

THE TRAGIC MISTAKE OF ISRAEL: MISSING GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS ROMANS 10:01–13

Introduction

This passage has two powerful points. It shows the tragic mistake of Israel, and it proclaims the great danger of missing God's righteousness. It is an excellent study on God's righteousness. It shows man exactly what has to be done in order to receive his utopia upon earth, exactly what has to be done to make all things right. It reveals how a man can receive righteousness and be saved from death and judgment and live forever.

- I. Paul's desire and Israel's mistake (vv. 1-3).
- II. God's righteousness is Jesus Christ (v. 4).
- III. God's righteousness is opposed to man's righteousness, to man's way for reaching God (v. 5).
- IV. God's righteousness does not have to seek out a Messiah or a Deliverer (utopia) (vv. 6-7)
- V. God's righteousness and salvation are right before a person (vv. 8-10).
- VI. God's righteousness and salvation deliver a person from shame (v. 11).
- VII. The Lord treats all men alike (v. 12).
- VIII. All people are saved by the same promise (v. 13).

I. *Romans 10:01–03 Errors of Israel*

Paul's desire and Israel's mistake. Paul had a burning desire for Israel's salvation. He loved his people and loved them deeply.

=> The word "desire" (eudokia) means longing, willing, yearning, craving. He craved and yearned to see the salvation of his people. If he saw their salvation, his desire would be fulfilled.

=> Note that Paul prayed for Israel's salvation. They could be saved; their rejection of Christ was not hopeless. The door of salvation is open to all men, the Jew as well as the Gentile.

Thought 1. The fact that Paul prayed for the salvation of the Jews is a lesson to all believers. We, too, need to be praying for the salvation of the Jews. Why? Because so much of the world's heritage that is good and decent has come from the Jews:

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|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| => morality | => law |
| => the Bible | => the Prophets |
| => the Son of God, Jesus Christ | => the true religion |
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John 4:22 *“You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.”*

Now note Israel's great mistake: they had a zeal for God, but it was not based on correct knowledge.

=> The Jews had knowledge (gnosis) about God, and knew a great deal about Him (Rom. 2:17f)

=> But the Jews did not have the correct knowledge of God. The word knowledge (epignosis) means correct, right, full, complete. It means an *experiential knowledge* of the truth.

The point is, the Jews knew some things about God, but their knowledge was only partial. What they knew was incomplete; it was not enough. Therefore, their knowledge was incorrect. As a result they did not know God personally.

Why did Israel have an incomplete and incorrect knowledge of God? There are three reasons.

1. Israel was ignorant of God's righteousness. They failed to understand...

- God's true nature: His holiness and perfection, and the utter necessity to be perfect in order to be acceptable to Him and given the right to live in His presence.
- Man's true nature: his sin and desperate need for *perfect* righteousness in order to be acceptable to God and given the right to live in God's presence.
- God's love: His love in sending His Son to save man by providing a perfect righteousness for him.

Very simply, Israel was ignorant of God's method of justification, ignorant as to how a man really becomes acceptable to God.

Eph 4:18 *They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.*

Jer 5:4 *I thought, “These are only the poor; they are foolish, for they do not know the way of the Lord, the requirements of their God.”*

Micah 4:12 *But they do not know the thoughts of the Lord; they do not understand his plan, he who gathers them like sheaves to the threshing floor.*

2. Israel went about establishing its own way of righteousness. They sought to make themselves acceptable to God through...

- rituals
- ceremonies
- laws
- works

They sought to save themselves by being as religious as they could. They felt God would never reject them if they did the best they could. Therefore, they drew up every

rule and regulation they could to make themselves *religiously good* and acceptable, and they worked and worked to follow the rules and regulations. They sought to build their own way and route to God.

Mark 7:6 *He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.'"*

2 Cor 10:12 *We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.*

Job 9:20 *Even if I were innocent, my mouth would condemn me; if I were blameless, it would pronounce me guilty.*

Prov 20:6 *Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man who can find?*

Prov 30:12 *Those who are pure in their own eyes and yet are not cleansed of their filth.*

3. Israel refused to submit themselves to the righteousness of God. Very simply, they refused to accept Jesus Christ, who is God's righteousness.

Thought 1. Note a crucial point. Zeal and sincerity are not enough in seeking God. No person or group of people could be any more zealous or sincere in seeking God than the Jews. But something else is always needed; zeal and sincerity always require one other ingredient: accurate and complete knowledge. Zeal and sincerity by themselves cannot reach a destination. A person can be as zealous and sincere as possible and still be on the wrong road and never reach his destination. To reach his destination, he must know the right road.

1 Tim 2:4-5 *Who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

II. Romans 10:04 Jesus Christ, The Righteousness of God

God's righteousness is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the One who puts an end (telos) to man having to seek righteousness through the law. Man no longer has to work and work to be acceptable to God, to work and work knowing full well that he is coming up ever so short of God's glory and demand. Man no longer has to live under the enslaving power of sin, under its guilt and shame and punishment. Man no longer has to live under the weight and pressure of failing and of being ever so unworthy and hopeless, lonely and alienated. Man can now be set free and know full well that he is acceptable to God. Man can now have a heart that swells with assurance and confidence, the perfect knowledge that he is God's and God is his. Man can know that he is accepted as righteous before God. How? Through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes." This means at least three things.

1. Christ *ended* the law in that He is the object toward which the law pointed. All the ceremonies, sacrifices, offerings and purifications — they all led and pointed toward Christ.

=> The law was the supervisor, the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

Gal 3:24-25 *So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.*

Very simply, the law was never intended to be the way to become righteous and acceptable to God. The law was given to point and lead men to Christ, who is the righteousness of God.

=> The law was but a shadow of the real substance that was to come.

Col 2:17 *These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. (see Heb 9:9)*

2. Christ *ended* the law in that He fulfilled and completed the law perfectly. He lived under the law and kept it perfectly. He was sinless, obeying every rule and requirement of the law. By fulfilling the law, Jesus Christ has become...

- the Ideal Man
- the Perfect Man
- the Representative Man

The law finds its perfection in Jesus Christ. He is the very embodiment of all that God wants man to be. Therefore, man no longer looks to the law for his righteousness. Man no longer looks to the law as the way to reach God and to secure God's favour. Man now looks to Jesus Christ and approaches God through Jesus Christ.

2 Cor 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

1 Pet 1:18-19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

3. Christ *ended* the law in that he destroyed the penalty and condemnation of the law against man. Christ took the sin of man upon Himself and bore the condemnation for man. Christ died for man; He bore the execution of being separated from God for man.

Eph 2:15 *By abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace.*

Col 2:14 *Having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.*

However, note a critical point: Christ ends the law for righteousness *only to those who believe*. A man is justified, that is, counted righteous by God, only if he truly believes that Jesus Christ is the righteousness of God. (See Rom. 5:1; *Law*, Mt. 5:17. Also see Rom. 3:21-22; 8:2-4; *Christ Fulfills the Law*, Rom 8:3.)

Thought 1. Jesus Christ is the righteousness of God; He is the very embodiment of God's righteousness.

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

1 Cor 1:30 *It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.*

Phil 3:9 *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.*

III. **Romans 10:05 God's Righteousness**

God's righteousness is opposed to man's righteousness, that is, opposed to man's way for reaching God. Man tries to reach God by law and works, by simply doing the very best he can. However, there is a terrible flaw in this approach. Moses was the first to point out the flaw: the man who lives by the law must keep the law, and keep it perfectly (see Lev. 18:5).

Rom 10:5 *Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them."*

Gal 3:10 *All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."*

Gal 3:12 *The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them."*

The point is this. There are only two ways to become righteous. A person can become righteous...

- by keeping the law perfectly, by never sinning in act, word or thought. If a person could keep the law perfectly — never sinning even once — he could be declared righteous.
- by trusting in the righteousness of a Person who has lived a sinless life and who stands before us as the Ideal Man, the Ideal Man who can represent us before God. (See *Justification*, Rom. 5:1.)

IV. Romans 10:06–07 Man's Righteousness, Utopia

God's righteousness does not have to seek out a Messiah or a Deliverer (utopia). Note the contrast between heaven and the deep or abyss. This is a picture of the summit and the pit, of the very best and the very worst. Men search...

- for the height of heaven: for life and joy and pleasure, for the very best, for their utopia.
- for the answer to death and hell: for the release and freedom from death and the sense of judgment — for their utopia.

Another way to say the same thing is this: men search for righteousness, that is, for everything to be right. If they can achieve righteousness and make everything right, then they will have their utopia.

The point is this. Man's search for life or for utopia is *really* a search for a deliverer who can do two things: ascend into heaven to bring utopia down to earth and descend into the depths to conquer sin, death and hell (see Deu. 30:11-13. See Psa. 139:6-9; Prov. 24:7; Amos 9:2.) Men are really searching for a true Messiah, for Christ Himself.

Thought 1. A person does not have to scale heaven nor fathom the deep to be saved. If he did, he would be lost eternally, for no man can penetrate heaven to secure righteousness or go into the depths to conquer death and hell. No man can work hard enough to climb up into heaven or labour enough to conquer death and hell. No man or combination of men can penetrate the spiritual world and dimension or transform man into a perfect being so that he never has to die and face judgment. Righteousness — man being right and perfect — is beyond the grasp of man's efforts.

Prov 30:4 *Who has gone up to heaven and come down? Who has gathered up the wind in the hollow of his hands? Who has wrapped up the waters in his cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and the name of his son? Tell me if you know!*

John 3:13 *“No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven — the Son of Man.”*

V. Romans 10:08–10 God's Righteousness and Salvation

God's righteousness and salvation (utopia) are right before a person (see Deu. 30:14). Jesus Christ is the Deliverer who has ascended into heaven and brought utopia down to man, and He is the Saviour who has descended into the depths to conquer death and hell (Rom. 10:9).

Eph 4:8-10 *This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.” (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also*

descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

Since Christ has come, the gospel does not require man to scale the heavens nor to fathom the great abyss. Such requirements would be impossible. The gospel only demands faith and open confession that Christ has done both. Why would God commission His Son to go to such limits for man? Simply because God loves man that much (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8).

All that a man desires — righteousness, salvation and utopia — are found within man's mouth and heart. Man has to do three simple things to be counted righteous and acceptable by God. He has to do three simple things to be saved from sin, death and hell, and to receive utopia:

1. Man must confess with his mouth *that Jesus is Lord*. He must confess that Jesus Christ is the *Lord from heaven* (see v. 6. See *From Above*, Jn. 3:31.)

John 3:13 *“No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven — the Son of Man.”*

John 3:31 *“The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.”*

John 6:33 *“For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”*

John 6:50-51 *“But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”*

John 6:62 *“What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before!”*

John 8:42 *Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me.”*

John 17:5 *“And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”*

2. Man must believe that God raised Jesus from the dead. He must believe that Jesus Christ...
 - died for man
 - was raised up from the dead because He perfectly satisfied God's demand for justice

God's holiness and justice were perfectly satisfied with the death of Jesus Christ. God was perfectly satisfied with Christ taking man's sin upon Himself and bearing the punishment of sin for man. God was perfectly satisfied with Christ dying for man; therefore, God raised up Jesus Christ from the dead.

Rom 4:25 *He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

Rom 1:4 *And who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Acts 13:32-33 *"We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father.'"*

1 Pet 1:3-4 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you.*

3. Man must believe with the heart and then confess with the mouth. A man believes unto righteousness; that is, a man believes in Jesus Christ, and God takes that man's faith and counts it *as righteousness*. Then the man confesses Christ *to salvation*; that is, he is saved by openly confessing Christ. No man can deny God's Son and expect God to save him.

Mat 10:32-33 *"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven."*

Luke 12:8 *"I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God."*

Rom 10:9 *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.*

1 John 2:23 *No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.*

1 John 4:15 *If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.*

VI. Romans 10:11 Righteousness that Frees a Person

God's righteousness and salvation deliver a person from shame (see Isa. 28:16). Note two points.

1. Whoever believes in Christ is saved. The gospel is available to all, both Jew and Gentile. The gospel is the message of God's righteousness and salvation to the whole world. The gospel is universal.

John 7:37 On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."

1 Tim 2:4 Who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

1 John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.

Rev 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Isa 45:22 "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other."

Isa 55:1 "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost."

2. The true believer is not ashamed.

- a. He is not ashamed to face God, for he is covered with the righteousness of Christ.

Rom 13-14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Gal 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Eph 4:24 And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Col 3:10 And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

- b. He is not ashamed to confess Christ before men. He readily confesses the glorious life and assurance God has given him in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Acts 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

2 Tim 1:8 So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.

1 Pet 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

VII. *Romans 10:12 The Lord God Treats All Men Equal*

God loves the whole world and every person in the world. His love is not limited to any one nation or people or type of person. The gospel is universal; it is for the world.

1. There is no distinction between men, not in God's eyes. All men are related to God in the very same way. In God's eyes, all men...
 - are His creatures
 - are sinful and alienated from Him
 - are loved by Him
 - are saved only through the righteousness provided by His Son

God does not save one man a certain way and another man some other way; neither does God reject a man because he is a Jew or a Greek. God does not show partiality; He has no favourites. No person is favoured over another person in being saved or condemned.

Rom 2:2 Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth.

Acts 10:34-35 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right."

Job 34:18-19 Is he not the One who says to kings, 'You are worthless,' and to nobles, 'You are wicked,' who shows no partiality to princes and does not favour the rich over the poor, for they are all the work of his hands?

2. The Lord God "richly blesses all who call on him." Scripture clearly declares:

Exo 34:6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness." (see 2 Chr 30:9; Psa 103:8; 116:5; 145:8; Joel 2:13)

The Lord God is rich in mercy and grace and in all else that is good and beneficial. He is so wealthy that every good gift and every perfect gift that exists in the world has flowed from His mercy and grace (Jas 1:17). Note two significant points.

- a. God has enough supply to richly bless all who call upon Him. There is no limit to the riches of His grace.

Eph 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

Eph 1:18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

Eph 2:4-7 *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

Phil 4:19 *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

- b. A man must call upon God to receive the riches of God's mercy and grace. (See note, Rom 10:13.)

VIII. Romans 10:13 Salvation

All people are saved by the same promise. Note that this promise was foretold in the Old Testament (Joel 2:32). This verse is one of the great promises of God. God loves every person, no matter his nationality or race. God is not willing that any person should perish; He wants every person to be saved (2 Pet 3:9). In fact, God promises salvation to every man if the man will do but one thing: "Call on the name of the Lord." Note what God says.

1. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." The word "everyone" means anyone, whoever, no matter who they are.
 - => It means any person, any nationality, any race, any colour.
 - => It means any person from any environment, condition, background, country, government or family.
 - => It means any person, whether immoral or moral, unjust or just, bad or good, poor or wealthy, mean or nice, lonely or befriended, unpopular or popular, deformed or attractive, diseased or healthy, needful or without need.

"Everyone" means that any person can be saved, no matter who he is. No matter how terrible a person and his circumstances may be, he can be saved. He may be in the depths of the inner city or in the depths of the jungle, and he may be enslaved by the most terrible spirit of sin and evil imaginable — God will still save him.

John 7:37 *On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."*

1 Tim 2:4 *Who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*

1 John 5:1 *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.*

Rev 22:17 *The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.*

Isa 45:22 “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.”

Isa 55:1 “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”

2. “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” To “call on the name of the Lord” means at least two things.
 - a. It means that a person calls on the name of Lord Jesus Christ: he believes Jesus Christ can and will save him. It means that the person looks upon and believes that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, that He is the Son of God who came to earth to save men. Very simply, it means that a person believes the message of John 3:16.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

John 5:24 “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

- b. It means that a person calls Jesus Christ *Lord*, that he looks upon Jesus as the Lord God of the universe and upon himself as His servant. It means that a person surrenders and dedicates himself to serve Jesus Christ throughout life — in everything and through everything, no matter the cost. To “call on the name of the *Lord*” means total surrender and dedication of all one is and has. (See *Cross and Discipleship*, Lk 9:23; *Lord*, Acts 2:36.)

Luke 9:23 Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

Rom 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Phil 2:11 And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

1 John 4:15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.

3. “Everyone who calls...will be saved.” (See *Salvation*, Rom 1:16.) ■