

## ROMANS XXXVII: THE END OF THE LAW

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### INTRODUCTION:

We have already seen that Christ is the foundation stone and the stumbling stone, depending. For the one who believes, He is the foundation of all. For the one who does not believe in Him, He is the rock of offense.

### THE TEXT:

*"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" ([Rom. 10:1-4](#)).*

### SUMMARY OF THE TEXT:

Paul has already said that he could wish himself lost if that would benefit his kinsmen ([Rom. 9:3](#)). Here he repeats his heart's desire and prayer—that they would be saved (v. 1). He can testify on their behalf that they are zealous, and that it is a zeal for God. But it is not in accordance with knowledge—it is a false-hearted zeal (v. 2). Their problem is that they were ignorant of God's righteousness (v. 3), and they were "going about" to establish their own righteousness (v. 3). As a result they had not submitted to God's righteousness (v. 3). Paul's conclusion is that Christ was the end (*telos*) of the law "for righteousness to" every one who believes (v. 4).

### THE WHOLE POINT OF THE LAW:

When Paul says that Christ is the "end of the law," he does not mean that Christ is the abolition or limit of the law, as in the phrase the "end of the dock." He means that Christ was the whole point of the law, as in "what is the chief end of man? The word *end* here does not mean limit or boundary, but rather it means purpose or point. The law of God was therefore teleological (from *telos*), and the *telos*, the one it was driving toward was Jesus Christ. He is the point of the whole Bible. But He is the point of the law as more than just a person or placeholder. He is the end of the law *in His righteous obedience*. More on this shortly.

### IGNORANT OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS:

Remember the conclusion of chapter nine. There is a trap for sanctimonious saints. There is a pit for the pious there. There is something in the (religious) human heart that wants to be righteous *on its own*. In our own tradition, in our own teaching and preaching, we must be careful not to leave any room for this tendency whatever.

A recent interpretation of Paul says that the "righteousness of God" refers only to God's own faithfulness in keeping His own promises. It does not refer, the argument goes, to any righteousness of God that can be imputed to others. This view of God's righteousness is deficient when held up next to this passage, for four reasons.

First, if the righteousness of God refers to His own righteousness, then the Jews were *not* ignorant of it. Second, they were "going about" to establish their own righteousness. Instead of what? Instead of the antecedent, the righteousness of God. They wanted their own righteousness instead of the righteousness of *another*. Third, the righteousness of God was not something they were willing to submit themselves to. This submission, we have just learned, is by faith—and if it is the righteousness of another, it has to be a submission by faith, by definition. And fourth, consider closely the language of v. 4. Christ is the end of the law *for righteousness to* every one that believeth. This fourth point requires some more from us.

## GRACE EVERYWHERE YOU LOOK:

If Christ is the whole point of the Torah, and if Christ is a stone of stumbling and rock of offense, then it follows that *the whole point of the Torah* is a stone of stumbling and rock of offense. In Scripture there is grace everywhere you look, and if you don't want to see it, then you have to do some strange things to the Scriptures.

The language of v. 4 is consistent with the doctrine of imputed righteousness, and is consistent with nothing else. Everyone who believes receives something. What is that? They receive *righteousness*. We know that it cannot be their own righteousness because, if it were, they would not "receive" it, but would already have it, and we also would not have just been told that those who wanted their *own* righteousness were stumbling over the rock of offense.

I looked at multiple translations, and they all render it *for righteousness to*. Paraphrase this, amplify it. "Christ is the whole point of the Torah, His life and work being the complete fulfillment of it, in order that His righteousness might come to every one who believes in Him, instead of continuing to trust in his own righteousness."

## IGNORANT SAINTLETS:

What is the kind of thing that would make someone stumble so egregiously over news this good? God in His covenant righteousness sends a righteous Messiah, in order that the people of God might be gathered up and included in His righteousness, and reckoned as complete and perfect in Him. What would make someone kick against this?

The answer is found in our text. Religiosity is the thing that hides the righteousness of God from us. But it does not hide the righteousness of God considered as a goal toward which we might strive—no, it *magnifies* the righteousness of God that way. And the higher the bar, the better. At least that is what ignorant saintlets think.

God offers us a salvation that is by His grace from first to last. But because the God who offers us grace is also fully and completely righteous, there must be a completion of His holy requirements. This means that we, if we are to be saved at all, must be content with the righteousness of another, imputed to us. And in order to be content with this, we need to be willing to have all our good deeds despised by God. We must be willing for God to put them away with loathing, holding them between His thumb and forefinger. We must be willing for God to laugh at all our pious striving. Beads of sweat have broken out on the forehead as we wrestle with lust, with covetousness, with pride, with anxiety, with sin . . . with everything but our culpable ignorance of what God is like. Poor, ignorant *sap*. Christ is here. Believe in *Him*.



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