

Romans (10:1-4)

The End of the Law

Part 44 - August 7, 2005

CHRIST THE CORNERSTONE

We saw how Paul wove two OT scriptures together, to show that:

- A. A “cornerstone” would be laid by God. (*Is. 28:16*)
- B. And, this “cornerstone” would *be* God. (*Is. 8:14*)

Paul also demonstrated that God had predicted (through Isaiah) that the Jews would stumble and fall over this stone. (*Is. 8:14*)

... 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. - *Romans 9:33 NIV*

* “Zion” refers to the land of Israel, as a symbol of the Jews.

Q: But, what does it mean to “stumble” over Jesus?

Q: How did they stumble; and why did they stumble?

Let’s find out what Paul’s thinking:

Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. 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. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. - *Romans 10:1-4 NIV*

- He reminds them that he is one of them: “Brothers”
- He reminds them that he cares for them: “My heart’s desire”

And he reminds them that he respects them: “I can testify about them that they are zealous for God”. Paul speaks from experience; he was so zealous he persecuted (victimized) early Christians.

Even today, there are hotels (catering to Hasidic Jews) with special elevators (for the Sabbath) that stop on every floor, so the buttons don’t have to be pressed (constituting *work*).

And then we have a classic: “But”

WRONG WAY ZEAL

“But their zeal is not based on knowledge”

It’s passionate and intense and earnest; but it’s misdirected! (Paul is sneaking in another Old Testament reference.)

It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and *miss the way*. -
Proverbs 19:2 NIV

Q: Ever hear someone say it doesn’t matter *what* you believe, as long as you’re *sincere*?



I was cruising through Bellingham once, late at night; and as I went through an intersection I noticed the stoplights had been hung *backwards*. I thought: that’s weird. As I shot through the second intersection, same thing! I thought: that could be dangerous; somebody is really stupid. At the third intersection it hit me: *I’m stupid!* It’s a one way street!

- We can sincerely miss the way!

Until I realized my *own* foolishness, I could only conclude that Bellingham signal-light guys were idiots! But once I recognized my mistake, the wisdom behind those lights became obvious.

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. - *Romans 10:3 NIV*

There is no excuse for refusing to admit our error, or submit to his righteousness once it has been revealed to us. Then it is no longer sincerity, it is rebelliousness.

God had revealed himself to Israel at Mount Sinai. And his covenant did NOT require them to *earn* their salvation, but to trust his mercy, and to let obedience flow from the joy of faith. However, they ended up using his commandments to quantify their virtue. In fact, when they entered the Promised Land, three times in different words, Moses had to give them this warning:

Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the Lord your God is giving you this good land to possess ... - *Deuteronomy 9:6 NIV*

And yet, they continued to resist a righteousness through faith, and as Paul noted, they: “Sought to establish their own”



I saw a T-shirt that said: Jesus Loves You! And in small print: Then again he loves everybody. The humor plays off of a sinful characteristic we share, to feel less valuable if we don’t somehow stand out from “the crowd”.

ESTABLISHING OURSELVES



Hair color, hair style, clothes, tattoos, piercings, we'll do whatever it takes to be unique (even if it means conforming!). Here's an extreme example on the left. You have to admit it is tasteful ... I mean, compared to the one on the right!



I find my value in the fact that I've been created in the image of God, purchased by his blood, and am desired to be cared for in his presence forever ... plus I have this wicked nose ring! I'm not condemning tattoos, piercings, or hair color; I'm pointing out that we have a corrupt tendency to establish our sense of self-worth by contrasting ourselves with other *people*.

- And this is dangerous when it comes to a sense of righteousness.

Q: Where are you on a scale of 1-10 for being righteousness?

- If Hitler is a *zero*, that raises most everyone to at least a five.
- If pornographers are *threes* the rest of us must be somewhere around six.
- If kind-hearted atheists are *sixes*, that's got to make us believers eights.
- If half-hearted Christians are *eights*, well then, we gotta be nines.

And if you're a strong believer, attend church regularly, tithe on the gross, share your faith, read scripture, pray with your children, serve in ministry, and have a regular quiet time, ... whoa, baby: 9.7 – 9.8? It looks like we're at the top of the ladder.

- The problem is, the scale isn't 0-10 it's 0-infinity!

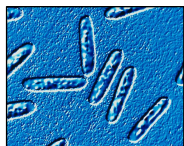
Until we submit our righteousness to the measure of God's holiness, we'll wrongfully rate ourselves in comparison to other people, and wind up with a much higher *score* than they deserve.

And when a person considers him/herself to be a 9.7 or a 9.8, there's no sense talking about a Savior, because in their mind they just don't *need* one.



- I've had people I love say to me, "I'm not that bad."

It's like looking at a glass of water. It looks so pure till you put it under a microscope ... and then, parasites and impurities!



- I am profoundly lovable, but completely unacceptable.

Unrighteousness is magnified in God's presence. And the law serves as a magnifier of sin, to reveal the need for a Savior.

And, if we miss the point of the law (and turn it into a way to quantify righteousness); we will miss the point of Christ, and see his message of faith as a threat to our sense of self-worth. To receive Christ's righteousness, we must reject our own. And now we begin to see how and why they "stumbled" over Christ.

Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. - *Romans 10:4 NIV*

When Paul says that Christ is the "end of the law" he doesn't mean the "abolishment." The Greek word, *Telos* means end and goal.



It's like a finish line. It's both the objective for the runner, and the completion of the race. God intended all along that Christ would end the era of the law (which separated man and God), even while ushering in a new era (covenant) to which the law always pointed.

Jesus said it this way (by quoting Psalm 118:22):

What is the meaning of that which is written: "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone"? - *Luke 20:17 NIV*

Q: Do you know what a capstone is?

You probably have a picture of one on you right now. It's above the pyramid on the back of a \$1 bill. "The Great Seal of the United States" includes a capstone with the all-seeing eye of God/providence.

Q: So, is he the cornerstone as (Paul quotes), or the capstone (as Jesus quotes)?

A: He's both; the alpha *and* omega, the first *and* last, the beginning *and* end.

It was set for him and by him, and finds it's completion in him. He is the "end of the law"; the cause and climax of salvation history. And Jesus then went on to say:

Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." - *Luke 20:18 NIV*

There's an old Jewish Proverb that helps us understand Jesus' point:

If a stone falls on a pot, woe to the pot! If a pot falls on a stone ... woe to the pot! In either case, woe to the pot! - *Old Jewish Proverb*

When it's a stone versus a pot, the stone wins every time! We can never be good enough to provide a righteousness of our own that could be the grounds of our justification before God. Religion can't save us no matter how zealous we are.

- Christ will be our righteousness, or we will perish.