

Romans Session 145
Israel's Unbelief Is Consistent With God's Prerequisite Of Faith 2
Israel's Failure Was Ignorance Of The Person Of God: His Righteousness 1

Romans 9:30-33 (NASB)

³⁰ *What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;*

³¹ *but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.*

³² *Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,*

³³ *just as it is written, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."*

We have learned from Paul here that the reason the self-righteous Jews failed was because;

"they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,"

The only thing that any person, Jew or Gentile, can do to be saved is to believe that he can do nothing to merit salvation and to cast himself at God's feet for His mercy for the sake of Christ.

Jews were incensed at the gospel of grace made effective by **faith** because it nullified all the good **works** by which they thought they could please God.

Several years before he wrote the epistle to Rome, Paul had reminded the church at Corinth that;

1 Corinthians 1:22-23 (NASB)

²² *For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom;*

²³ *but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,*

Again, quoting from Isaiah, Paul explains;

Isaiah 28:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ *Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.*

Isaiah 8:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ *"Then He shall become a sanctuary; But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, And a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*

1 Peter 2:7-8 (NASB)

⁷ *This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone,"*

⁸ *and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.*

Long before the Messiah came, the Lord had predicted in many ways and through many prophets that Israel would reject Him.

Far from being inconsistent with God's word Israel's unbelief verified that Word. Just as Isaiah declared, she tripped over the **stone of stumbling**, refusing to receive her Savior and Lord, because He did not fit their understanding of the Messiah and because as a rock of offense, He declared their works to be worthless.

Daniel completes the picture by adding that the One who was the stone over which the Jews stumbled and the rock that offended them will, in the future, be the stone that will break in pieces all the kingdoms of the world (Dan. 2:45)

But the good news of the gospel is that, unlike those who reject Him, He who believes in Him, the one who has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the divine stumbling stone and rock of offense will not be disappointed.

The issue on the human side is faith, which alone can bring the salvation that God's grace provides. Man is justified by grace through faith, but Israel's unbelief, and her lack of faith, did not surprise the Lord or nullify His plan.

God's prerequisite of faith has always been the same, and His choosing a remnant in Israel for salvation was in perfect harmony with His omniscient awareness that only a few would believe in His Son and be saved.

That is the way God knew it would be and planned it to be, and that, of course, is the way it turned out to be.

ISRAEL'S FAILURE WAS IGNORANCE OF THE PERSON OF GOD: HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS 1

Romans 10:1-3 (NASB)

¹ *Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.*

² *For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.*

³ *For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.*

As Paul continues his theme explaining the place of Israel in God's plan, he now focuses on what might be called Israel's failure, or ignorance.

It will be helpful to begin by looking at a crucial issue in Scripture, namely the matter of truth.

In the introduction to his gospel, John pronounced that Jesus was, "**full of grace and truth**" (*John 1:14*)
While teaching in the treasury of the temple,

John 8:31-32 (NASB)

³¹ *So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;*

³² *and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."*

In other words, Jesus declared Himself to be the source and the measure of truth, and that;

John 18:37c (NASB)

³⁷ *Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."*

John 14:6 (NASB)

⁶ *Jesus *said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*

Jesus promised His disciples that;

John 16:13 (NASB)

¹³ *"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.*

On their behalf He prayed to His heavenly Father;

John 17:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ *"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.*

In many other instances, Jesus emphasized the truthfulness of His teaching, introducing His instructions with such words as;

John 8:45 (NASB)

⁴⁵ *"But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.*

And;

John 16:7 (NASB)

⁷ *"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.*

Paul declared that;

2 Thessalonians 2:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ *those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.*

And that those who are saved are sanctified;

2 Thessalonians 2:13 (NASB)

¹³ *by the Spirit and faith in the truth.*

No matter how erudite, religious, and sincere they may be those who rely on their own knowledge and understanding are destined to be;

2 Timothy 3:7 (NASB)

⁷ *always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

The Gospel puts a high premium on God's truth. The Gospel is the life-changing, sin-cleansing, salvation-giving, soul-transforming, heaven-opening truth that comes only through trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

No group of people in history has been more concerned about religious truth than the Jews;

Romans 2:17-20 (NASB)

¹⁷ *But if you bear the name "Jew" and rely upon the Law and boast in God,*

¹⁸ *and know His will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law,*

¹⁹ *and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,*

²⁰ *a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth,*

From ancient times, centuries before the time of Christ, Jewish children, especially boys, were meticulously instructed in the Old Testament. But they were also carefully instructed in Jewish tradition, which often was wrongly interpreted and even contradicted the Old Testament.

Those traditions taught by the rabbis, along with their commentaries on Scripture, were considered by most Jews to be essential for comprehending God's truth.

Leading rabbis, who often were scribes, were thought to be the possessors and the purveyors of religious truth, and consequently they had great power and influence over the Jewish people.

Paul relates that he had studied at the feet of the famed rabbi Gamaliel;

Acts 22:3 (NASB)

³ "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today.

Young boys who aspired to be teachers themselves would travel great distances to study under noted rabbis, the most renowned of which were usually found in Jerusalem.

The holy city of the Jews had become a citadel of learning, and its rabbis and scribes were honored and venerated. Those teachers were held in such esteem that their interpretations of Scripture and their religious instructions were seldom questioned, regardless of how much their ideas may have contradicted the clear message of God's own Word.

Because those teachers were thought to have esoteric powers of spiritual discernment that most Jews did not possess, their word became virtual law.

A simple story in the Talmud illustrates the extreme admiration most Jews had for the scribes.

The Day of Atonement was the most sacred day of the Jewish year, when the high priest went alone into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled blood on the mercy seat as atonement for his own sins and those of all the people.

It is told that, on the eve of one Day of atonement, the high priest was going to his home, followed by a large and admiring crowd. But when two beloved scribes passed by, the crowd left the high priest and followed the scribes.

The scribes were given the prestigious titles of rabbi, which means teacher, and even of master and father;

Matthew 23:1-12 (NASB)

¹ Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples,

² saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;

³ therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them.

⁴ "They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.

⁵ "But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments.

⁶ "They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues,

⁷ and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men.

⁸ "But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers.

⁹ "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.

¹⁰ "Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.

¹¹ ***"But the greatest among you shall be your servant.***

¹² ***"Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.***

So great was their influence that some historians believe that it was a group of zealous scribes that incited the Jewish riots against Rome in A.D. 66, a rebellion that led to the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple four years later.

The scribes always sat in the places of highest honor at banquets and religious feasts.

In the synagogue they would sit with their backs to the cupboards that contained the scrolls of the Torah, that sacred law of Moses, indicating their unique position as its sole interpreters.

Even the tombs of the famous rabbis were venerated with superstitious awe, and their memories were embellished with fictitious legends about their wisdom and works.

Because the Old Testament was written in Hebrew whereas most Jews of New Testament times spoke only Aramaic, making people almost completely reliant on those leaders for any knowledge of God's Word.

Paul's assessment of this situation was as follows;

Romans 10:2-3 (NASB)

² ***For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.***

³ ***For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.***