

97-01-05b

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Now you may notice we're reviewing a little bit in Romans chapter 10, but we're getting ready to push through into chapter 11, and keeping these things clear in our mind, you can see how it ties back to how Paul started this letter. And this thread is a continuous thread that runs all the way through the letter, and in fact runs all the way through the New Testament, and especially the epistles of Paul.

Christ is the end of the law. Now, we say, okay, the law ended. That's the end of the law.

It's finished. It's terminated. But this is end.

We have this meaning for the word end even in English. The end justifies the means. It doesn't mean that because it's finished, the means is okay.

The end is the purpose, isn't it? It's the goal. It's the summation, the fulfillment, the completion, in the sense of having attained to what you were after. Christ is the purpose of the law for righteousness.

Christ is the goal of the law. What was the goal of the law? The law was a description of what a righteous man looks like. What was the goal of the law? It was to encourage Israel to faith and to the obedience that springs from faith.

That was the purpose of the law. The purpose of the law wasn't to say, here's a set of rituals. If you keep these, I'll declare you righteous.

It was to give Israel an understanding of what faith looks like, of what works look like that spring from faith. But it was never designed to cause them to skip the faith step, which is what they did. What was the goal of the law? Righteousness by faith.

Israel completely messed up the law, didn't they? Because they didn't, as a nation and generation to generation, they didn't arrive at righteousness by faith. They pursued righteousness by works. They chased after it and they never caught it because they didn't do it by faith.

That was the purpose of the law, was to bring them to faith. And it didn't happen. Christ is the purpose of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

And this is a present tense. This is not an eras. It's not talking about salvation at the point of faith where you're transformed forever out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.

This is as long as you are trusting. This is the ongoing process of trusting. Christ is the goal of the law for righteousness, with regard to righteousness.

Where righteousness is concerned, it's Christ. If we focus on Christ, the way that he lived, the

death he died, he died to sin, the life he lives, he lives to God, so forth. That's the goal for everyone who is trusting.

And we've reviewed this, what Moses says about the man who does these things shall live by them. And his temporal fate, his fate in time, depended on whether or not he obeyed. He was master of his own fate, captain of his own ship.

If he did these things, he would stay alive physically. But the righteousness of faith speaks in a different way. You've got the Word in your mouth.

You've got the Word in your heart. It needs to be the object of faith, and God credits righteousness based on that faith. And we saw in verse 9 the confessing with the mouth of the Lord Jesus and belief in the heart that God raised him from the dead.

You will be delivered. You believers will be delivered if you take that step after faith that results in obedience, making the conscious decision after accepting these things, after believing these things, after understanding that that's reality, to obey. That's confession.

That's what James is talking about, that your faith has results. That's how you know it's genuine faith. You don't really have genuine faith if it's not changing the way you live.

Some of us have been exposed to good teaching for years and years and years, and we've known other people who were exposed to good teaching for years and years and years, people who have filled notebooks and have blackened the pages and the margins of their Bible with notes, and yet from week to week and month to month and year to year, they're no different. After thousands of hours of Bible study, they're essentially the same person. We may be essentially the same person as when we started.

Something is wrong because the Word of God has transforming power in the hands of the Holy Spirit. It renews. It motivates.

It cuts to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and joints and marrow. It is a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It equips us for every good work.

If nothing is changing, there's no life there. One of the characteristics of life, we talked about this not long ago, a living thing respirates. It reproduces.

It does work. It accomplishes something. It exchanges energy.

And it changes. It grows. If we're not changing and growing, we don't have any life.

And it doesn't matter how much of the Word of God we've heard or how much of it we accept as fact and believe to be reality. It would be like somebody that... Suppose, for example, that eating potato peels would make your ears fall off. I don't want to use a real example because it may

apply to someone and then they'll feel bad.

But suppose there were scientific studies that said, you know, eating a lot of potato peels, your ears just wither and drop off. And some people that I know really love potato skins. It's one of their favorite things.

And they read report after report, magazine articles, TV specials and so forth. Look, we've just discovered eating potato skins. Look what it does to your ears.

Here's all these people. Here's pictures of them. Here's a pile of ears and so on.

And someone could say, well, that sure seems like it happens. And yet they don't stop eating potato skins. And pretty soon their ears wither up and fall off.

What's the point? Many people do this. And you can think of more concrete and realistic examples of this fact in life. Many people who get addicted to cocaine.

Many people who are alcoholics. Many people who abuse some other substance. There are studies where certain foods that you eat are bad for your body.

And somebody can understand that and see evidence of it and yet say, well, I don't argue with any of that. I'm sure that it's true. However, comma, and bing.

They just go right on forward and do what they've always done. It's possible to know and understand a truth, acknowledge it, have no argument with it, and not have it change your life. That's the point.

And we see it around us all the time. Well, if that's the case in terms of spiritual truth, we're dead and we're in big trouble. That's what happened with Israel.

Israel had the law and the promises and the covenants. They were acted out in the rituals all the time. The word was near to them in their hearts and in their mouth.

And yet their faith didn't result in obedience. And they had a zeal for God not according to knowledge. And it persisted right up to Paul's day.

Not according to full knowledge, epinosis knowledge, knowledge that transforms and creates motivation and results in a different pattern of life. Turn with me to Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2. One of the classic, most widely known passages in the Bible that talks about faith and works is Ephesians 2, 8 through 10. What I'd like to do is refresh our minds on why Paul says what he says in Ephesians 2, 8, 9, and 10.

If you go back to chapter 2 at the beginning, he talks about our salvation. We were made alive when we were dead in trespasses and sins. We were under the power of the course of this world and we conducted ourselves in the lust of the flesh and so forth.

But look at verse 4. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. And he raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Why? Verse 7. Verse 7 immediately precedes what we're about to look at. So that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. In the ages to come.

We sit here today and we look at the Old Testament, don't we? We see the life of David and Moses and Abraham and all these other stories and episodes in the Old Testament. At that time, in Moses' day, this was a coming age that we live in. Well, now we're in it and we're looking back and we're educated and edified.

All these things were written for our instruction. And we see God's grace and we see his mercy and his compassion. We read Exodus 34, 34, and so on.

We are going to be someone's Old Testament in the future. The record of our lives, the decisions that we make, the pattern of our walk through life can be a reflection of God's exceeding riches of grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Someone's going to be flipping back through the pages of some future Bible and find us.

What is our life going to reflect? Hopefully it's going to be like Abraham, like David, like Moses. Because that's God's purpose. That's the reason that he made us alive together with Christ.

It's the reason he raised us together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Why do we have eternal life? What is God's calling and purpose for us in this age? So that in ages to come he can demonstrate, he can point to us and say there's an example of the exceeding riches of his grace and his kindness. Now look at verse 8. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves.

It is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. God's purpose in the eternal future is not to point back and say, look at Sam's wonderful works. Look at so-and-so's wonderful works and all of the great things that they did.

Look at the impact that he had in his community. Look at the number of people he evangelized. Look at the scalps on his belt and the silhouettes on his fuselage here.

Look at all the things that he did. Wasn't he a wonderful guy? Wasn't he a tremendous believer? Isn't he to be numbered up among the saints? That's not God's purpose. What is his purpose? To show his exceeding riches of grace and kindness, what he has done, where he was at work.

And he is at work within us to will and to do his good purpose. God is going to be pointing to what

he was able to do because we let him, not what we were able to do because we were trying to please him. And Paul says, look, you were saved by grace through faith, not out of works so that you can't boast.

It's not your purpose to boast, your place to boast. It's not your goal to find a way to boast and let people know everything you've done. Look at verse 10.

For we are his workmanship. We are something that he has done. We are created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Now, in the light of what we've just seen in everything in Ephesians 2, 1-9, it's all talking about what God has done and what God wants to demonstrate. It seems a little odd here that he says, well, God has created us for good works. And to take that and say, well, God created us in Christ Jesus so that we could go out and have an impact in the community, evangelize and witness and minister and do all of these good deeds.

Even if that were true, it wouldn't make sense in this context, would it? Paul isn't talking about, you know, you all aren't really getting out and ministering. You're not really helping the widows and orphans. I haven't really seen any evidence.

He's not doing what James argues, is he? James says you're disregarding one another. The poor man comes in and nobody helps him. You say, go be warm, be fed, and he's left out in the street with nothing.

That's not the case in the Ephesian letter, is it? That's not even a part of Paul's argument. Paul is saying, look, this whole thing is of God. God is going to demonstrate in the future His grace and His mercy and His compassion through you.

And that's why your salvation doesn't come from what you do. It comes from His grace. None of you can boast.

It's God who's going to boast in the eternal future and demonstrate Himself. He's created you in Christ Jesus for good works. And then it seems like, whoa, where did he get this good works thing? You can read the rest of Ephesians and he doesn't really talk about good works.

He talks about what we should be, not what we should do. Be a good wife, be a good slave, be a good child. He doesn't talk about what you should do.

He doesn't talk about widows and orphans. He doesn't talk about the sick and afflicted. He doesn't talk about the poor, the naked, the blind, the thirsty.

Good works. He doesn't specify any of these good works. If you walked into a typical group of Christians today and said, let's get out the whiteboard and a marker here and list good works that would be a part of being a Christian today, what do you think would go up on the board? Well,

let's see, church attendance, giving, witnessing, ministry to the less fortunate, compassion on those who are sick and afflicted and so on.

We could make a list of good works, couldn't we? And how many of those would we find in Ephesians? If that's what Paul is talking about in Ephesians 2.10, we've been created for good works, it seems like he'd help us out by giving us a list. And it's not here. It's nowhere in the book.

And if we look closely, as we're going to do now at Ephesians 2.10, this is going to clarify our whole understanding of faith and works. Let me give you a little bit of Greek here. It won't kill anyone, I trust.

Ephesians 2.10, if you render it in the same order that it is in the Greek, he says, I have to do a little bit just to get it to make any sense at all in the English, but he basically says, for his workmanship we are created in Christ Jesus, and then it says epi, E-P-I, and then we have the dative of ergois, and then we have an adjective, agathois. It's epi, ergois, agathois. Ergois is ergos, which is the noun for work.

Agathois means good. It's an adjective that means good. The cases match here.

They're both in the dative. And we have the preposition epi. Epi means upon or above.

We saw it earlier this morning in epinosis. It's not just knowledge. It's superior knowledge.

It's full knowledge. It's over and above your run-of-the-mill knowledge. Epinosis, over, upon knowledge.

Here this is that we have been created in Christ Jesus upon good works. That doesn't quite make sense. If you go to any Greek grammar and look up the functions of the preposition epi, it's used with three different cases in Greek, and when you look up its meaning when it is used with the dative, which is what we have here, it means upon or over, and it generally is used to indicate in this sort of sense that the cause for something, because of, is a common translation.

Let me just take you to a few passages where we have this construction used by Paul. You can look in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 6. 1 Corinthians 1.6. Actually, I think I wrote that down wrong. It should be 1 Corinthians 1.4. Paul says, I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God, and it's epi plus the dative of charis, which is grace.

He says, I give thanks to God always for you, epi, the grace of God which was given to you in Christ Jesus, upon the grace of God. That's the occasion that I give thanks. I look at the grace of God that's been bestowed on you, and upon that occasion, or because of that, I give thanks.

So, it's because of something that God has already done. God has bestowed grace to them. He's given them grace in Christ Jesus.

Paul thinks about that, and it motivates him to give thanks. So, you might say he gives thanks because of God's grace to them. The same book, 1 Corinthians 13, verse 6. We have the same construction, epi plus the dative.

Paul is talking about what love is like. 1 Corinthians 13, the great love chapter. Love does not insist on its own way.

It is not irritable. It is not resentful. It does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right.

And this is epi plus the dative of the words for wrong and right. It does not rejoice because of wrong. A wrong is committed.

You look at it. You don't rejoice. Something right is done.

That's what you rejoice over. So, there's something out there. You see it, and because of that, you rejoice.

There's something in existence, and because of that, you have an attitude. You rejoice. You get the idea here? It doesn't say that you rejoice for the purpose of committing a right, or for the purpose of committing a wrong.

You don't have an attitude, and it results in something. You have an attitude because of something. You see the cause and effect there? There's something out here, God's grace or a wrong or a right, and because of that, you have an attitude.

You have a response. Because of that, you do something. Turn over just a page to 1 Corinthians 14, 16.

He's talking about if you're uttering unintelligible words in the spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say amen to your thanksgiving when he doesn't know what you're saying? And right here, it says, how can anyone as an outsider say amen upon your thanksgiving, upon whatever it is that you're muttering? Because of that, epi plus, in this case, eucharistia, which is where we get eucharist, because of your thanksgiving, because of your action here in muttering these unintelligible words, upon seeing that, how can he say amen when he doesn't know what you're saying? Because of that, he's going to respond. There's something out there. Because of it, you do something.

This is the pattern that we see in this usage of epi plus the dative, and it's important. It's a grammatical point, but it's essential because Paul doesn't use this construction very often. In Ephesians, it only occurs twice.

And in some books, it doesn't occur at all. And so when he uses it, he's got a meaning for it. And the meaning we're seeing time and again is that it's because of.

It's because of. Another couple of pages over, 1 Corinthians 16, 17. He says these men came and visited.

He's got Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus. He says, I rejoice at their coming. And this is epi plus the dative of the word for coming.

I rejoice because of their coming. They came. It caused me to rejoice.

So you see the pattern that we're developing here. I just want to show you a couple of other passages. Flip over a page or two to 2 Corinthians 1 and verse 4. Paul says that God is the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction.

And this is epi plus the dative. He comforts us because of our affliction. He comforts us upon our affliction.

Epi plus the dative. We have an affliction out there. Because of that, God comforts us.

In this same book, in chapter 7, verse 4, 2 Corinthians 7, 4. He says we have joy because of affliction. Because of our afflictions, we are overjoyed. The last part of verse 4 there.

Now, this is the passage we want to get to here in this light. 2 Corinthians 9 and verse 13. 2 Corinthians 9, this section of it, if you recall, is Paul talking about the cheerful giver.

Paul is taking up a collection for the saints in Jerusalem. And he is encouraging the believers at Corinth to participate in this, to take advantage of the opportunity. He says, I thought it necessary in verse 5 to urge the brethren to go on before and arrange in advance for the gift that you have promised so that it may be ready, not as a requirement, not as something that is exacted from you, but as a willing gift, a bounty, something that you are giving willingly and freely and that is a joyful occasion.

The point is this. If you sow sparingly, you will reap sparingly. If you sow bountifully, you will reap bountifully.

Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion. God loves a cheerful giver. And Paul points to the fact that here is an occasion to give, but the point is it needs to be the result of faith.

It needs to be the result of an attitude in your soul. I don't just want you to give and that is going to be a good work in and of itself. It needs to spring from faith.

And so he gives them an occasion for faith. He gives them a promise. God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work.

As it is written, he scatters abroad, he gives to the poor, his righteousness endures forever. He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

Now verse 12, For the rendering of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God. It's not just that by giving you're going to help out these needy saints, but this is going to be the occasion for people to glorify God. Look at verse 13.

Under the test of this service, you, they actually will glorify God because of your obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ. And when it says they will glorify God by your obedience or because of your obedience, this is *epi* plus the dative of the word for obedience. On the occasion of, because of your obedience, people are going to glorify God.

They're not going to glorify you. They're going to glorify God. And what is this obedience? This obedience is acknowledging the gospel of Christ.

Isn't that interesting? We've talked about the fact that the word gospel doesn't always mean that because of the death of Christ, we're rescued from the lake of fire when we trust Him. The gospel is the way of life of believers. It comprehends everything that is a part of the mystery, everything that's a part of the message to believers on how to live after salvation as well as the good news of redemption and reconciliation and so forth.

Notice, under the test of this service, you will, they will glorify God. I keep saying you because this translation has it there, but this is they. They will glorify God because of your obedience, *epi* plus the dative here of *hupotasso*, because of your submission.

Same word we saw in Ephesians. And then it has your obedience in acknowledging the gospel. This word acknowledge is an old friend.

It's *homo logeo*. It's the word translated confess in 1 John 1.9 to acknowledge, to say the same thing. Your obedience acknowledging the gospel of Christ.

This is the gospel of Christ. When they take the opportunity to minister to the needs of the saints, remember James? Here's somebody poor. Do you say go be warm, be fed, and you do nothing? Is there any obedience that results from your faith? Is there any change of mind? Is there any shift in priorities? Having my material possessions and keeping everything that God has given me is not as important as the welfare of a fellow believer that I see in my periphery.

Here's an opportunity. Not only are these things real to me, but I'm going to change what I might normally do. I might normally say go be warm, be fed, but here's an opportunity.

I'm going to take advantage of it. And I'm going to trust God that if I somehow deplete my

resources in this endeavor that because my motivation is right and my desire is to please Him, He's going to fill in that deficit. It's a manifestation of faith.

It is an action that is performed specifically because we trust God. And we say I trust that God will make up any deficit, that God will not allow me to fail in fulfilling my financial responsibilities to my own family and so forth if I do this thing. It's a result of faith.

And Paul says that this is going to bring glory to God by your obedience in acknowledging, in homologuing, in confessing. Remember our passage on verbal confession? With the heart you believe and with the mouth you confess. This is the outworking of that faith in the human realm where it's visible.

Acknowledging the Gospel of Christ. This is acknowledging the Gospel of Christ. This is living out the Gospel which is the word of truth as it applies to the life of a believer.

This isn't living out you can get saved by trusting Christ and not go to the lake of fire, is it? So we have another use here of Gospel talking about the truth that pertains to us as believers. This is the Gospel that Paul preaches. This is the Gospel that he talked about in Romans 1.16. I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.

It is the power of God for deliverance to everyone who is trusting, the Jew first and also the Greek. The Gospel of God, the truth of God, the promises, principles, and doctrines that pertain to believers in this life are the power of God for deliverance. Deliverance out of this evil age.

Deliverance out of the pattern of seeking our own righteousness instead of God's righteousness. Deliverance out of the pattern that Israel followed as believers. We can be delivered.

We don't have to wallow in the inadequacy of our human efforts and our human viewpoint. We can be delivered out of that. It's the power of God, this Gospel, when it's the object of our faith and when it not only is acknowledged by us and believed by us, but when it motivates us to obey, to change the way we live, to implement it in the smaller and larger decisions of life, that's when we're delivered.

That's when God is glorified. That's when we acknowledge and confess the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That's the consistent message of Paul in every letter that he writes, and it's nowhere more clear than right here in 2 Corinthians 9.13. Under the test of this service, this is dokimazo.

This is the noun that comes from dokimazo. Dokimazo, D-O-K-I-M-A-Z-O. And dokimasu is the noun that comes from it.

It means to test for the purpose of approving. You test something to verify that it is what it appears to be. You're not testing it to disqualify it.

You're not testing it because you think it's faulty. You're verifying that it is what it appears to be.

To test for the purpose of approval.

This is like when the USDA comes in and tests foods. You want their seal of approval. You don't want them to come in and throw everything out.

You don't say, boy, come in and test my meat. I'm hoping you'll eliminate all of my bad food. You call them in because you want to be approved.

You want to pass that test. And you bring them in for the purpose of approval. That's what this is.

Under the test of this diakonia, this deaconage, this service. This is a test of service. It's an opportunity that God is watching for the purpose of approving us.

And it's a deacon activity. It's the opportunity to serve. Under the test of this service, they will glorify God because of, upon the occasion of, epi plus the dative, because of your hupotasso, your submission, your obedience.

In homologueo. We're getting a lot of Greek here, aren't we? But every word is significant. You're confessing.

You're acknowledging. You're saying the same thing. You're living out the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is motivated by hope and is generated by faith and results in love.

Your obedience and acknowledging the Gospel of Christ. And then here I'm reading out of the New RSV. It says that they will glorify God by your obedience and acknowledging the Gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your contribution for them.

I'm not sure how your English reads, but it's not the generosity of your contribution. Contribution is an extremely bad translation here. The word that the New RSV translates contribution is koinonia.

We've been in churches where they had a koinonia committee. It's the fellowship committee. It's the committee that takes care of fellowship.

Koinonia is almost universally translated fellowship. By the generosity of your fellowship with a view toward them and a view toward us. With regard to them and with regard to us.

It's a manifestation of fellowship, of like-mindedness, of commonality, of being one in the body of Christ. This is confessing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It's acknowledging that there are others who believe and think the same way and having the desire to sustain and to minister and to take the opportunity to be a blessing to.

The generosity of your fellowship with them and with us is the idea here. So what's the point? The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Word of Truth that is near us in our mouth and in our heart is the object of our faith. The whole theme of the book of Romans that we've been studying is

righteousness by faith, isn't it? But that faith should produce life.

God's going to declare us righteous because of that faith. But if it's genuine faith, it is going to motivate us to obedience. It's going to make a difference.

We're going to see the effects in our own lives. It's going to work itself out. And it might be easy to be critical of the understanding that we have gained in Romans and say, well, you're just talking about righteousness by faith and it's all internal and my approval before God and my survival at the judgment seat of Christ and so forth, and I'm just trusting God and getting myself declared righteous.

Where's the compassion? Where's the love? Where's the concern and the burden for the lost and for fellow believers and so forth? You seem like you're just self-centered and preoccupied and contemplating your navel and so forth. What's the point here? This is a matter of first things first. Paul directs our attention to faith because he knows that genuine faith is going to bring about the obedience of faith.

It is going to be the fuel that lights the fire within us to where we cannot help but express in love, in ministry, in evangelism, in those things. But it's going to come from the right source. It's going to be empowered by the right power.

It's going to be guided by the right spirit. And it's going to glorify the right person because of that. It is a result of work that God has done in us and an opportunity that God has created around us.

And when those things take place, God will be glorified. It will result in thanksgivings to God. There is nothing that should be more alarming to us than when a ministry is performed or a good thing is done to hear more about the person who did it than the God who provided for it.

The whole purpose, when these things are done right and when they spring from faith, the glory is going to go to God. And it's not going to be a verbal nod to God like, oh, glory to God, let me tell you how God used me to be a blessing to all of these people. The focus is going to be on God.

The concentration is going to be on God. The appreciation is going to be for God and not for the common clay vessel that He used to scoop that grace up and pour it out on someone else. And that is a discernment that we have to make and a distinction that we have to watch for and that we have to be careful of in our own lives.

If it's really coming from faith and it's really a part of God's work, then God's grace and God's glory are going to be reflected and not our own. And it is so easy and so common in Christianity today that even as the words are spoken, oh, isn't God wonderful, glory to God, what a wonderful thing God has done, that the impression you're left with is, boy, what a guy, what a gal, what a ministry, what an organization, what a system, what a concept, what a step program, what a

book, what a program that was. And you're not left with the glow of the glory of God in appreciating His character and His grace and His power.

And that's what needs to happen because if God is not glorified, then it's not coming from genuine faith and it isn't a part of God's plan. That's the goal. That's why Paul is writing Romans.

It isn't that there's anything wrong with good works. The law was just and right and holy, but it was misused because people made it a means instead of a result. And that's what happens in Christianity today.

Much of what we see around us that is labeled Christian ministry, Christian evangelism and so forth is a means for the people engaged in it to justify themselves. They believe it to be a means of fulfilling their purpose, a means of working out their spirituality or whatever it might be. And it has to be a result of work that God is doing and then God will be glorified.

So the point here as we conclude Romans 10, we might just turn there as we close, is to keep on track in this book. You would be amazed if you go and read a commentary in Romans on how far afield we are from some of the more common threads of interpretation in Romans at this point because I haven't checked some commentaries in several weeks, but I went back and read through and it's all dwelling on sovereignty and on one thing and another. And the whole thrust of the argument here is righteousness by faith.

Paul has argued for it in contrast to works. He has contrasted Israel and the fact that they were vessels of wrath prepared for ruin because they missed this point. And he's going to move on and talk about the fact that there has been a remnant that has gotten this message, that caught the point and understood righteousness by faith.

God has preserved them and God is going to honor them and God is going to sustain them as branches in the tree that bears fruit and so forth. But he's talking in the last half of chapter 10 about the Word of God because the Word is the object of faith. Righteousness comes through faith.

And what was the problem? Where was the breakdown in the system for Israel? He says in verse 11 of chapter 10, Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame, whoever is trusting, the one who lives this life of faith and who sustains the obedience that comes from it. He will not be put to shame. It doesn't matter if he's Jewish or Greek.

It's the same Lord over all and is rich to all who call upon Him. Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him whom they have not trusted? How shall they trust Him whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher? How shall they preach unless they are sent? This has been a classic text to support evangelism and missionary activity and the principle is certainly sound but this context tells us that what Paul is talking about is righteousness by faith for believers.

If you're going to live the life of faith, you have to have the Word and make it the object of faith. And he makes that point. He says the Word has to be present.

And look at verse 16. They have not all obeyed the good news. Isaiah says, Lord who has believed, report.

Who is Isaiah talking about? Believers in Israel who had received a message from the prophet that they needed to trust God and not lean on their surrounding countries as allies in the face of a threat. This was living faith, living righteousness that was being called for by the prophet. And Israel disregarded Isaiah.

They wanted to make an alliance. They wanted to lean on a bending reed and so forth. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

And this is rhema, R-H-E-M-A, the spoken word, the Word as it is in the act of being communicated. But I say, have they not heard? Yes, they have. Now, Israel has fallen down, right? Israel didn't get it.

As a nation, generation by generation, they are a picture of failure in this regard. And so Paul says, okay, to have faith, you've got to have the Word. You've got to hear it and have it preached.

Was that Israel's problem that the Word wasn't preached? They didn't hear it and they didn't know it? Not at all. They have heard. The sound has gone forth to all the earth and their words to the ends of the world.

Did Israel not know? Israel did know. They heard the Word and they knew better. You see how this all ties together? This can be our problem today.

We can be exposed to good teaching and know it. We've heard it. It's the object of faith.

It isn't that we didn't listen to it or that we didn't believe it and didn't hear it and know it to be true. Israel did that much. They had a zeal for God.

But it didn't result in obedience. It didn't result in epinosis, the full knowledge that motivates obedience. Israel did know.

He said, I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation. I will move you to anger by a foolish nation. Isaiah is very bold and says, I was found by those who did not seek Me.

I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me. But to Israel, he says, and this was the case in the Gentiles. The Gentiles had never really been trying to live up to the rituals of the law to be declared righteous.

They heard the Gospel and were saved and they understood faith from the outset until the Jews

got a hold of them. But to Israel, he says, all day long I stretched out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people, people who heard the Word, people who knew the words of the prophets, who knew the words of the Torah, who knew the words of the wisdom books. But they were disobedient.

They were contrary. When you talk about a mule being contrary, what does it mean? You pull the rein in one way and it wants to go the other. You pull forward and it plants its feet and if anything goes backward.

Contrary means to resist a pull in a particular direction. If you're contrary, the wind is blowing one way and you're steering the other. You're controverting something.

You're fighting against something when you're contrary. Israel knew the Word and they had the Word, but they didn't obey it. They were contrary.

And that's the point. It isn't that lack of faith meant that they didn't know the Word and that they didn't believe it. They had that much faith.

They had that kind of faith, but they didn't have the faith that James is talking about. They didn't have the faith that results in obedience. They knew the reality and they disregarded the reality.

And so when we start next time in Romans chapter 11, we're going to find out what is the fate for national Israel who was characterized by this disobedience and this contrariness, even when they had the Word and the Word was near them in their heart and in their mouth, and they disregarded it. That has implications for them as a nation, as a people. Is God still going to fulfill the promises that He made to the nation and to the people? And if so, how is He going to do it? Is all of Israel going to be cast away? That's the question that Paul is going to answer in chapter 11, and that's where we'll pick up next time.

The exhortation for us and the application for us is to not only be hearers of the Word, but be doers. To not only throw the positive volition switch when it's time to assemble or when it's time to hear or even when it's time to believe and acknowledge the truth, but when it's time to apply, when it's time to obey, when it's time to fly in the face of opinions and fly in the face of human wisdom and step off the edge and not see the ground that may be under our next step. To act like these things are real in the outworking daily decisions, small decisions as well as large decisions of life.

Rahab did. Abraham did. James pointed that out.

We need to do the same thing. Let's close in prayer. Father, we thank You for the truth of these things.

We thank You that they are clear, they are near us in our hearts and in our mouth. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will raise before us the issue not only of faith, but also of the obedience that

springs from faith, the obedience that is a part of true faith, and that we will see those opportunities and see those occasions clearly, that the issue will be sharp in our minds and that we will know what it is we are doing as we make the decisions and set the priorities and perform the functions of our daily lives. We pray that as a result of seeing these things and understanding these things, we will act and we will live in a way that pleases You, that does glorify You and brings glory and reflects honor on the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

We ask it in His name. Amen.