

CHRIST THE END (ROMANS 10:4)

I. How Does It End?

II. Paul's Grief

- A. In Romans 10, the apostle Paul expresses his grief for his fellow Jews.
- B. This train of thought began in chapter 9. At the start of chapter 9, Paul tells us that he has great sorrow in his heart (v 2).
- C. Paul grieved over the fact that many of his fellow Israelites (v 3) were not receptive to the message of the Gospel that Paul had been preaching.
- D. In spite of widespread unbelief, Paul takes comfort in the fact that God's promise to save Israel will come true (v 6).
 - Rom 9:6-7: "But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel,⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."
- E. Although many Israelites did not attain God's righteousness, many *non*-Israelites have (9:30)!
 - Rom 9:30-33: "What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith;³¹ but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law.³² Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone,³³ as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."
- F. While Israel failed to attain the righteousness of God, Gentiles have because they put their *faith* in God's Messiah, *trust* in Christ.

III. Bad Zeal

- A. When Rom 10 begins, Paul continues to express his longing for his fellow Israelites to believe in the Messiah Jesus so that they can attain righteousness and salvation.
 - Rom 10:1: "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them [the Israelites] is that they may be saved."
- B. What is it that is keeping these Israelites from Jesus? *Ignorant zeal*.

- Rom 10:2: “For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.”
- C. The problem with unbelieving Israel is that their zeal for God and his Law was the wrong kind of zeal!
- D. God does command us to be zealous for him. But when our zeal for God is “not according to knowledge,” bad things can happen.

IV. Self-Made Righteousness

- A. In 10:3, Paul takes us to the heart of ignorant zeal: *Ignorant zeal happens when we think that we can make ourselves acceptable to God by our own works.*
- B. This is at the heart of the unbelief that Paul sees amongst so many of his fellow Israelites:
 - Rom 10:3: “For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.”
- C. Rom 10:3 highlights two elements that are almost always present in any kind of misguided religious zeal. Misguided zeal is...
 1. an ignorance of God’s Gospel: The Israelites were “ignorant of the righteousness of God...”
 2. almost always boastful when there really isn’t much to boast about: The Israelites were “seeking to establish their own [righteousness]...”
- D. What prevents people from believing the Gospel is the belief that we sinners can somehow attain the righteousness of God’s Law, make ourselves acceptable to God by our own efforts, and be the saviors of our own lives.
- E. Once we are able to identify this inner dynamic or principle, we can begin to understand the misguided zeal that we see in the world today. For instance:
 - Religious fanaticism/militancy
 - Forms of nationalism
 - Workaholism
 - Controlling perfectionism
- F. Misguided zeal shows up in all the ways we rely on our performance to gain acceptance with God.
- G. No matter what the external manifestation of ignorant zeal may be, the internal dynamic is the same across board: Instead of submitting to God’s righteousness, we seek to establish our own. Instead of trusting God with our end, we are seeking to secure our good endings by our own efforts.
- H. These are the kinds of signs that a works-righteousness/self-salvation mindset tends to produce.
 1. Instead of peace, there will be anxiety.

2. Instead of love, there will be self-centeredness.
 3. Instead of joy, there is despair.
- I. These are only to be expected, because we are *sinners*.

V. Christ the End of the Law

- A. God steps into our frightened, guilt-ridden, anxious, performance-obsessed lives and says: “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (v 4).
- B. “For” connects this verse to the previous one.
1. Verse 4 tells us why Paul is so confident that his fellow Israelites are not submitting to God’s righteousness.
 2. Paul knows that they are *not* submitting to God’s righteousness, because they are rejecting Christ who is “the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”
- C. What does it mean for Christ to be the “end” of the law for righteousness?
1. The word “end” (Gk: *telos*) can mean “termination,” “goal,” or “fulfilment.”
 2. It is hard to choose between the meanings, because all meanings are present.
 - a. If Christ is the termination of the Law for gaining righteousness with God, then Christ is the Law’s goal.
 - b. If Christ is the Law’s goal, he is also, in some senses, its fulfilment.
 - i. When we go to Christ, we fulfill all of the Law, because the sum-total of the Law’s righteousness is given to us, donated to us, in Christ.
- D. At the very least, to say that Christ is “the end of the law” is to say that Christ is the *goal* of the Law—for the purpose of attaining “righteousness” (i.e., right-standing) with God.
- E. Right-standing with God (justification) is the good ending that we all seek.
1. Justification saves us from eternal hell.
 2. Justification is God’s approval.
 3. Justification opens the way into God’s favor, affection, and empowerment.
- F. To be justified is to no longer be considered a sinner by God. Instead, it is to be considered perfectly righteous by God. It is to attain the very affirmation and validation of the highest authority in the universe, who is God himself!
- John Calvin: “The gross abuse of the law by the Jews, who in their evil-doing made a stumbling-block of what was to be their help, is in

consequence rightly censured. Indeed, it is evident that they had shamefully mutilated the law of God, for they rejected its soul and snatched at the dead body of the letter. The law promises a reward to those who observe it. Now, however, that it has proved all men guilty, it has substituted a new righteousness in Christ, which is not acquired by the merits of our works, but being freely given is received by faith. Thus the righteousness of faith (as we saw in the first chapter), is witnessed to by the law. This remarkable passage declares that the law in all its parts has reference to Christ, and therefore no one will be able to understand it correctly who does not constantly strive to attain this mark.” *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, 221-222.

VI. To Everyone Who Believes

- A. This righteousness is given “to everyone who believes” in Christ.
- B. We are made righteous in God’s sight by trusting completely in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation.
- C. We are justified by resting entirely on the Israelite Messiah for our salvation.
- D. The whole righteousness of the Law, every commandment of God, is fulfilled by us when we trust in Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ kept all of God’s Laws for us.

VII. Life at the End

- A. First: If Christ is the end-goal of the Law for our righteousness, we should no longer rely on the Law for our justification nor fear its condemnation.
- B. Second: If Christ is the end-goal of the Law for our righteousness, we should no longer rely on our good works for our deepest sense of validity. Your basic worth before God and before others is not dependent on:
 - How successful a person you are;
 - How submissive a wife you are;
 - How hardworking a husband you are;
 - How manly a man you are;
 - How intelligent a student you are;
 - How patriotic a citizen you are;
 - ...or whatever.
- C. The pressure is off. My existence in this world is no longer to prove myself.
 1. Instead, I can work primarily for the good of others—not for my self-validation.

2. I can pour out my life back to God, without fearing that my failures would condemn me.

VIII. Christ Our Good End

Christ is the end. He is end of the Law for righteousness. He is the end of God's purposes for your life. Your end is not in better exam results. Your end is not in that career you've always wanted. Your end is not in that lifestyle you desire. Your end is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ fulfilled the whole Law of God for you. Jesus Christ died for all your sins. Jesus Christ rose from the dead for your justification. Jesus Christ is your righteousness. Jesus Christ is your good ending.

Questions for Reflection

1. Was there anything in particular about today's sermon that blessed and encouraged you?
2. Was there anything with which you disagree or found difficult to accept?
3. What was the cause for Paul's grief? (9:3)
4. According to Paul, how did the *non*-Israelites attain righteousness? (9:30)
5. In 10:2, what does Paul identify as the problem with unbelieving Israelites?
6. What are the components of ignorant zeal (v 3)?
7. What does it mean for Christ to be the "end" of the law for righteousness?
8. Why is right-standing with God (or justification) is the good ending that we all seek?
9. How do we attain God's righteousness in Christ?
10. What is it like to live life at the end? What implications for life does Rom 10:4 have?