

Provoking Jews to Jealousy

by Richard Owen Roberts

This sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's plan for salvation and the need for true holiness to provoke others to jealousy. It challenges individuals to focus on being transformed into Christ-likeness and living out their faith authentically to draw others to Christ, especially the Jewish people. The message highlights the significance of having sagacity, discerning God's purpose, and aligning one's life with Christ's mission of saving people from sin.

Duration: 1:54:59

Scripture: Romans 9:1, Romans 11:8, Romans 11:11, John 1:47, Matthew 1:18, Hosea 4:6

Topics: "God's Plan for Salvation", "Living Authentically in Christ"

Description

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Transcript

By the grace of God, here we are again. And may that same grace make this a wonderfully profitable evening for you. Now, some of you folk know that I have been for many, many years talking on the subject of revival.

And there is a measure of concern that comes to me, that as I face the reality that we are needing more and more revival, the Church is less and less interested. And for some time that puzzled me, how can that be? And then gradually I began to understand. And I believe by the grace of God I have a word for this congregation tonight.

Now, if one were to consult a common dictionary, they would find that the subject of revival is referring really to the restoration to vigor or activity. Not a very good definition, but what you're likely to find in a typical dictionary. Now, most of us are alert to the fact that when you're talking about the churches in America, you really have to distinguish between those churches that are calling themselves liberal and those that think that they are evangelical.

And obviously a church like this is considered evangelical, but the vast majority of churches are not. But what I'd like to begin with this evening is this question. Do you personally desire revival? Well, let me ask it again.

Do you personally desire revival? And let me put in front of you a series of questions that need to be addressed. Do you think this nation would be benefited by the revival of the notion that God himself gave us two books? Now, think of that. Will we be benefited by a revival of the notion that God gave us two books? Well, you say, I can't answer that.

I don't even know what you mean. Well, the majority of the church is insisting that God gave us two books. Now, let me try to bring that right down to where we are.

I hold in my hands a single book, but one of the greatest accusations that I received over time is this, Mr. Roberts, you preach too much from the Old Testament. Is there validity in that complaint? But sometimes I take a little moment to get it just right, and then I hold it up sort of like this in front of congregations, and I ask sometimes people who aren't very smart, what do you see? Well, it's obvious, isn't it? It looks like it to me more than two-thirds. Our Old Testament, I've just turned to that portion in between.

So, when you think about it, if God wrote two books and one meant the death of the other, then why bother at all with the Old Testament? But if he wrote one book that he gave to us, and we're focusing on one-third and leaving two-thirds, something is grievously wrong. And we're not going to correctly interpret the one-third that we hold to if the two-thirds have meaning and significance, and we've dismissed that. Now, it may not be apparent to you, but it is very clear to me, the bulk of the people that I encounter think God gave us two books, and they make it very plain when they say, I'm a New Testament Christian.

Maybe you've been guilty of some absurdity like that. I hope not, but how would I dare to assume that none of you is played with that nonsense? But let's begin with that thought. If there are those, and there are, I assure you, and they are in the vast majority in the Church, those who insist that Christianity is New Testament, not Old Testament, would we pray to God for a revival of that kind of nonsense? Well, I hope you can see how utterly stupid it would be to ask for a revival of error.

And that is error, because God did write and give to us one book. And you cannot say Old Testament is now out of date, New Testament is where it's all at. Now, you'll pardon a personal reference, I trust, but like a lot of preachers, even old men like myself, I went to theological seminary.

I wouldn't recommend it to you. Wasn't necessarily advantageous to anybody, but I went. And let me tell you what happened.

I became more and more doubtful about the Old Testament. And I was in the midst of a personal struggle in which I was thinking to myself, well, I want to believe that the New Testament is the Word of God, but I got a lot of suspicions about the Old. So I'll just chuck the Old and focus on the New.

I wasn't very happy with that, but I had come to that conclusion. And I decided that before I acted too greatly on that, I would talk to one of the faculty members. And so I made an appointment with the dean of students and went to his office at the appointed time, and I told him the struggle that I was engaged in.

And he said to me, I want you to promise to do what I'm going to do at the end of the quarter. I said, what is that? Now wait a minute, he said. You trusted me enough to tell me your story.

Now I want you to trust me enough to do what I'm going to do. Well, not without knowing what you're going to do. Well, he said, I'm going to leave here at the end of the quarter.

Oh, I said, I can do that. And I left. And you know how it is.

Some of you are students. I don't hardly need to mention this to you. You don't have any money.

You're going to school at somebody else's expense. Oftentimes parents, and you know by and large, parents who sacrifice to put their kids in school aren't all that excited when their kids tell them they quit. And so I was thinking, boy, if I tell my folks that I quit, they're not going to like it.

But then, even worse in one sense, my pastor, who had one time himself been dean of this seminary, I was sure if he found out I quit, he wouldn't like it. And then even if I could dismiss what my parents thought and my pastor thought, I still was faced with that problem that some of you, as I've said already, know I don't have any money. So what was I supposed to do? Well, I had gone and graduated from college in Spokane, Washington.

And during the time I was in college, I had been preaching all over what they called the Inland Empire, the whole great district surrounding Spokane, Washington. And I had had an experience. Now, sir, I hope you don't share this experience yourself with me.

But I had been preaching in the rescue mission, and I saw a commotion in the back of the room. And I saw a number of men jump up and wrestle another person to the floor. And I wondered naturally what that was all about.

But what I found out later was this man had a gun, and he was going to eliminate me from the world with that gun. And these men had jumped up, wrestled him down, took the gun away. And so I'm able to be with you tonight.

I doubt that you would have taken time to visit my casket and cemetery burial site in Spokane, Washington. But that's where I would have been. So when I'm ready to leave the seminary, and I have no money, and I remember well I preached dozens of times in the rescue mission, what if I go there, tell the superintendent about my circumstance? Maybe that's where the answer lies.

So I went and told him my story, and he said, Now listen, we've got a room here for you. You can stay as long as you like at no cost. You can come to the dining hall for your meals, or I can send the men up to your room with the food you need.

Take your choice. But we want you here, and you stay until this issue is resolved. So for three months, I stayed in a rescue mission.

I began, you know, you can imagine what my thinking was. I liked the New Testament. I thought I would try to live by it, make that the subject of preaching.

I was having trouble, as I've explained, with the Old Testament, and so I thought, well, I'll just rid myself of the old and focus on the new. And I decided the way to do that was to really get even more familiar with the new than I was. But it didn't take any time at all to discover I had a huge problem, because the new is loaded with quotations from the old, and that posed a huge problem.

And eventually I faced the reality, if I'm going to throw out the old, I'm going to have to throw out the new. And I don't want to do that, but good sense demands that I do that. And then, as the weeks slipped by, and I kept on day after day, it dawned on me.

I believed the whole book. And, well, you can see that was a long time ago. But I'm here tonight to express to you the conviction of an old-timer.

God gave us one book, and what we need is not a revival of the nonsense that's thinking of two books, but a revival of the one-book understanding. And I would like to pause and ask you, is that a settled issue for you personally? Do you see the relationship to the two? That there is an old covenant and a new covenant, and they're interwoven, and you can't understand rightly the new without the old. Is that, I'm asking, a settled issue with you? Now that's such a horrendous question that it would be grievously foolish of me to rush ahead until you'd had an opportunity to be certain you got that straight.

So I'm really asking the question, when we're talking about revival, does it make sense that there comes a whole fresh new wave of certainty and earnestness to renew this notion, to spread this notion, to widen the spread of this notion that there are two books? Or do we desperately need a revival of the understanding of one book completely interwoven? Now, let me take that issue just a step further. If we've got two books, then we've got to ask, how many gods are there? Because it's very common for someone to talk to me, and now this may shock some of you stupid children. Oh, that's not a nice word, is it? Some of you uneducated children.

It might shock you to realize that there are multitudes of people who say, I believe in the God of the New Testament. The God of the Old Testament, as one Methodist bishop said, is nothing other than a dirty, bloody bully. The God I believe in is nice.

Well now, look, we don't have a lot of choices here. We either have two gods, or else we've got a god who's gotten control of his disposition. He used to be mean and nasty, but now he's nice.

And he wouldn't think of punishing anybody for anything, because he's like Santa Claus. He's got something in his bag of goodies for everybody. And again, would it be out of the way for me to ask you, if this is really a settled issue in your mind, how many gods are there? Is God nothing but sweet and nice? Now, let me take that a step farther.

There's often in the Bible mention of the fear of God. How do you respond to a person who says, I don't believe in a god you have to fear. Maybe when everything is said and done, that's really where you're at.

You don't believe in a god you have to fear. Well now, in reality, that's not limited to the Old Covenant. At the end of Hebrews 12, in that sixth warning passage, it says our God is a consuming fire.

So no matter how nice you try to make God, it is God himself who told us about hell, and there's nothing nice about hell. But again, you see, I put to you the question, is it sensible to pray for a revival of that notion that there are two gods or else one God who's grown up and who's gotten control of his disposition. So you see, my great concern tonight is not to ask you how the other person thinks about these things, but because I know I'm old and I'm not likely to ever get here again.

Anthony's been kind and invited me a few times in the past and then circumstances worked out so that I'm here this evening, but I won't have many chances to ask you this question. Do we need a revival of the ridiculous notion that God has gotten control of his disposition and is nice now, whereas he used to be

nasty? Well, you may be in a hurry tonight and you're thinking, boy, I hope we can get this over with quickly. Well, you can leave, but I'm not in any hurry.

I don't have a plane until tomorrow morning to catch, so I don't need to be in any rush. My age may work against me and knock me down before I'm finished, but at the same time, this is a pretty critical issue and I want to face it squarely myself, but I want to ask you to face it as well. And let me carry this another step further.

If I'm not careful, if you're not careful, you may be thinking about a God who serves us, whereas the God of the Bible is looking for a people who serve him. There are plenty of people who believe in a God who serves them. I wouldn't dare to ask God for a revival of that absurdity.

But I'm asking you plainly, is that an issue that is crystal clear in your mind? Do you want a contradictory God who is so stupid that he creates a hell in which to incarcerate forever unrepentant people, then he taps his son on the shoulder and says, you go down there and live with them and suffer and die and save them from hell? Did you ever stop to think of the absurdity of that? How could any God be so dumb as to do a ridiculous thing like that? Well, another way of putting what I've just asked you, did Jesus come to save us from hell? Maybe that's what you think. But at least I can say to you, don't be dumb. Why would God create a hell as a place to incarcerate forever unrepentant persons and then save them from the penalty and leave them with the problem? Does it make sense to you? Now, I look at you, obviously, most of you, I don't know.

But sir, if you'll pardon me picking you out, you don't look stupid to me. Now, your wife may think differently. No, she doesn't.

All right, so we're on the right track here. You're not going to embrace that nonsense. But the bulk of the American church has embraced that nonsense.

That's what most people believe, that Christ came to save us from hell. So you see what I'm asking you is to think with me about this question. Do we want a revival of nonsense? Well, my sense is that the curse is great enough as it stands without multiplying that curse.

Well, I don't need to keep going indefinitely on this subject. You're wise enough to see what I'm speaking of. We don't want a revival of the current view that says repentance has nothing to do with Christianity.

That's something for covenant Israel. And then I bring it into a reality again in another dimension. Most of the places where I'm invited to preach want to let me know that the service must not be more than an hour long.

And here I've got an hour and 45 minute sermon. So I'm supposed to take the scissors or a butcher knife and slash the sermon into little bite-sized pieces? Do I want a revival of that kind of nonsense? I would suppose that at least seven or eight churches out of ten embrace that nonsense. That a thing can't be gotten over with in an hour or less there's something wrong.

Well, I don't know how you think. And maybe even though it doesn't show up on the surface, maybe you're one of these people who like short sermons. But here you are tonight.

And I assure you that I have already. And some of you know this anyway. This isn't going to be short.

But I don't honestly believe that it makes sense for the average person to watch television say for 15 hours a week. And then come and listen to a 22 minute sermon. I don't think it makes sense.

Now people tell me how busy they are and they don't have time. And yet those same people have plenty of time to attend the football game. And if it doesn't last at least three hours, they're angry.

They feel they've been cheated. Now obviously when you get this far in the matter, you're faced with a question. How many kingdoms are there in this world at this time? You see most of us are in danger of supposing that the kingdom of God is future.

And it has nothing to do with the present. But of course the Bible teaches that the kingdom of God both is and is to come. That indeed, although we were born as citizens of the kingdom of this world, by the second birth we become citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

And as we read the instructions and the help about faith as they appear in Hebrews chapter 11, we read, faith gives substance to things that are hoped for. It provides the evidence of things not seen. So in literal fact, we're dealing with some people who actually believe the kingdom of God is of infinitely greater importance than the kingdom of this world.

And therefore they do things like old men like me do. We shock as ridiculous the notion of one hour service. And we don't hesitate to preach for two or three hours if we think there's a hope of retaining the audience.

Now honestly, if you all got up and left, well I'd have to rethink. But I've never been anywhere where everybody got up and left. And I was told during a meeting where I was speaking yesterday that the meeting lasted four hours.

I didn't know that. But I noticed that there were people who stayed. And I understood that the reason they stayed was because they believed that the kingdom of God was a vastly greater consequence than the kingdom of this world.

So again, if you don't mind, and I'm going to do it even if you do mind, I'm going to pause and ask you, is the kingdom of God vastly more important to you than the kingdom of this world? Now let me recite again that portion of Hebrews 11 I already made reference to. Faith gives substance to things that are hoped for. It provides the evidence of things that are not seen.

Now look, we don't expect that a person without faith is going to treat the kingdom of God as if it were wonderfully more important than the kingdom of this life. But it's very perplexing to understand how a person can think themselves a Christian and yet think that the kingdom of this world is more important than the kingdom of God. So again I ask, where are you on this issue? Is it clear to you that the kingdom of God is of infinitely greater consequence than the kingdom of this world? And you prove that day in, day out, week after week, month after month, by paying far more attention to that which is invisible and yet is coming than to what you can put your hand on or taste or touch.

Now that's a mighty serious question. And a question that there is no wisdom at all in paying no attention to. So as you follow, you see, I'm asking, does it make sense to pray for the revival of something that's loaded with error? Or does it make sense to pray for the reality of a glorious renewal of that which really counts? Now a lot of people who talk to me say, Well, Mr. Roberts, it's not that I disagree with what you said.

But you don't understand. It's too late. The next event on God's calendar is the end of the world.

Get with it! And I would like to ask thinking people tonight, sir, may I include you, I would like to ask the question, What if in every past generation they said it's too late? What if men like Jonathan Edwards looked the situation over and said it's too late? What if men like George Whitfield? What if men like John Knox? What if persons like John Calvin? What if Melancthon? What if hundreds and thousands in our past history said it's too late? Have you learned to distinguish between late and too late? I'm asking you a question! Have you learned to distinguish between late and too late? And not then. The question the thinking person comes to is, When do we know it's too late? Because somebody else tells me too late? Does that mean it's too late? I would think it's not until the one in control says it that it matters. And if you don't mind, fellows, I didn't read anywhere in my Bible that it was too late.

I never heard the Lord say it was too late. I heard others say that. But I don't care what others say.

I'm interested in what the Lord says. So, you see, what I'm asking you is, Does it make sense to pray for something loaded with nonsense? Or does it make sense to pray for something that is truly of God? Some of you have given a little consideration to the subject of revival. And you're aware of the fact, when you speak about revival, you're really speaking about two incredibly wonderful things.

Number one, in revival, God draws near. Now let that sink in. In revival, through revival, God draws near.

Do you think it would hurt our president for God to draw near to him? Or do you think it would hurt ridiculous idiots like Hillary Clinton for God to draw near to her? Think of anybody that you know something about and ask, Would it hurt them for God to draw near? Or think of the society in which you live. What if not only senators and legislators of every sort, but storekeepers and school teachers and people like ourselves were to experience the nearness of God? Did you ever stop to think what might happen to yourself personally if God drew near? Now, when we try to describe God accurately, some of us do believe in the sovereignty, but never in my life have I heard anybody say, Sovereign, sovereign, sovereign. It's true.

You could repeat it endlessly and it would be factual. But I do hear people say and sing, Holy, holy, holy. And when you understand that when God draws near, the great impact is there in that vital realm.

A person who has excused themselves over and over for conduct contrary to scripture comes under tremendous conviction when God is near. Isn't that something we need as a nation? Isn't that something we need as individuals? So the nearness of God invariably produces a sense of holiness, of the importance of being right with God. Now we have people who pretend that God is near them and they live as ridiculously as the devil himself.

I don't pay any attention to whatever they say. I know it's sheer nonsense. Because God always brings that sense of the holy.

Now does it add up rightly to pray that there might be a renewal of that? Well, most certainly. Not as I've tried to suggest to you of stupid things like thinking God gave us two books or that there are two gods or I could name dozens of other things that would be perfectly absurd to be looking for or hoping for or praying for. But as I said, there are two incredibly important things that happen in revival.

I've already said number one. What we designate as the manifest presence of God. Now for some of you maybe the word manifest isn't a very good word.

But there's a little space right here. What if I choose to sit down in it? Now this lady may not have been paying any and maybe this fellow wasn't paying any attention to the fact that an old man was here. But it's kind of hard for them now to deny my presence and existence and maybe you haven't gotten the picture that when God draws near it is profound and meaningful and much more so than me sitting down next to somebody.

Indeed I've thought and thought and thought and I can't think of anything more wonderful than God drawing near. And manifesting himself not just to me or to you but to the nation. And when somebody's crying too late, too late.

If you understand what happens when God draws near it's not hard to contradict them and say take your idiotic notion somewhere else. How long does it take God to turn everything around when he draws near? Well now I don't wish to shame or embarrass these folks that I just sat between but it's going to be hard for them to deny my existence. And when God draws near it's very hard for everyone to deny his reality.

But as I said there are two great things that happen in revival. The manifest presence of Christ and then the word of God itself taking on a power that it doesn't seem to possess. Now you'll understand when I tell you this.

Often when I preach there'll be several people who'll come up and obviously they're bored and they wish I hadn't been so long-winded but they'll say oh that was nice Mr. Roberts. I'll think about what you said. But then when God draws near and the word takes on fresh power and meaning you don't find people making stupid statements like I'll think about it.

You find it irresistible and isn't that what we need? For the word of God to take hold of people that they can no longer act as if it wasn't there. So dear friends do you understand what I'm suggesting? We don't need a revival of nonsense. We've got far too much of that already.

What we need is a revival of the real thing. So if I were here to speak carefully to you I would not hesitate to say what we really need is a reformation revival. All these ridiculous notions of which I've tried to give you a sampling hide under a dirty rock somewhere because truth has gone.

Now maybe you're not thinking as seriously as I am on this subject. Maybe you haven't got the notion straight. So let me see if I can help you in that regard.

I want to ask you to consider a different series of questions. When Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by God as the record of Genesis shows did that mean it was too late for Israel? Or when God gave us chapter 28 in Deuteronomy and he took 14 verses to describe the blessings and 64 verses to describe the curses. Was it too late for Israel? Well if you paid any attention to scripture you know that the warnings were there.

And maybe you're the kind of a person that isn't yet convinced that God can destroy. Remember if you can what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah those cities of the plain that thought they could get away with anything they chose that they could believe what they wanted. And suddenly fire and brimstone falling from heaven and desecrating and bringing into ruination not only the cities themselves but the people who were the inhabitants and the only ones escaping a little family.

And then the wife of that family not much interested in God turns around to have a look and turns into a pillar of salt. Now you may not think that's fact but it is. Whether you like it or not when God decides to

destroy it doesn't take him months or years.

None of us pretends to know fully the mind and heart of God. He may have it in mind to destroy America tonight. And he can if he chooses.

But I'm asking you now to weigh this question. I've asked is it too late in Sodom and Gomorrah? Is it too late in Deuteronomy 28? Have you studied Isaiah recently? When Isaiah spoke chapter 1 an incredible portion chapter 53 when Isaiah spoke about the coming Messiah was it too late? Or move along to Jeremiah when Jeremiah was starting out God told him nobody will pay any attention to anything you say and don't bother to pray for these people because I'm not going to listen. Was it too late then? You see what I'm asking? Have you faced the reality that the time when it's too late may come? But now you've brought the Bible and I'd like you to turn if you will please to that small little book of Hosea.

And I'd like to ask you to look at something in particular. The book of Hosea. And I'm inviting your attention to chapter 4. And I'm going to be quiet for a minute you might think that difficult for me but despite the difficulty I won't do it.

So I'm going to ask you to look at chapter 4 and verse 6 and because I really hope you'll have a good look I'm going to be quiet and give you a chance to actually do this. So let me repeat it again for those of you who live in the fog regularly. I want you to look at Hosea 4 verse 6 and I'm about to begin that moment of quiet when I'm expecting you to look at the text and to see what it says.

Well I suppose not all of you brought the Bible but a good number did and I've given you a brief moment to look. Well what do you read in your text? Hosea 4 verse 6. Well I know some of you are timid and won't respond so I'll read what I've got. And you can see if it differs from what you've got.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge I also will reject you. And it goes on to speak of a given priesthood.

Since you've forgotten the law of your God I will also forget your children. Now I think this is a tender issue. There are some parents here.

Can you imagine a day when there's no hope for your children? Can you imagine a time when God speaks to you as a parent and says don't waste your breath praying for your children? Their end is already determined. Well now in this passage it says God has determined to destroy them and to hold out no hope for their children. I asked you to look at it because I know perfectly well we have a variety of translations and I wonder how many of you have got it right.

Now I hope I'm not speaking over your head but there are those who endeavor to sort things out by making a distinction between knowledge and wisdom. So I'm going to ask a friend here of long standing we've never been close but nonetheless I know he's seeking the father of Christ. What's the difference between wisdom and knowledge? Now I'm not asking to embarrass you but just to give you a chance to participate in the service.

Wasn't that kind of me? Do you know the difference? Do you? Well how about the rest of you? Do you know the difference? Why is it that the church is trying to help people to get a hold of things by distinguishing between wisdom and knowledge? Well surely you understand that there is external knowledge and internal knowledge. There is knowledge that affects thoughts and that which affects conduct. Now let me report to you an incident that happened not long ago.

Going way back years ago a missionary to Russia was talking to me one day and he asked if I could recommend something of great importance for him to read. And I said yes. Get a set of Kyle and Delage commentaries on the Old Testament and do everything in your power to master what is said.

Well this was some time back but fairly recently he telephoned me. He said I've been doing what you suggested. I've been studying the book of Hosea.

I've come to a really hard place and I want to ask your help. He said there's a word that Kyle and Delage say should appear in the text of Hosea 4.6 and it doesn't in most translations. He said I can't pronounce the word.

I'm not sure I've ever even heard the word so let me spell it out for you and you tell me what it means. So reading from Kyle and Delage he gives me something of the background as they describe it. Then he comes to the difficult word and he says Kyle and Delage insist that Israel was destroyed for their lack of S-A-G-I-C-I-T-Y.

He said I can't pronounce that word. I certainly don't know what it means. But I have a notion that you can and do.

But I submit it to you. May I ask you have you understood that Israel was destroyed for their lack of sagacity? Most of us have never faced that reality and naturally if you don't know the word you don't know what to do with it. But I ask you to think first about an effort at least to distinguish between knowledge and wisdom.

And I ask you to face the reality that there is external knowledge that affects your thinking and there is internal knowledge that affects your conduct. Now sagacity is an ancient word. It's an English word but most people have never heard it and most certainly have never used it.

But now tonight you can face this reality. Israel was destroyed by God because of their lack of sagacity. And even if it's a brand new word for you and even if you're stumbling over its real meaning it is the word of God.

And is it such a strange concept after all? Did I not begin this evening by asking you whether it was sensible to pray for a revival of the two book theory or the two God theory or the other nonsense that's represented by today's church? Do you think it would be stretching anything to say that the church in America lacks sagacity? Even if you don't know the word! Is it impossible to conceive of what happens to a people who treat things externally but it never enters internally to alter their conduct? Because you see there is both knowledge and discernment. And I'd like to ask you now the most important question of any that I've put in front of you this evening. Would you describe yourself as a sagacious person? Would you say, Mr. Roberts, I don't know those words! I know.

Don't struggle over that. I've tried to help you to understand. A sagacious person is not a person who has an external knowledge but a person who has discernment.

A person who understands inwardly what it's all about. Now let's look at this in a very practical sense. Would you dare to suppose that at some juncture Israel was going around saying, We don't believe there's a God! Have you any biblical reference to that? Do you know any place in Scripture where Israel declared that the whole concept of a God was ridiculous nonsense? No, in actual fact, it's very possible to believe externally without ever believing internally.

Very easy to have an outward knowledge that doesn't include discernment. And so here we have the record of not an individual, there was an Israel as an individual, but we have the record of an entire race of people destroyed because of their lack of understanding, of inward knowledge. And again, because I'm really greatly concerned that we not just be wasting the day.

And honestly, I'm an old man. It's easier for me to stay home than to come to places like this. And so because I'm here, I want to make the best of it.

I want to ask you, would you say about yourself that the thing that grips you and motivates you and carries you forward day by day is your inner knowledge of the plan and the purpose of God? That indeed, although the word may be strange, you do dare to say tonight, by God's grace, I'm a sagacious individual. I'm not like Israel that was destroyed for their lack of sagacity. It's not a boast, it's not something we're patting our backs about ourselves saying, isn't it wonderful, look at me! But it is an immensely important matter.

And what if some of you, in sheer honesty, were to say, I never understood what any of this was about. I never really understood what God's plan and God's purpose is, or was. So, although as I said already, you might be in a hurry, you can see I'm not.

Because I'm asking you to seriously consider a matter of incredible importance. Can you envision in your mind a whole race of people destroyed for their lack of sagacity? And one way of kind of relating to that is to ask the question to yourself, how many who were brought out of Egypt actually entered the promised land? Now, none of us knows exactly in terms of numbers, but it has been estimated by those who are in a position to know best that at least two million people escaped from Egypt. But again, I ask the question, how many of them entered the land of promise? Well, some of you don't have the foggiest notion because you're strangers to the truth of God.

But some know there was only a handful. Now, have you ever thought about the serious possibility of five out of two million being saved? And here we have read in Hosea that God himself had determined to destroy Israel for the lack of sagacity. Now, maybe you haven't made the connection.

But you know I'm an old man, I don't need to tell you. And maybe you've heard that I've been at this over 70 years. And many people say to me, I know you're an old man.

Don't you get tired of what you're doing? No. I'm weak, sometimes I can't do it. I ache all over and so on, but as long as I can, I will.

And that's because I understand that across America, a nation that I love, there are millions and millions of people who are like Israel. Their knowledge is external. They don't have sagacity.

They don't know what God's plan and purpose is. And I may be seeming to labor this point with you, but it would be dreadful if I left my home and my rocking chair to come and talk to people who don't care. And so I dare to ask my question again.

Do you have sagacity? Do you understand God's divine purpose? In all that's transpiring. Well, I'll move along because I know you didn't plan to stay all night, and I don't think I have the strength myself to do so. So that's the first issue I want you to face tonight.

The issue of sagacity. And not as if you're inconsequential, but as if you were asking yourself, do I have what Israel did not? But then I move along to a second issue. It won't take me quite as long, perhaps, on this second issue, but it is tremendously important.

Some of you have read enough of the Bible to remember the time when a man by the name of Joseph, who was engaged to Mary, a girl by the name of Mary, discovered she was already pregnant. Now, I don't know how you single fellows feel, but I know how I felt as a young man. And believe me, I didn't want to marry a pregnant girl.

And had my Maggie said to me, well, it's hard, but I've got to tell you, I'm already pregnant. I would have had a fierce problem. Well, we have this record.

This is as factual as you're sitting here tonight is factual. Joseph is engaged to this young woman, and he discovers she's pregnant. And he doesn't want to marry a pregnant girl.

And so he's struggling with this issue. And he's asking himself, what should I do in this instance? Now, he's a good man. He's not wanting to embarrass Mary or to bring her into shame.

So he's got this dual problem. He doesn't want to marry a pregnant girl, nor does he want to embarrass and shame Mary. So he's struggling, as every good man will struggle when faced with such a crisis.

And while he's in the midst of his struggle, something happens to him. And just because I don't want to run the risk of not stating this accurately, I'm going to invite you to turn in the Gospel of Matthew to the very situation as it's described there. I've got to go back to the pulpit.

Maybe I'd be better off just staying here and not wandering around. But I think you're kind enough to forgive an old fellow who can't stand still, because when I do, my feet swell up. And though you may not be used to wanderers, you surely have enough compassion to understand that one of the problems of old age is exactly that.

So we're turning to the Gospel of Matthew. And I'm inviting you to look at chapter 1. And I'm beginning a reading at verse 18. I'll give you just a moment to get there, because I really am concerned that this matter be clear in your thinking.

So Matthew 1, verse 18. Now, the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

And Joseph, her husband, or the man she was engaged to, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

Now, all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophets might be fulfilled, saying, Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Jesus, Emmanuel, which translated means God with us. And Joseph arose from his sleep, and he did as the angel commanded him, and he took her as his wife and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a son, and he called his name Jesus. Now, I know you're not completely stupid, but at the same time, I know we are a mixed group, and it won't do any harm if you already remember for me to remind those who can't keep

things straight.

We began by talking about revival. I've tried to make it clear. Revival is when God draws near, when the Word takes on incredible power and sweeps sometimes just like a tidal wave of divine blessing.

But I've asked you to face the reality that Israel understood these things externally but never understood them internally, never had sagacity, and so as a nation were destroyed. Now, it's quite clear, isn't it, by the way Christmas is celebrated that a lot of people understand outwardly that God had a Son whose birth we celebrate at Christmas. Now, granted, there are a lot of people who get involved in the celebration who don't have the fabulous notion externally either.

But then our concern at the moment is not them, but us. I didn't come to speak to those who aren't here, but to those who are here. And I'm asking you, have you understood that message that the angel gave to Joseph? I don't need to repeat the circumstances.

You've all felt something of that and you saw the plight that Joseph was in. But here he is being told, go ahead and marry this girl. Be a father to this child who's to be born.

Give him a name. The name Jesus. But don't ever forget why he came.

To save his people from their sin. Now, I've already covered this in a sense. He didn't come to save us from the penalty of our sin.

He didn't come to save us despite our sin. He came to save us from our sin. Is that clear to you personally? Don't look around and wonder if somebody sitting nearby understands it.

Make sure you understand it. He came to save you from your sin. And again I repeat, not just from the penalty, not just from the consequence, but from sin itself.

And would it be out of the way to ask you to consider, has this happened to me? I'm not asking you if you're perfect. I know you're not. You're no more perfect than I am.

And if you don't know how imperfect I am, sometimes if you get the chance, ask Maggie. But let's play that. Could it be said that you have sagacity concerning Jesus? Here we've got the whole nation destroyed, not because of their lack of external knowledge, but their lack of internal discernment, understanding of the plan and the purpose of God.

Well, I've covered two related issues, the necessity of sagacity and a true understanding of the meaning of the name Jesus and the impact that name should have on us. But now let me pose to you another problem. When Hosea said these people would be destroyed for their lack of sagacity, at the time Christ came into the world, did Israel by then have sagacity? Well, we read in the New Testament he came unto his own and his own received him not.

And if you've read with any care the New Testament, you know that the religious leaders hated Christ and could hardly wait to crucify him and get him out of the way. Doesn't sound like they had sagacity. For generations, Jews had been looking forward to the Messiah, and when the Messiah comes, they don't even recognize him.

They insist that Christ is not their Messiah. Well, I hardly need to tell you what happened as a result because Israel had no place for Jesus in their hearts, could not tolerate him as the Son of God crucified

him despite all that he could have done for them. Did the Apostle Paul, answer me now, sir, I've embarrassed you already, might as well do so again, did the Apostle Paul spend his time trying to win these Jews to Christ? He's going to defer, that's fair.

Does he do that often at home? Don't answer, don't answer. The purpose is not to embarrass anyone. But that is a significant issue.

Did Paul spend his time trying to convince the Jews that they ought to have sagacity? Well, I'll not go into it with great detail, but I'll point out the fact that the Jews were set aside and God created a church made up not exclusively, but largely of Gentiles. Now that brings us to the passage you were told in advance I would be dealing with, Romans 9, 10, and 11. You've already faced the reality am I going to quit in a jiffy? So we're here for a little spell.

But will you turn now to the book of Romans? I don't intend to read those three chapters to you, but I do think it would be well for us to at least get a sampling of what is said in these chapters. So I would ask you to turn to chapter 9 and to read with me what is said for a brief moment, starting with chapter 9, verse 1. I'll give you a jiffy to turn. Romans 9, verse 1. I'm telling the truth in Christ Jesus.

I am not lying. My conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit. Now I'm not sure you've ever given any great care, but that's a mighty important introduction to what he's about to say.

And I honestly think that despite the fact that I live very close to the grave and will be there shortly, I come tonight with the truth of such incredible consequence, the Holy Spirit himself bearing witness, that it would be dreadful if you shrugged your shoulders and said, so what? Look at verse 2. I want you to know, says the apostle, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belong the adoption as sons, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the temple service, and the promises, whose are the fathers and from whom is Christ, according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Or if you will for a jiffy, drop down to verse 19 of this same ninth chapter.

So you will say to me then, why does God still find fault for who resists his will? On the contrary, who are you, O man, to answer back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, why do you make me like this? Will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay to make from the same lump? This sounds familiar, doesn't it? As if you were here this morning. We had the illustration of the vessel of honor and the vessel of dishonor. Doesn't the potter have the right to choose for that lump to be divided in one to be a vessel of honor and the other a vessel of dishonor, of wrath, prepared for destruction? And he did so, verse 23, in order that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy which he prepared beforehand for glory.

Even so also he called not from among the Jews only, but from among the Gentiles. As he says also in Hosea, I will call those who were not my people, my people. And her who was not beloved, beloved.

And it shall be that in the place where it was stated to them, you are not my people, I know that they shall be called the sons of the living God. Well, I know that this is really a private task. Each of you should understand clearly what is said in chapter 9. But even though I don't look very kindly, I expect I am more kindly than some folk you know.

And I don't really intend to keep you here forever, but it would be dreadful for me to say the service is over and for you to understand why Israel was cut off. Now it's been stated in your presence and you have heard this, Israel was cut off for a stated reason. In order that God might bring into the picture those who were not.

Now, I don't know how much you know, sir, but Gentiles were nothing in the Old Testament. They were like a nationless people. People who didn't count with the eternal God.

And I suppose there could be an exception. There might be a Jewess or a Jewish man here, but the highest probability is we're all Gentiles. Here we read God deliberately cut off Israel because from the beginning He didn't intend that His kingdom should be made up solely of Jews.

Some of you may remember that account in John 1 of Philip saying to Nathanael, Come along with me. We found the Messiah. And you may remember what Nathanael said.

Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Now, that wasn't a stupid statement on Nathanael's part. You see, the record of Scripture made it clear the Messiah did not come out of Nazareth. And when Nathanael first heard about Him, he thought, well, nothing good is likely to come out of that place.

But his friend, Philip, said, come along anyway, even though you've expressed a sound doubt, and meet Him for yourself. And so when Nathanael came along with Philip and met Christ, he was astonished because Christ said, I already know you. Well, how do you know me? Well, before we met, I saw you under the fig tree.

And naturally, like we would do, Nathanael was concerned and wondering. Jesus had described him as an Israelite indeed, in whom there were no fish hooks. Do you buy fish? Did you ever fish with hook and line? Did you drop the hook in the water, or did you first disguise the hook before you dropped it? Yes, they respond by saying, we disguised the hook.

Maybe with a minnow, maybe with a crawdad, maybe with a worm, whatever works in the particular place you're fishing. You don't go to the printer and ask him to print you off a sign in fish language saying, look out fish, what you see is not what you get. But everybody who's ever used hook and line is aware of the fact that guile is at the center of what we do.

And so Jesus, looking at Nathanael, says an Israelite in whom there is no guile, no pretense, no sham, no make-believe. And when Jesus says that, immediately Nathanael is aware. He's not talking to you, sir.

He's not talking to me. I could see somebody under a fig tree and not have the foggiest notion what they were doing there. But Jesus knew what Philip was doing under that fig tree.

And so really what we've got is this simple fact. Two people knew what Nathanael was doing under the fig tree. Nathanael himself, and now suddenly Jesus of Nazareth.

He comes to an immediate and an absolute conviction. This man must be God. He knows what I was doing under that fig tree.

Now, we don't know. We weren't told. We have to use our imaginations.

But suppose he was under that fig tree praying, Oh God, I don't know what to do. I don't know where to go. I can't even decide what's right and what's wrong.

Will You meet me in all these circumstances? And suddenly, he's got the answer. Now, I won't take but a jiffy to report this, but you know that the incident that I'm speaking of in chapter 1 is followed by a marriage. And you remember where that marriage was? And we're told concerning that marriage that Mary was there and Jesus was there and all the disciples were there.

Now, how do you suppose they all ended up at the marriage in Cana of Galilee? Well, if you look at the list and the descriptions of the disciples, you discover in their group was only one from Cana of Galilee and that's Nathanael. I guess they were at his wedding. But understand now what we're dealing with.

Jesus says, an Israelite indeed in whom there are no fish hooks, no guile, no sham, no pretense. Now, let that get a hold of you. How does it happen that in most people there's pretense, there's sham, there's guile, but in Nathanael there was none and he is described by the Lord Jesus Christ himself as an Israelite indeed.

And do you understand the connection? It was not the plan and purpose of God that one race be saved, but that all true Israelites should be saved. All people in whom there was no guile. And it didn't much matter where they were born and who their parents were.

God from the beginning planned that there should be people from every tribe and nation and yet for the most part the Old Covenant concerns itself with Israel who as I hope you have established as a fact were cut off because of their lack of sagacity. And not just because God's mean, but because God had a plan. A plan as I just said that all true Israelites would be welcome.

If you're born in America, if you're born in Mexico, if you're born in Iraq, if you're born in China, that's got nothing to do with it. The issue is are you an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile? So now I want to read this to you just so you see that I'm not making this matter up. We won't have time as I said and as you know to look at all of this.

But will you turn to chapter 11 of Romans and let me read a piece from it. In verse 1 of chapter 11 a very significant question is asked. I say then, God has not rejected his people, has he? Now look, if you're careless and you're paying attention tonight, you said that old cadre said that because of their lack of sagacity and he actually read this from the Bible, Israel is destroyed.

So the apostle is asking a highly significant question. Does that mean that there is no hope that God has rejected his people? And so Paul is responding and he's making it clear he hasn't rejected them. Verse 2, God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.

Do you not know what the Scriptures say in the passage about how he pleads with God against Israel? Lord, they've killed thy prophets. They've torn down thine altars. I alone am left.

Well, if I thought you could stand it and if I thought I could stand it, which I know I can't, I'm getting tired. I hope you're not too tired to hear the ending. God deliberately cut Israel off.

As we read in chapter 11, just as it's written, verse 8, God gave them a spirit of stupor. Eyes to see that don't see. Ears to hear that don't hear.

And the apostle Paul says, what I'm talking about is right down to this very hour. And I want to add now, we're a long ways removed chronologically from the apostle Paul. I haven't picked on you, sir.

I hope you won't mind my singling you out. Do you know a case anywhere where you're experienced where a Jew has come to Christ because he was provoked to jealousy by a Gentile? He said, now you maybe couldn't hear him, but he answered very honestly and carefully. No, not personally.

Well, I don't mean to make this sound like a boast, but it is clear, I think, to you that I've been around this, pal. And some folk know I've been preaching for more than 70 years. And I never yet in all this time met a situation where there were Jews who came to Christ because they were provoked to jealousy.

So, if you go over these chapters with any care, you understand that Sagacity says when God cut Israel off, he did so because he had a plan. Not that merely those of a given nation should be saved, but that people from every tribe and nation. And yet here is an incredibly important matter that has not yet happened.

Now, I'm asking you to think. I've done that all evening, but I'm up to asking of you. Will you think now of what might provoke Israel to jealousy? Now, don't throw away what you already know.

Most people here know that many, many of the businesses in our land are owned and controlled by Jews. I'm not saying everyone, but a vast number. And by and large it's understood Jews are better businessmen than the rest of us.

I'm not being exclusive, not making that to extend to everything. Just saying that as a general rule, that's the case. Now, this fellow has said it quietly and he knows I'm not to pick on.

This guy's been around long enough to know how dangerous it is to sit on the front row when Mr. Roberts is speaking. You saw he agreed. But now look.

God deliberately visited Israel with a stupor and inability to see through the real facts because he intended as a nation to cut them off so that he might bring to his heart the Gentiles whom it was God's intention should provoke Israel to jealousy. I've already asked are Gentiles, generally speaking, better businessmen than Jews? So I want to add now, here's my question coming to you. Do you think if we can build the church big enough that that will provoke Jews to jealousy? Now, you couldn't hear him, but of course I could.

And he responded to my question by saying, no. I've already tried to get you thinking the right way by saying that Jews are terrific business people usually. They're not going to be affected by size.

If a church grows from 200 to 20,000, that's not going to have any impact at all on the Jews. But having picked on you, sir, or better yet, having given you an opportunity to share in the service, can you envision anything that might provoke Jews to jealousy? I don't suppose you could hear him, but he said the promises, of which they have some awareness in at least some cases, are actually coming into fruition or reality. Well, that's not a very dumb answer.

By the grace of God, it's a pretty sedacious answer. Yes, it wouldn't hurt to applaud the fellow. But I do want you to think about that.

Hear God. Now, I'm not talking about some silly little nut like me. I'm talking about God.

He deliberately cuts off Israel, visits them with a stupor, pronounces their doom, and generation after generation after generation has died without any true knowledge of God and without salvation because it

was God's plan that a Gentile church developed and provoked the Jews to jealousy and it's never happened. That means, now I don't need to tell you this, but you've got to face it, even if I don't mention it. But just to help you face it, I'm going to mention it.

That's still got to happen. Now, think seriously of what that means. It's got to happen.

It's going to happen. We know it's the Word of God that we're dealing with, not some silly notion of an apostle, not even the notions of an old man like myself. We're only citing Scripture.

Israel must be provoked to jealousy. We know perfectly well size won't get anywhere in that direction. We ask the question, what might provoke them to jealousy? And we think then along these lines.

Jesus Christ belongs to them. As I cited already, He came unto His own. He was not a Gentile like me or like you.

He was one of them and they didn't understand who He was and they didn't receive Him as their Savior. And I've already tried to help you to see why He came. It wasn't to give them a religious freak.

He came and He was called Jesus to save His people from their sin. Now, I wonder, I'm not going to ask because my purpose is not to embarrass, but I wonder how many of you in speaking directly to the Lord and in the secret chamber of your own heart are praising God that He has saved you from sin. But if you ask what will provoke the Jews to jealousy, there's one thing, Jesus accomplishing in us what He came to do.

Now, just think about this. Suppose that the great aim, the true goal, the real purpose of every single person in this church was to see Christ's purpose in coming accomplished. What is the biggest thing in your mind would be to respond to God who said, Be ye holy as I am holy with a life so holy that others looked at you and were provoked to jealousy.

Just anticipate what a glorious day it would be when everywhere you looked you saw people who were perhaps at one time incredibly indifferent to the kingdom of God and to our Savior, Jesus Christ, who were saying to themselves, This is not fair. Now look at this jerk here. Can you not imagine people say, That guy is nobody, and yet he looks like Jesus.

He's got the same love of holiness that Jesus had. Every time I watch him, even when I do so secretly, when it doesn't appear anybody's looking, this guy is acting like Jesus. But in his case it's not all that important.

Or is it all that important? Instead of thinking of this fellow, why don't you think about yourself? What if you looked like Jesus? Oh, I'm not talking about physical being. We don't have the foggiest notion what Christ looked like in that regard. But we do know that he committed no sin, that he loved righteousness and hated iniquity.

And what if that becomes the overwhelming desire of your own heart? To be like Jesus. Not merely to escape a miserable world and get to heaven, but actually to look like Jesus. And what if all around you there were people saying to themselves, That's not fair.

Why should they have what I don't? And especially Jews saying, This is utterly ridiculous. Here's a Gentile. And certainly Christ was not a Gentile.

Here's a Gentile who is being turned into holy by God himself through the power of Jesus Christ. That's not fair. Jesus Christ is my Messiah.

Why should I let them have what I don't have? Can you not envision what a wonderful day it would be to have others provoked to jealousy because Christ was working so profoundly in your life that you looked like Jesus. But now, you see, that's not quite the end. We'll not take the time to read it.

I've urged you to do that. But a question has to be asked. If Israel couldn't get away with make-believe, if they couldn't pull the wool over God's eyes, if they couldn't get away with pretense by saying, I believe, and then proving that they didn't by the way they lived, what makes you think anybody else is going to get away with that? You see, that is a crucial issue.

Is there anything gained by your professing Christ as Lord and proving by your life that it isn't true? I don't know how you feel about these things. And I may be too old now to experience it like some of you young people might. But I can't imagine anything more wonderful than people in every direction believing that Jesus is their hope.

Because if you turn me from the natural man to a man that looks like himself, who behaves as a true believer ought, and they're saying to themselves, I'm not going to let that go by. If God can do that for him through Christ, think of what he can do for me. Now, I don't know how old you are, sir.

And as I try to make it clear, I don't know most of you. But I'm going to take the gall and speak to you personally for a moment. I'm close to the end of the line.

And by normal human reckoning, you're at the beginning of the line. What if you could see with your own eyes, feel with your own heart the fulfillment of what God intended? What if by your life many, many, many were provoked to jealousy and turned to Christ? Would it not be wise for every one of us to look at things that way? I know I'm old and I wouldn't be surprised. I don't think my dear Maggie would be surprised if the next event on God's calendar is to lay me out in a casket and bury me.

I don't have much time left. But then you don't have much time left either. And before you know it, you'll be like me, an old man.

And the simple truth is, for all of us, time goes by a whole lot faster than we thought it would. And it's clear, Sagacity understands why Christ came and wants to be a part of Christ's plan to provoke others to jealousy. Am I out of the way in hoping that you, my young friends, will take this seriously? That you'll commit your life to following Christ so closely that holiness will prevail in you? Is it out of the way to ask that of each of you and to plead, let's not let our Savior down? He came to save us from our sins.

Let Him do it. Well, you say, I think I would like to, but I don't know how. Well, I can tell you why most people fall.

Because they don't look at Him. They look at others. And they say, oh, what a mess she's making.

What a ridiculous idiot he is, speaking of some mere human. But what if from now on you kept your eyes fixed on the author and the finisher of our faith? And because God in His grace gave you Sagacity, you understood why you're here and you determined in your heart that what God intended would really happen. What if this whole church caught a vision of being so Christ-like that everybody looking on was saying to themselves, I don't think it's fair for them to have what I ought to have.

I'm going to get in on what Christ is doing for them. Can I go home tomorrow knowing, knowing that what God intended is going to happen right here?

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