



# Self-righteousness: Stone of stumbling

*"And he who falls on this **stone** will be broken to pieces" ... And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. -- Matt. 21:44,45*

*And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer ... -- Luke 18:9,10*

## Study 13a: BUT WHO COULD BE OFFENDED by JESUS? (9:30-10:4)

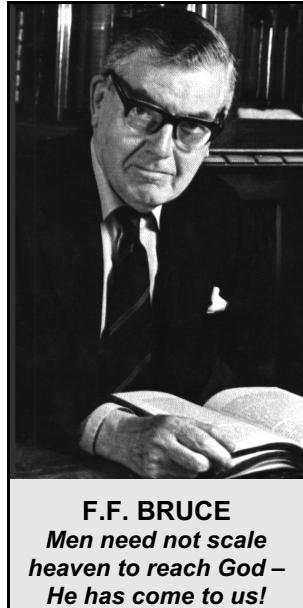
**9:30 - 9:33 How could it be that a people pursuing righteousness did not find it?** (10:3; Matt. 7:7,8)

When a man asked Charles Spurgeon how he reconciled divine sovereignty and human responsibility, Spurgeon replied: "I never try to reconcile friends!" -- **W.W. Wiersbe, Be Right**, p.109

So long as a man insists on going his own way, and believes, that by his own unaided efforts he can secure righteousness, the glad tidings of the free gift of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ will offend, and even enrage him. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas, Romans**, p. 159 (emphasis added)

**10:1-4 Despite their often murderous intent toward him, why could Paul not hate his brethren according to the flesh?** (9:1-3; 11:1; Acts 22:3-5; Phil. 3:4-6)

It will be noticed that each one of the three chapters in this theodicy begins with a warm expression of the



apostle's own feeling. He will not let it be forgotten, in bringing these heavy charges against those of his own blood, that he is writing in pity and not in anger. He is not an enemy of Israel. -- **J.M. Stifler, Romans**, p. 182

This -- (to have zeal not according to knowledge) -- is a terrible thing, which properly and alone resists faith, opposes obedience to God's Word, and makes men stiff-necked and incorrigible, as we perceive this in heretics and schismatics. For they insist upon their "good intentions" with stiff-necked and obstinate opposition, just as though they could not be mistaken; they believe that their salvation is altogether based upon the fact that they have good intentions and zeal of God. Such persons the Bible describes most properly as perverse in heart and corrupt in mind. Therefore we must note that to have a zeal of God according to knowledge means to regard nothing else as greater than always to be ready with fear and trembling to be guided, led and instructed (by God) in all that is good, no matter how insignificant it may be. -- **M. Luther, Romans**, p. 130

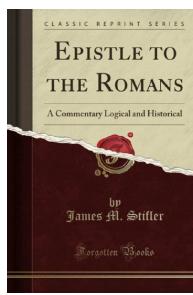
## Study 13b: ... AND SINCE WHEN IS A FREE GIFT AN AFFRONT? (10:5-11)

**10:5-7 To what does Paul liken the folly of trusting in works -- righteousness for salvation?** (Deut. 30)

The thirtieth chapter of Deuteronomy refers to the ultimate gathering of all Israel. Moses promises that in the future God will circumcise the "heart" of Israel. -- **J.M. Stifler, op.cit.**, p. 185

God has brought His salvation near to us, in Christ. We do not have to "climb the heavenly steeps" to procure it, for Christ has come down with it; we do not need to "plumb the lowest deeps" for it, for Christ has risen from the dead to make it secure to us. It is here, present and available; what we are called upon to do is to accept it by inward faith -- believing in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead -- and to acknowledge Him aloud as Lord. The saving faith is

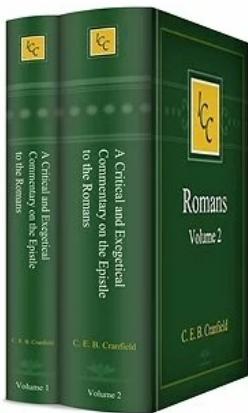
resurrection faith: "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain" (1 Cor. xv. 17). -- **F.F. Bruce, op.cit.**, p. 202



**10:8-11 To whom is the truth too simple?** (1 Cor. 1:18 - 2:16)

The anxious follower after righteousness is not disappointed by an impracticable code, nor mocked by an unintelligible revelation: the word is *near him*, therefore *accessible*; *plain and simple*, and therefore *apprehensible*; and ... deals with *definite historical fact*, and therefore *certain* ... -- **Henry Alford, Romans (The New Testament for English Readers)** vol. 2, p.932 (bold emphasis added)

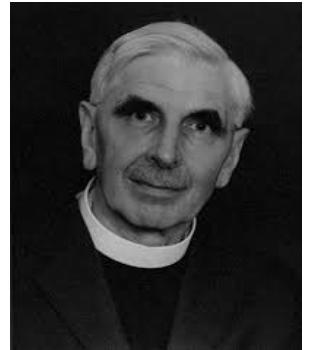
**10:12-13 Why are Jews and Jehovah's Witnesses alike offended by v.13? (1 Cor. 8:5,6; Phil. 2:9-11)**



**10:14-17 Which LORD does context demand we call upon? (vv. 9,12,16,17)**

And the confession of Christ is public confession: "Jesus is Lord" is the earliest, as it remains the sufficient, Christian creed. ... when Paul gives Christ the title "Lord", he does so because God the Father Himself has given Him that title as the "name which is above every name" (Phil. ii. 9). This title "Lord" is given to Jesus by Paul as the equivalent of the Hebrew Yahweh (Jehovah): the way in which he applies Isaiah xlvi. 23 (cf. Rom xiv. 11) to Jesus in Philippians ii. 10f., indicates that, to him, the confession "Jesus Christ is Lord" mean "Jesus Christ is Jehovah".

-- **F.F. Bruce**, *op.cit.*, p. 202,187



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## Was the Law the problem -- or the way the Law was viewed?

It is of the greatest importance to recognize something which is so often completely ignored, namely, that there is not the slightest suggestion here that to *pursue* the law was wrong or useless. It is not for its pursuit of the law, not on account of the *fact that* it had pursued, and was still pursuing, the law, that Israel is condemned, but for the *way in which* it had pursued the law ... The tragedy of Israel was that, instead of thus responding to the law of God with faith and pursuing it on the basis of faith, they had sought to come to terms with it ... on the basis of their works, their deserving, cherishing the illusion that they could so fulfil its demands as to put God under an obligation to themselves. Such an illusory quest could only result in failure -- in imprisonment in one's own self-centredness, and so in failure really to get to grips with the law, failure to comprehend its true meaning. **C.E.B. Cranfield** *Romans* Vol.2 pp.509,510