



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Romans 10: 1-4

Romans

“The End of the Law”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are continuing our studies in the Book of Romans and this morning we're beginning a new chapter, chapter 10 and we'll look at verses 1 through 4. If you your bibles open, follow as I read, “Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation for I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” May the Lord bless this reading of His word and our time of study together. Let's bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, it is a blessing for us to come together on a Sunday morning, to gather as your people and this is your desire for us, you have instructed us to not forsake the gathering together of the saints and we gather on a Sunday in remembrance of the Lord's resurrection and the new age that has begun through Him and the church that He has established. This is where we gather, this is where we are built up in the faith, this is where we grow increasingly in the likeness of Christ as we sit under the ministry of the word of God and we are taught the scriptures.

So we look to you, Father, to bless us because ultimately while we're responsible to be here and we're responsible to give our attention to the word of God, we cannot understand it, we cannot be nourished by it apart from the ministry of the spirit of God which reminds us that this is a supernatural experience for us, one in which life, transforming, life-changing events occur in which the spirit of God takes

the truth of the word of God and applies it to the hearts of your people. We grow through our study of scripture so may this be a time of growth, a time of blessing for us. May we come to know you better through understanding your word more clearly. May the spirit of God who is our teacher open our minds to understand these things that we consider, that He illuminate them in order that we would grow in the grace, the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So we begin by looking to you to bless us. Prepare our hearts for study and teach us, nourish us and build us up in the faith. We are people with many details to our schedules. We are busy and there are many things that can occupy our mind at this moment. Father, clear our mind of all of the concerns of life and help us to think about the things that the apostle Paul has written and help us to devote our time in the hour to come to instruction and learning and worship of you, that we might be benefitted and grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. So bless us spiritually, Father, as only you can.

And bless us in the physical things of life as well. We're a needy people and we are reminded of the needs that others have from the prayer list that we have been given. We pray for those whose name are there, we pray for those who are sick, those who are discouraged. We pray for those who are facing surgery or are recovering from surgery. We pray that you would give blessing, physical blessing to those who are in need of it. We pray that you would bless them with healing and encouragement in the midst of a time of recovery. It's a fact that our physical and our spiritual lives are tied together to a large extent and the difficulties that we have physically can affect us spiritually and emotionally and intellectually.

So Father, give encouragement where there's discouragement. Encourage your people. There are many things in life that weigh us down. Help us to look to you as we should to remember your promises and remember that all things that happen in our lives happen for a purpose and a good purpose for your people. We thank you for that. Bless our nation, Lord. We pray that you would give our leaders wisdom at this time of crisis and warfare in our history. We pray that you would direct our leaders nationally. We pray for ourselves in a local sense, statewide and citywide, having elections again in the weeks to come. We pray that you give the citizens of this city wisdom in casting their votes.

We pray for our nation, Father, in the material sense for peace. We pray for prosperity, that it would be used though for your good and most importantly, Father, that spiritual prosperity would sweep across this land and many would come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. We're to be abet the business of proclaiming the truth, Father, and we pray that you would energize us to do that and bless us in this hour that we have to equip us for doing that, being good and faithful witnesses in the midst of a dark generation.

Bless us in this hour, bless us this evening when we return to this place to worship our Lord and remember His death and remember His coming again. We look forward to that day. And now, Father, bless our final hymn, prepare our hearts with it for a time of study together. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] One day as Jesus was setting out on a journey, a young man ran up to Him and asked, “Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life. Now this was a man who had it all. We're told that he had money and youth, he was moral and serious about his religion. He sincerely wanted eternal life. But he wanted to have it by doing something. And so Jesus asked if he had kept the law. And he said that he had. He had kept it from his youth up. But to show him that he really hadn't, that he had broken the law completely by making an idol of his money and loving himself more than his neighbor, the Lord said, “Sell your possessions, give the money to the poor and follow me.”

That he couldn't do. For all of his zeal, he loved his money and he wasn't interested in following Christ. He wanted to do a good work, keep another law and earn heaven. So he left. He is a picture of the natural man who thinks he can gain God's approval with an earnest heart and enough effort. Man has what Mr. Spurgeon called a strange infatuation with the law. Like the fascination which attracts the gnat to the candle which burns its wings. Men naturally fly to the law for salvation. But the law burns, it doesn't heal. It can only condemn, it cannot save. And so as the young man left, and we're told he went away sad, I'm sure that the Lord was sad too. Mark tells us that Jesus felt love for him.

Paul had the same love for the Jews and sadness also because they too were pursuing salvation by the law. And that caused grief in his heart. That's what he said in the beginning of chapter 9 where he begins to address the problem of Jewish unbelief. He reaffirms that same concern for the Jewish at the top of chapter 10

where he tells the Roman Christians that his heart’s desire is for their salvation. But in chapter 10 the emphasis is different from that in chapter 9. The affection is the same, but the focus is different. Chapter 9 teaches divine sovereignty and God’s purpose in election. Chapter 10 teaches human responsibility to believe the gospel. Both are true, both need to be emphasized. Paul emphasized them in order to answer the question that Jewish unbelief raised within the minds of many. And that was, if the Jews were lost, was God unfaithful?

He had made great promises to Israel. We read throughout the Old Testament the promise of salvation, the promise of a kingdom to come, great promises, but the majority of Jews were not being saved. Had God’s word failed? No, it hadn’t Paul has answered as he explained in chapter 9. God’s promise of salvation was not for every physical Israelite but for the elect of Israel. That doesn’t excuse unbelief among the Jews. They are responsible, as Paul explained at the end of chapter 9. But rather than look for the savior who was promised in the scriptures and promised throughout the word of God, they had tried to earn salvation by their own efforts and good works. They pursued righteousness by the law, not by faith.

As a result, Paul said, they stumbled over the stumbling stone. The fault was their own. They were responsible for their unbelief. Paul now expands on that point in chapter 10 where he moves from the decree of God in eternity past to the decisions of men in the present before turning to the future of Israel in chapter 11. So we can these three chapters that make up this unit in Romans chapters 9, 10 and 11 in terms of God’s decisions in the past, man’s decisions in the present and what is future in chapter 11.

Paul begins chapter 10 with a statement of love and concern for unbelieving Israel, brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for their salvation. And in that statement we have the part of an evangelist, his deepest desire is for the salvation of the lost. Paul was not indifferent to that and particularly he was not indifferent here to the salvation of the Jewish people. And that is to be the attitude of the church. It is an apostolic attitude. We are to have a concern for the Jews and we are to pray for them. It goes without saying that there is no place for anti-Semitism within the church. And I think Paul was particularly interested in the church of Rome in knowing his concern for the Jewish people because this was predominantly gentile church by the time Paul is writing to them and he wants them to know that he felt no

satisfaction in the plight of the Jews. He is deeply grieved by their lost condition and prayed for their salvation.

These are strange words, it might seem, for a predestinarian. Not what we might expect following Paul’s teaching in Romans 9 on the sovereign determination of God’s will and salvation. He has mercy on whom He desires and He hardens whom He desires, does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs but on God who has mercy. So in light of that, why pray? If God is determined to pass by some, isn’t prayer useless? Evidently not to the apostle Paul. He saw no conflict between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Our Lord saw no conflict between them. Christ preached predestination.

Read John 6, we see it very plainly then, verse 37, he says, “All that the Father gives me will come to me.” He believed in predestination and yet He preached the gospel. We see that in the way He dealt with that rich, young ruler. He dealt with him to show him and reason with him, to show the weakness of his position, to show him that he truly had not kept the law as he thought, that he was in need of salvation. He invites him to come to Him, He urges him to follow Him. That’s evangelism by one who taught predestination so like Paul our Lord saw no conflict between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. But still, it’s a question that calls for an answer.

If God has already determined destinies, why prayer and evangelize? There are a couple of answers. The first and I think the obvious answer is that God has commanded us to do both. He’s commanded us to pray, He’s commanded us to give the gospel. We may not understand how these two, the sovereignty of God and our responsibilities fit together, at least not completely or perfectly, but we can know this, if they do, whether we understand it or not. So if for no other reason than obedience to our Lord, we should do both, we should pray and we should evangelize. But there is a rationale for doing what we do and that is that the God who has ordained the end has also ordained the means to the end.

Prayer and evangelism are the means of salvation. Let me give an example. In Ephesians chapter 2 in verse 10, Paul states that we are God’s workmanship. That is everything that you and I are as God’s people, we are by God’s grace. He has made us who we are from eternity to eternity, we are God’s workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus for good works and then he goes on to say about good works, which God

prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. God had not prepared them beforehand, we would not walk in them. But there are these works that each one of us has that God has prepared beforehand, already prepared for us. But we do them by working.

We walk by effort. We're not passive in the Christian life. The fact that there works prepared beforehand for us doesn't mean, well, we sit back and do nothing. It energizes us to do them. And in doing them, we pray, we seek for wisdom, that God would supply us with the wisdom and the effort to do those works that He has prepared. So prayer's a means of obtaining the blessing that God has already prepared for us. And evangelism and prayer are the means God has given to win the lost. He has ordained that multitudes be brought to salvation through the prayers and evangelism of Christians.

Now that should encourage us to be active as Paul was active. He did what he could for his people. He did not write them off. He prayed for their salvation. And that's something that we all can do for Jews and for unbelieving gentiles. We can't force conversions. We can make people believe. We can't argue people into heaven. But we can pray for them and we can pray that Heaven will open their hearts to receive the truth. And we should do that and we should do that confidently, optimistically. Election is part of God's secret council and we don't have access to that. We cannot know who the elect are. But we know that they are, and we know that they are many. They are a multitude. And so we are to be optimistic about the salvation of the loss and the use of the means that God has given to us.

The emphasis of chapter 9 is on the glory of God as seen in His mercy, his sovereignty in His mercy. God is a merciful God. He said, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." And so we are to expect that. We are to expect mercy from God. The reform theologian William G.T. Shedd stated that the evangelist is consequently to expect the election of his hearer rather than his reprobation. Now if that's right, and I think he is, then it's wrong for us to despair of or to abandon all hope for the salvation of people because of God's eternal decree.

There's no reason for despair, just the opposite. It is reason for hope. It should give us hope. It did the apostle Paul. As one who speaks so clearly and at such length in chapter 9 on the absolute sovereignty of God and His will in salvation,

prayed earnestly for his kinsmen and we should be praying for ours as well. There's something very practical in this, I think. And that is that parents should pray for the salvation of their children. The doctrine of election should encourage that. But the reality is it so often it does just the opposite. It is misinterpreted to a hindrance to salvation. I've spoken with parents more than once who have heard a lesson on this doctrine of election and then they have expressed great concern that that mean that their children were passed by, that their children are not elect and that their hope for their children and all of their efforts in giving the gospel to them and praying for them are pointless.

In reality, the opposite is true. Election is what makes salvation possible. If there were no elect, if God has chosen none, none would be saved. God is merciful and His election of a multitude of individuals is the outworking of that mercy and He instructs us to give the gospel and to pray. And again, we don't know who the elect are and so we do that and we give the gospel in a very general way, just as say a farmer sows the seed. He goes out into the field and he sows it liberally, generally and we give the gospel in that way. We're responsible to do that, to speak to those around us and as parents to speak to our children and to pray for them and to urge them to listen to what we're saying and to believe the gospel. And we should do that with great confidence.

So you parents who are worried about election, what do you trust in more, God's choice or your children's choices? What do you have more confidence in? God being merciful to you as a parent or your children listening to you as a parent? Would you rather your children's destiny depended on God to make the right decision or on your children to do that? I love my children and I respect their decisions, but I have more confidence in God's wisdom than theirs. The doctrine of election shouldn't cause you to worry. It should do just the opposite. It should relieve you of all anxiety and make you trust the Lord, follow His instruction and pray like Paul the predestinarian prayed.

Now let me give some support for that with a story about George Muller, it's one that I told before but it applies here. Mr. Muller was a man of great faith, a man of great prayer, in fact, he was a five point Calvinist who became a great faith work among the orphans in England. He looked to God in prayer to provide for the orphans. He did that consistently throughout his long life and God never failed to

provide. He also looked to God to save souls. In his youth he had two friends for whom he began to pray. He prayed daily for their salvation for more than 60 years.

Toward the end of his life someone asked Muller why he was still praying for them since they had shown no response. And he answered that he believed that they would, that God would not have kept him praying for them if he had not intended to save them. One of those men was converted just before Muller died at one of the last services that he held. The other became a Christian within a year after Muller's death. Parents should pray like that for their children. We should pray like that for our friends, with complete confidence that God will bless and that He will always do what is right and what is best.

Paul prayed like that for the Jews and someday God will answer his prayers. Long after Paul's death, there will be a great awakening among the Jewish people. Paul tells us that in 11:26. And thus all Israel will be saved. The Old Testament prophets foretold that. Paul himself prophesied it. He knew that it was going to happen, but that did not deter him from prayer. That was not a dissidence to pray, that encouraged him in his prayer. He prayed for it. And the church should have that same kind of burden for the lost and following Paul's example, for the Jew.

Now to people today it seems shocking to suggest that Jewish people are lost even though most are not even religious, most are secular today. Still, they are the people of the bible, they are respectable people. It seems narrow and it seems intolerant to say that Jews need salvation. And perhaps it seemed that way to some in Paul's day, certainly the Jews would have taken exception to Paul's statements here and been offended by him saying that he was praying for their salvation. So Paul acknowledges some things about the Jewish people. He acknowledges that they were religious. Certainly they were not like the heathen. They had truth and they were very committed to their beliefs, verse 2, “For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but,” he adds, “not in accordance with knowledge.” Zeal is good, but it doesn't save.

Paul knew what he spoke about. As a Pharisee, no one could match his zeal for the law and the traditions of his ancestors. There are portions of the New Testament that Paul wrote that are autobiographical and he tells us, for example, in Galatians 1 about his early life as a Jew and a Pharisee, that he was a student and we're told other places that he was a student of the great rabbi Gamaliel, the greatest

rabbi of his day and Paul devoted himself with great zeal to his study. In fact, he outshined all of his contemporaries. He was zealous in defending Judaism against the renegade Christians and trying to destroy the church. But a zeal was not according to knowledge. And all during that time he was utterly lost.

Zeal is good, sincerity is good, but only when it is according to knowledge, otherwise it only contributes to a person's lossness. A person who tries to go to Fort Worth from Dallas by going east only gets further away from it quicker by going fast. Speed is no substitute for direction and sincerity is no substitute for truth. Calvin wrote that it is better, as Augustine says, to limp in the right way than to run with all our might out of the way. Well, that's a message for modern society, evidently a message for every generation because it seems from Augustine's day and Calvin's day, in our day people have this idea that zeal or passion or probably we would say sincerity covers a multitude of sins and makes up for a lot of error.

It's not good to be mistaken, most people would say. But when it comes to religious things, it's not so clear what's right and wrong. What's important is that we're sincere about our beliefs. Well, that's the mind of modern man and I suppose since Augustine talked about it it's the natural mind from the beginning. But the bible is very clear. There is truth and truth is clearly presented in the word of God, unmistakably and sincerity is no ground of safety. That is found only in the cross of Christ. Only the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses the sinner from sin. And that is received only through faith in Him. There are no exceptions.

Augustus Toplady put it very well in his mighty hymn, *Rock of Ages*, “Could my zeal a respite know/ Could my tears forever flow/ All for sin could not atone/ Thou must save and thou alone.” But the Jews did not understand that and in verse 3, Paul gives the reason that they had a zeal without knowledge. They did not know God's righteousness. For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. The righteousness of God is the gift of righteousness. It is the righteousness that comes from God. It is what Paul explained in the first part of the Book of Romans.

But the Jews did not know about it. And they knew about righteousness, they knew that it was necessary to be righteous in order to stand in God's presence and be accepted by him, but thinking that they were able to produce that righteousness themselves, they sought to establish a righteousness of their own. And again, Paul

spoke here from experience. He knew the mind of the Jew. He was one and he had been just like that in his early days. In Philippians 3, we have another autobiographical section of scripture in which he recounted his own experience under the law and he gives in that passage the mindset of a religious Jew, an earnest Jew. In terms of bloodline and achievements, no one could surpass the apostle Paul.

If anyone could have accumulated righteousness and established a righteousness of his own, it was Paul. Circumcised the eighth day of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Now that’s pedigree. Few men could claim that. As to the law, he was a Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless. He was like the rich, young ruler in terms of a legalistic righteousness, outward morality. He could say he was blameless. He measured up well compared with his friends and contemporaries.

But then he met Christ on the Damascus Road and the Lord’s heavenly glory blinded him and he saw how far short of God’s righteousness he fell, realized that all of his achievements under the law, all that he had gained was lost. He counted it all rubbish. James Boyce illustrated Paul’s sense of himself before his Damascus Road experience as being as if he considered himself a 100-watt light bulb surrounded by people who were only 75, 60 and 25-watt light bulbs. He outshone them all. The Christ appeared and his righteousness was that of the sun at noon. Paul realized that his righteousness must be received, not achieved. You can’t achieve righteousness. If he’s to have it, he must have it from Christ and he trusted in our Lord.

The Jews, on the other hand, Paul says, did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. They thought they could achieve it for themselves through the law, but improving our behavior by changing our condition by our conduct is impossible because our condition is fallen. Our condition is sinful. In fact, before God we are spiritually dead. So being moral before God is like putting makeup on a corpse. We’ve all been to funeral homes and we’ve viewed a body lying in a casket all dressed up and made up. Now that may improve the appearance of the corpse, but it still is a corpse. Makeup can’t change that and morality can’t change us and make us acceptable to God because we are fundamentally the same, dead in our transgressions and sin.

The law can't do that. It can't change us, it can't infuse us with righteousness, it can't make us fundamentally different. It was never given for that purpose. It was given to expose our condition. It was given to expose our sin and our nature and show us that we are fallen and dead. Luther described the law as a glass or a mirror that shows a man to himself that he is guilty of death and worthy of God's everlasting wrath. Jeremiah called the law God's hammer. It breaks and shatters man's self-righteousness and self-confidence before God. A person thinks he's right and he is acceptable as he looks around at others and sees their conduct and compares himself with that. When he looks at the law, if he looks at it squarely, if he looks at it honestly, if he truly sees the truth of that law and sees himself in light of it, it is a hammer that smashes his self-confidence. That's the function of the law.

But the Jews failed to understand that. That failure, though, is not unique to Israel. It is typical of all religions because all natural religion is man's effort to reach God. That's what makes Christianity unique. Man's religion is his effort to reach God, to gain God's acceptance. Christianity is the good news that God has reached man, that He has come to us in the person of His son and that He has accomplished salvation in the work of His son. There are two ways or there are two options set before man: we can either make our righteousness with God by our good works or we can receive God's righteousness as a free gift, submit or subject ourselves to God's righteousness as Paul puts it. Those who don't, those who, as Charles Hodge put it, err essentially here err fatally. There's a way which seems right to a man, Solomon said, but the end is the way of death.

Jewish people had largely chosen that way because they did not know, they did not understand the righteousness of God, that it is a free gift from Him. And that caused Paul great sorrow and unceasing grief. But the second error, the fundamental error of those who seek to establish a righteousness of their own is given in verse 4, they don't know that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Now that statement for righteousness has the sense of resulting in righteousness, so the idea is Christ is the end of the law resulting in righteousness for everyone who believes.

But what does that mean, that statement Christ is the end of the law? Does it mean that He is the goal of the law or does it mean that He is the termination of the law? It can have both meanings, the word end, telos, has both senses. The Lord uses

it in Matthew 10, he who endures or perseveres to the end will be saved. The Lord used the verbal form of this word from the cross when He made that famous statement, “It is finished,” and brought to an end, salvation is completed.

The primary word meaning of the word end has the sense of termination. But it is also trust that Christ was the goal and fulfillment of the law in Galatians 3:24, for example, Paul explains that the law was given in order to lead people to Christ, specifically it was given to Israel to lead the Israelites to their savior, to the messiah. Paul has told us in chapter 9 they stumbled over Him, but the law was given to guide them to lead His people to Christ. He is the goal of it.

In Matthew 5:17, the Lord explains his mission in the world. He said he did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it. And he did that in many ways. He did that morally, He did that prophetically. In Genesis 3:15, we have the first promise of the redeemer, of the deliverer to come who would crush the head of the serpent and save his people. And throughout the law, as well as the prophets, there are the promises of the messiah. In Genesis 49:10 there is the promise of Shiloh coming. In Numbers 24:17, the prophecy of the star coming forth from Jacob.

In Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses foretold a prophet being raised up by God. They were to look for Him. They were to look for all of these descriptions of one who would come and Christ is that person. He is the fulfillment of these prophecies. All of the sacrifices of the old covenant foreshadowed the Lord. They pictured the person and work of Christ, an unblemished lamb sacrificed for His people. The great day of atonement look forward to Calvary. The Passover pictured our spiritual redemption from slavery to sin by Christ, the true Passover lamb.

The Lord was the embodiment of the law. He only, of all men who ever lived, He only it perfectly so He could say to His enemies, “Which one of you can vex me of sin?” Even Pilate had to confess at the Lord’s trial, I find no fault in him. So the law did point to the Lord, He was the goal and fulfillment of it. But it is in that fulfillment that the Lord has in some sense terminated the law, brought it to an end. The illustration or the analogy of this is that of a race. When runners cross the finish line, the race both comes to an end and it reaches its goal. The purpose of running the race is to finish it. And once a person finishes it, they have reached the goal. And Christ did that with the law. He fulfilled its moral obligations, He fulfilled its prophecies, he fulfilled its types.

As a result with His death and resurrection, He brought the law to a conclusion, He ended the old dispensation, He began the new dispensation. That ended the laws binding authority over God’s people and it ended the law as a supposed system of salvation. It demonstrated that the righteousness revealed in the law is available only in Christ. It must be available only in Christ because the law has been terminated. He is the source of righteousness and it can only be received by faith in Him. But because the Jews did not understand that Christ ended the law, they did not respond to Him in faith and have missed the righteousness that is offered only in Christ. Now that’s Paul’s meaning here. That’s the meaning of his statement. The righteousness that is required for salvation is found only in Jesus Christ who fulfilled the law perfectly and it can be only be received through faith in Him.

Paul doesn’t mean that the end of the law of Moses is the end of its value and that it is no longer useful for us. It is scripture and all scripture is profitable for the believer. 2 Timothy 3:16, we continue to read the Old Testament, we continue to think about it, learn from it and respond to it. Nor does Paul mean that because we are no longer under the law’s authority as the regulator of our daily lives, as the Israelites were, that we no longer have law. We do have law. The law’s moral absolutes which are expressions of God’s character and are as eternal as God are carried over into the law of the New Testament. But that is now embodied in Christ, in His instruction and that of His apostles. In fact, Paul in Galatians 6:2 and in 1 Corinthians 9 speaks of the law of Christ. The New Testament is our law and the Holy Spirit is our guide. He is the one who enables to do what we are instructed to do.

So there’s a great change that’s taking place with the death and the resurrection and the ascension of our Lord in terms of our relationship to the law. And there is another change. With the end of the law, the salvation that is in Christ is now offered widely. During the age of the law God was dealing mainly with Israel. Though with the end of that age, righteousness has been made available to the gentiles. And so Paul says it is to everyone who believes. It is for Jews and gentiles alike, it is for the sinner and the self-righteous, it is for the publican and the Pharisee, it is for the rich and the poor. It is for all kinds of people, it is for all who realize that they have no righteousness of their own, who give up on themselves and look to Christ for that righteousness and believe in Him.

The gospel is for sinners and the gospel gives hope to the hopeless. When George Whitfield preached to the coal miners near Bristol in England, he could see that they were receiving the gospel by the streaks of white made by the tears as they ran down their black cheeks. He wrote in his diary, “As these poor coaliers, these coal miners had no righteousness of their own, they therefore gloried in Him who came to save publicans and sinners.” They knew they had no righteousness of their own, but they rejoiced that Christ gave righteousness. The law can’t do that. The law cannot give righteousness. A person can turn away from Christ and try to gain eternal life with some good deed like that rich, young ruler did or a person can abandon all hope in himself and look to Christ alone for the gift of righteousness. In Him only do we find righteousness and refuge for salvation.

I have a picture at home of the place where it is said that Augustus Toplady was inspired to write his famous hymn, *Rock of Ages*. It is the picture of a crevice in a large rock and the story goes that one day Toplady was out walking when he was caught suddenly in a great thunderstorm, but he was able to find shelter in a gap in the side of rock and safely wait there ‘til the storm passed. Afterward he wrote, “Rock of Ages, cleft for me/Let me hide myself in thee.” Well, that’s Christ. He is the rock, He is the refuge. He’s also a stone of stumbling. But He is a shelter for all who seek shelter in Him and the promise is that we will not be disappointed when we come to Him.

So if you’re here without Christ, come to Him. Flee to Christ. Find shelter in Him from judgment. Trust in Him. He died for sinners to give them the righteousness that the law cannot provide. He suffered the storm in our place so that we would be spared. So trust in Christ and then rejoice in the salvation that you have in Him. It is a gift received by faith alone. May God help you to do that. Let’s bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for your goodness and your grace, the salvation that we have in your son. We come to this great text of scripture and we read how Israel, your ancient people have a zeal for you and yet not in accordance with knowledge. And how true that is of others, to be true of the gentile, having a zeal but not knowledge. Zeal is not salvation. But you give knowledge. By your grace you opened minds and hearts to receive the truth and we who have belief thank you and praise you for that. We recognize that our salvation is all of God, not of us.

Thank you for that. We thank you for the righteousness that's in Christ, a free gift received through faith alone. We praise you for it and pray that we will live lives that measure up to that righteousness, lives of obedience. Make us diligent as evangelists and witnesses for your grace in the midst of this world we pray in Christ's name.
Amen.