

1 Corinthians 9:16 (Donald Bilisoly) 216301

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Address—D. Bilisoly

Turn with me to 1st Corinthians chapter nine. First Corinthians Chapter 9. 16 So though I preached the gospel, I have nothing to glory of, for necessity is laid upon me. Yeah, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel, for if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward, but if against my will a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily, that when I preach the gospel. I may make the gospel of Christ without charge. That I abused not my power in the gospel, and so forth. Well, brethren, I would like to take up a line of things that I have used elsewhere, but I think it would be helpful. I trust it will be. And that is to take up the question of Paul as a pattern. Now, in considering a passage like this, we see that there was a great responsibility upon Paul. What a responsibility, and he felt it keenly. And he had this laid upon him, and he felt the responsibility. He had, as he says, a dispensation of the gospel committed unto him. Dispensation. That's kind of a heavy word, isn't it, for the young folks? Dispensation. I sometimes like to illustrate it this way, that when you're riding along a freeway, you may come to a toll road and when you come up to a toll booth, a machine or dispense a ticket to you and you have a responsibility. For that card, that ticket, until you get to the end and then things are settled. It dispensed to you. It's the word that we still use in some measure now. But Paul had dispensed to him a great responsibility, and he speaks of it as his gospel. Not that he had any personal claim upon it above others, but it was the responsibility that he had. In a peculiar and a special way. He makes reference to it as the gospel of the glory. That's how it could read. It has to do with a risen and glorified. At the right hand of God. What a wonderful message in that gospel. And shall I put it this way, that dispensationally we are under Paul? That responsibility was committed to him and now we have all the truth that we need. In fact, let's turn for a moment over to Colossians and notice how it's worded there. Colossians chapter one. In Colossians chapter one. He says in verse 25. Whereof I am made a minister. According to the dispensation of God, there's that word again, which is given to me for you to fulfill. The Word of God or to complete the Word of God, that's how it could be to complete. What does that mean? It means simply this, that we have no truth that goes any farther than Paul's doctrine. There's other things that were given later on, like in the Book of Revelation and what have you, but that's the fullest truth that we have. There's really no revelation beyond. Paul's doctrine, it is complete. It was given to him to complete the word of God and we're complete in Christ. Oh, it's wonderful to consider those things. Now I emphasize that, dear ones here, because there are those that make a pretense of having new light, new truth. Don't believe it, we have it, it's complete and we can rest upon this precious truth. Paul's doctrine. What is Paul's doctrine? We'll just stop and think about it. Paul's doctrine, you know, he brought out the truth of justification by faith that were cleared from all things, were justified freely from all things from which we could not be but the law of Moses. And certainly Paul brought out the truth of the new creation. That were new creatures in Christ. He brought out the precious truth as to the heavenly calling of the Saints. Paul's doctrine. He brought out the present truth of the testimony of the Church, the truth of the one body. That's Paul's doctrine, which we are committed to hold in practice. We meet people sometimes that say that all they believe.

They believe the truth of the one body, but do they practice it? That's the question. And they'll say sometimes, Oh well, we're gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus too, What's the difference? Well, if you examine it closely, you'll see that they function independently and you can bring that before them that in practice that they are not holding the truth of the one body. What a most important and vital truth in connection with Paul's doctrine. It's Paul's doctrine that unfolds in detail the truth of the Rapture. There's many dear believers that hold and enjoy that truth, and yet they won't go farther. Impulse doctrine, they won't go farther, but yet they hold that. Thank God that they hold at least that much truth and maybe justification by faith, I really believe. But that aspect of Paul's doctrine was brought to light once again at the time of the Reformation. You remember how the story goes when Martin Luther was walking on his knees up this tower? And that passage in Habakkuk come before him. The just shall live by faith. Three times over, that's quoted in the New Testament, and each time I believe the Spirit of God would lay emphasis on a certain aspect of that quotation. But what a wonderful quotation in the Old Testament. The just shall live by faith, and the truth of it is unfolded and unfolded. In the book of Romans. Wonderful isn't it? How we can have the righteousness of God as a gift? And be justified freely from all things. Well, this is Paul's doctrine. Of course, we know that it was given to Paul, as we mentioned in the reading meeting the present state. Of the believer that if they depart this light, they're absent from the body present with the Lord. Also, it's impulse doctrine that we learn that we'll have a body. Like his body of glory, isn't that nice to consider that he is able to subdue all things unto himself, and so these poor bodies of humiliation, he's going to change them and fashion them like his. Body of glory? Doesn't that give you a warm feeling? Oh, you know, as you get a little older. Some of you, dear ones, have experienced far more of the breaking down of the body than I have, of course. And I'm thankful I'm still able to do a few things, but I can't do what I did when I was 20 years old. So and you notice limitations begin to come in and those of you who have really experienced. These feelings, the breaking down of the body, you can appreciate more fully that precious truth that He's going to take these four bodies of humiliation and fashion them like unto His body of glory, whereby He is able, He's able to subdue all things unto himself. After all, He's the Creator. He's the one that made us. What is it to Him to bring those bodies back together? Though they may be scattered off across the sea or into dust, what is to Him to take those bodies and resurrect them? The mighty power of resurrection to know Him and the power of His resurrection. Isn't it a marvelous thing to consider that at the grave of Lazarus, had the Lord Jesus not specifically said Lazarus come forth, every grave would have opened up? It's the power. It's the voice of the Son of God. What can resist that? So he will have it his way. And he'll have each one just like himself. God will not be satisfied with anything less. He wants every believer just like Christ. As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall bear the image. Of the heavenly one, it could be it's a person. We're going to bear his image. We shall be like him, or we shall see him as he is. How is he? Oh, he's glorious. He's glorious in the presence of God. He's glorious and we don't know what he's like. But we'll know in that day to see him, and we'll know that we'll be just like him. And when we see every believer, we'll see that they're just like Christ. Oh, we'll still have our identities. Of course we won't be. We won't be as if we're lost in the crowd. But each one, I believe, will have their identity, and each one will be perfect in Christ. Well, of course, that's the work of the Spirit of God now in a moral way, to bring us up to our standing, to the fullness of the stature.

Of Christ so Paul's doctrine is a marvelous thing to consider well that isn't all of course you know it's in Paul's doctrine that we learn the significance of that one loaf on the table Lord's day morning and did we not enjoy that and here we can view that one loaf and. We can consider that one unbroken loaf. We can see in it a picture of all believers represented in him weeping. Many are one bread, one loaf. It could be so. Those are aspects of Paul's doctrine most important and vital truth. Dispensationally, we are under Paul. Now turn with me to First Timothy, and let's get a little scriptural license for what we're about to do. In first Timothy chapter one here once again he talks about this glorious gospel, verse 11, or the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. How keenly he felt it, and I thank Christ Jesus our Lord. Who hath enabled me for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry. Who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious. You ought to read Mr. Darby's translation on this. Passage something like an insulin overbearing man was very unflattering. He tells this all on himself. What a difficult person. He must have been furious. But I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. Remember the Lord Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. There was really no provision in the Old Testament for presumptuous sins. Keep thou thy servant from presumptuous sins. Psalm 19. I did it ignorantly and unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love. Which is in Christ Jesus exceeding abundance with faith and love. Can any of us here say that it is not so with each of us? Are we not all trophies of the grace of God? Has there not been an abundance of this grace bestowed upon us? The very faith that we have was a gift all His love manifested to us, which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief, albeit for this cause I obtain mercy, that in me first the 1st or the Chief Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Then he gives that lovely doxology. Here was an example of the grace of God that surpassed all that the chief was actually saved. And of course we hear these accounts sometimes of some tribal chief that was saved. And what a change it can bring, you know, when the grace of God works in that way. So here was the chief of sinners. He was saved, and what a turn that was. So Paul speaks of himself in this respect as a pattern. That is a pattern of all long-suffering, the whole long-suffering that could read and the other translation, that is it reaches all the way back to man's entry into this world and sin and God's patience, his forbearance with the sins that were passed as we have in Romans 3. And now finally here we have in a man such a violent opposer to the truth, such a violent opposer to the name of Jesus and the grace of God was manifest to him and the change came about. So he's a pattern of all long-suffering. And Paul is so open about all of these things and he never really forgave himself. You might say God forgave him, but he says I'm the least of All Saints and not worthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the Church of God, never really kind of forgave himself. And we see that all of that, no doubt, was used toward his humility. But we have, I believe, scriptural license here to consider Paul as a pattern. Certainly He became the patterned St. and the Holy followed Christ. There's no question about it. He wholly followed Christ. And that's what we want to consider. We want to take off a pattern in that connection. One time I was in a school classroom and talking to, I think some 5th grade or 6th grade students, and I was laboring to try to explain.

A parable to them, or something of that sort. And some boy held up his hand and I said, yes, he says, Sir, do you mean an allegory? I said, yeah, that's right, an allegory. They understood better than I thought an allegory. And so I believe we have imposed life and circumstances. An allegory. A lesson in the things that happened to him. A lesson. So linked with his doctrine that we can't miss it. We can't miss it. And I think that's exceedingly important to follow this line of thought. All right, back up with me now to Philippians, Philippians Chapter 3. Philippians, Chapter 3. Verse 17. Brethren. The followers. Together of me and mark them which walk so as you have us for an example. Then you notice also that he mentions a similar. Thing in verse in chapter 4 and verse 9, those things which ye have both learned. And received and heard, and seen in me do. And the God of peace shall be with you. Now certainly it isn't our thought to eulogize a person, because we'll see as we read on that really it was Christ. His example without a question, in fact, right here in Philippians 3. If we're following the context of his remark here, we would have to back up to these remarks here in connection with his pursuit. He pictures himself as pressing on towards the goal, and so he's pressing on in verse 14. He's pressing towards the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. It was Christ. In glory, that was his object. And his remarks in all of this third chapter present that thought to us. He wanted to know him. What's he talking about? Did he not know him? He says that here. Let's see. My eye doesn't catch it now. Yes, thank you. To know him? Isn't that an interesting statement of scripture? What does he mean? He wanted to know him better. Of course it's unlimited. It's unlimited. But how much do we really know the Lord now? That's a good question for my heart, is it not? For each of our hearts. How much do we really know the Lord now? I suppose no one knew him like the Apostle Paul. Yet he says to know Him, he wants to know him better. It's an inexhaustible subject. John could say, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books that should be written of the things which Jesus did. Well, what did he do? Oh, we can't take it all in because John's gospel, of course, is so mysterious. It's the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh. But I, I feel satisfied in that coming day of glory, the Lord will delight himself in unfolding these precious things. Precious things, but Scripture puts a check on us. No man knows the Son, save the Father, and so forth. There's a check on us, and we should. Be careful how much we delve into these things. What is revealed is for our blessing our benefit, we can rejoice and we can desire to know Him better. But you understand these thoughts, but you know Paul with this objective before him. He just counted his former advantages as nothing. That's what he means when he says forgetting those things that are behind verse 13. What things? All these advantages. That he had in the flesh circumcised. Verse 5. Circumcised the 8th day. There's covenant pride of the stock of Israel. There's racial or national pride. Of the tribe of Benjamin there's tribal pride that's like saying that that I belong to a certain.

Ethnic group within a certain country, you know what I mean and Hebrew of Hebrews that's like ancestry crimes. All these things can come into the hearts of anyone of us and say well my former background was this and this and this. We went to visit a cemetery of our family connection in the east and somebody went to a great deal of trouble to put in a whole new tombstone because the old tombstone couldn't be read that to made one of the first. Ancestor Ancestors to be a commander of a French fleet. That's spectacular, isn't it? But what does that mean Now? See, he's been dead and gone for years and years and years, but it was important enough to somebody to make a whole new tombstone in English instead of French, so everybody could see that he was commander of a French fleet. Ancestral pride touching the law of Pharisee. Religious pride concerning zeal, the pride of zeal persecuting the church, touching the righteousness which is of the law. Blameless. Well, you see, all of these things made a person of his rank and caliber and character exceeding pride, but proud. But what does he say? But those things which were gained to me, those I counted loss. Verse seven for Christ. Yeah, doubtless, and I count all things but loss. For the Excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, And do count them but dung, or that should redraw. There might be a little commercial value in dung, but not dross. That I may win Christ, and be found of him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is. Of God by faith and so forth, all those majestic terms. And so he says, forgetting those things that are behind. Now, I kind of like to contrast this passage with the end of verse eight of chapter 4 here. In one place we're told to forget things. In another place we're told to think upon them. Remember. Well, when

you consider verse 8, and I might just say this, that verse eight of chapter 4. A brother said to us one time after Lord's Day, when some of us boys were just right after Lords day we come to this home and we all sat down and there were the the funny papers, the comic papers. We picked them up and started all pouring over them and this brother. Laid out a little for our conscience. You know he says did you ever notice him Lippians 48 that we have kind of a divine sieve that hit the conscience a divine sieve well you can really test things by this will they get through this sieve verse 8 think on these things I've enjoyed this thought too that. If you consider all of these virtues here. Of verse eight you can certainly put the Lord Jesus Christ. He qualifies in all respects. So if we think on him, he meets all of qualifications. But there I am drifting. Far from our portion, but Paul said in verse 17, rather than be followers together of me. But here he also brings in others as an example. O brethren, how thankful I am for the example of my brother. How thankful I was as a young person for the steady example of older brothers. It was such a help to me and encouragement to me. I thank God for them. And let me say this, that everyone of us, I believe, are having an influence upon others, either for good or for bad. That's something to think about, isn't it? Just what kind of a an influence are we asserting? Are we making it easier or more difficult for them to go on for Christ? We need to weigh that in our own conscience, but I think that's lovely how Paul brings in those mark them which walk. So as you have us for an example, but it was that example. Christ. Paul was pressing on. He had a goal before him, and that was Christ. In glory, he says, brethren, be followers together of me. He was wholly following Christ. And here God gives us an example of one who had such grace that he could have that object before him, that pure object before him. That's lovely to see how the grace of God can work in a fellow man like ourselves.

Now back up over here to 1st Corinthians. First Corinthians. Chapter 11. First Corinthians, Chapter 11. Verse one Here we have it again. Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now you see the way in which He brings that in its context. Again, I believe we'll have to back up. Will have to consider his earlier remarks in this 10th chapter. And so he says in verse 31. Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. I might just say in passing that here is a verse that will take care of all the Gray area questions people sometimes say, Show me a scripture. Here's a scripture. This will cover all the Gray areas whatsoever. Whether therefore he eat or drink or whatsoever he do do all to the glory of God. Is it brother or is it not to the glory of God? An older brother said to me one time several years ago, or I don't. I believe he said it in a reading. He says I believe that the criterion for the judgment seat of Christ. Was whether it was or was not to the glory of God? Isn't that a solemn thing to consider? How refining is this verse? Verse 32 give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God. O brethren, isn't it easy to give offense? Let's just check up on ourselves over these things. You know we can do things. We can react even towards those of the world. We can react in such a way that we clip off their ears so we can't talk to them about the Lord. If you show a heat of feeling over some matter, if you do something that. You know is not right and people can't irritate you. Is that right? If they come up close and follow you too close in your car, they won't dim their headlights. Things can irritate you so quickly and you might do something yourself, something rashly or say something in such a tight situation so that you don't have the liberty to talk to them about the Lord. Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God, even as I please all men in all things, not seeking my own prophet, but the prophet of many, that they may be saved. Now we see in the Lord Jesus the greatest example of this. Like Peter says, who do, who did went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil? Where he went he showed kindness and did good now, and the thought of pleasing all men is only in the sense of winning their souls. There's no thought that we could link up with the thought of men pleasers in that sense. That's a different thing. But here we see how the Apostle was really all things to all men, that he might by all means save some. He was concerned for their souls, and careful in that respect. What an example. And he refers to the Lord Jesus in that way as the great example. Now turn over to the 4th chapter. You see, we're building a framework here for following call for our pattern. Chapter 41 Corinthians. Verse 16. Wherefore I beseech you, be followers of me. Again, do we back up for the context of this remark? It's a thing that reaches the conscience surely. Verse 14. I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons, I warn you. For though ye have 10,000 instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers?

For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel, wherefore I beseech you be followers of me. I believe the thought of a Father is one who has care for the children. Simple enough. And what a nice, a nice element that is in the assembly, that true and genuine care for the Saints of God. It means so much towards the well-being of the assembly. There's always ample instruction, it seems, but it's not an appreciated work always to try and help the Saints in a quiet way, in a pastoral way. But how valued of the Lord it is. And the apostle again, was an excellent example in that respect. The care of all the churches came upon him daily. He was concerned about the Saints of God. He didn't just evangelize and forget them. Like we so often do. But rather he followed it up and he sought them out and he was concerned and cared for them. So now brethren, we've had some clear cut statements about following Paul and I do not believe. We can separate it in thought from his doctrine. Turn with me now to Second Timothy, chapter 2. These things are known to most here in the room this afternoon. But I think that we need to continuously repeat truth. Don't you think so? Because you've got new ones coming along, you've got children coming up that need to know these things. And Paul, you remember what Paul said? He said to write the same things unto you. To me is not grievous, but for you to save. Repeating things is safe. We think people know things, but we might be very surprised at what they don't know. You might be surprised at what, I don't know, but at any rate, we should repeat things. And Peter even says to bring things to your remembrance. Well, as to the present truth, all right, So we need to repeat truth in Second Timothy. Chapter One. Here we have a lamentable remark of the Apostle. Tragic to read such a thing. Verse 15. Of Second Timothy, Chapter one. This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me, of whom is the jealous and homogeneous. You know, trouble comes in pairs. Isn't it clever of the enemy to imitate God's order? The Lord sent them out by twos, and the enemy would imitate that ample witness to. And so the enemy comes, and their their men, their men that are not. Rough in character sometimes they may be very nice personality. That's an extra test. I believe these names here would indicate maybe lovely things. And you have them. You notice this in Timothy, especially Hymenaeus and Fleet is Janice and Jamrie's. The jealous and her manganese and others trouble in pairs. And so these men no doubt were leadership in this feeling against Paul. They no doubt used used the circumstance of he being a prisoner to to speak against him and to turn the Saints away from Paul. But brethren, this is a far deeper thought here than just simply people that were turning away. Person. I don't think there's any thought that they turned away from Christ, but there was decidedly a turning away from Paul. And the full blown effect and result is that generally, Christendom has departed from Paul. You know that. You know that's what's happened. Now Paul here draws attention to a one person. The Lord give mercy, verse 16 unto the House of onusiferous. For he OFT refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain. But when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me the Lord. Grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day, and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus. Thou knowest very well how interesting he cites out a person here. We're not told really whether or not he fell in with this.

Asiatic departure from Paul? That's beside the point. Paul draws attention to the diligence of this dear God to find him in Rome. After all, you know, they didn't care about prisoners. I doubt if they had any registry of names or anything of that sort and define Paul in a big city like

Rome. Which jail? Which prison was he in? He had to search out very diligently until he found them, brother, and this is falling into place. With the allegory, With the picture. Here I believe it suggests to us the way of finding Paul. It takes diligence. If there's a true and a genuine desire to know, to know Paul's doctrine, to know the truth and to be. Truly gathered to the Lord's name. According to Paul's doctrine, a sincere soul will search and be let on of the Lord. I believe that soul. So this, this fits the picture, I believe. And the thought of diligence. Diligence. We can't just go out on the street corner and proclaim. Doctrine can we can proclaim the gospel, but we can't proclaim it in that way. And so you have in that same allegory type picture you have the way Paul's doctrine was received. They came to him as it were in his own hired house for two years. He received all that came unto him, that is they sought him out. So I believe there's a lesson in these things and that's encouraging to our hearts. The Lord knows he knows the heart and. A sincere desire to know his will. He that will do his will, will practice his will. Shall know of the doctrine. And so this is a way back to Paul, as it were. A way back. Now. If we were going to follow through this line of an allegory, where would we go to consider it? I think the book of Acts gives us the fullest picture there. There must be a number of lessons in this connection with Paul. Why don't we just go to the book of Acts now while we have a few minutes and see if we can trace out a picture? Two that would add force to this line of thought. I believe if we lay hold of this thought in principle, it may help us to regard the privilege. The great advantage to know Paul's doctrine and to be in fellowship with those who hold Paul's doctrine, because it is not held and generally accepted. Well, how about the 9th of Acts? His conversion is a great lesson in itself. You know these things mostly, but let's draw a little attention to it. Acts 9, verse one. And Saul yet breathing out, threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them down. Unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus. And suddenly. There shine round about him a light. From heaven in another place he says a great light. In another place he says the light above the brightness of the noonday sun. His thoughts keep elevating over this whole thing. Why? Because of the source of that light, God. God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined into our poor dark hearts to give the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Precious thoughts before us this morning and so here it's all falling into place. And he fell to the Earth. What else could he do? What power and light. We know that we're learning now, just by modern technology that there's tremendous power in light. They can do things with lasers that astound us. There's power and light. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? A brother remarked, that that this is the most intimate expression of our union with Christ.

Isn't that nice? Why persecute a style me to touch those poor believers, poor and maybe weak and fearful of this persecution. To touch them was to touch Christ. Oh, how very solemn are these thoughts. And he said, Who art thou, Lord? He's trembling now. He knows that he's talking to a divine being. He knows it and he's afraid. Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus. Whom now persecutest, and he trembling and astonished. Said Lord, what will I'll have them to do? Oh, Can you imagine what went through his mind? What went through his soul? At that time when he learned for the first time that that voice. Was Jesus the very name He despised the very name and those attached to that name whom he persecuted? It was one and the same. But what a state he was in. He was breathing out, slaughtering the word of God. You know the Spirit of God uses such descriptive language. There's nothing to equal it. The Spirit of God can put a thing in such a short and an expressive way that there's no other way that it could be. Better. So meaningful. You've got to breathe constantly to retain life. Every breath in and out. We don't want to miss too many breaths. How long can you hold your breath? A minute. Tony Kelly off in Nassau can hold his breath for two or three minutes as he used to going down undersea. But you've got to breathe all the time. And his hatred was such towards the name of Jesus that his very breath was slaughtered. Get rid of him. To death with him, Imprison them, Stop it. He was violently opposed to that name and there was no regard for for age, sex, person or what. And so here he is now he's extending in his violence. But he stopped by the bright light from heaven. Oh, you can see how all the picture, how all of that was impressed on his soul. And he had to be blind for those three days to have it deeply impressed upon him, how spiritually blind he was. But I did it ignorantly, in unbelief. So God was merciful to him, but now, now he knows and there is a complete change, a total change. And though his going and preaching into the synagogue after that was not a part of his formal ministry. We see, however, immediately he preaches that Jesus is the Son of God. He brings that forcibly before them, and every Jew has got to come to them. Israel in a coming day to come in to bless them. They've got to come to that. Rabbi. Thou art the Son of God, the King of Israel. Nathaniel says. And every, every born again Jew has to come to that. Well, anyway, Paul was trying to persecute that way, and just in passing I might say that the early believers took no name upon themselves. They didn't take the name upon themselves. If someone says, well, what church do you go to, brethren, how do we answer them? How do we answer them? It's difficult sometimes, is it not, to give a good, honest, faithful answer. May the Lord help us at least to say, Well, I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, and I'm gathered to his precious name. May the Lord give us grace at least to say that they may not understand it, of course. Because they're so used to systematized air that they don't understand they want to handle well, what's what? You must have an animal. But you notice in the early part of the Acts, they didn't take a name. Oh, they were first called Christians at Antioch. The description fit. But they just made reference to him of that way. Did anyone mistake what was meant when they said, oh, they're of that way? No, not at all. The testimony was so strong, so powerful that all they had to say owner of that way and it was well understood what it was. Now turn over to the 13th chapter of Acts. Now here we begin Paul's formal ministry. His formal ministry.

And I might just say this, that it's really the Spirit of God that does the sending. It isn't the assembly, but they concur with it. They recognize that this is truly of the Lord. And so the thought is being let go verse nuts in a way in verse four. So they being sent forth or let go by the Holy Ghost, or rather sent forth of the Holy Ghost. I guess verse three would be the thought of let go. So they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost. Way in verse four, so they being sent forth or let go by the Holy Ghost, or rather sent forth of the Holy Ghost. I guess verse three would be the thought of let go. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto solution, and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God and the synagogue unto the Jews, and they had also John to their minister. And when they had gone through the aisle unto pathos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar Jesus. Counterfeit bar Jesus. Which was the deputy of the country? Which was with the deputy of the country? Sergius Paulus? A prudent man who called for Barnabas and Saul and desired to hear the word of God. But Elemis the sorcerer, for so is his name by interpretation withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him and said, Oh, full of all subtlety and all mischief. While child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind. Not seeing the sun or a season and immediately there fell on him amidst. And a darkness. And he went about seeking some to lead him for the hen. Now I might just say this at the outset. That you have first of all opposition outwardly. To Paul Paul's doctrine. Didn't think of it that way. And then it seems that the Spirit of God would convey the thought of trouble arising within in opposition to Paul. Well, we'll think about that, Lord willing, perhaps a little later. But if this seems to me. To be the first real opposition to Paul. That is, it's a Jewish source. And what are what is the attempt to hinder the Gentile from hearing

the gospel? That's exactly what you have in in First Thessalonians. I'll just read it to you. You don't have to turn to it. It says. Verse 14 of chapter 2. For brethren, and for ye brethren became followers of the churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus. For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews. Who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us, and they please not God, and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved to fill up their sins always, for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost. We were speaking a little this afternoon in the reading over that matter, how that those who have had such opportunity and grace. Who hardened their hearts? Ultimately wrath comes upon them and it did upon the nation. They they resisted the gospel. They became jealous when they saw the gospel being preached to the Gentiles and that the Gentiles were receiving it. Can you imagine that they would witness that work of grace and resent it and oppose it and try to block it? And this is exactly what we have here. And so. Paul takes action, which is very interesting because I believe that in a certain sense. He kind of shuts the door on the nation there in the end of Acts after they had agreed not to believe. And then Paul quotes that prophecy from Isaiah as to the blindness that comes upon the people and the hardness of the heart because they refused and refused and refused the grace of God. And so Paul takes action in that regard here and speaks about blindness, and that's the state of the nation. Now. They're in a state of blindness. They don't recognize these things or a few here and there through the grace of God. But largely those of Israel are blind to these things. Or a season. You see the grace of God in that little statement, Thou shalt be blind for a season. Well, you know, brethren, just as soon.

As the Lord gives that shout and we're caught away to meet the Lord in the air. Then he began to work in the hearts of Israel again. They'll begin. Their eyes will begin to open up. And they'll begin to respond and it'll be a new work of grace, a wondrous work of grace, and it'll be a work in the heart, the the law written in the heart and so forth is it's developed. So anyway, the picture is falling into place, it seems to me now, one other passage and then we'll have to close over in chapter 14. We have now we have some opposition from the Gentile as well as the Jew. And here we see that Satan cleverly, when he couldn't get Paul and Barnabas to accept worship from the people, which would have corrupted the testimony. Well, then we see that he stirs all people up against them, these these Gentiles that were so enamored by this miraculous deed and who wanted to make gods out of Paul and Barnabas. And I might just. In passing that, they called Paul Mercurious, and maybe that bothered Barnabas a little bit because he was the chief speaker. I don't know, but here they stone Paul. See verse 19. They stoned him. And drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. Verse 20. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him or encircled him, he rose up and came into the city, brother. And that's exactly how the testimony goes on today. That's how the testimony was raised up once again of God was because of the disciples encircling Paul. You get the picture. And so by the grace of God, there are those that are encircling Paul today. Thank God. For that.

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