

## **They Did Not Seek it by Faith**

### **Romans 9:30-33**

30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; 31 but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. 32 Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. 33 As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

Paul brings us to the crux of the matter. The Jews have not followed the teachings of Jesus and they have rejected Him as their Messiah. There was the judicial judgment of God upon Israel for their continued rebellion to the leading of God of course. But there was something much more basic.

We often think things to be more complicated than they are. But sometimes the answer to the problem is more basic.

Paul boils the rejection of the Jews into a simple reason. They would not come to God in faith alone in Christ alone for salvation.

This is a problem for millions of people today.

Almost every religion is a system of works one way or another. People hold that by their own efforts they can make it, what ever they think make it means.

The Jews had an elaborate system of religion and religious works and duties that they trusted would avail with God.

In truth the Gentiles also did but to pagan gods.

So let us sort this out. How can a people work so hard to please God and yet fail. And how can others be so far from the truth and end up righteous in God's site without working for it?

#### I. The Gentiles

##### A. Who did not pursue righteousness

1. The Gentiles did not seek after the true God.
2. They were bound to the stocks and stones they worshiped.
3. They had no scriptures and not promise. They were outcasts and alienated from God.
4. Man may be incurably religious but quite satisfied to find God in their own way and on their own terms.

##### B. Have attained to righteousness

1. What a marvelous thing that the Gentiles should find what they were not

looking for. Paul knows that it is because of God, His grace and mercy.

2. This is a thrilling statement. Gentiles, without willing or working, found righteousness in Christ because God worked and God willed it. The Old Testament Scriptures had prophesied it. As we have seen, Isaiah had said that Gentiles were to be saved. *J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Commentary: The Epistles (Romans 9-16), electronic ed., vol. 43 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 37.*
3. To the Jew this was an impossible thing.
  - a. They Jews had the family calling in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
  - b. They had the very oracles of God.
  - c. They had the offerings and sacrifice

C. Even the righteousness of faith.

1. The Gentiles found it the same way that Abraham did.
  - a. Genesis 15:6 (NKJV) 6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.
  - b. Before the law, before circumcision, without works, by faith Abraham found righteousness simply because he believed.
  - c. Regardless of what other preachers say, it is not a matter of keeping a law or keeping sacraments that bring righteousness.
2. Now it is not a natural thing but a supernatural.
  - a. 1 Corinthians 1:22-29 (NKJV) 22 For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.
3. Attained . . . Attained
  - a. In the English it is the same word, but in the Greek there are two

very different words: katalambano and phthano. Perhaps I can illustrate the difference by telling a story. Some time ago I saw a cartoon in one of our national magazines. It showed a scene in the board room of some industrial company where the president of the company was standing before his subordinates. On the wall behind him was a portrait of a man dressed in the style of the previous generation, who by the likeness was most evidently his father, the founder of the business. The president was scowling fiercely and saying to his salesmen, "The trouble with you men is that you have no initiative. Why, by the time I was thirty years old, I had inherited my first five million dollars." Well, believe me, there is a big difference between inheriting five million dollars and earning five million dollars. The two Greek words here set forth that difference. Our KJV says that the Gentiles attained righteousness and Israel did not attain to the law of righteousness. The Gentiles who followed not after righteousness, suddenly inherited, obtained, or received the free gift of life in Christ by grace through faith. The people of Israel who tried to earn it, did not get it. *Donald Grey Barnhouse, Expositions of Bible Doctrines Taking the Epistle to the Romans As a Point of Departure – Volume 8: God's Covenants, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1963), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 56.*

- b. So the way the Gentiles attained righteousness was through the free gift of God.
- c. They did not earn it any more than the Jews did.
- d. They did not deserve it any more than the Jews did.

## II. Israel

### A. Pursuing the law of righteousness

- 1. They had summed up the law into 600 some commands.
- 2. It was all about keeping the commands.
- 3. But keeping commands does not grow righteousness but pride.
- 4. Galatians 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. 22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

### B. Has not attained to the law of righteousness

- 1. But now I ask, "Why should God create a gospel that is so offensive?"

This is not the way a modern advertising executive would do it. He would try to make the gospel as attractive as possible. He would try to make it fit “felt needs.” That is the way to get a hearing. That is the way to sell a product. Doesn’t God understand the techniques of good marketing? The answer, of course, is that God knows exactly what he is doing. And what he is doing is to humble human pride, which is absolutely necessary if you or I or anybody else is to be saved. It is our pride that has gotten us into trouble in the first place. Pride is the very root of sin. There can be no salvation unless our pride is cut down, torn up by the roots, and cast out, which is what the gospel does. When pride is destroyed, then, and only then, are we ready to believe in Jesus and begin to build upon him. *James Montgomery Boice, Romans: God and History, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991–), 1145.*

C. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith

1. In Galatians Paul tells us that the purpose of the law was to force us to come to Christ.
2. Ga 3:24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

D. But as it were, by the works of the law.

1. Any religion or church that has any works associated with faith in order to achieve righteousness is bogus.
2. When people add baptism to faith they have a false gospel.
3. When you add anything to faith you have a false gospel.

III. The Stumbling Stone

A. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.

1. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a stumbling stone.
2. 1 Corinthians 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

B. As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense

1. A free salvation becomes an offense to men on account of their pride. They cannot bear the idea of being indebted for it to sovereign grace, which implies that in themselves they are guilty and ruined by sin. They desire to do something, were it ever so little, to merit salvation, at least in part. *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans. Robert Haldane*
2. Psalm 118:22 (NKJV) 22 The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.

3. There is a story behind this verse, though it is not in the Bible. It is a two-thousand-year-old tradition that has come down to us from the time of the building of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. The stones for that temple were quarried away from the temple site, according to detailed plans supplied by the temple architects, and they were transported to the temple site and assembled there without the noise of stonecutting tools. Early in the construction a stone was sent that did not seem to fit the temple. Since the builders did not know what to do with it, they laid it aside and forgot it. Later, when they were ready to place a large capstone on the now nearly completed structure and sent to the quarry for it, they were told that it was not there, that it had already been sent up. The builders searched for it and eventually found the stone that had been laid aside. When they lifted it to its proper place in the building, it fit perfectly. *James Montgomery Boice, Romans: God and History, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991-), 1145-1146.*

C. And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

1. Isaiah 53:2-3 (NKJV) 2 For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him. 3 He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

During the last century, in the worst slum district of London, there was a social worker whose name was Henry Moorehouse. One evening as Moorehouse was walking along the street, he saw a little girl come out of a basement store carrying a pitcher of milk. She was taking it home. When she was a few yards from Moorehouse, she suddenly slipped and fell. Her hands relaxed their grip on the pitcher and it dropped on the sidewalk and broke. The milk ran down into the gutter, and the little girl began to cry as if her heart would break. Moorehouse quickly stepped up to see if she was hurt. He helped her to her feet, saying, "Don't cry, little girl."

But she kept crying, repeating through her tears, "My mommy'll whip me; my mommy'll whip me."

Moorehouse said, "No, little girl, your mother won't whip you. I'll see to that. Look, the pitcher isn't broken in many pieces." As he stooped down beside her, picked up the pieces, and began to work as if he were putting the pitcher back together, the little girl stopped crying. She had hope. She came from a family in which pitchers had been mended before. Maybe this stranger could repair the damage. She watched as Moorehouse fitted several of the pieces together until, working too roughly, he knocked it apart again. Once more she began to cry, and Moorehouse had to repeat, "Don't cry, little girl. I promise you that your mother won't whip you."

Again they began the task of restoration, this time getting it all together except for the handle. Moorehouse gave it to the little girl, and she tried to attach it. But, naturally, all she did was knock it down again. This time there was no stopping her tears. She would not even look at the broken pieces lying on the sidewalk.

Finally Moorehouse picked the little girl up in his arms, carried her down the street to a shop that sold crockery, and bought her a new pitcher. Then, still carrying her, he went back to where the girl had bought the milk and had the new pitcher filled. He asked her where she lived. When he was told, he carried her to the house, set her down on the step, and placed the full pitcher of milk in her hands. Then he opened the door for her. As she stepped in, he asked one more question, “Now, do you think your mother will whip you?”

He was rewarded for his trouble by a bright smile as she said to him, “Oh, no, sir, ’cause it’s a lot better pitcher ’an we had before.” *James Montgomery Boice, Romans: God and History, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991–), 1139.*