

Galatians 1:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

Analysis

And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. Paul documents his credentials as Judaism's champion. "Profited" (proekopton, προέκοπτον) means "advanced, made progress"—Paul was climbing rabbinic ranks. "Above many my equals" (hyper pollous synēlikiōtas, ὑπὲρ πολλοὺς συνηλικιώτας) shows he outstripped contemporaries—literally "those of the same age." He was the generation's rising star.

"In mine own nation" (en tō genei mou, ἐν τῷ γένει μου) specifies Jewish people—Paul's advantage was among Jews, not Gentiles. "Being more exceedingly zealous" (perissote ὁριζόντως zēlōtēs hyparchōn) uses comparative form—"more abundantly zealous." Zēlōtēs (Ζηλωτής) can mean political revolutionary (Zealots opposed Rome) but here indicates religious fervor.

"Of the traditions of my fathers" (tōn patrikōn mou paradoseōn, τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων) refers to oral law, rabbinic interpretations handed down (the Mishnah later codified these). Paradosis (παράδοσις) means "that which is passed on"—tradition. Paul excelled precisely in what Judaizers now wanted Galatians to adopt. His authority on Jewish tradition surpassed the Judaizers—and he rejected it for Christ. This makes his testimony devastating to their position.

Historical Context

Philippians 3:4-6 parallels this autobiography: circumcised eighth day, tribe of Benjamin, Hebrew of Hebrews, Pharisee regarding law, persecutor regarding zeal, blameless regarding legal righteousness. Paul studied under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), the most respected rabbi of his era. Pharisees were Judaism's theological elite, numbering only about 6,000. Paul's trajectory led toward Sanhedrin membership and national leadership. Acts 26:10 suggests he voted in capital cases against Christians. His Damascus mission with high priest's authorization showed his favored status. This pedigree made him ideal Judaizer—instead, his intimate knowledge of Torah's glory revealed its inability to justify.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What religious credentials, moral achievements, or cultural advantages tempt you to trust in something besides Christ?
2. Why would someone deeply invested in religious tradition and honor willingly abandon it unless truly convinced by divine revelation?
3. What former "advantages" has Christ led you to count as loss, and what does that reveal about transformation?

Interlinear Text

καὶ προέκοπτον ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ ὑπὲρ πολλοὺς
And profited in the Jews' religion above many
G2532 G4298 G1722 G3588 G2454 G5228 G4183

συνηλικιώτας ἐν τῷ γένει μου περισσοτέρως
my equals in nation mine own more exceedingly
G4915 G1722 G3588 G1085 G3450 G4056

ζηλωτὴς ὑπάρχων τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων
zealous being fathers mine own of the traditions
G2207 G5225 G3588 G3967 G3450 G3862

Additional Cross-References

Colossians 2:8 (Parallel theme): Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Acts 26:5 (Parallel theme): Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

Acts 22:3 (Parallel theme): I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

Matthew 15:6 (Parallel theme): And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

1 Peter 1:8 (Parallel theme): Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

Acts 26:9 (Parallel theme): I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Jeremiah 9:14 (Parallel theme): But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them:

