

Session 6: Israel's Response to Grace

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 8, Session 6)

The reason for talking about this is because Israel knows whom the true God is and they have the law, and yet they are going to wind up just as condemned as the Gentile sinners. Both Jews and Gentiles need salvation; they both need the righteousness of faith and they need it equally!

When God's wrath comes, will it be any less on unbelieving Israel who tried to keep the law in order to be righteous than it will be on the unbelieving Gentiles? It will not. And unbelieving Israelite will wind up in the same place as an unbelieving Gentile: in the lake of fire. Why? Because neither of them attained unto the righteousness that God would accept.

The Abomination of Self-Righteousness

The Pharisees did not see it that way. They thought they were much more righteous and more acceptable than those 'sinners.' That is why you have the account over in Luke 18; the Lord is addressing the false comparison between competing failures. First, notice who the Lord is speaking to and the point he is making.

Luke 18:9 *And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:*

Now let us take up the narrative.

Luke 18:10 *Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.*

The publicans were tax collectors and because of their propensity for extorting more than the legal taxes for their own personal gain; they were often seen as extortioners, with the moral compass of adulterers. We can see this in the words of the Pharisee.

Luke 18:11 *The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.*

The righteousness of the Pharisees, as far as they were concerned, had two aspects to it:

1. It consisted of them doing no harm to others.
2. It also consisted of attending all the ordinances of God.

We can see both of these in the Pharisee's words. By implication, he is saying that he is not "as other men are, extortioners" (I do not take what belongs to another by false pretenses.), unjust (I do not take advantage of another man's ignorance in buying or selling), adulterer (I avoid every kind of uncleanness), etc. The Pharisee says that he is not like other men, who do harm to others in some way.

The second aspect of attending to the ordinances of the law is seen in the next comments made by the Pharisee.

Luke 18:12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

The Jewish days of fasting in each week were the second and fifth days; or Monday and Thursday (it would be to us). These days were marked out in remembrance of Moses going up to the mount to receive the law on the fifth day and his descent with the tables of stone on the second day of the week.

Also, the Pharisee gave "tithes" of everything he possessed. In another place we learn that they even tithed of the mint in their gardens. Why? Because they thought it would gain them favor with God; because it was something they saw in the law in order to be righteous.

How should an Israelite have approached the law? He should have acknowledged that he was not capable of keeping it and cried out to God to do something in view of his incapacity.

You generally do not have to tell the sinners they are in trouble with God; they have a tendency to know that already. It is the self-righteous crowd that you cannot convince. Because they believe they are so much more 'righteous' than the sinners and because they have all the religious accruments, (I go to church, I give in the offering, I sing in the choir, I teach a Sunday school class, I have my list of do's and don'ts, I ... etc.) it is hard for them to see past all that. They cannot imagine that God would reject them or their service.

Therefore, when Jesus showed up, his own people rejected him. When Paul shows up with a message to those Gentile sinners, the Gentiles responded with faith. But what did Israel do? By and large, they rejected Paul's message just like they rejected their Messiah. Even the members of the remnant had some issues with Paul's message, which is why Paul is addressing those objections in Romans 9.

Now let us get ourselves back on track. God is not doing something with Gentiles because they deserve it or because they have earned it. Otherwise, it would not be grace!

The reason Israel has not attained righteousness.

In verse 32, Paul answers why Israel did not attain unto righteousness.

Romans 9:32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;

How does anyone get saved? By faith!

In salvation, it is trusting in the message: the gospel. For us, it is trusting in the gospel of Christ; that we trust that Jesus Christ accomplished everything needed to satisfy God's justice and appease God's wrath against our sin. We trust him and him alone; he is all sufficient. We do not need anything else in order to be justified before God. Jesus has accomplished, in his death, burial, and resurrection, everything that is needed to save us from the debt and penalty of our sin and to give us eternal life.

How does anyone live for God? By faith!

Grace living is:

- Living out of the sanctification which was given to us when we trusted Christ.
- Living out of our new identity in Christ, in accordance with the doctrine given to us in his word which allows us to produce "fruit unto righteousness" which is acceptable to God.

That is how we "live by faith." That is how we live out of the power of God's grace. That is grace living.

According to verse 32, Israel did not seek that righteousness by faith. They thought they could attain unto that righteousness by their own efforts in keeping the law.

Romans 9:32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;

Let me be clear: the members of the believing remnant of Israel responded to Jesus Christ in faith. That is what made them part of that remnant. Their faith made them justified unto eternal life. They trusted not in the works of the law, but in their Jesus Christ as their Messiah. But that was only a remnant.

The nation at-large rejected him. God is able to put Israel into an *accursed status* because of their rejection of the One he sent to them. Again, the problem is with the clay, not the Potter. If Israel is a vessel of dishonor, it is her fault, not God's.

Romans 9:33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

If Israel had responded to the law properly, “by faith,” they would not have thought to attain righteousness by the works of the law.

Go over to Galatians with me and let us look at what Paul says about the law. Was it the purpose of the law to justify people unto eternal life? No, it was not. The law was given for an entirely different reason.

***Galatians 3:23** But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. ²⁴ Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*

The law was a system by which God instituted, which if responded to properly, would have revealed that they needed a redeemer. That is why verse 24 says that the law was (Israel’s) ‘schoolmaster to bring them to Christ’ so that they “might be justified by faith.”

That is what it means to receive the law “by faith.” They would have acknowledged their sinful condition and their need of a Savior.

***Galatians 3:22** But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise **by faith of Jesus Christ** might be given to them that believe.*

Just for a moment, lift that highlighted phrase out of the verse and read it.

“By faith of Jesus Christ” is a prepositional phrase that describes how the promise will be provided: by the ‘faithful performance of Jesus Christ.’ It is “faith” not ‘of the sinner,’ but “of Jesus Christ.” It is his “faithful” work that provides for the promise of eternal life.

What promise? According to the context (verses 6, 8, 11, 13, 14, 21, 22, 24, 26, 29), the promise is eternal life.

If an Israelite received the law “by faith,” then they would not be thinking that all they had to do was obey the law and they would be justified.

Many of the Jews thought that simply because they were the descendants of Abraham, that was all that was needed to be righteous. They thought they were naturally righteous! If you thought that, you would never think you needed a Redeemer and neither did they. That is why Paul says what he does at the end of Romans 9:33:

***Romans 9:33** As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion **a stumblingstone and rock of offence**: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*

According to the last phrase in the verse, the “stumblingstone” is a “him” – that “him” is Jesus Christ.

The problem with Israel is that they had God’s word which testified of Jesus Christ and they rejected it; they ‘stumbled’ at him.

Jesus himself said that he was the subject matter of the Scriptures.

***Luke 24:44** And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.*

As Jesus was calling out his disciples:

John 1:45** Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found **him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

Philip understood that Jesus was the One of whom Moses and the prophets did write. He responded to the law “in faith.”

***John 5:37** And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath **borne witness of me.** Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. ³⁸ And ye have not his word abiding in you: for **whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.** ³⁹ **Search the scriptures;** for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which **testify of me.** ⁴⁰ And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*

***John 5:45** Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even **Moses, in whom ye trust.** ⁴⁶ For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for **he wrote of me.** ⁴⁷ But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?*

***Zechariah 9:9** Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.*

How could Moses accuse them? A Jew could never say at the judgment that he was never told because Moses told them in their own scriptures. Israel had the law, the written testimony, and they still rejected him.

Session 7: The Stumblingstone

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 8, Session 7)

We have been looking at the last section of Romans 9, which introduces the issue of Israel's stumbling being the reason they are in an "accursed" status.

Romans 9:30 *What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. ³¹ But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. ³² Wherefore? **Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;** ³³ As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*

The unbelieving element in Israel was trying to be righteous by keeping the law. Therefore, they rejected Jesus' claims of his Messiahship. That rejection culminated in the cross.

During the extension of mercy (following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ,) they continued to reject him, resulting in their 'stumbling' over him. Jesus Christ is that "stumblingstone" and "rock of offence."

Israel's whole system of belief was wrong:

- They did not properly respond to the law (not by faith, but for righteousness).
- They did not acknowledge their need of a Redeemer.
- They did not believe that Jesus was the Christ.
- They were offended (ashamed) that their King would be presented in the humble ways Jesus was presented.

The main issue we were focusing on at the end of our previous session had to do with responding to the law 'in faith.' We saw that the law, the Psalms, and the prophets all spoke of Israel's coming Messiah – Jesus Christ.

If they had responded to the law properly, they would not have trusted it for righteousness, but they would have seen it pointing them to a Kinsman/Redeemer: the Christ, the Son of David.

Luke 24:44 *And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were **written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.***

Even though the nation of Israel possessed the written testimony concerning him, they still rejected him.

Now we turn our attention to a parable in which Jesus alludes to the nation in its rejection of him.

Our reference is in Matthew 21. As a background for this, the book of Matthew is broken into four major parts with each part having a central doctrinal issue:

Divisions of the book of Matthew:

1. Matthew _____ : _____

Space for personal reflection and notes

Session 8: The Parable of Matthew 21

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 8, Session 8)

Our reference is in Matthew 21. As a background for this, the book of Matthew is broken into four major parts with each part having a central doctrinal issue:

Divisions of the book of Matthew:

1. Matthew 1:1-7:29 : The Sermon on the Mount (from Session 7)
2. Matthew _____
3. Matthew _____ :
4. Matthew _____ :

Now we turn our attention to a parable in which Jesus alludes to the nation in its rejection of him.

In Matthew 21:42, Jesus is talking about their “rejection” of him. (Jesus, the stone which the builders “rejected.”) However, down in verse 44, he refers to the “stone” over which they stumbled. In Romans 9, Paul calls him a “stumblingstone.” So the question is this: when did Israel “stumble” over the stumblingstone? They did not stumble at the crucifixion. The crucifixion is the ‘rejection’ of the stone. Let me show this to you by taking us back to something Jesus said in earthly ministry to his disciples.

Matthew 21:33 *Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: ³⁴ And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. ³⁵ And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶ Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. ³⁷ But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. ³⁸ But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. ³⁹ And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. ⁴⁰ When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? ⁴¹ They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. ⁴² Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is*

become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

Who are the “husbandman of Matthew 21?”

The “husbandmen” refer to the Pharisees, scribes, chief priests, and Sadducees: them being the religious leaders of the nation.

Matthew 21:41 They say unto him, **He will miserably destroy** those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

Now Jesus is about to quote from Psalm 118.

Matthew 21:42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, **The stone which the builders rejected**, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

Space for personal reflection and notes