

Unashamed (13): The Righteousness of God

(Romans 10:1-21)

I. Introduction

- A. Years ago, I directed teen week at camp when one of college groups performed for us
1. They did both *a cappella* religious program and a Top-40 program with instruments
 - a. The religious songs were uptempo and jazzed up (*aimed at stuff kids would like*)
 - b. Top-40 were middle of road—a decent “*Southern Cross*” by Crosby, Stills and Nash
 - c. As far as the kids were concerned, this was the best thing that we did all week
 2. As for the camp board was concerned, it barbecued sacred cow of some camp visitors
 - a. One visitor (a youth minister) objected to a *cappella* program (Top-40 part was OK)
 - 1) He said they were “*simulated instruments*” with their voice. (“*beatbox bass*”)
 - 2) If you going to do that to religious music, you might as well uses instruments
 - b. Another (preacher) thought the religious part was great—he objected to the Top-40
 - 1) Some of the kids were dancing in their chairs to the music, and that’s not right!
 - 2) Lucky he didn’t see my staff in the back. Both demanded board do something
 - c. **Factoid:** The preacher and the youth minister from the same congregation!
 3. We were supposed to come up with a rule to satisfy everyone; after 6 months we did **Rule #112:** *On concert nights by Christian college music groups, no visitors to camp are allowed!*
 - a. Coming up with the perfect rules is never going to make everyone really happy
 - b. And following the perfect list of rules is never going to make anyone really holy.
- B. We continue our series *Unashamed: Message of Romans*, and we are in part two of book
1. Jewish Christians are wondering about all the promises that God made in the OT.
 - a. We saw law week how Paul began Rom 9 by highlighting those promises (**9:4-5**)
 - b. If God has changed his promises, can we really trust God to keep his promises now?
 - 1) **Romans 9** stresses that God did His promise; God always keeps His promises.
 - 2) God didn’t reject the Jews; they *stumbled over the stumbling stone* (**9:31-32**)
 2. In our text today, Paul goes on to explain further why this rejection as a warning to us
 - a. Jews rejected Jesus due to a basic misunderstanding about the nature of the Law
 - 1) They though that through following the Law they would become holy
 - 2) Paul argues that Jesus was the end, fulfillment, the culmination of the Law.
 - b. Many Christians today make the same basic mistake that the Jews make here.
 - c. Oh, they have a different law, a different set of rules—but it’s the same mistake.

II. The Righteousness of God: How They Missed It

- A. Paul begins with the basic Jewish mistake made with the Law (**Reading: Romans 10:1-4**)
1. His basic point is Christ is “*the culmination of the law*” or “*the end of the law*” (ESV)
“*Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given*” (NLT)
 - a. Point isn’t that Christ just ended the Law—He’s the end to which the Law pointed
 - b. Jews thought the Law was the point! Righteousness could come through Law
 - c. Paul says that Christ was the whole point— *it was the righteousness of God!*
 2. Paul knows all about the rigors of ritual righteousness; he knows Judaism inside/out
 - a. He does not dismiss their pursuit as hypocrisy; he says they are sincere and zealous
 - b. But their zeal is misinformed because it misunderstands the righteousness of God
- B. His contrast is between what we **DO (LAW)** and what we **BELIEVE** God did (**FAITH**).
1. **Caution:** May drive you nuts; he talks about salvation & doesn’t mention baptism!
 - a. He’s stressed baptism in **Rom 6**; his argument there assumed they’re all baptized
 - 1) Better? Paul would have never even considered an “*unbaptized Christian.*”
 - 2) Just follow his argument (*and resist temptation to pull an Acts and two 38’s!*)
 - b. Paul is contrasting faith and law; righteous comes faith only... maybe only by faith
 - c. This shouldn’t surprise us—remember of what we are unashamed of (**1:16-17**)
 2. Here is Paul’s contrast between Law and Faith, between **DOING** and **BELIEVING**
 - a. **First**, Jews saw righteousness as coming through **DOING**—the Law (**Rom 10:5**)
 - 1) Paul quotes Moses from **Lev 18:5**; the Jews were expected to follow the Law
 - a) The problem was they couldn’t follow it; in fact, that may have been the point!
 - b) When Paul quote **Lev 18:5**, in Galatians, he prefaces it with “*clearly*” (**3:11-12**)
 - 2) Problem with trying to be righteous in keeping the Law is in keeping the Law
 - a) No matter whether it’s 10 commands or two great commands—we can keep it
 - b) Adam and Eve only had one command, and how long before the messed it up?
 - 3) You have to be perfect to be holy based on Law, and nobody is coming close
 - b. **Second**, Righteousness is through **FAITH** in what God did. Sound complicated?
 - 1) Paul contrasts what we believe versus what God has done. Walk thru verses
 - a) Reach to heaven to bring Christ down? (**10:6**) God sent Him! *Do you believe?*
 - b) Reach into grave to bring Christ up? (**10:7**) God raised Him! *Do you believe?*
 - 2) Our part in righteousness of God is on our heart & lips! (**10:8**) *Do you believe?*

3. So what Paul says next makes perfect sense; don't miss it or explain it away (**10:9-13**)
 - a. Wait! That sounds like all we must do to be saved is believe. *That's what he says!*
 - 1) Does he mean baptism isn't really part of our faith response? No, look closer.
 - 2) Paul doesn't mention repentance. Jesus, "*Unless you repent...*" (**Luke 13:3**)
 - b. We must let Paul make HIS point here. And keep it HERE in context of his point.
 - c. Paul is contrasting two things—FAITH and LAW. Or DOING and BELIEVING
 - 1) In context, Paul's point is very clear. It's all faith. It's only faith. Faith only!
 - 2) We don't make anything happen by anything we do— do we? *We just believe!*
 - a) We didn't reach into heaven or reach into the grave. What just BELIEVE in God
 - b) We don't save ourselves because we got anything it right—no one gets it right!
 - 3) We're saved because of cross and empty tomb— *God makes us right in Christ*
 - d. That is Paul's point; that is true righteousness— that is the righteousness of God.
 4. That's our story; if we stick to it and tell it, then we'll have beautiful feet (**10:14-15**)
- C. We get wrapped-up around the axle when we forget exactly whose righteousness saves us
1. Like the guys demanding camp board do something about out of control camp music
 - a. Gotta have the right rule to make sure that everything reminds exactly camp kosher
 - b. But there's at least THREE PROBLEMS with that approach to keeping things right
 - 1) **First**, you'll never find a set of rules that everyone will agree on
 - a) Preacher and youth guy in the same church couldn't agree on the right rules
 - b) Rabbis debated Law's interpretation and application—what it said and meant
 - c) Christians do the same thing with the NT— why there are so many churches!
 - 2) **Second**, if we could agree on right rules, no one would ever follow them!
 - a) Old saw is pretty much dead on, right—rules really are made to be broken.
 - b) Paul suggested knowing the law just make us want to break it more (**Rom 7:7**)
 - 3) **Third**, rules tell you when you've messed up, but they can't up mess you up
 - a) Law says, "*Violators will be prosecuted,*" once you are a violator, there you are!
 - b) For Paul, that is ultimate failure of Law and why we need Christ (**Rom 3:20**)
 - c) That why he points us to a righteousness from that comes from faith (**2:21-22**)
 2. We must decide if gospel is going to be enough. Or do we have to turn it into rules
 - a. At our worst, Christians feud and fight over rules as much as the Pharisees ever did
 - b. At our best, we point to cross & empty tomb and rest in the righteousness of God!
 - c. Is it about FAITH or LAW? Is it DOING or BELIEVING? Is it really US or GOD?

III. Conclusion

- A. It's important that we keep what Paul says within the context of what Paul says
1. **First**, he isn't saying the **OLD TESTAMENT** is bad and we don't need to read it
 - a. He already said that there is much benefit in being a Jew (**Rom 3:1**)
 - b. The benefit is because the Jews were entrusted with the words of God—the OT!
 - c. Yes, our daily reading this year is in NT, but it's not because the OT is not valuable
 2. **Second**, he isn't saying **LAW** is now bad or we shouldn't stress **OBEDIENCE**
 - a. He'll spend the last third of the book patiently explaining how they are to obey
 - b. You can make the case that chapter 12-16 (*application*) is the why he wrote book
 - c. Yes, Paul wants them to obey! He wants them to know what is going to save them
 3. **Third**, Paul isn't saying the avoid all **LISTS** of right and wrong things
 - a. Some things are right and wrong, and Paul isn't above making representative lists
 - b. He began Romans that way, a list of sins characteristic of pagan world (**1:29-32**)
 - 1) In case we weren't paying attention, he repeats a similar list in **Rom 13:13**
 - 2) Of course, Jesus would never list sins like that—except He did (**Matt 15:19**)
 - c. While following lists of right and wrong never make us holy, sometimes list help
- B. In Paul's context, he is dealing with why the Jews were rejected. They rejected Christ
1. They pursued the righteousness of the Law rather than the righteousness of God
 - a. That righteousness comes from faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - b. That is the righteousness— and the invitation to which we point you this morning
 2. And it all begins and ends with faith in Jesus Christ— "*from faith from first to last*"
 - a. Yes, that faith expresses itself in baptism as a picture of his death and resurrection
 - b. But it's His work, not ours. We don't reach into the heavens or down into the grave
 - c. We only believe. And if you believe, we invite you to be baptized into Christ today.