

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Israel's Failure, Part 4

Scripture: Romans 10:4-8

Code: 45-78

Romans chapter 10 and we're looking at this very significant chapter under the heading, "Israel's Ignorance...Israel's Ignorance."

I want to read some Scripture to you as I begin tonight and I want you to listen very carefully to it. These are Scriptures that spell out, if you will, the death of Israel. First of all, listen to the twenty-sixth chapter of Leviticus, "But if you will not hearken unto Me and will not do all these commandments, I will devastate the land so that your enemies who settle in it shall be astonished at it. And I will scatter you among the nations and I will unsheathe the sword after you and your land shall be a desolation and your cities shall be a waste."

Listen to the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy. "And you shall become a horror, a proverb and a byword among all the peoples where the Lord will lead you away. And the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone which neither you nor your fathers have known and among these nations you shall find no ease and there shall be no rest for the soul of your foot, but the Lord will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul. Your life shall hang in doubt before you. Night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of life. In the morning you shall say, Would it were evening and at evening you shall say, Would it were morning because of the dread which your heart shall fear and the sights which your eyes shall see."

And listen to 1 Kings 9, "But if you turn aside from following Me, you or your children, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them and the house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And this house will become a heap of ruins, everyone passing by it will be astonished and will hiss and they will say, What has the Lord done thus to this land and to His house? Then they will say, Because they forsook the Lord their God who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt and laid hold on other gods and worshiped them and served them, therefore the Lord has brought all this evil upon them."

And the twenty-first chapter of Luke we read, "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies then recognize that her desolation is at hand. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains and let those who are in the midst of the city depart. And let not those who are in the country enter

the city because these are days of vengeance in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled. Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babies in those days for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people and they will fall by the edge of the sword and will be led captive among all nations and Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

Now whether you're reading in the Old Testament or the New, you hear these passages that promise tragedy to Israel. And in the lifetime of the Old Testament prophets and people, these tragedies came to pass. And in the lifetime of the New Testament writers, these tragedies also came to pass. And it continues even to our own time that we see the devastation, the destruction, the lostness of the nation Israel. And we ask ourselves the question, what happened? And that's the very question that Paul is posing in this part of Romans. How is it that the people of God have missed the blessings? How is it that the nation Israel to whom were given the very covenants of God and promises of God and laws of God and the holy Scriptures and the prophets, how is it that they have missed out on God's blessing? How is it that they have been set aside for judgment and punishment? And Romans chapter 10 is written to answer the question. And basically it is because of Israel's ignorant unbelief.

And in the midst of their ignorant unbelief, they forfeited God's blessings as all men and women do who live in unbelief and brought upon themselves God's judgments. Israel was ignorant of the truth, failing to believe. In chapter 10 it opens like this, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved; for I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge, for they being ignorant." Stop at that point.

They're ignorant. They don't know. They don't know. Paul introduces thus the rest of the chapter in which he outlines the elements of Israel's ignorance. You ask the question: why is it so with Israel today? Why was it so that Jerusalem had to be destroyed in 70 A.D.? Why is it that they have known the cursing of God and the punishment of His justice? It is because of their ignorant unbelief. They were ignorantly unbelieving. Not only in the Old Testament time, not only in regard to the prophets but even in regard to their own Messiah.

Now what were they ignorant of? Five things are outlined in this chapter. Five elements in the ignorance of Israel. They were ignorant of the person of God. They were ignorant of the provision of Christ. They were ignorant of the place of faith. They were ignorant of the perimeters of salvation. And they were ignorant of the predictions of Scripture. Tremendous chapter, so wonderfully laid out by the genius of the Holy Spirit. And this ignorance, and may I suggest to you what we've been saying all along, it is a willful ignorance, they chose not to believe the truth. They chose to close their ears and their eyes until God finally judicially did it for them. It was ignorant, but it was willing ignorance. It was unbelief, but it was willing unbelief. Paul is sorry about it, as verse 1 indicates. But nonetheless it was their own fault.

Now first of all then we've said that Israel was ignorant of the person of God. And we've spent three weeks talking about that one point. We've been all over that point. We've beat it to death. And I'm not going to go back over it again. But it is a very essential understanding and that's why we spent the time with it. Verse 3 says, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness," they didn't know how righteous God was. They wouldn't accept what the Old Testament said about the holiness and the righteousness of God. They wouldn't accept what the Messiah said about the holiness and righteousness of God. They thought God was more tolerant of sin than He really was. They thought God was more accepting of them than He really was. They thought they could be good enough for God's low standard and they didn't realize He had an infinitely high standard to which they could never come. And because they didn't know how holy God was they went about, says verse 3, to establish their own righteousness and would not submit to the righteousness of God. They pulled God down to their level and then said, "We're okay because this is all God requires," and they didn't know the infinitely holy standard of God.

My friends, that's an error made by multiplied millions of people who do not understand how holy God is, they do not understand how high His standard. They do not understand how absolute His law and one violation damns the soul forever. They don't understand that. They don't believe that. They don't even want to hear that. They want a God who can be brought down to their level. Their theology was what we would call "auto- soteric," it was self-saving. They could save themselves by proper maintenance of certain ethical laws and standards and rituals and rules and so forth. They were a far cry from Ezra. In chapter 9 verse 15 he said, "O Lord God of Israel, Thou art righteous." And then he said this, "Behold, we are before Thee in our trespasses for we cannot stand before Thee because of this." It's a great word. So it was ignorance of God's person. They didn't know how holy He was. They didn't know how righteous He was. And they thought therefore that they could attain unto His standard by their works. And they damned themselves with such folly.

Secondly, and finally we're getting to it, they were not only ignorant of the person of God, they were ignorant of the provision of Christ. Verse 4, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." You see, the only one who could provide righteousness was Christ and they rejected Him. Back in chapter 9 verse 32 says, "They sought righteousness not by faith but by the works of the law," and therefore because they had brought God down and thought they could attain to His level by their own works, when Christ came they stumbled at that stumbling stone. That rock laid in Zion, verse 33, that rock who is the Messiah Christ became for them a rock of offense. They didn't understand the provision of Christ. He offended them. He came and He condemned their self-righteousness as He does every man who thinks He can attain God. He condemned their works system as a way to earn salvation. He blasted away at their paraded holiness and called it unholiness. He shot down their self-righteousness and called it unrighteousness. In fact, in Matthew 5 in the Sermon on the Mount He said to the people, "Unless your righteousness is far beyond that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never ever see the Kingdom of heaven." Theirs was an utterly

inadequate righteousness. And as we are seeing in our study of Matthew 23 it is the kind of righteousness that parades on the outside but inside is full of vice and immorality and corruption and disease and death.

But you see because they had dropped the standard and didn't understand the person of God, they didn't realize they needed the Savior because they had invented a righteous God whose righteous standard they could live to on their own. So why did they need a Savior? That's why Jesus had to come and lift the standard up and show them that God was holier than they thought and more righteous than they thought so that they would realize that they could not attain His standard and therefore they would look to a Savior who could do for them what they could never do for themselves. And Jesus came to provide a righteousness which they could never attain. That's the reason He came. But they were ignorant of that as well.

In fact, in Matthew 9 Jesus said something that's very very important. When the Pharisees came and condemned Him for hanging around sinners, He said, "They that are well need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go and learn what that means. I will have mercy and not sacrifice for I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." What did He mean? They that are well need not a physician. That's right. He said, I came to sick people. What do you mean by that? I came to people who know they have a problem they can't solve. I came to the people who know they need Me. I'm not called...come to call the righteous but those who know they're sinners. And what He was saying was sarcastic. He was saying to them, "As long as you think you're righteous and as long as you think you're well, I can't help you. It's not until you know you're sick and unrighteous and unholy and as long as you've got God down here where you can attain His level, you think you're well. And not until you see God in His full holiness can you see you in your unholiness know you're sick and come to the physician." And so it was really an abhorrent theology that led to an abhorrent Christology. They were ignorant then of the provision of Christ. They didn't understand that they needed a Savior who could pay the penalty for sin.

Paul was a Pharisee but he came to an understanding of the truth. And in Philippians 3:9 he writes that he wants to win Christ and then says, "And be found in Him...listen to this...not having my own righteousness which is of the law but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." In other words, he says when I came a believer I turned in my own low-level self-righteousness for the true righteousness which I could never earn but which is mine in Christ. That's what he means, "Be found in Him, the possessor of true righteousness." They missed it.

You see, you can't convince people they need the righteousness of Christ unless they know their own righteousness is inadequate. So the message is always a message of sin, a message of judgment, a message of inadequacy before it's a message of hope and salvation. And no preacher can preach the gospel who doesn't preach the inadequacy of human righteousness. They missed it. They were ignorant of it.

Now look at verse 4, it's just a very important verse. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness." Now stop and I'll explain this verse to you. Many people were seeking righteousness through the law. They saw, as this little phrase says it, the law for righteousness. In other words, if you're going to be righteous, keep the law...keep the law. It was the law for righteousness. You want to attain righteousness, keep the law, keep the law.

Well, Christ is the end of that. And the word "end" here simply means termination, telos, it means the end, it's over. Paul is saying this, very important, Christ terminates the quest for righteousness by law. In other words, when you come to Jesus Christ and you receive His righteousness by faith, that ends the quest for righteousness by law.

Now some have interpreted this verse in other ways. They read it, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness as some historical concept, that Christ is the fulfillment of the law by being the reality that it points to, like in Matthew 5:17 and 18." Other say, "It means that Christ is the fulfillment of the law because He lived it to perfection." Others say, "Christ is the end, or the fulfillment of the old covenant because He introduces the new covenant."

But I don't believe this verse can say anything historical particularly. I don't think it's talking about Christ coming and being the fulfillment of the Old Testament, being the fulfillment in terms of the new covenant replacing the old, or being the embodiment of all that the old covenant called for. Because I don't think the verse is talking about historical issues..and the key is the last phrase. It could say Christ is the end of the law for righteousness period, and we could say that's historical. Boy, when He came it ended the law. When He came He fulfilled the law. When He came He perfected the new covenant and so it's the end of that old. But it doesn't say it's historical. It says He's the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. Now that qualifies the rest of the verse. If that wasn't there we could interpret it historically. But this verse is saying Christ is the termination of the law for righteousness only to people who believe. The point is, once a person believes in Christ the quest for righteousness through works ends. That's the point.

Listen, all that historical stuff is true of Him if nobody believes, right? I mean, He is the end of the law in terms of being the one to whom it pointed historically. He is the end of the law in terms of being the one who lived it out in fulfillment. He is the end of the law in the sense that He replaced the old covenant with the new covenant, but that would all be true if nobody believed. What he's saying here is He is the end of the quest for righteousness by works to those that believe. Once you believe that quest is over. I mean, I may think I'm going to get to God and honor God by doing my works, but once I come and see the truth of Christ and embrace the truth of Christ by faith and He gives to me His own righteousness, that quest is over. I'm no longer seeking righteousness through law which I have received as a gift through faith. Understood? When people come to believe in Christ, He ends the effort at self- salvation. There never was, there never will be righteousness by law by works. But

in a lot of peoples' minds there is and they're after it with all they can get. They're going to get into heaven by their good works.

And then they see the reality of Christ and His gracious gift of faith and their impossible quest ends. And in faith they receive Him and given to them is the righteousness they never could attain on their own. So when a person sees Christ and the gift of His righteousness, the legal ritual religious quest is ended. It's ended. That's why people who spend a lot of time in a system of ritual and external religion, trying to earn their way to God with their good deeds and their religious activities, when they come to Jesus Christ immediately feel the pull to get out of that stuff because there's a liberation from that quest. Christ is the end of that to everyone that believes.

I know in my life and the life of all of you here, you're not still trying to get saved by your works, are you? If you've embraced Christ, that's over...that's ended. And we learn the truth of 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God...where?...in Him." In Him we become righteous.

Isaiah saw it. Isaiah 45:24 Isaiah said this, a beautiful statement, "In the Lord I have righteousness." That's right. It's the only place.

Now the word "law" here in verse 4 is general. It isn't necessarily talking about Mosaic law, it's just talking about the idea of law. That is, saving myself by keeping commandments, keeping laws, religious rules and so forth. This is good news, folks, and it's sort of what we were talking about this morning. Can you imagine being that person in Israel who has been burden down with all the stuff the Pharisees piled on people? Just piling it up and piling it up and piling it up and piling it up until the burden is absolutely unbearable and not a person who piled the burden on moves a finger to ease the burden? And you go through life with this horrendous weight of legal stuff that you've got to perform and the guilt of not living up to it, trying your best to pile up more good deeds than bad deeds so you can get into heaven and not be sent to hell? And in the midst of all of that quest along comes Jesus Christ and you hear the gospel of grace which says you can't make it that way, forget that whole thing, put your faith in Jesus Christ, believe in Him that He died for you and rose again, receive Him as your Savior and instantaneously God will grant to you in Him the righteousness you could never get on your own. What good news, what good news. And that's why Galatians 5:1 says for freedom Christ has made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. That's over, that quest is gone. We've been made free from trying to seek self-righteousness.

In fact, in Colossians 2:14 it's that very beautiful thought that the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, all the record of what we were guilty of was nailed to the cross of Christ, what a thought. All that was nailed to the cross of Christ and He died for us and gives us perfect righteousness.

Early in Romans chapter 3 verse 21, in verse 20 it says, "By the deeds of the law," that is by the quest for law righteousness, "no flesh is made just." Nobody gets right with God that way. The law only gives us the knowledge of what? Sin. The law just shows us how sinful we are. "But now," verse 21 says, "the righteousness of God is apart from the law manifest." It's apart from works. It is the righteousness of God, verse 22, which is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe. That's a different kind of righteousness.

Now Israel was ignorant, first of all, as we said the person of God and now the provision of Christ. They didn't understand what Christ provided. And that's what the epistle to the Romans is intended to unfold. And that's why it says in chapter 1 verse 17 that the righteous live, not by works, but by faith. Great truth.

Now there's a third point. It follows very naturally on the first two, they were ignorant of God's person, they were ignorant of the provision of Christ, thirdly, they were ignorant of the place of faith. They were ignorant of the place of faith. A very important thought. Verse 4, and this we'll just look at and brief and then we'll follow through on it in our next session as we move through the chapter.

But Israel was ignorant of the place of faith. I mean, they were just ignorant of all the basic stuff...like who God was, what Christ did and how you get saved. The place of faith. Faith was the issue. Back in verse 32 of chapter 9 it says, "They sought it not by faith." I mean, they were dead set on getting their way in by their own works. Faith was the issue.

The end of verse 4. "Christ is the termination of law righteousness to everyone that...what?...that does what?...believes," that's all. Faith, believing. Believers receive what workers never get. And not believing in Christ forfeits the righteousness of God. Faith signs the covenant and makes His righteousness our own.

Now to verify the place of faith, and it is essential, to verify the place of faith, Paul goes back and quotes Moses. He doesn't want to be criticized for having some new doctrine so he reaches back and uses Mosaic sources. Notice verse 5, "For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the law." First of all, he's going to show that Moses talks about law righteousness, then he's going to show that Moses talks about faith righteousness. "Moses describes the righteousness which is of the law that the man who does these things shall live by them." Moses talked about righteousness by law. And he makes reference here to Leviticus 18:5...Leviticus 18:5.

And what does Leviticus 18:5 say? Basically what it says at the end of verse 5. "The man who does these things shall live by them." Now that's what Moses said about the righteousness of the law. That simple direct statement pushed to its limit means this, if you are going to think you attain righteousness by doing these things then you are bound to live by them. That's the implication. In other words, if you say you're coming this way, the demand is for absolute perfection. That's the way

Paul sees the statement of Leviticus 18:5. He uses it to emphasize that thought, that to attain righteousness through keeping the law of God means you've got to live that way all the time. Which is what? Impossible. It's absolutely impossible. That's what Moses said about law righteousness. It's impossible, but theoretically if it were possible, which it isn't, you'd have to keep the law all the time...all the time...all the time.

And you know, those religious Jews were so confused in their mind and had lowered the standard so much that in Matthew 19 when Jesus confronted the rich young ruler and said you have to keep the law of God, the guy says..."All those things have I...what?...I've done." Unbelievable. They were so self-righteous. But it was impossible. Even Moses said, "The one who does those things as a way of righteousness has got to live by them all his life without equivocation, without deviation, without one failure." In fact, Deuteronomy 27:26, some other words recorded in the Pentateuch, "Cursed be he who confirms not all the words of this law to do them." In other words, you don't do all of them all your life, you're cursed. So if you want to come this way, lots of luck.

Look at Galatians for a moment, chapter 3 verse 10. "For as many as are of the works of the law, as many people as want to live by the works, as many people want to live by law, want to be self-savers, are under the curse." They're all accursed. "For it's written, Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." So if you've ever not done something you ought to do, or ever done something you should not have done, you're out, you're cursed. It's amazing.

Verse 11, "But that no man is justified by law in the sight of God." It's evident. Nobody can do that, it's evident. It's obvious. So God says the just shall live by faith and the law is not of faith, but...and here Paul quotes again Leviticus 18:5, "The law says the man that does them shall live in them." And again that Scripture is applied to the same idea. If you're going to go that way you've got to go that way in absolute perfection with no deviation. I mean, you could put it in three simple sentences. The man who pursues salvation by law keeping will stand or fall on that effort. Second, it is impossible to stand. Third, falling means eternal cursing. That's it. You put yourself under obligation to keep the law, you won't do it, you're cursed.

Now it's a shock, believe me, for Jewish readers to learn they're under a curse for not keeping the law. They thought lawless Gentiles were under such a curse, the truth was legalistic Jews were under the same curse. So you could be an absolute reprobate, an absolutely lawless irreligious person and on the other hand you could be a very religious Pharisee and you'd be under the same curse for the violation of the law for it only takes one violation to forfeit any hope of self-saving through the law.

You see, in Romans 4:15 Paul said the law works wrath. All the law does is demonstrate your sinfulness and release the wrath of God against it. It justifies nobody. It redeems nobody. So

Leviticus 18:5 then, there in verse 5, becomes an accuser because nobody can come that way, it's impossible. The law shows no mercy. The law will not even overlook the smallest violation. It has no mercy in it. None at all, it's law, that's all, there's no mercy, and it condemns forever the one who violates it.

So Moses wrote that. But Moses also wrote about justification, righteousness of faith and for that we come to verse 6. "But the righteousness which is of faith speaks like this," and here he personifies the righteousness and has it do the speaking but he quotes out of Deuteronomy chapter 30 from Moses. "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven, that is to bring Christ down from above, or who shall descend into the deep, that is to bring up Christ again from the dead, but what saith it, the word is near thee even in thy mouth and in thine heart that is the word of faith which we preach."

Now that's a very interesting fascinating text and fascinating use of Deuteronomy 30 verse 12 and following. I want to take you back there for a moment. Go back to Deuteronomy chapter 30 so that we can see this. In Deuteronomy chapter 30 verse 10 God is calling His people to obedience. And it says, "If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law and if thou turn unto the Lord thy God...watch this...with all thine heart and with all thy soul," that's it. He's calling them to obedience, but it's not external, it's what? It's internal, in the heart, in the soul. And Paul assures us that the intent of this passage in Deuteronomy is a call to faith. It is a call to faith. He even calls it in Romans 10:8 the word of faith. It is a call to a heart response. It is a call to faith. It is the obedience of the heart that he is after, not just some external behavior. And may I suggest to you this? That a call to faith, a call to a true heart relationship to God in Deuteronomy is based on the covenant of grace. Now listen carefully. Deuteronomy is not simply a call to legal externalism, it is a call to respond in faith to a covenant of grace.

Go back to Deuteronomy chapter 7 and I'm going to help you to understand this book in about two or three minutes, give you a feeling for what the intent of the book is. Deuteronomy chapter 7 verse 7, "The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you because you were more in number than any people, for you were the fewest of all people, but because the Lord loved you and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, Hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondage from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy with them who love Him and keep His commandments."

Now it's the whole point. Why was Israel God's people? They earned it? Did they earn it? No. Because, verse 7, He set His love on you. Verse 8, because He loved you. That's all it said, it doesn't say why. It's just grace. It's just sovereign grace. It's because it's God's nature to be merciful. It is the covenant of grace here as much as a covenant in the New Testament is a covenant

containing grace. Nobody in the Old Testament was ever redeemed by keeping the law. They came and opened their heart to God and loved Him and out of that love came obedience. And the love was drawn by a covenant of forgiving grace and mercy. That's the theme of Deuteronomy chapter 9 verse 4, "Speak not thou in thine heart after the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee saying...watch this...don't say this because you've been victorious, don't say this...For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me into possess this land, don't say that. You didn't earn this. But for wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out before thee." I mean, don't you say, Israel, that the reason God punished the Canaanites is because of their wickedness and the reason God brought you into the promise land is because of your righteousness, don't you say that.

Verse 5, "Not for thy righteousness, nor for the uprightness of thine heart dost thou go to possess their land but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God did drive them out from before thee that He may perform the word which the Lord swore unto the fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, understand therefore that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess for thy righteousness for thou art a stiff necked people." Well why did He do it? Because of His what? His grace and His mercy and His love. It's always a covenant of grace.

Chapter 10 verse 15, this is it, "Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them and He chose their seed after them," that's all. He wanted to do it, sovereign love, sovereign grace, nothing earned, nothing deserved. Chapter 14 verse 2, verse 2, "For you are an holy people to the Lord your God and the Lord has chosen you to be a peculiar people unto Himself above all the nations that are upon the earth." No other reason is given, He just chose you, sovereign love, sovereign grace.

Look at chapter 15, humph...and verse 15, "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord thy God redeemed thee." That's it. You were a slave, He redeemed you. Why? Sovereign love, sovereign grace. "And it shall be," verse 16, "if ye say unto thee, I will not go away from thee because He loves thee and thine house because He is well with thee." Then it goes in to talking about a slave. It's almost as if it's a picture, almost as if it's a picture of God's special love for His people.

Chapter 29 verse 9, the same idea, "Keep therefore the words of this covenant and do them that you may prosper in all that you do." In other words, be obedient to the words of this covenant. And why kind of covenant is it? It's a one-sided covenant, folks, did you get this? God determined to love you. God determined to call you. God determined to redeem you, make you His peculiar people for no good of your own but all of His mercy and grace. Now respond to that by obedience. That's the whole point of Deuteronomy, respond in obedience because of God's saving grace.

And then in verse 26 of chapter 33, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun," that's Israel, "who rides upon the heaven in thy help." Isn't that marvelous? There's no God like your God who rides the heaven to help you. "And in His excellency on the sky the eternal God is thy refuge and underneath

are the everlasting arms. And He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone, the fountain of Jacob shall be upon the land of grain and wine, also his heaven shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help and who is the sword of thy excellency." Saved by the Lord. Saved by the Lord. Not by your own righteousness.

You see, the framework of Deuteronomy, and this is what I want you to see, the framework of Deuteronomy is sovereign grace. Now go back to Romans 10 and you'll see how it fits in. So when you turn to Deuteronomy chapter 30 verses 11 to 14 Paul specifically here kind of touches several of those verses in that passage. You come to these, you know it's all based on the covenant of God's grace. And so the righteousness which is by faith says this, or you could put it another way, the Scripture speaking about the righteousness of faith says this, Paul just chooses to personify the righteousness of faith. It says this, "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven?" Verse 7, "Or who shall descend into the deep?" Verse 8, "The word is near thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart." And that's right out of Deuteronomy chapter 30.

Now what is this saying? It's saying this. Don't think that you have to respond to God by ascending into heaven or by descending into the deep to collect the truth. Don't think you have to go on some impossible journey. The righteousness of faith is available, verse 8, is near you. It's in your mouth, it's in your heart, it's been revealed. It's in the covenant of grace you simply believe and receive it.

You see, the Jews were trying to do the impossible. They were trying to ascend to heaven. That's what a work system does, save yourself, get up, crawl up to heaven on your own. Descend into the deep. Those are two kind of Jewish proverbs. In fact, to be high and afar off was a Jewish way of saying something is unattainable. Thou art high, it says of God, that art very high. It says of the wicked, God sees them afar off, that is there's no way to reach them. To the Jew to be high in the heavens or deep in the depths, to ascend to heaven, to go down to hell was to do what was impossible. So he reaches back to Deuteronomy 30 and says Moses says that the righteousness of faith is not available just for those who can do the impossible. It's available for anybody. It's right there. Rather than say Moses said, or Scripture says, he says the righteousness of faith speaks like this...don't think you've got to do the impossible, keep the law. Don't think you've got to scale your way to heaven by perfection, by some esoteric experience, by some philosophical speculation, by some legalistic effort you're going to vault yourself into heaven. You can't get the message that way.

And then Paul adds to the Deuteronomy passage these little parentheticals that are just marvelous in verse 6, "Don't say in your heart, Who can ascend to heaven? How can I attain it? Parenthesis, that is to bring Christ down." What does he mean by that? As if you had by your own effort to crawl up to heaven to accomplish the bringing down of the messenger. In other words, don't think you've got to go all the way up there as if to bring Christ down, He already came. Listen, works righteousness is a flat out denial of the incarnation. It says, "I've got to do it on my own, I've got to get up there, nobody

ever came to do it for me." And works righteousness is a denial of the incarnation that God sundry times and diverse manner spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son. And when you try to crawl up to heaven to gain your own righteousness and to crawl up into God's domain to gain the truth, you are denying the incarnation of the Son of God who brought it to this earth. You don't need to do that.

And, he says, in verse 7, who's going to...don't say in your heart, Who will ascend into the deep? Who can go way down, the opposite of the heaven? In other words, from one end of the universe to the other, who can attain these truths? Who can descend literally? Paul uses the word abyss, abussos, who can go into the bottomless? Who can go into the depths? Back in Deuteronomy the word used there has to do with the sea. But it's the same idea. Deep down in the caverns of the earth that hold the waters, deep down in the pit, the abyss, hell, the bottomless place, whatever you want to call it, it's the same concept. You don't need to go all the way into heaven to pull Christ down and you don't need to climb way down into the pit to find some truth. Why? Do you need to do that...I love this...to bring Christ back from the dead? That's the resurrection. What a thought. He has been deep in the pit. He has been as deep as the pit gets. He's been in the bottomless place. And right in the midst of hell's carnival when He was dying on the cross and His body was still there and they were celebrating His death, He greeted them in the pit and proclaimed His triumph over them.

So we learn from the words of Paul and Peter, He's been there and He came out. And the righteousness of faith says you don't have to go to heaven to bring Christ down, that denies the incarnation. And you don't have to go to the depths of the earth to bring Him up, that denies...what?...the resurrection. You see, a works righteousness system negates the work of Christ and that's what this whole point is saying. They were ignorant, yes, of the person of God. They were ignorant of the provision of Christ and of the place of faith and trying to go up to heaven and pull down the message and dig down into depths of some kind of experience into the other extremity and pull it up from there...was a denial that Christ had come and brought it to them and descended in to the pit and come back and claimed the victory. To seek to attain righteousness on your own is to deny both His incarnation and His resurrection. And the language of self-righteousness says God hasn't brought to us anything. The incarnation didn't bring us anything, there is no incarnation, there is no resurrection of Christ, there is no righteousness of faith, we've got to attain it by going to the heights and the depths. And all they're doing is denying Jesus Christ.

But Moses says, verse 8, what does it say, "What saith it? The word is near thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, it's right there. You don't have to go anywhere to find it." God doesn't mock the sinner. God doesn't laugh at the sinner. God doesn't scorn the lost soul by mocking him with an offering of salvation that is utterly unattainable and expecting him to go on an impossible quest. Jeffrey Wilson writes, "The sheer perversity of unbelief is shown by the many who prefer to undertake an impossible odyssey rather than put their trust in an accessible Christ."

What does it say? It's near you...it's near you. How near? It's in your mouth. It's familiar to you. The message of salvation is familiar discussion. I mean, people even in our society are like those Jews to whom Paul speaks or refers here. We know the gospel, people in our society know the gospel. It isn't some foreign thing to them. It's common that Jesus came, common knowledge that He came, that He died, that He rose, everybody knows that. It's in their mouth. It's common discussion, it's familiar stuff. God has made the word of incarnation and the word of resurrection a familiar word. It's not only in your mouth, it's in your heart. People think about it. Jewish people read about it, heard about it, talked about it. The truth's familiar. What truth is it? Look at the end of verse 8, "It's the word of faith." The truth about salvation by faith, salvation by faith, salvation by believing not attaining. And it's the same word, the end of verse 8, "which we preach, which we herald, which we announce, which we proclaim publicly."

Beloved, in Galatians chapter 3 two times Paul uses a phrase, the hearing of faith, the hearing of faith, what a great thought. The gospel is not an impossible dream, it's not an impossible attainment, it's right there. It's available to everyone with the hearing of faith, with the hearing of faith. God has had His preachers and they have heard the hearing of faith.

They didn't understand the place of faith. I hope you do. Next week we're going to find out what true faith is and how it acts. Let's bow in prayer.

Thank You, Father, for the truth of this text. What a joy to hold in our hands Your precious word, to study it's great rich truths, to stand, as it were, in the classroom of heaven with the Spirit of God as our teacher. Thank You. O God, may we not err as Israel erred in the person of God, the provision of Christ, the place of faith. May we know how holy You are, how short we come. May we see what a provision of righteousness Christ has given which is appropriated by faith. And may we have believing hearts to receive.

With your head bowed for just a moment, if you know Jesus Christ, thank Him for the gift of faith. You were not so noble you were redeemed. God chose you for no other reason than His sovereign love, there is no other explanation. It is grace and you received it through faith. You couldn't earn your election and calling, you couldn't earn your salvation. It is a gift of faith. But you had to come to a point where you knew you didn't come up to God's standard. Maybe you're just there now and you know you fall short, reach out in faith to Christ who came into the world, died and rose that you by faith might be made righteous. That means right with God for all eternity. If you're a Christian, thank Him. If you're not, exercise that faith.

Father, do Your work in every heart. Bring to the prayer room those that You desire to come for whatever the need of their life and we'll thank You in Christ's name. Amen.

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