

Lesson Title: Stumbling Over Righteousness
November 27, 2018
Romans 9:30 thru 10:21 (Background Passage)
Romans 9:30 thru 10:21 (Lesson Passage)

Theological Principle: God's righteousness come to us by grace through faith alone.

Introduction:

- When have you known someone who refused to listen to any advice or instruction?
- How carefully do you follow the instruction sheet in a ready-to-assemble product?

9:30-10:21 Chapter and verse divisions in the Bible are modern inventions made for the convenience of readers. Chapters 9-11 are one unit of thought, and they must be understood together to get a complete picture of Paul's argument.

9:30-33 Gentiles, who were not seeking **righteousness**, were granted it by grace through **faith**. They did not work for it or earn it. But **Israel** missed it by seeking righteousness through the **law** and by their **works**. They stumbled over the Messiah and did not believe in Him ([Isa 8:14](#); [28:16](#)). Jesus Himself warned Israel that they missed the "stone" ([Mt 21:42-44](#); see [Ps 118:22-23](#)).

Understanding the Text (Israel's Unbelief)

³⁰ What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. ³² Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone.

³³ As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame."

Romans 9:30-33 (NIV2011)

¹ Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. ² For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. ³ Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴ Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Romans 10:1-4 (NIV2011)

- By what means have the Gentiles (non-Jews) obtained righteousness? ([9:30](#))
- What kept Israel from obtaining righteousness? ([9:31-32](#))
- Over what has Israel stumbled? ([9:33](#))
- What was Paul's greatest desire? ([10:1](#))

- What positive trait did Paul recognize in the Israelites? ([10:2](#))
- What had the Israelites done instead of submitting to God’s righteousness? ([10:3-4](#))
- What is the relationship between Christ and the Law in a person’s pursuit of righteousness? ([10:4](#))
- What is the relationship between Christ and the Law in a person’s pursuit of righteousness? ([10:4](#))
- What groups of people in our society resemble the unbelieving Jews of Paul’s time?

It is staggering to think that God’s chosen people Israel, who had the Law, the Prophets, and all the writings of Scripture, missed the Messiah. The Gentiles, on the other hand, who had none of these advantages, began to embrace Jesus as the Savior of the world. Israel stumbled on the law, and that blinded them for their need of the Savior. Israel misunderstood the law. They thought that by obeying the law, they would establish their own righteousness. They sought to win God’s favor by their works. This is a fundamental misunderstanding of the law.

The law was given to reveal our sin and to reveal God’s holiness. The law should convict us of our sinfulness, but it cannot make us righteous. If you keep the commandment “You shall not steal,” you have not done anything worthy of bragging. You cannot say to your neighbor, “Pat me on the back! I didn’t steal your car today!” Israel thought that if they kept the law, they would be righteous. But this failed because first, they didn’t keep it. Second, refraining from sin does not earn us merit points because “not sinning” is nothing to brag about. Righteousness comes by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. We trust Jesus and His work for our salvation. If we pursue righteousness by our own works, we will fail as Israel did before us.

Understanding the Text (God’s Way of Salvation)

⁵ Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: “The person who does these things will live by them.” ⁶ But the righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: ⁹ If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹ As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Romans 10:5-13 (NIV2011)

- How did Moses describe righteousness that comes by the Law? ([10:5](#))
- How does righteousness produced by faith come about? ([10:6-9](#))

- What were the simple instructions Paul gave regarding personal salvation? ([10:9-10](#))
- What promise is given to anyone who puts his or her faith in Christ? ([10:11](#))
- What distinctions did Paul note in the way that Jews and Gentiles obtain their salvation? ([10:12-13](#))

James teaches us that “whoever keeps the entire law, yet fails in one point, is guilty of breaking it all” (James 2:10). We know that no one (except Jesus) ever kept the law perfectly, and for this reason, the law has never saved anyone. The good news is that faith in Jesus does save! “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:9). In this context, Paul makes it clear that if any Jew is going to be saved, he or she must be saved by confessing Christ as Savior and Lord. In this regard, Jew and Gentile are exactly the same: there is no salvation outside of faith in Jesus Christ.

From the beginning, salvation has been by faith. Abraham “believed the LORD, and He credited it to him as righteousness” (Gen. 15:6). We also see that Abraham “listened to My voice and kept My mandate, My commands, My statutes, and My instructions” (Gen. 26:5). Abraham managed to keep the law of God over 400 years before God gave it to Moses! How did Abraham do that? He kept the law by faith. Salvation, even in the Old Testament, came by grace through faith and not by works.

Understanding the Text (Embracing God’s Favor)

¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

¹⁵ And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” ¹⁶ But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” ¹⁷ Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. ¹⁸ But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: “Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.” ¹⁹ Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, “I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.” ²⁰ And Isaiah boldly says, “I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.” ²¹ But concerning Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.”

Romans 10:14-21 (NIV2011)

- What does it take to get the message of God to someone? ([10:14-15](#))
- How have the Israelites responded to hearing the message of God? ([10:16-18](#))
- How did Paul answer the argument that the Jews have not had adequate opportunity to hear God’s message? ([10:18-21](#))
- How had the response of the Gentiles to the message of God differed from the response of the Jews? ([10:18-21](#))

Apply It

- When could you spend extended time in prayer to bring before God those groups or peoples who have shown little interest in the gospel?
- Who in your circle of friends and family needs to hear about God's plan of salvation? When?
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____