

# The Stone God Lays in Zion: Salvation or Stumbling

Romans 9:30-10:15

Preceding passage:

*Romans 9:22-29 What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath-- prepared for destruction? <sup>23</sup> What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory-- <sup>24</sup> even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? <sup>25</sup> As he says in Hosea: "I will call them 'my people' who are not my people; and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one," <sup>26</sup> and, "It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"*

<sup>27</sup> *Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved. <sup>28</sup> For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality." <sup>29</sup> It is just as Isaiah said previously: "Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah."*

I. Paul's Summation: A Stone Laid in Zion... Faith or Stumbling

*Romans 9:30-33 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; <sup>31</sup> but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. <sup>32</sup> Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone." <sup>33</sup> As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."*

Q: Why is it so important for the Jews to realize that "God's people" includes many Gentiles, while many Jews are not "God's people"?

Q: How does Paul contrast Gentiles and Jews in this passage?

Q: Why is it significant that the Gentiles did not pursue righteousness?

Q: What amazing gift of grace did God give believing Gentiles?

Q: How does Paul describe Israel's pursuit? How did the Jews pursue righteousness not by faith but by works?

Q: How do Paul's observations here about Israel's pursuit of righteousness by works of the law line up with this passage from Paul's testimony in Philippians?:

*Philippians 3:8-11 I consider them [my religious credentials] rubbish, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

Q: What is "the stumbling stone" in verses 32-33? What does it mean to stumble over it?

Note: In Romans 9:33, Paul combines two quotes from Isaiah:

*Isaiah 8:12-15 do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. <sup>13</sup> The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread, <sup>14</sup> and he will be a sanctuary; but for both houses of Israel he will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare. <sup>15</sup> Many of them will stumble; they will fall and be broken, they will be snared and captured."*

*Isaiah 28:15-16 You boast, "We have entered into a covenant with death, with the grave we have made an agreement. When an overwhelming scourge sweeps by, it cannot touch us, for we have made a lie our refuge and falsehood our hiding place." <sup>16</sup> So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed."*

Bottom line: the stumbling stone is this... being told "You cannot save yourself... if you try, you will die! But if you simply trust in me, humbly admitting your weakness, need, and sin, I will save you."

In this passage, Almighty God was BOTH a sanctuary and a stone of stumbling for Israel... to the humble, faith-filled remnant like Hezekiah, He was a sanctuary and a Savior. But to anybody who tried to prepare militarily, who didn't bother to repent but who felt what we need is stronger fortresses and a bigger army... what we need is to make a pact with Egypt to come fight for us... what we need is a new secret weapon or surprise strategy... if you try to save yourself that way, you will be slaughtered. That would be a stumbling stone.

So also when it comes to salvation. Christ is either the refuge or the stumbling stone.

Q: How does the statement, “The one who trusts *in him* will never be put to shame” teach us who the “stumbling stone” is? How is Jesus Christ a stumbling stone for the Jews? (Paul openly identifies the stone of Isaiah 28:16 as Jesus in Romans 10:11)

## II. Paul’s Earnest Prayer for the Jews

***Romans 10:1-4 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. <sup>2</sup> For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. <sup>3</sup> Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. <sup>4</sup> Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.***

Q: What does Paul’s desire and prayer for unbelieving Israel teach you?

Q: How do you harmonize his clear teaching on God’s sovereignty in election and salvation with this prayer?

Q: What does Paul say about their zeal for God? Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

Q: What is the problem of zeal without knowledge? What are others examples in today’s world of people with religious zeal without knowledge?

Q: What didn’t they “know”? What was lacking?

Q: Why did they seek to establish their own righteousness? How did they try to do that? What is at the root of such an effort? Why is it completely unacceptable to God?

Piper: Here we have a Judaism that says, “We are born of Israelites. We do some law-keeping, better than the Gentiles, for sure. And what we don’t succeed at there, we add some sacrifice, some forgiveness.” And that mixture is then offered to God. “I got a little bit of merit and a good dose of grace and now we’re in.” PAUL UTTERLY REJECTS THAT!

Christianity says zero contribution to your justification. You bring zero works to your justification, and Christ brings total perfection to your justification, and that’s why it corresponds to election. Election is totally without any condition. And so, he’s developing a way of justification that parallels election. Election is unconditional, and justification, in its grounding and provision, is unconditional.

Q: How is Christ's parable of the "Pharisee and the Tax Collector" a good display of what this passage both rejects and accepts? How does the Pharisee seek to establish his own righteousness?

Q: What does Paul mean, "They did not submit to God's righteousness"?

Q: What does "Christ is the end of the law" mean in verse 4? Note: "end" can mean "purpose" or "perfection" or "termination". How is Christ the purpose of the Law? How is Christ the perfection of the Law? How is Christ the termination of the Law?

### III. Righteousness by Law vs. Righteousness by Faith

*Romans 10:5-13 Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them." <sup>6</sup> But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) <sup>7</sup> "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). <sup>8</sup> But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: <sup>9</sup> That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. <sup>11</sup> As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." <sup>12</sup> For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile-- the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, <sup>13</sup> for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

Q: How does Paul say Moses describes the righteousness by law? What does he mean "will live by them"?

Q: How does that compare with the vital opening statement in this Book of Romans?

*Romans 1:17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "**The righteous will live by faith.**"*

Q: Why is the "righteousness by the law" not possible to save anyone? How does it compare with this statement:

*Romans 3:20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*

Q: How does Paul then describe the righteousness that is by faith? How do his statements connect with this passage in the Law?

***Deuteronomy 30:11-14*** Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. <sup>12</sup> It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" <sup>13</sup> Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" <sup>14</sup> No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.

Q: How does Paul marry the statement in Deuteronomy with the works of Christ to save us?

Q: Why is it vital to understand that the word of faith (the gospel of Christ) is near us... right there... in our mouths and in our hearts?

Q: What does verse 9 teach us about salvation? Paul seems to be saying, "It is not hard to be saved... all you have to do is \_\_\_\_\_"

Q: How does Paul link belief and confession in verses 9 and 10? Why does he say "It is with your heart that you believe... it is with your mouth that you confess?"

Q: How does Paul go back to the earlier statement about the rock God lays in Zion (Romans 9:33). What is the link here?

Q: Why bring up the Jew/Gentile issue at this point? [That everyone gets saved the same way]

Q: What does it mean to "call upon the name of the Lord"?

#### IV. Missions Are Essential to God's Plan for Salvation

***Romans 10:14-15*** How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? <sup>15</sup> And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"