

# Ignorance of God's righteousness

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now friends, shall we turn for a little time tonight to the portion of scripture that we read together. The epistle of Paul to the Romans, chapter 10.

And we may read again at the beginning. Romans chapter 10. 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. And especially the words of verse 3.

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.

[ 1 : 20 ] These verses show us something of the Christ-likeness of the Apostle Paul.

How faithfully he followed the Master's teaching. Pray for them that persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.

For no man could have been treated more ruthlessly by his fellow countrymen than the Apostle. And in his second letter to the Church at Corinth, he gives us a glimpse, a catalogue of his sufferings for the sake of the Gospel.

Of the Jews, he said, Five times received I the forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods.

[ 2 : 31 ] Once was I stoned. Thrice I suffered shipwreck. A night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeyings often.

In perils of robber. In perils by my own countrymen. And now he says, My heart's desire, and my prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

Oh, what a beautiful Christian spirit the Apostle showed. How closely he followed the teaching of the Lord Jesus.

There is a tendency nowadays to depreciate doctrine. To set aside doctrinal standards.

And there are those who say, What does it matter what a man believes? As long as his life is in the right.

[ 3 : 47 ] Well, the Bible teaches that what we believe is all important. For doctrine is the foundation of all right living.

And in the Apostle Paul's writings, Doctrine and duty are always closely related. Belief leads to behavior.

He believed the teaching of his Lord, and he sought practically to carry it out. What a great Christian he was, that he could say of those who had treated him so basely, Brethren, my heart's desire, my prayer to God for Israel, is that they might be saved.

Now, friends, as we meditate on these words for a little time tonight, I would like to think, first of all, of Paul's personal plea.

Paul's personal plea. My heart's desire, and prayer to God for Israel, is that they might be saved.

[ 5 : 14 ] He longed for the salvation of the Jews. He was aflame with the love of Christ. He was burdened with this passion for souls, day by day.

Apostle of the Gentiles, though he was, he longed for the conversion of God's ancient people. And he tells us, that to them, belong the adoption, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises of grace.

They were Paul's kinsmen, according to the flesh. And in the previous chapter, the apostle says that he had continual sorrow and great heaviness of heart.

And he could wish, he said, I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh.

Oh, what a demonstration of the love of Christ. How this man had learned to forgive.

[ 6 : 54 ] How he had walked so closely with his Lord. They are my kinsmen, according to the flesh. and he was willing to give his life in their place, to sacrifice his all for their salvation.

Oh, what a fine Christian the apostle was. A man who was filled with the spirit of his master.

And these words of the apostles remind us of that selfless plea that Moses made, you remember, when Israel had fashioned the molten calf in his absence.

And when he came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of stone, and you remember how he threw them to the ground. And God spoke in wrath that he would destroy Israel.

And you remember the plea of Moses, the intercessor, yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin, and if not, blot me out, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written.

[ 8 : 33 ] And as Moses is one of the highest human peaks of the Old Testament, so is Paul of the new.

My heart's desire, my prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved, that they might be saved. And this is the desire of the gospel preacher for his hearers. this is a continual burden of the pastor for his flock, that they might be saved, that they might turn from this way of seeking to establish their own righteousness, that they might be brought to trust in Christ and to rest on his finished work alone.

And this is the ambition of the believer for others. This is the Christian's great hope for his fellow men and women, that they might be saved, that they might come to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

Do you remember how we are told in the gospel about Andrew, the brother of Peter? Oh, what a genuine servant of Christ Andrew was.

[ 10 : 17 ] He is in the shadows in comparison with his brother. He is not prominent among the disciples. But, oh, Andrew was surely an effective witness for Christ.

And we are told that when Jesus called him, that Andrew first found his own brother Simon and he said to him, we have found the Messiah.

We have found the Messiah. he found his own brother Simon. And you see, friends, it is wrong for us to make a distinction between the home and the foreign mission field.

For the field of the gospel is one. one, and we must faithfully seek to sow the seed without neglecting any one part of the field.

The master's commission is to the church, go and preach the gospel to every creature, to every creature.

[ 11 : 42 ] Go and preach this word of grace. ah the great apostle of the Gentiles was not unmoved by the desperate plight of those who were perishing at home my heart's desire my prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved but then also friends we see in our text a false zeal a false zeal 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 now Paul bears witness that the men and women of Israel were very religious according to their own lights and the class to which he himself belonged the Pharisees were very strict regarding the letter of the law they were scrupulous as to the observance of ritual to the attention they gave to the minutest things of the ceremonial law and then too many of the Pharisees were morally respectable there was a man who said in the temple

I thank thee that I am not as other men are not an extortioner or an adulterer or a wrongdoer and outwardly many of them were moral and in their observance of the ceremonial law they fasted at the proper time they gave a tenth of their income for the upkeep of the temple they enforced the keeping of the ten commandments and they trained students to be teachers of the law of God many of them were scrupulous regarding the observance of the outward things of God's law but very often that was as far as it went the religion was largely a cold and lifeless formality and Paul says they have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge it was a mistaken zeal a zeal that was not according to knowledge and the apostle was speaking from his personal experience for before his conversion when he was a persecutor of the church

Saul of Tarsus thought that he was doing God's service he too was ignorant of God's righteousness he was seeking to establish a righteousness of his own to devise some means of salvation for

himself and the great mistake of the Pharisees was this that they thought that religious observances apart from faith could make a man acceptable to God they believed as it were in a mechanical means of salvation a mechanical means of salvation you see there are those for instance in the Roman Catholic Church today and they imagine that their very presence at the administration of a sacrament is a means of salvation that is what ties the Roman

Catholic so closely to the church and to the ministrations of the priest he really believes that his presence at the observance of the mass is for him as it were a deposit in the bank of merit that this is going to count towards his final salvation and there are many even in Scotland in our day who make much of the sacraments and yet are seldom present in the house of God they take lightly their views regarding baptism they regard the baptism of a child as a social convenience now the sacraments are precious they're precious to the believer in Christ but as our catechism teaches they have no value in themselves apart from faith in Christ and yet that is the modern delusion of some who call themselves

Protestants but they imagine that the mere partaking of a sacrament is salvation and you see the apostle is saying this about the Jews of his day they are going about to establish their own righteousness they think that their presence at the sacrifice in the temple that that is acceptable to God they imagine that their own tithe and their own observance of ritual that this is as it were gaining them some merit in the bank of heaven they are going about to establish their own righteousness that's what the Pharisee was doing in his prayer in the temple I thank thee that I am not as other men are I do this and I do that and

[19:22] I do the next thing and I am better than this man and I am not like this man and they prided themselves they prided themselves on their own good deeds they were going about to establish their own righteousness and they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness the termination of the law Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes the righteousness of Christ covers the sinner who trusts in him then friends we would see in these words the crowning sin the crowning sin they being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God this is the crowning sin they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God in other words they have turned their back upon Christ they have rejected the Savior they have ignored

God's offer of salvation they have rejected God's way and they have chosen their own way one of the great watchwords of the reformers was Jehovah Sid Kenyu which means the Lord our righteousness the Lord our righteousness Paul says that his fellow countrymen were going about to establish their own righteousness piling up merit as it were in the bank of heaven this was going to avail for them they would think that their keeping of the commandments was sufficient for God that they would be accepted while the gentile world was under the curse that was their belief and Paul says they were going about to establish their own righteousness but no friends is that not true of us all before we came to Christ that we were going about to establish our own righteousness that we really thought that we could get to heaven by our own good works that we could as it were devise our own way to heaven while we were rejecting

God's means of salvation salvation do you remember the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and he asked what must he do to inherit eternal life and Jesus said you know the commandments and he said which ones thou shalt love the Lord thy God thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself honor thy father and thy mother and he said all these have I kept from my youth all these have I kept and you see that young man is typical of us all we keep clinging to the idea that somehow we can satisfy the demands of God's law see that young man was utterly ignorant of the spiritual nature of the law of

God he did not realize that no mere man is able in this life perfectly to keep the commandments of God but doth daily break them in in thought word and in deed all these have I kept from my youth up he said ah he had not learned to say with the apostle in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing it's beyond me I cannot possibly fulfill the law of God such knowledge is too strange for me too high to understand he did not understand the spiritual nature of the law of God all our righteousnesses said Isaiah are but filthy rags all our righteousnesses the things that we would boast of ah yes as one of the old

Puritans said our holiest services are tainted with sin all our righteousnesses are but filthy rags Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth Christ is all and you see

being ignorant of God's character made him ignorant of the demands of God's law and he was ignorant too of the deceitfulness of his own heart going about to establish their own righteousness they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God they have not submitted themselves they have not accepted

[ 26 : 31 ] God's way they go on persisting in their own way imagining that they themselves can build a ladder that will reach up to heaven but they will not take God's way God's way that is freely presented in the gospel to every sinner who will turn to Christ they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God that is the crowning sin to reject Christ remember our Lord's words he that rejecteth my word hath one that judgeth him they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God you see friend it is as if that prodigal that prodigal who had so grieved his father who had led such a shameful life in the far country it was as if he denied that he was a sinner but when he heard the words bring forth the best robe and put it on him it was as if he would say no no my own raiment is good enough my own raiment is good enough and he was wearing these filthy rocks had not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of

God he was offered the ring of the covenant engagement the ring that said that he was a member of the family and that he was entitled to all the privileges of the father's house but he refused that ring that ring that transferred all his liability to the father and as if he heard the words put shoes on his feet to enable him to walk in the way that leads to heaven it was as if he said no I won't have them I'll get there by myself I'll get there by myself they're going about to establish their own righteousness and my friend that is typical of the natural heart that is man's attitude by nature he goes about to establish his own righteousness and he is ignorant of God's righteousness he does not see that the gospel is offering him salvation that God is inviting him to come with nothing in his hand without money or without price that he is invited to come and take the cup of salvation and pay his vows unto the Lord in the presence of all his people going about to establish their own righteousness they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God ah my friend the robes of Christ's righteousness are precious they're infinitely precious everyone in that glorious multitude of the redeemed in heaven are wearing these robes they're wearing the robes of his righteousness they are accepted in the beloved they have submitted to the righteousness of God they are clothed in the righteousness of Christ and you remember how John in that great vision of heaven said to the elder when he saw the innumerable multitude of the redeemed before the throne who were they he said who are these whence came they and the elder said these are they that have come out of great tribulation and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb ah they've been cleansed sin has been cleansed forever and they're wearing pure robe these beautiful robes i asked them whence their victory came they with united breath ascribed salvation to the lamb their triumph to his death ah yes clothed in the righteousness of christ oh my friend can you say tonight my hope is built on nothing less than jesus blood and righteousness nothing less the righteousness of god or oh my friend are you going about to establish your own righteousness are you going about saying i am better than other men are are you as it were printing yourself on your obedience to the law on the morality of your life all these are good things we would not for a moment decry them but ah we must not make them the means of seeking to establish our own righteousness going about to establish our own righteousness ah my friend look look at

Calvary look at the savior look at him who in our place fulfilled the law who finished transgression and made an end of sin and brought in an everlasting righteousness in our place condemned he stood sealed our pardon with his blood oh my friend is is christ your hope is the righteousness of christ your robe trusting in him accepted in the beloved wearing that fine linen which is the righteousness of the saints my heart's desire for Israel is that they might be saved and that is our longing for all who hear the gospel that they might be saved that they might not go about seeking to establish their own righteousness but that they might receive the gift of God the gift of God which is eternal life through

Jesus Christ our Lord who every one that thirst is come ye to the water and he that has no money come ye ye come buy wine and milk without money and without price he offers it freely to every sinner who looks to Christ and he says him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out approach my soul the mercy seat where Jesus answers prayer and cast thyself before his feet for none can perish there for none can perish there may the

[ 35 : 36 ] Lord bless our meditation on his word