

Christ, the Goal of the Law

📖 Romans 10:1-4

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Last week we looked at Romans 9:30-31 where Paul answers one of the most perplexing questions in the NT. Why did Gentiles, from among the nations, who did not pursue righteousness, attain righteousness, but the nation Israel, who did pursue righteousness not attain it? His answer, in 9:32 is basically that the nation Israel had pursued the righteousness of the law as though it were by works and not by faith. In other words, God had given the law to the nation Israel and the only way to obey the law was by faith, not self-effort. If they had obeyed by faith then they would have had an experiential righteousness that pleased God and would have resulted in enjoying blessing in the land under the Abrahamic Covenant. During the OT the nation had pursued the law by faith to a great degree and enjoyed tremendous blessing under King David and Solomon. However, the following generations, beginning with Rehoboam did not pursue the righteousness of the law by faith and eventually distorted the law in order to keep it by self-effort. The distorted form of the law is known in the NT as the "traditions of men." Most of the nation tried to follow these "traditions of men," traditions that were mere externals and did not get to the true intent of the law. Jesus said these traditions caused them to neglect the commandment of God and, in fact, invalidated it. It was because of this that the nation that had set out to attain the righteousness of the law did not attain it, but was instead blinded by their sin and stumbled over their Messiah. That essentially is Paul's answer as to why the nation Israel did not attain righteousness. This, of course, did not mean that individual Jews did not attain righteousness. Clearly there was a remnant of Jews who did attain it because they actually did follow the law as God had given it. They repudiated Pharisaic tradition. As such they were not blinded by their sin and saw clearly that the law pointed straight to Jesus as the Messiah who was the perfect embodiment of that law and believed in him and entered into the spiritual life of faith. Even at the time of the writing of Romans, Paul says in 9:33 that if they "believe in Him" they "will not be disappointed." Individual Jews can and are still being justified by faith. This formation of a believing remnant during this present time demonstrates that God has not cast off the nation Israel as a whole. However, Paul's point in 9:30-33 is that as a whole the nation did not attain the righteousness they strove for under the Law, were blinded by their sin, rejected their Messiah and cast into divine discipline.

Today, in 10:1 Paul continues to show concern for the nation Israel as a whole. In 10:1 he says, **Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.** This is not expressing Paul's concern for individual Jews being saved. Individual Jews were being saved all the time in the early church. What this is expressing is Paul's concern for the nation Israel and national salvation from Gentile enemies in the future Tribulation. If that surprises you it's proven by Paul's language in the context. First, the word **them** is a corporate reference and not an individual reference. The nearest antecedent to the pronoun **them** is "Israel" in 9:31. There "Israel" is referring to the nation Israel and how they did not arrive at experiential righteousness under the law because they did not pursue it by faith but as if it were by works. So in 10:1 **them** refers to the nation Israel as a whole. Second, the word **salvation** is referring to physical salvation from Gentile kingdoms at the Second Advent of the Messiah. The nearest use of "salvation" is 9:27 which is a quote from Isaiah 10:22 where Isaiah is clearly referring to Israel's national deliverance from Gentile kingdoms when the Messiah comes. So then, Paul's deep seated desire and prayer in 10:1 is not for individual Jews to be spiritually saved, something that was occurring on a daily basis, but for the nation Israel to be physically delivered from Gentile kingdoms at the Second Advent of the Messiah. In other words, Paul wanted to see the fulfillment of the unconditional, eternal, permanent covenants God made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the nation Israel, David and Jesus. God made these covenants with only six recipients and therefore they can only be fulfilled to them. That fulfillment is tied directly to their national salvation or deliverance from Gentile kingdoms after the times of the Gentiles has run its course. We may say then that Paul wanted nothing more than to see God's revealed plan for Israel come to pass. Since Paul is expressing this desire to his **brethren** who were both Jewish and Gentile believers in Rome, and his desire has yet to be fulfilled, then we should also join Paul in desiring to see God's plan for national Israel to come to pass. The ongoing return of Jews to the land of Israel today is preparatory stage-setting for this to take place. It should give us confidence that we are properly understanding Scripture.

In 10:1 we may also develop Paul's two expressions of sentiment toward his nation, both of which echo his sentiments for his nation earlier in 9:1-2. First, **my heart's desire...is for their salvation.** **Heart** here is *καρδία* and usually refer to the thinking center of man. It only rarely refers to the organ that pumps blood. Here it refers to the thinking center. It is not an emotional word as in the English language but a cognitive word. It refers to where we think, where we mull ideas around and where our deepest thoughts reside. **Desire** is *ευδοκία* and refers to a yearning for satisfaction. In this case the satisfaction of God's plan for national Israel being fulfilled according to the covenants, i.e. **their salvation.** Second, **my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.** Paul not only had a deep seated desire for satisfaction with respect to God's plan for national Israel being fulfilled but he also prayed **to God** about it. The word **prayer** is *δησις* and refers to "an urgent request." There are six Greek words for prayer but this one is unique in that it is used exclusively of requests made to God. It is an urgent request. Paul yearned to see this fulfilled in his own lifetime. This explains his urgency in his own mission to the Gentiles as we will see in Romans 11. In Paul's mind Gentile salvation makes Jews jealous and so Gentile salvation is a means to the end that the nation Israel be saved. Ends are certain but means of getting there

involve responsible evangelism and prayer. Through them we have the opportunity to enter into the joy that God gets of bringing His plan to pass. We should be like Paul who, on one hand, knew the certainty of God's plan for Israel being fulfilled, but on the other hand, also knew that prayer and evangelism are necessary means of that fulfillment coming to pass. History is not fatalistic. It involves both God's sovereignty and genuine human responsibility. In concluding 10:1, in Paul's deepest thinking about his nation he yearned to be satisfied by seeing God's covenant plan for Israel fulfilled. He also prayed **to God for** this fulfillment. Since Paul's desire and prayer have still not been fulfilled then it should continue to be our desire and prayer.

In 10:2 he begins a series of statements that each begins with "for." The Greek word *γὰρ* can be translated as "for" which means an explanation is being given, usually of the prior verse, or it can be translated as "because" which means a cause or reason is being given. How you translate it is based on how you understand the argument. Probably verses 3 and 4 should be translated as "because" since Paul seems to be giving a cause or reason for his **heart's desire** and **prayer to God** in verse 1 and verse 5 should be translated as "for" since he is giving a much needed explanation of the highly controversial verse 4.

So we will read verse 2 in light of verse 1 as giving the cause for Paul's heart desire and prayer to God for his nation's final deliverance. **Because I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.** The fact Paul says **I testify** is significant because Paul himself had been one who had **a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.** Paul was the son of a Pharisee and therefore born a Pharisee. He attests that he was extremely zealous for the ancestral traditions of Judaism and studied under the great Rabbi Gamaliel. He knew better than most, if not all, **that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.** The word **zeal** is *ζηλον* and means "intense positive interest in something." Here **they** had an intense positive interest in **God**, just as Paul had before his conversion. The problem here was not zeal but misguided zeal because it was **not in accordance with knowledge. Knowledge** is more important than zeal. For example, take what God said in Isa 5:13, "My people go into exile for their lack of knowledge." They didn't go into exile for lack of zeal. They went into exile for lack of knowledge. In Hos 4:6 God said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Again, they were not destroyed for lack of zeal. They were destroyed for lack of knowledge. These OT passages refer to Israel going into exile in 721BC to the Assyrians and Judah's going into exile in 586BC to the Babylonians. Going into exile was a consequence of not studying the word of God carefully. As a consequence there was a lot of blood spilled, a lot of women raped, a lot of horror in Israel and Judah. You can read Josephus' account and be horrified by women eating their own children because of the famine in wartime siege and the psychological effects of hunger. And the reason for the horror of both exiles had nothing to do with lack of sincerity or zeal but lack of knowledge. What had happened had happened again and they were destroyed in AD70 by Rome. Titus and the Roman armies came in and killed over a million Jews, raped the women, pillaged; it was a disaster. It was not a happy ending. And the reason that is so important to understand is that it was not because they lacked religious sincerity, it was not because they lacked religious zeal, it was because they lacked knowledge.

It's things like this that make me furious at pastors and Christians who warn you not to get all that head knowledge because that will only make you spiritually fat. Not only do they falsely dichotomize head knowledge from heart knowledge, which is post-Immanuel Kant philosophy, but shows you their thinking is thoroughly paganized, Christians pastors who are pagan in their thinking. They think of faith as an upper story mystical experience and reason as a lower story real evidence. To make it worse they quote bible verses out of context to support this nonsense. For example they quote 1 Cor 8:1 where Paul says "knowledge puffs up." And they say, "Oh no, you're being over-intellectual and that's not spiritual." See, Paul warns, knowledge puffs up. You need to stop learning all that doctrine and start just take it by faith, by which they mean a leap into the nothingness. That is so much trash. If they could read, and that is a serious problem in our culture, nobody can read anymore. But if they could read so as to comprehend the meaning of a text they would have read the very next verse where Paul says, "If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know." In other words, what Paul is saying here is that there are two kinds of knowledge. Knowing as one ought to know, which is true knowledge; and knowing as one ought not to know, which is false knowledge. Paul says the same thing to Timothy when he says there is a knowledge falsely so-called. It's knowledge falsely so-called that puffs up. True knowledge does not puff up because it is knowing as one ought to know. That is to say it is knowledge that is tied to the ethics of humility. And that is why Paul goes ethical in the very next verse saying, "if anyone loves God." And so all these Christians that are so anti-knowledge today, so anti-intellectual and say you shouldn't approach the Bible as an intellectual book are showing that they have never read this book or they don't know how to read! God says my people die for lack of knowledge, they are destroyed for lack of knowledge and he is clearly talking about true knowledge because he uses the Greek word *ἐπιγνωσις* which is the basic *γνωσις* with a prepositional intensifier. It's true knowledge, real knowledge. My people die, God says, for lack of true knowledge. So zeal is good when it is connected with true knowledge but it is bad when it is connected with knowledge false so-called and that is what Israel had, **a zeal for God, but not in accordance with true knowledge**. And what was the result of that explosive mixture? Death and destruction at the hands of the Romans in AD70.

Now look in 10:3 and see what in particular they did not truly know about God. **For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God**. This is what we talked about last week with the law and how the scribes and the Pharisees during the intertestamental times distorted the law and invented the traditions of the elders which were not the law and invalidated the law and negated the law. Note what Paul says, they did **not know about God's righteousness**. This expression **God's righteousness** does not refer to the attribute of **God's righteousness** but in Romans refers to "a God-kind of righteousness," that is, a righteousness that is consistent with God's attribute of righteousness. As we've said over and over so A. T. Robertson said, "A blunt thing to say, but true as Paul has shown in 2:1-3:20. They did not understand the God-kind of righteousness by faith (1:17)."¹ Of course, by **righteousness** Paul is talking about experiential righteousness that came about by keeping the Law of Moses.

That is exactly what verse 5 mentions and so don't fly off into imputed righteousness. All righteousness is by faith, no doubt, but what is in view here is the experiential God-kind of righteousness that was available to them if they pursued the law by faith. They didn't do that because, as we pointed out last week in Mark 7, when the demands of the law came to them, such as honoring your father and mother, the law's intent was that this extend to many applications, such as helping your parents financially in their elderly years. But because that seemed impossible to do they decided to make another law that said if you dedicate that money to God you don't have to help them with their finances. And so what they did was get around the law of God. By doing that Romans 10:3 says they revealed that they did **not know about** the God-kind of righteousness that was available to them if they lived by faith that God would work it all out! That is always the problem as I mentioned last week. We struggle to live by faith because we can't see how the word of God could possibly work. Take examples from the OT. What the OT is trying to do is teach the Israelites to live by faith and leave the results to God. The OT is rich in examples of people who lived by faith. For example Joshua. Joshua sees the fortress city of Jericho, sends military spies into the city for reconnaissance, determines a strategy and then all of a sudden runs into someone in the camp with sword drawn. He says, "Whose side are you on?" The guy says, "I'm on my own side, I'm the captain of the army." Joshua bows down and the captain, who was the pre-incarnate Christ says what? What's the strategy to take this city? I want you to march around the city once a day for six days and then on the seventh day I want you to march around the city seven times, blow the trumpets, make a big noise and the walls will come tumbling down. Really? That's going to work? That has got to be the stupidest military strategy I have ever heard. That could not possibly work. But it did work. Why did it work? Because the battle does not belong to us, the battle belongs to the Lord. What does it teach us? To live by faith. And when we do He does the work. Now I use that OT example and we could use countless others, to show that the OT mode of living under the law was always and only by faith. There was no obedience to the law apart from faith. God taught them over and over in the OT that the only way to live was by faith! But they didn't do that you see. And that's what 10:3 is saying in that first expression, **not knowing about God's righteousness**, that is, that it is revealed or manifested only when we live by faith. But instead what did they do? They tried **to establish their own**. That is, they followed the traditions of the elders, all the nitpicky rules of the Pharisees that didn't have a thing in the world to do with God's righteousness. It was all just external ritual. In God's sight it was all garbage and it still is garbage but by it they sought **to establish their own righteousness** with God. The problem is that when we are trying to establish it, it is by self-effort and that is all the flesh and so it was sin. And the mountains and mountains of sin blinded them to recognizing their Messiah, causing them to stumble over the Messiah.

Now since they were trying **to establish their own** righteousness Paul says in verse 3, **they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God**. There was a God-kind of righteousness available to them in the law if they submitted to the law by faith. The word **subject** is *υποτασσω* and means "to line up under, to submit to a higher authority." That is essentially what faith is, trusting a higher authority so as to follow that authority. The law was God's authority, they were to submit to it. But when they changed it they showed that they did not

submit to it, that they could not live by faith. As such they became the authority. And it's the same way today in Judaism. The ultimate authority is not the law. The ultimate authority is the rabbinical interpretations of the law. It's the same way in Roman Catholicism today. I listen to Roman Catholic radio and if I've heard it once I've heard it a thousand times. The Roman Catholic church's interpretation is authoritative, the text alone is not authoritative. They give an authority to the text but not all authority resides in the text, you've got to listen to the councils and the creeds too and this is the classic way they express it. But what it means is we do not submit to the word of God! And that is exactly what the Pharisees did and so they ended up trying to produce all this righteousness by self-effort, following their scruples and God says, you haven't submitted to My word in the law, you've made yourself out to be the authority. And so verses 2 and 3 are why Paul's deep heart desire and his prayer to God for his nation was for their national deliverance. Because they were in a ball of wax, all hung up on their traditions. It was not a good place for the nation to be.

Now 10:4 explains verse 3. The first English word is rightly translated as **For**. It's an explanation or possibly even evidence for how Paul knew they did not know about the righteousness of God. He knew because if they knew about the righteousness of God they would have readily identified this righteousness in Jesus Christ. **For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.** I've already stated the proper way to understand this verse but it is a difficult and controversial verse. The main controversy is over whether the word translated **end**, which is *τελος*. Many Christians read this as saying that Christ is the "end of the law" as far as time is concerned. That is, we are not under the law because Christ fulfilled the law. This is problematic because if that is true then what does the verse indicate about how righteousness was attained before Christ came? That righteousness was attained by keeping the **law**. And that would mean we have two ways of becoming righteous before God. Before Christ came righteousness before God was attained by keeping the law. After Christ came righteousness before God is attained by faith. Of course there is only one way and so that is a wrong-headed approach. The word *τελος*, here translated as **the end**, is not referring to the end in time. Other passages may teach that and do in a way teach that, but that is not the teaching here. The word *τελος* may also mean "to goal toward which a movement is directed" and so he's saying that the goal toward which the law was directed was Christ. The law was aimed at or pointing to Christ. Ross gets really close when he says this, "The verse does not merely mean that the law has come to an end or ceased with Christ; it means that Christ is the goal and culmination of the law because he provided righteousness for those who believe in him."² He's right that the law came to an end or ceased with Christ. That's not taught here but it is taught elsewhere, for example, Heb 7:12. He's right that it means that Christ is the goal and culmination of the law, meaning that the law pointed to Christ. He's also right that by keeping the law He provided a righteousness for those who believe in Him. However, as I have taught you previously, righteousness may be referring to legal or experiential righteousness, and while Ross has in view legal righteousness, what Paul has in mind is experiential righteousness. He's saying that Christ is the goal or aim of the laws purpose to give an experiential righteousness to the one who is living by faith. We

will see this very clearly in 10:5-6 where he contrasts the two ways one could live under the law as either by works or by faith and how this was to work toward their national salvation.

What he means is this, watch closely, during the OT, the law was given to the nation Israel at Mt Sinai. That law was never given for legal righteousness, the nation was already viewed as legally righteous on the basis of God's deliverance out of Egypt. So the law was given to a people already viewed as legally righteous and therefore for experiential righteousness. The nation was to live by faith under the law in preparation for the Messiah. The law taught them about God and thereby about the Messiah because the Messiah was to be God come in the flesh. So they were to keep the law by faith in order to be ready to meet and receive their Messiah. Messiah was the aim or goal of the law in that it pointed to Him.

Now this truth is also taught in a similar way in Gal 3:23, so turn there. This is not easy stuff but I'm going to try to bring it together for you after we look at Galatians. Galatians is another book that is often misunderstood as only dealing with justification by faith. It does that but it does not only do that. It also looks to sanctification by faith. In verse 23 we read, "But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. ²⁴Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. ²⁵But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor." Paul's talking about the nation being under the Law before Christ and how that Law was given to them as a tutor. In ancient Greece and Rome the "tutor" was a "pedagogue" or "child trainer." When a son turned six years old it was the custom that the father would place his son under a pedagogue. The pedagogue was a guardian. He would stay with the boy wherever the boy went and would take him to school and teach him morality and how to stay out of trouble and so forth. He was training the boy to become a man. On the boy's sixteenth birthday, if he had learned all these things, his father would come to him and put a toga on him and this would signify that the boy was now a man and the boy would be free from the guardian because he had successfully learned how to live responsibly without him. That is a parallel to what was happening with the nation Israel. The nation was an infant when they came out of Egypt but at Mt Sinai they were a young boy and God, the Father of the nation, gave them a guardian, the Law. This Law taught them what the Father expected of them in order to prepare them to meet Him in the incarnation when they were full grown. By putting their faith in Him they would be set free from the Law to live a life of faith. The problem that Paul is talking about here and in Romans 10 is that when the time came for Israel to be set free from the Law they had not learned what the Law taught and so they did not recognize God in the flesh, they did not recognize their Messiah. Consequently they were not set free from the Law and are still under it. The reason is because they never learned how to live by faith under the Law and so they are currently under its discipline.

But for those who do believe that Jesus is the Messiah, watch this, turn to Rom 8:3-4 and I think you will understand what I am trying to say with all this analogy with the Law being the guardian. When the guardian had finished raising the son then the son no longer needed the guardian, right? He had learned to live without

the guardian and yet have the life that the guardian taught him produced through him. That is, in essence, what is true of us today. We are not under law because we have believed, but we have the law's requirement met through us because we've learned what the Law wanted us to learn, and that is that we must live by faith if we are to see the righteousness of God revealed through us, that is, to have Christ's life produced through us. Watch Rom 8:3-4, "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." What Paul is saying is that you couldn't live a perfect life under the Law because of the sin nature, but Christ did not have a sin nature so He voluntarily died on the cross for our sin nature so that as we live by the Spirit we have the requirement of the Law fulfilled in us. The requirement of the law is a God-kind of righteousness. The Law was and is good, the Law was and is holy, the law was and is righteous, and when we live by the Spirit who was given to us at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone, Christ produces the requirement of the Law in us so that there is a real revelation of the righteousness of God in our lives. We call it the fruit of the Spirit but it is consistent with the righteous requirement of the Law. Put another way, we are not under the Law but the Law's requirement is met in us as we live by the Spirit. We are like the son that actually learned under the guardian how to live and so was set free from the guardian on his sixteenth birthday. He was set free from the guardian because he learned how to live and did not need the guardian any more. In the same way, all who have faith are free from the law because we have learned how to live, but as we live by the Spirit the requirement of the Law is fulfilled in us and this pleases God.

But the nation Israel did not learn what the Law had to teach them about God and how to live by faith in His word in the Law and consequently what the Law pointed to, their Messiah, they missed, and only individuals who believed in Him were set free...

¹ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Ro 10:3.

² Allen Ross, *Holiness to the LORD*, p 63.