

DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME IX
DON'T TRIP
JULY 31, 2022

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter: What are some common misunderstandings of who Jesus is in our culture today?

Key Text: *“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.’” (Romans 9:30-33)*

In his book *How You Can Be Sure You Will Spend Eternity with God*, Erwin Lutzer tells about a missionary who became a good friend of an Indian pearl diver. They discussed salvation many times, but the Hindu could not believe it could be a free gift of God’s grace. He believed salvation had to be earned in some way. Before the missionary left India, the Indian gave him the largest and most perfect pearl he had ever seen. The pearl diver explained that his own son had lost his life getting the pearl from the bottom of the sea. The missionary thanked him but then offered him money for the pearl. The Hindu was offended, saying there was no price that could be paid for a pearl that had cost the life of his son. At that moment, the truth dawned on him—that is what grace is all about! Salvation cost God the death of His only Son. To think we can pay for it is an insult indeed. Grace is free to us but very costly to God.

Many people—including the Jews Paul refers to in today’s text, Romans 9:30-33—think they must earn salvation from God. But Paul emphasizes that while we were still dead in our trespasses and sin, God established the way through faith in Christ in which we could be made right with Him.

1. Through faith, the Gentiles found righteousness without even seeking it. (9:30)

“What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith.” (v.30)

For the most part, non-Jewish people have never tried to live in accordance with Moses’ Law since the Law was given to the Jews, not to the Gentiles. They may have had religious rituals and ceremonies, but they did not try to show God they were righteous by following the Law as the Israelites tried to do. Paul says Gentiles found righteousness with God by grace through faith in Christ. God credited the believing Gentiles with righteousness via the same means God credits the believing Jews with righteousness—through faith (v.30).

Discuss: What was your parents’ view of Jesus when you were growing up?

Discuss: When did you first come to believe in Jesus as your Savior?

Discuss: What words would you use to describe who Jesus is to you now?

2. Through the Law, Israel has not found righteousness even after seeking it.
(9:31-32a)

“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. (v.31-32a)

In contrast to the Gentiles, the Jews actually did seek after righteousness by following the Law, but they failed: *“Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law”* (v.32). They failed in trying to attain righteousness because they pursued it through their own attempts at good works rather than through faith. They couldn’t keep God’s Law perfectly; therefore, they couldn’t keep it at all.

Discuss: James 2:10 says, *“Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.”* Why do you think God set the standard so high—why isn’t keeping 99% or 80% or even 1% of God’s law enough to make us righteous?

3. Jesus Christ is the foundational rock of God’s salvation plan—and the unbelieving Jews stumbled over Him. (v.32b-33)

“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.’” (v.32b-33).

Jesus was not what the Jews expected, so in their chase after salvation by works, they tripped over Him (v.32b). The Jews wanted recognition for their efforts toward salvation. 1 Corinthians 1:23 puts it this way: *“We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews...”* The idea of a crucified Messiah undermines our own self-righteousness. But Christ had to die because we are unable to save ourselves!

Discuss: How does God’s plan of salvation clash with today’s popular self-help mentality we see in our culture and even in some churches?

Paul then asserts that those who trust in Christ for salvation will *“not be put to shame”* (v.33)—that is, they will not be shown to be foolish for their faith—but those who reject Christ will stumble and fall spiritually.

Discuss: Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-30 and discuss how Paul’s words in those verses compliment his words in Romans 9:32b-33.

Discuss: Read Ephesians 2:8-9 and discuss these key words in those verses: *grace, saved, faith, gift, not a result of works, boast.*

For Further Study:

Free online commentary of the Book of Romans at www.enduringword.com

“How is Jesus a ‘Rock of Offense?’” article at www.gotquestions.org

“Why Do Most Jews Reject Jesus as Messiah?” article at www.gotquestions.org