

## **The Doctrine Of Israel (Part Eight): Romans 10**

**The Righteousness of Faith**

**Richard T. Ritenbaugh**

**Given 02-May-20; Sermon #1542**

My wife recently pointed me to a Ted talk given by essayist and poet Heather Lanier. You probably do not know her. She is not a famous essayist or poet, as far as I know. But Miss Lanier has a daughter named Fiona who has Wolf-Hirschhorn syndrome. It is a genetic condition that delays development in the child. So an infant who has this Wolf-Hirschhorn syndrome, let us say, will not roll over when you expect a child to roll over. My granddaughter, Eden, is rolling over. She just turned four months. But Fiona did not roll over, I think she said, till she was about a year. So she was behind by a good eight months there, and those sorts of developmental things would follow throughout her life because it is a genetic thing.

Now, the video that I watched had a description on it about the Ted talk, "Lanier questions our assumptions about what makes a life good or bad, challenging us to stop fixating on solutions for whatever we deem not normal and instead to take life as it comes." I did not take that from what she said. From my perspective, her talk was more about withholding judgment about situations that we encounter because we cannot see their ends.

Along this line, she began her talk by telling what she called "an ancient parable." I do not know where she got it, but she called it an ancient parable:

A farmer lost his horse and neighbors came over to say, "Oh, that's too bad." But the farmer said "Good or bad, hard to say." Days later, the horse returned and brought with it seven wild horses, and neighbors came over to say, "Oh, that's so good." But the farmer just shrugged and said, "Good or bad, hard to say." The next day the farmer's son rides one of the wild horses, is thrown off, and breaks his leg. The neighbors said, "Oh, that's terrible luck." But the farmer again says, "Good or bad, hard to say." Not long after, officers came knocking on people's doors looking for men to draft into the army, and when they see the farmer's son lying there, his

leg broken, they pass the house by. And neighbors say, "Oh, what good luck." But the farmer says, "Good or bad, hard to say." And so it goes.

The parable, I think, makes a wonderful point. We are quick to jump to conclusions about situations we come across in life and I would say a good 90 percent of those judgments are inaccurate. What is more, our instant judgements often color and even determine how we both respond to them in the short term and perceive them over the long term.

You know, we talk about first impressions. We do this with people. Somebody comes up, we meet them for the first time, we look at their face. We see what part of their attitude comes out because of their expression, their stance, or what they are wearing. We take in a lot of information and we make quick, snap judgments about those sorts of things and those first impressions stay with us—maybe forever. We are always judging that person by those first instantaneous micro-judgments that we are making about them. Where they came from, what they are thinking, what their expression is, whether they put out a hand or whether they do not, what have you. (After COVID-19 that is not going to be one of those things we judge.)

But it is the truth. When we come across a situation, we do the exact same thing. We say, like those neighbors, "Oh, this is bad." "Oh, what good luck." "Oh, that's terrible." "Oh, that's great." But the farmer had the right way of looking at it. "Good or bad, hard to say" because it just happened. You do not know how this is going to end. You do not know, let us say, in terms of a person, how that person is going to change. And you have factors that come in over time, whether it is to a person's life or to a certain situation, and those factors change things.

Maybe the guy that you did not think was very personable, finds a wife and it changes him immediately. He is happy. He becomes outgoing because really he was lonely and you saw him in one of his depressed, lonely times and made a snap judgment about him that was not really true. It did not reflect his real personality.

Lanier says in her talk, by making these snap judgments, we encase such situations or people or even activities in concrete. Our mind becomes made

up that quickly and we never change our perspective on those things. They become fixed ideas in our minds and we never give ourselves a chance to see them in a true light or for what they really are.

We do this naturally. I am not accusing anybody of being a bad person for doing this. This is just the way our minds work. But we need to be aware that we do these things, that we often misjudge situations and events and people, because maybe it is just because the way we woke up that morning, and if we are wise, we should try to look at things with fresh eyes every once in a while to see how people and situations and activities may have changed in the meantime, or how we have changed in the meantime, and can see them in a better light.

In terms of her daughter with this genetic condition, for her own sanity, Lanier learned that she needed to neither exult too much in the highs or to fall into depression during the lows. Because her daughter's condition was a constant and she had to learn that if she was going to help her daughter over the long term, she needed to be steady and she needed to look at things from a new perspective every time. She could not allow her to get giddy when something good happened nor should she start crying uncontrollably and inconsolably when things were bad. That she just needed to look at it and try to help move the situation along toward more good and do what she could in the meantime.

So instead she learned to take the good and the bad as they can come and deal with them as they *were* rather than affix them to an arbitrary scale somewhere between horrifying and amazing. Because she learned that situations are not static. Her daughter was developing. She was, you know, becoming more of a normal person. She just took longer and she had to keep that in mind. Things change over time as new variables alter the state of affairs.

Now believe it or not, we have two examples of this—one good, one bad—in Romans 9-11, the very place we are studying. The first are the physical Israelites. They affixed in concrete the idea that God had chosen them as His special people. This was the one thing that really stuck with them: We are God's people. We are His favorites. We are the only family on earth that He has come to know and blessed to this point. At this point after they came to

this conclusion, maybe they should have said "Good or bad, hard to say." Sadly, they did not acknowledge that the covenant they had made with God based their continued favor on keeping the terms of the covenant. They seemed to have forgotten all that. Everything was just "Oh, we are God's people!" Things could not get any better, right? We are God's people.

So their conclusion of unconditional specialness in the eyes of God stopped all effort toward having a relationship with Him. They just froze right there but really they did not freeze because they soon degenerated into worse than the heathen. That thing I was talking about in so many sermons, that they no longer knew to do right. They did not know the difference between right and wrong because it did not make a bit of difference to them because they were "God's chosen people." They had His favor. So why improve?

They were not able to see their danger by having this attitude. They felt they had no need, no reason to repent. So they just went blithely on, thinking that God was smiling down on them, and the wrath of God and His eventual divorce of Israel hit them like the proverbial ton of bricks. They did not see it coming. They just thought that they were God's favorite people and they would continue on under His blessing. Their conclusion, their judgment about their good situation made them blind to the truth and to their own sense.

Let us look at Jeremiah 7. I just want to take this as kind of a snapshot. This happened in the time of Jeremiah, obviously, right at the end of the nation of Judah, the kingdom of Judah, and Jeremiah 7 is really a fascinating study into the psychology of the people and what they thought about their situation. But we are just going to pull out these three verses. God is speaking to them through Jeremiah.

**Jeremiah 7:8-10** [He says] "Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations'?"

God is scratching His head and saying, "How can you think this?" How can you think that you can break all the commandments He names there? Let us see: Steal is eight, murder is six, commit adultery is seven, swear falsely is nine, burn incense to Baal is two, and walk after other gods is one. Think about all those commandments that they were just blithely breaking and they felt no need to really repent or to change their ways. They would just saunter into the Temple and feel like they were okay with God.

The lying words He talks about there in verse 8 are those in verse 4, "the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." That is kind of hard to understand what they meant by that. But those words essentially imply God's Temple, His presence is among us so God still favors us. If God did not like us or God was angry at us, He would take the Temple away, He would take His presence away. And so they saw it standing there on the hill where everybody could see it and they say, huh, we are so good. So they concluded, they might not have sat down and said, "Ok, let's put this in pro and cons" and whatever, but their general idea, their general understanding was that it did not matter what they did. They could break any commandment with impunity so long as they went to the Temple.

To be delivered, as they say there in verse 10, means saved, rescued, redeemed. So they are saying "we're saved" when they go to the Temple. "I'm saved, I'm covered. Now we can go do all these abominations." They always had the Temple handy to go to, they can get cleared of their sins and go back to them. That is why God is saying, "I don't get it. How can you think that? Their erroneous judgment about their situation froze them in opposition to God because they were not willing to step back and say, "Hey, this isn't right. I need to be changing my ways." And so they were in opposition to God, they were in opposition to His covenant, and they were in opposition to His truth.

And that is exactly the place where the apostle Paul finds them when he opens up Romans 9. They are lost, God has divorced them, they had had the Messiah, Jesus Christ, come among them and they rejected Him because they were still in this mindset. And so he looks at them and says, "I wish I could give my own salvation for their salvation."

That is where the second example of this "good or bad, hard to tell" situation comes up. The second example begins at the same point where Paul finds Israel, but this one is from the perspective of Paul himself. As Romans 9 opens, Paul says he "could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites." Now, he seems to have come to one of those rigid conclusions, one of those snap judgments. Maybe it was not a snap judgment, maybe he had been thinking about it for a while, but that is the conclusion he had come up to at some point, and he felt that Israel was forever accursed, there was no hope for them. But he should have said "Good or bad, hard to say," that they were at this point, at this juncture, in their national history.

You can tell he was in this quandary because he offers an impossible solution to the problem. That is, he would give his eternal salvation so that they would not be condemned. I mean, he might as well have said at that point, there is nothing for it. Israel is doomed. But like I said, he should have said "Good or bad, hard to say. I need to think about this a little bit more. I need to see what develops." Because by the time we get to the end of Romans 11, we find that he has indeed changed his tune. We see his attitude toward Israel change over these three chapters, and in thinking the matter through, in going through these arguments that we have been also going through, he comes to the more theologically sound conclusion that instead of eternal damnation, all Israel will be saved. That is what he says in chapter 11, verse 26.

He goes from chapter 9, verses 1 and 2, basically saying they are doomed, to the end of chapter 11 and saying God's going to save all of them. So the position that they were in at the beginning of chapter 9 was it was a bad thing. They should not have gotten to that point, but they did. But to say that they were stuck there for all eternity was the wrong conclusion. The right conclusion, using what God has provided in His Word, is that this is only temporary. God is going to change all of this and make it turn from very bad to very good.

So today we are going to cover the middle part of Paul's argument between these two extremes of the beginning of Romans 9 and the end of Romans 11.

Romans 10 is a necessary step to get from the place in chapter 9 to the place in chapter 11. We have got to go through this middle part because it is very important to understanding certain things about God's work with Israel.

Now, it may be helpful in going through the very end of chapter 9 and all of chapter 10, to think of this part of his argument about Israel in terms of human free will or freedom of choice or free moral agency as opposed to what we saw in chapter 9 of Paul's emphasis on God's choice. So we have chapter 9 which is all about God is free to choose, to elect, to select anyone He wants. It looks like from all the arguments of other people that he gives there, that that is not fair. This is not fair to people. They have no part in it.

Well, Paul basically comes down on them and says, "It's very fair, this is God we're talking about." But chapter 10 softens his stance and says there is this other thing called free will that all people have. They have the ability, given by God, to make choices themselves. So it is not just God out there predestining everything and moving everything around according to His sovereignty without any kind of thought toward the objects of His love. Yes, there *is* that. But on the other hand, they can choose whether they want to go along with it, whether they want to accept God's will, whether they want to have the things that He is offering them. And so even though He is sovereign to do all those things, He does not close off our ability to choose whether we want those things or not. So there is a tension between these two things—God's sovereign election and human choice, human will, human ability to decide what they want to do.

And so in chapter 9, we have this part about God and His sovereign will, and in chapter 10 we are focusing more on Israel's ability to decide what they want to do. These things are in opposition to each other in these two chapters. It is a kind of paradox, if you will, within the salvation question, but both elements are necessary. If God just did His will and gave us no part in it, no decision in it, then we would just be automatons. If everyone chose by himself without God's input, we get the case of Israel, essentially. That is the human way, we want what we want without God's interference. Both are not good. But when both are combined, both working together, then it is a glorious thing, and it works out wonderful things.

So God must call or elect or choose those He wills and humans must accept it, believe in Christ and His work, and live by faith. They both have their parts.

This is the gist of divine covenants. God does this stuff, humanity does this stuff, and they both get what they want. They both produce whatever it is that the covenant is designed to produce. Both parties are satisfied. That is how covenants work. That is how contracts work. It is supposed to be for the mutual gain of both parties.

Now, unlike chapter 9, chapter 10 has only one argument. Remember we went through four arguments in chapter 9, but there is only basically one argument, one overall argument in chapter 10. And that is, Paul tells us Israel's mistake was in trying to achieve righteousness or justification through law keeping or obedience or good works. I like the term human effort the best. That was their mistake. Israel's mistake was in trying to achieve righteousness or justification through human effort, whereas God has always accounted righteousness to be by faith in Him. It is right there in the beginning book of the Bible, in Genesis 15:6, where Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.

That is all you need to know, basically. The first man that He called as the one He was working through for this divine project that He is working out, had to go through this same process, and Abraham did not achieve justification in a relationship with God through any kind of works that he did. He just believed God, did what God said, and God accepted it as righteousness because it was through faith, because he trusted God.

Israel, on the other hand, consistently went about it in the wrong way. And so it is no wonder that they rejected Christ. They were trying to do it all on their own. The gospel that Christ preached was a gospel about faith and grace and a coming eternal Kingdom, obviously. But you can only be in that Kingdom if you accepted Christ and live by faith—and Israel could not accept that. It went against everything that they understood, all their *traditions*. (We will get into that a little bit more later.) But let us go back to Deuteronomy 29, just to give you again this principle that they were not working with a full deck. They were being made an example. God was using



them to show the folly of human works, trying to have any kind of righteousness without Him.

**Deuteronomy 29:4** "Yet the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this very day."

What had happened there is that even though God revealed all of this through His Word, He made it available in terms of being accessible knowledge, they did not have the heart or the mind to understand it because He was not working with them in that way. He wanted to leave an example or a model, maybe put it in these terms, a monument of the futility of human effort to have a relationship with Him and forgiveness of sin. It is just impossible. Humans without God have no ability to achieve righteousness. It is just that simple. There is no way that a human being apart from God can be righteous. There is no way that a human being apart from God can be justified. There is no road that leads to salvation apart from God. Even with all the truth that they needed, that was available in Scripture, they still failed.

In fact, as Paul says at the end of Romans chapter 9, verse 29, without God's mercy and saving a remnant, their attempt to do this, to be justified through their own works, would have ended in utter annihilation. "Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom and we would have been made like Gomorrah." They had gone so far away from God in their attempt to justify themselves through human effort that, unless He had shown grace in saving a remnant, He would have wiped every one of them off the face of the earth. That is how far they had gotten from God, They did not know to do right. The people before the Flood did not know to do right. Every thought of their hearts was only evil continually. And what did He do with them? He wiped them off the face of the earth. Sodom and Gomorrah were despicably wicked and perverted. And what did He do? He sent fire and brimstone and wiped them off the face of the earth.

That is the comparison that is being made here. That what Israel tried to do was astoundingly wicked, anti-God. We just need to understand that. It is very important. We often think of Israel in such glowing terms as God's favorite people because they are often presented that way to us in God's Word in the Old Testament—what God was hoping for them. But by the end of it they were a mess. I mean, there were some lights in Israel obviously:

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua. Many of the judges, Samuel, David, prophets, and others—faint lights among a sea of darkness within Israel.

Let us go to Romans 9 and I want to pick up in verse 30. I went through that because that is the mindset that you have to have to read what we are now going into because this is where Paul found them. This is what Paul was facing. He faced it actually every day because the Jews were hounding him, this remnant of Israel, and he could look at his own life and say, "Yeah, I participated in a lot of that stuff. I know what I'm talking about here, how far they are actually from God."

**Romans 9:30-33** What shall we say then? [What can we say?!]  
That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law [their own human efforts]. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and a rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

This is a very important section that we need to understand. Paul begins his explanation, his argument, at this point of failure. Israel has failed. But on the other hand, the Gentiles, or at least some of them, have succeeded. Talk about a paradox! He brings that up. Gentiles were not looking for it, they got it. But on the other hand, Israel was looking all over for it and could not find it. What is the deal here? "What shall we say then?" How do we explain this?

On the surface what he says here does not make a whole lot of sense. As a matter of fact, you could, with just the first couple of verses, think that pursuing righteousness is futile, that it is not going to work. That the easiest way to find righteousness is to ignore it and to do something else and you just go on with your life and not worry about it. That is not what he means, because there is another factor that we have to add into all of this. Hello? God. But you understand what is going on here. He is trying to show that this is a paradox that we need to understand here. Why did God's chosen people fail so badly?

He answers the question, of course. Their problem was that they tried to gin up righteousness through their own "goodness." Through doing what *they* thought was right and living as scrupulously by the law as *they* understood it. They were going to prove to God that they were good people. They were going to write all their good deeds on one side of the ledger and show that those over-balanced, if you will, all their bad deeds. So they had lots of credits, but very few debits. They were good people and God would have to look on them and say, "Look at My righteous children. I'm going to have a relationship with them. I'm going to clear their sins." That is not the way it works. That was their problem.

They were trying to do it all on their own. We all know, we have heard the meticulous exactness of Jewish practice, say, for keeping the Sabbath. Oh, it is rigidly kept to the second and they will only walk so far. They have got to make sure they live within that walking distance of a synagogue. They could not carry more than the weight of two dried figs. I do not know how much that is, but that is what the Talmud says. That was acceptable. They would not carry a needle on the Sabbath because a needle is a tool. And if you have a tool you might be tempted to work. But you could carry a little bit of string or thread that you could actually use with that needle. Not light a fire, not at all. No. Did they not stone somebody in the wilderness for lighting a fire? Well, that means that in modern days they will not even flip a switch because that kindles a fire. Their appliances have a Sabbath mode, so they will not be tempted to turn one on, let us say, an oven to cook on the Sabbath.

All of these are manmade regulations designed to keep them from breaking the fourth commandment. But have you noticed that the fourth commandment details none of these things, except for you shall do no work on it—no ordinary work. God left it very broad. But the Jews in their zeal made it very narrow and very heavy. Does that not sound like Jesus talking about all the heavy weights that they put on people?

Now, their attempts, if you want to say so, are praiseworthy in terms of zeal. But they are ridiculous once we realize that none of that work can balance the scale of guilt before God. It is not going to do a bit of good. No amount of good works can cancel out any sin. There is not a one-on-one equivalent. You cannot go out and get a cat out of a tree and that is going to cancel your

adultery or something. You know that is just not how it works. You cannot feed the poor and then kill somebody behind the building. You cannot do that. It does not balance out that way.

Sin taints a person. Sin taints their character and it just cannot be wiped away by doing something that we think is a good thing. It just does not work that way. It is utterly impossible for good works to cancel out sin. Human effort cannot eliminate sin, but they thought it could.

Let us go to Hebrews 9 and we will see the theology on this as Paul lays it out in broad strokes.

**Hebrews 9:11-15** But Christ came as High Priest of good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason, He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

**Hebrews 9:28** So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him, He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

In verse 22, it says there, the last part, "without shedding of blood there is no remission." The Jews should have known this. It also says in chapter 10, verse 4, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin." Those are two facts that the Jews should have understood. Even the blood of unblemished, clean animals does no good in terms of taking away sin. The life of a beast of whatever size or value is not worth anywhere near the life of a human being. And so we know that the death of the human being will pay for the sin.

But what if you have got a whole nation of people who are sinful? What if you have a whole continent of sinful people who need the remission of sins? What if you have a whole planet? And not only a whole planet of sinful people, but that these sinful people have been around generation after generation for 6,000 years and they all need remission of sins? What kind of valuable sacrifice of blood is going to take away all those sins? Sins of billions of people, each of whom lived many years. Do we understand the load of sin that has to be expiated here? And there was only one way that this could happen. Only the sacrificial blood of the sinless Creator of mankind, the blood of God, if you will, is valuable enough to cover or pay for or atone for a believer's sins. Because we find out in the theology that that blood is not available to everyone for cover. It is only those who accept Christ as their personal Savior, who have the opportunity to have their sins covered and taken away.

If we have faith in Him, His blood can be applied to cover our sins. And at that point, when His blood covers us, we are proclaimed righteous. That is when justification happens, we are justified at that point before God. We stand upright before Him because we have the blood of Jesus Christ, our righteous God, standing in our place. Only His righteousness is worthy. Ours is abominable.

So without Christ's sacrifice, man is entirely helpless against this taint of sin. Yet the Israelites tried to attain righteousness on their own and died in their sins. It could not happen. Human effort is worthless other than belief and sincere acceptance of Christ's own sacrifice. That is the only way that we can have any kind of righteousness before God. Any kind of justification.

Now, what does Paul say that ultimately their problem was? He says it back at the end of chapter 9 of Romans. He says they stumbled over Christ. They stumbled over the Rock of salvation. That was their problem. That was something that they never got through their thick skulls. Whether they called Him Christ, whether they called Him Yahweh, it did not matter. That is what they never accepted. They could not accept that their God would forgive their sins through faith. Ever. That was something only the greats of righteousness in the Old Testament like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ever understood. Because God opened their minds to it.

Let me just put it this way, Why were they offended by Christ? Why did He offend them so much? He offended them by pointing to Himself rather than to the law as the means of salvation. How many times do we see it in the Gospels? You have to come to God through Me, not through the law. He was always pointing to Himself and they say, "What kind of witness do you have? How are you going to prove this?" They wanted a sign. Paul says that later on—that Jews demand a sign. They wanted to see some kind of proof that what He was saying was true, and He said, "I am the proof." How many times in John does He say, I am this, I am that. And all these other things, all these things that pertain to salvation and they did not get a one of them?

They rejected His proofs. Many of those things were things like constantly telling them that He was from heaven, that He had been sent from God, that He was divine, that He was their Messiah. He gave them the gospel of the Kingdom. He taught them truths like grace and faith. He taught them. Look at Nicodemus, "You must be born again." "Oh no, that can't be." First reaction! "No." Christ said, "I'm giving you a figure here. You can understand this. You've got to have a new life and it comes through Me." "Nah." I mean, he eventually got it, but that was a typical Jewish reaction. He did not say, "Yes, Lord, how does this happen, teach me?" He said, "No, I've got an argument for that. How can you go back in your mother's womb?" Jesus must have looked at him and said, "Really?! You think that's what I said, that's what I meant?"

But that is typical of how they understood things. They always looked at them physically when He was teaching them in spiritual things. They had no mind conditioned by the Holy Spirit to understand and compare spiritual things with spiritual. It just would not work with them. They could not accept that God Himself would come in the flesh and die to pay for their sins because they had closed their minds to everything but human righteousness, human effort, through works by obeying the law.

Jesus Himself found it almost impossible to break through. Three and a half years of ministry, thirty-three and a half years of living the life and by the time you get to Pentecost in Acts 2, there are 120 names. In most cases these days of ministry, that would be a failure. But that is what He wanted. He wanted a small group of people that He could astound the world through

(which we will get to in a few minutes). Think of John 6. I know it does not look like we are going to get through Romans 10, but we will. Because once you understand these things, the rest of it comes very quickly,

**John 6:60-69** Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" [He had just said, "You've got to eat My flesh and drink My blood.] When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you? [What a rhetorical question.] What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father." From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. [He had just cut their legs right out from under them by saying those things.] And Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away? But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Do you see the difference between the disciples that stayed and the disciples that left? They believed Him! They came to understand and know that He was the Christ and that they had been specially called by the Christ, by the Messiah, and that He had all the instruction they needed. All they needed to do was believe. But the others, they were still stuck in their ways. "What? God has to call you specifically? I thought I got it from my mom and dad. I was born this way, God's favored person." "No," Jesus says, "no. And not only that, once you get called, you have got to totally consume Me. You have got to eat the bread of life, you have got to drink My blood, You have got to be totally consumed by what I have to offer. That is how you are going to have eternal life." They ran away from that screaming. I am surprised that they did not pick up stones to stone Him at that point.

Let us go back to Romans 10.

**Romans 10:1-4** Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Chapter 10 begins much like chapter 9, where Paul is saying that he desires salvation to come to Israel. And he points to their zeal, their enthusiasm, their *fire* for God, but he says it is perverted. Their zeal is skewed. It is distorted because the whole foundation of their approach is wrong. When he says their zeal is not according to knowledge, he means that it is unenlightened, it is not coupled with the Holy Spirit, it is not coupled with divine revelation.

Now, they did have the truth in terms of God's revelation of words and instruction in the Old Testament, but their knowledge of the way, the method that you become justified before God, was based on human experience and reason. They had come up with their own way that they thought would please God, and it was the wrong way. And so to the question, how do we achieve righteousness before God? They answered, through strict adherence to what God gave us, the law, the Ten Commandments, and all the little things that we put on it as we went to help keep us from sinning. They said, "Our obedience and our good works will be so perfect that God must accept us." It was all based on human achievement, of human standards, human righteousness. What do we call that? Self-righteousness. They were not doing anything according to God's righteousness. It was their own made up righteousness that they could not go into Scripture and prove.

Now that is very different from God's righteousness—the righteousness of faith. God's righteousness is not based on the law. It is not based on any human standard or concept. Do you know what God's righteousness is? Himself. God's righteousness is His character. The law, conversely, is based on *Him*, not the other way around. That is why Paul ends up in verse 4 saying that Christ is the end, the goal, or maybe we could call it the fulfillment of the law. The law leads you to Christ, its Source, because He is



the standard. Did He not say in Matthew 5:17 that He was not going to do away with the law? He was instead going to fulfill it, He was going to manifest it to everybody about how the law looks like in a person, in a person's actions, in a person's attitudes, in a person's character.

The word picture in verse 4, where it talks about that Christ is the end of the law, is a foot race. The end or goal variously translated is *telos* in Greek and what is the finish line but the end or the goal of the race. That is what He is trying to get us to think of. But, he says, the finish line, if we put it in terms of a race to the finish line, is Christ. Christ is the finish line. Christ is the goal that we are working toward. And in that way, Christ is the end. Once we come to the fullness of Christ, that will be an end of one thing and the beginning of something greater. But our goal throughout all of life is Christ and that is what he means to this.

The law points to Him as the goal or the standard of our faith, not any human-generated obedience or good works. We *run* toward His righteousness because we have no righteousness of our own that will allow us to win the race. We are always seeking His righteousness.

Israel's error was to make the *law* their goal rather than God Himself—Christ. Their faith was in the law. Their faith was in their human abilities, not in God or in Christ. They sought to be saved by the law, rather than to be saved by the Person of Jesus Christ.

**Romans 10:5-13** [With this in mind] For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, "'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith, which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth, confession is made to salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." For there is no

distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Very interesting section.

What Paul does here is that he digs into the Old Testament to show that the arrows pointing toward the righteousness by faith were there all along. First, he tells us that Moses warned Israel that trying to attain righteousness through keeping the law meant *keeping them all perfectly*. That is what he says there, "The man who does those things shall live by them." That means that they have to be totally consumed by the keeping of the law. And so trying to be righteous through law keeping is an arduous, futile task.

The righteousness that comes through faith, on the other hand, is not based on human effort, and that is where he gets these other couple of quotes here. The righteousness that is by faith does not require that we ascend into heaven and bring Christ to the earth, nor does it require us to go into Sheol to raise Him from the dead. Who did that? Who did the sending and who did the raising? Not human effort. God the Father sent the Messiah from heaven. He came to us. And God the Father raised Jesus Christ from the dead! It did not require anything of us, did it? Neither one of those things needed any human effort to bring Christ down or to raise Him up after He died. It was all by grace—all by the gift of God. All by God's actions. No human effort needed.

Instead, Moses said, the word, the instruction, the knowledge, the help, the revelation, was already there. It was already available. God had made it readily available through His Word. He had a whole tribe that was supposed to preach it to them. It was not hidden, it was not obscure. It was known! All a called person needs to do once God opens his mind is to confess it, he says. Maybe a better word would be *accept it in a public way*, meaning that you say that Jesus is your personal Savior and then truly believe it. Those are the two things he says here, "If you confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

Now that encapsulates a great deal of activity and of commitment and submission and those sorts of things. It is not easy. But he basically gives

you these two things and both of them are shown in the baptism ceremony. When we baptize, we ask people if they have repented of their sins and if they accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. And the person says, "Yes!" and we baptize them and at their word, they are members of the church. We place hands on them and God sends His Holy Spirit and they are part of this body.

Of course those are symbolic things. There has got to be a lot of stuff done internally, but that is essentially what happens, and all of this occurs after God the Father calls a person. This is a very important distinction because a lot of the Protestant world thinks that this all happens just universally. Paul is not saying that. Paul is not saying you can go put up a tent and have a revival and it is open to everybody to be saved. That is not what it is saying here. You have got to understand that the calling of God is still vitally important and He calls on an individual basis.

So, if a person has been called by God and they make this public witness through baptism, and if they truly believe in Christ, they are then justified. They have attained the righteousness of Christ through faith because their sins have been covered by Christ's blood, and they are now able to be presented before God the Father as righteous and holy, and now they can begin to walk the road to salvation. It does not matter if the called person is a Jew or a Gentile. God calls whom He will and if they turned turn and respond to Him, He will save them.

Now let us read the rest of Romans 10.

**Romans 10:14-21** How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says, "I will

provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation." But Isaiah is very bold and says: "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me." But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

What happens here is that Paul goes through a series of supposed questions or objections to what he had just said about the righteousness through faith. And he answers with quotations from the Old Testament, those are readily available revelations of God in the Old Testament, and the Jews should have known them. So the primary objection he mentions is basically how could the Jews have known any of this about the righteousness of faith? How could they have known about grace? How could they have known about forgiveness and accepting Jesus Christ?

Paul's answer is, what do you mean? All of this has been available the whole time. The gospel has been preached pretty much nonstop since Moses—and all over Israel. There is no part of the earth that it has not gone to where there are Israelite people. Even Isaiah, he says, proclaimed that nobody listened to him. No one believed him when he preached. The Word of God could be heard, he says, throughout Israel at all times. And if they had only truly listened to it. How many times did God command them to listen, to harken? If they had, they might have had faith in God.

And in verse 19 he asked, "Did Israel not know?" His tone is more along the lines of: "Do you really think that God kept Israel in the dark about all this? Would that have been fair? Not at all." In answer to this question, "Did Israel not know?" he goes back to Moses, he goes back to the wilderness. He goes back right after the giving of the law when they are about to go into the Promised Land and establish the nation there back to Deuteronomy 32:21, where God says, "You will be made jealous and angry by people you consider fools." He foresaw it all the way back then.

He is telling them (this is something that you probably do not know), but the Jews considered themselves the wise and the Gentiles they called fools. And so by calling up this specific scripture, he is saying you guys should have known all the way back in Moses' time that God was going to raise up

Gentile nations to make you jealous and angry because God was working with them and not with you. And was that not the Jewish response to the beginning of the church—jealousy and anger, which led to persecution, which led to things like the one who became the apostle Paul, hailing people off to prison and agreeing to the martyrdom of the saints, prophesied in Deuteronomy 32. You should have known this guys, is basically Paul's answer.

Finally, in verse 20, Paul interprets Isaiah 65 for them and he solves, in the last verse, the paradox between God's calling and human choice. Because this has been intentioned through these these two chapters here that we have been going over, and he basically says, "God calls, He elects, He chooses, however you want to put it, and humans respond." David wrote in Psalm 14, "No one seeks God," and certainly if people try to pursue God, they will not find Him because they have no idea what or who God is. They do not know what they are looking for. One can truly see God only after God calls him or her and reveals Himself to the mind.

This verse in Isaiah 65, then, points toward righteousness through faith, and the fact that we understand that their first must be a spiritual link forged by God. We call it the Holy Spirit. And then a person can turn to God and seek Him and His righteousness. If that link is not there, there is no finding God. Not at all.

Israel though, rather than desiring this link, always resisted Him. That is what He says there, "All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people." They never really wanted a relationship with Him. They wanted His salvation on their terms, not on His.