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Romans

I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit,... Romans 9:1

After eight detailed chapters concerning deep theological and doctrinal truths, chapter 9 suddenly turns in a new direction - the state of the Jewish people in the world and their status before God at Paul's present and into the future. This discourse will continue through chapter 11. After this section will come Paul's exhortations to the church in Rome to close out the book. Because of the seemingly unrelated nature of Romans 9-11, it is often called a "parenthesis" in the book. But the importance of Israel as a people is an integral part of what God is doing in human history.

The "church age," also known as the "Dispensation of Grace" will not continue on forever. Depending on how you interpret the rest of the Bible, and especially Israel's status, your expectation of what will occur after the church age will be completely different than someone who perceives Israel's future role differently. In other words, "Is God through with Israel?" "Has the church replaced Israel?" "Is there still a plan and purpose for the people of Israel?" What is correct and how can we tell?

In 9:1, Paul begins with "I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying." What he will relate to us is either truth or it is a lie. If it is a lie, then nothing else he has said can be held as reliable either. In other words, his words here are either an anchor which holds fast for the entire epistle, or they are the cunning deception of a man

who desired to pull his audience into the depths of a raging ocean. By invoking the title of "Christ" in his vow, he is making a claim that Christ is, in fact, God. This can be determined from the Old Testament, of which he once served as a Pharisee. In Deuteronomy 6:13 it says -

"You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name."

By invoking Christ in Romans 9:1, he is either blaspheming the name of the Lord (Jehovah) or he is claiming that Jesus is the incarnate Word of God - Jehovah in the flesh. After claiming the truth in Christ and affirming it, he reaffirms it by calling on the Holy Spirit as a witness to his conscience. The matter which he will state is of such importance to him that he has brought the very fellowship of the Spirit who resides in him into the matter. In essence, either I am crazy, or the Spirit testifies to the truth as a witness along with me.

Life application: Jesus, as well as the apostles after Him, tell us to let our yes be yes and our no be no. In other words, let our words be of such weight that when we speak, those around us will know they are the truth. At times, however, a matter may be of such importance that we must invoke God in our words. Invoking anything less than God is idolatry. Let us never flippantly invoke God's name and let us never invoke any thing in creation when making a vow.