the sense of what the patriotic Jew looked for in their Messiah. They had never forgotten this picture from Isaiah, of the glorious, the reigning Messiah. That's what they were looking for. Verse 46, "And Mary said: My soul exalts the Lord, ⁴⁷And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior," so at least she understands the saving part. Mary is not unregenerate here, but what I'm pointing out here is look at the emphasis in her magnificat on the final glory of the Messiah. Verse 48 "For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. ⁴⁹"For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name. ⁵⁰"AND HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION AFTER GENERATION TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM. ⁵¹"He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered *those who were* proud in the thoughts of their heart. ⁵²"He has brought down rulers from *their* thrones, And has exalted those who were humble. ⁵³"HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS; And sent away the rich empty-handed. ⁵⁴"He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy, ⁵⁵As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and

his descendants forever.” So as a believer she understands the plan of history centering on the Abraham contract. But this young Jewish girl, prophesying of the future, sees the Messiah doing all these things in verse 51, 52, but they’re future to Mary’s time. Though they’re in the past tense like many prophecies, it’s past tense because in her vision she sees it as *having been accomplished*. But in history it has yet to be accomplished. But that gives you a sense of the anticipation of the coming glorious Messiah of the 1st century Jew.

We’re going to go chronologically so I’m going to skip from Luke to Matthew, then I’m going to come back to Luke. Go to Matt 16, this is half way through Jesus’ ministry and let’s see what happens. Here we are again, in the middle of a nation and in Matt 16:21 there’s a shift in Jesus’ career. He has been preaching of repentance to the nation Israel, repent and what will come? The kingdom of heaven. They like that, that’s what Isaiah talked about so much, the kingdom of God, Israel’s blessing, prosperity and freedom, all they have to do is repent. But they do not like this repent part. So in Matt 16:21, Jesus begins to shift His message, so instead of Isaiah’s message of, the glories of the Messiah and the blessing here’s what Jesus is going to do:, He’s going to teach more and more about the sufferings of the Messiah and He’s going to downplay the glories. He’s going to reverse the balance. So, “From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. ²²Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid *it*, Lord! This shall never happen to You.” ²³But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.” A rather humbling response. Even Peter didn’t like the shift Jesus was making. He didn’t like this suffering bit.

Let’s go to Luke 24, you remember the Emmaus Road incident? Jesus had just been crucified and here we are several days later. This had dashed the hopes of many Jews; they didn’t know quite how to handle the crucifixion of Jesus. So Jesus comes up to these men and asks them what they’re talking about? What’s the news these days? And they say, what planet have you been on? And Jesus says in verse 19, “What things?” And they said to Him, “The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, ²⁰and how the chief priests and

our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. ²¹“But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened.” Do you see something wrong here in their theology? There’s a weakness. They didn’t have a place for the Messiah dying. Messiah’s not supposed to die. So Jesus goes on to explain to them, starting with Moses and the Prophets he explains how the Messiah was to suffer first and then enter into glory second. This dialogue shows the Jewish problem; they were all focused on the glory of the reigning Messiah, which was the good thing but the problem is how do you get there? It goes back to the diagram we’ve shown over and over of good and evil. You can’t have the separation of good and evil unless what happens? A judgment. You can’t get to the good things until you go through the judgment to get rid of the bad things. The judgment is going to separate us and that raises the issue of salvation. In unbelief the Jews, because of the natural inclination of the sinful fallen man, had come to emphasize the good and what they wanted was salvation without the judgment. They wanted to be an evolutionist spiritually, that we evolve into a higher plane and there’s no discontinuity, there’s no judgment that separates. They wanted salvation without judgment. There were two pictures in the OT about salvation, Noah’s Flood and the Exodus. Were those just salvations, or were they judgment/salvations? They were judgment/salvations in both cases. And they were pictures of the ultimate judgment/salvation. You can’t have salvation without judgment. That is unbelief, and ultimately it’s rooted in a deep denial of the justice of God.

Now we’re going to move from all that Jewish unbelief over to the Gentile unbelief. And we’ll look at some quotations. There are three quotes I want to look at. I’ll read them and look carefully at what is being said. “Gentiles have claimed that an atoning death is incompatible with the love of God.” Now here comes the goo, what has happened, not so much among the Jews but among the Gentiles, the Gentile form of unbelief, sort of parallel to the Jews, seizes upon the good and pleasant things. What’s the good and pleasant news of the gospel? That God loves, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” So let’s take love and let’s minimize justice and holiness, and let’s just sit and talk about love all day long. What it is is a content-less word now, there’s no integrity behind it. Watch these quotes. The “Gentiles have claimed that an atoning death is incompatible with the love of God. God, being a God of love,” these liberals reason, “does not require a bloody

atonement before He forgives. Forgiveness, they insist, can be granted merely on the basis of repentance without any atonement.” Thus the liberal theologian Hasting Rashdall, for example, writes: “That sin ought to be forgiven when there is [only] sincere repentance is a truth which, like all ultimate ethical truths, must be accepted simply because it is self-evident.”

“Self-evident,” is it really? If sin can be removed merely by repentance, then it implies that no damage has been done to the real objective entity outside. Repentance doesn’t gain forgiveness of sins unless there’s a cross behind it, then benefits flow upon repentance. But if there’s no cross out there to give the blessing, you can repent all day long and it doesn’t do a thing because repentance doesn’t do what? According to justice. Justice, God’s justice means restitution. Where’s the restitution in repentance? Repentance doesn’t have any restitution. So repentance doesn’t save. Here we have a collision. Here’s the gospel, everybody says well there’s so many religions in the world, and how can you be so arrogant to say Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life.”

Because God has character, He has integrity, He has justice, that’s why. Doesn’t your God, or is He some lovey-dovey flake? We don’t have a flake God here, we have a God of integrity, and you come to Him on His terms. In Eden there was only one gate to the garden. In the Flood there was only one ark. And there’s only one way to get into His kingdom, the cross. So here we have a liberal who lets it all hang out. All you need is sincere repentance, no necessity of a blood atonement. That’s liberalism. I went and got this right out of a liberal theologians quote, and you can see the frustration in his quote. You can feel his emotions in that statement, can’t you? He’s frustrated that anybody would dare to think that you’ve got to have something besides repentance.

Let’s look at another quote. “Once it is granted that atonement is no longer required for forgiveness, *the death of Christ becomes less than necessary*. In fact, the only accomplishment of the death of Christ is its exemplary force to man.” It’s the death of a martyr. “The cross exerts ‘moral influence’ upon man in some way, recent liberals believe. It testifies to Christ’s love for man in pursuing His mission all the way to the grave. Jesus, according to this liberal model, demonstrates sincerity in dying for His convictions.” That may be true, He did die for His convictions, yes, but that’s not the heart of the Jesus of Scripture. A lot of guys died for their convictions. Every martyr in history

has died for his convictions. To say that's all Christ did is to take the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man Savior, and put him down on the same plain with all religious martyrs.

Now here's a beauty of a quote, look at this one, look at how he deals with Acts 4:12, "There is no other name among heaven given among men whereby we may be saved." Exclusive stuff, let's look at what Rashdall does with it, Mr. Liberal. "Rashdall illustrates this belief in his paraphrase of Acts 4:12, "There is none other ideal given among men by which we may be saved except the moral ideal which Christ...illustrated by His...death of love...." That's all the goo that you can imagine in a sentence, all the vocabulary, oh, he's got a death of love... well what the heck is a death of love? What is that? It's the martyr idea. Isn't that inspiring? Every time you see a crucifix you think it's a death of love. Hmmm, Jesus really was sincere. That's what liberalism does to the cross of Christ. What is unbelief doing here? They have a problem with the justice of God. In other words, by exaggerating the love of God, and diminishing the justice of God they've deformed God into an idolatrous reconstruction and then having done that they can't find a reason for the cross any more. Of course they can't, not with a God like this. Why, if things are really like this, do we need a cross?

Now I'll show you how the evangelicals even begin to think this way. This is a Baptist conservative theologian I'm quoting, listen to this guy. "The idea of reparation [restitution] has become questionable today since it seems associated with irrational vengeance. It is true that people today still have a largely unconscious desire to see certain kinds of criminals pay for their crimes.... But few people will consciously acknowledge that they believe in a general principle of making reparation." The author, in his book, continues on in the conversation, and do you know what he does? We've got to rethink how the gospel is preached, because our society, our contemporaries don't believe any longer in the idea of a restitution. Well, what problem does that cause? Let's think about this. Let's say I change the biblical idea of justice and I conclude, grandiosely, that the idea of restitution is no longer in vogue, people don't like that. But now what else do I have to change? Hmmm, we changed justice, now we need to take one step forward and go ahead and change the gospel. If you change the nature of justice you change the nature of the gospel don't you? See what's happening.

The point is, there are mechanics at work. If we go to Rom 1 we see the mechanics of how this gets going. Turn to Rom 1:32, because this verse tells us the dynamics of what's happening here, why the cross of Christ is not clearly understood, why people do not want to clearly understand it, and why certain forms of gospel preaching are compromising the truth of the cross of Christ. Rom 1:32, this verse is just loaded, loaded with insight. It says, this is speaking of paganism, a pagan society, "and, although they know the ordinance of God," who's "they," the subject of that verb? All men, it doesn't say those who admit they believe in God know the ordinances of God. It's "they," all men... well, I don't believe in God, how can I know the ordinance of God? You know the ordinance of God. Well, I don't believe in God. You know the ordinance of God. Well, I don't believe it. You still know the ordinance of God. How can you say that? Because you're made in His image and He made His ordinance known to you. That's what Paul says in Rom 1, no compromise, I don't care what you say, you know the ordinance of God. "...that those who practice such things are worthy of death," they have a sense, then, of justice, why would they believe that those who practice such things are worthy of death if they didn't have a sense of Biblical justice? So all men in their heart of hearts have a concept of justice. You say well if they have a concept of justice, why is this happening?

Verse 32 explains. All men have a sense of Biblical justice in the depths of their heart, "...that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they" same people "not only do the same," these wicked things, "but also give hearty approval to those who practice them." I want to break that last sentence down because that's one of those little sentences in the Bible we can read and think we've understood it and we don't understand it. Diagram that sentence out a little. "They," subject, who's the "they?" All men, not some men, all men. What's the verb? "do" those things and also what else do they do? They approve them. So "they," the verb is "do" and the idea here is pat on the back or go along with, we'll just say "approve." Which verb of those two verbs in that sentence is emphasized by the construction of the sentence? What verb has the weight in the way that sentence comes out? The second one, notice how he prefixes that second verb, "they not only do the same, *but also* give hearty approval to those who do such things." It's the end that is emphasized.

Now after I pointed that out do you feel some discomfort with the logic of that sentence? He's saying they not only do something that is sinful, thought word or deed, but they approve of others who do the same sins. The first couple of times I went through this I said wait a minute, isn't it worse to do it than to approve it? I mean, you can approve it and not do it. You can say oh let them do it, but I just don't want to do it. But what he's saying is the act of approving what is wicked is worse than doing it. Why is that? Because it's more perverted. When you get to the point where you are approving evil what has happened to the conscience and awareness of divine justice? It's been buried, it's been suppressed. So when you have people involved in re-inventing ethics, Paul says that is the sign of a very evil society. That's the sign. There are several signs along the way in Rom 1; perversions of heterosexuality is a sign, homosexuality being publicly approved is one of the signs. But when you start to have people redefining what is good and evil, that's the last sign. That means the process of paganization has come to the end goal of re-designing society. That's the goal of unbelief under Satan's tutelage.

Why, then do we have a perverted gospel? Look at the mechanics. Men know the justice of God; their conscience bears witness of the justice of God. How can they live as sinners? If you don't want to be saved, and you don't resolve the problem that way, how else are you going to resolve the problem? Knock out your conscience. If your conscience keeps convicting and bringing this truth up again, again, again, again, it makes you uneasy and drives you ultimately to the cross. But since you don't want to come to the cross, then the next thing to do is break your conscience, over and over sear it, love evil, hate good, redefine ethics. And I warn you now, you know people, I know people that every time you're around them they get disgusted with you. You know why? Because they've seared their conscience and here you come along, you're Mr. Conscience to these people and you're Conscience does double duty, it's serving you and them. And so you're not welcome. But everybody else who has seared their Conscience and pats them on the back, they're in the club.

So that's Rom 1, and that's what paganism and unbelief is doing to the cross. The cross presents the issue of divine justice to a conscience so clearly that they have to bury it, and how they do that is they redefine the cross. And it will be redefined by dismissing the necessity of the cross of Christ as any

kind of an atonement. Readily acceptable is a cross where, gee, you know Jesus was dying for His beliefs, what an example, hey, three medals for that one. So the cross is acceptable as long as it ONLY is an example of a sincere person dying for his beliefs. But what cannot be accepted is that on that cross work was done before a holy righteous God for our sin. That is the gospel, and that is what separates these goo words about Jesus and the cross and all the rest of it from how the NT presents the cross. Unbelief on one side, belief on the other.

Beginning next week we're going to deal with what really happened on the cross. Now we've gotten rid of all the crud, we're going to deal with the doctrines that describe what God was doing in that period of darkness.

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