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Romans

For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

Romans 10:3

"For" is again used to continue the on-going chain of thought. This time, it is directly related to Paul's previous words, speaking of the Jewish people who held to the law as a means to an end, "they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." Because of this zeal, which lacks knowledge, they were "ignorant of God's righteousness." A few thoughts on this -

- 1) This is speaking of God's means of bestowing righteousness, not God's inherent righteousness.
- 2) Paul is not attempting to excuse the Jewish people for their ignorance; he is stating it as a fact and then explaining the results of it. This goes directly to the thought that misdirected faith is wasted faith, no matter how sincere it is; ignorance is no excuse. Paul uses the same thought about himself in 1 Timothy 1:13 when speaking of the time before God's grace was bestowed upon him -

"...although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."

Although his words here seem to indicate that he obtained the mercy because of his ignorance, this isn't what he is saying. Rather, he received mercy because of his faith which came after his ignorance. Had he continued on in his unbelief, the mercy wouldn't have come. This is the continued state of those Paul is speaking about. Instead, they were "seeking to establish their own righteousness."

The righteousness of God for man is found in Christ Jesus. This is explicitly stated in Ephesians 3:9. Paul said there that he would - "be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith." But this isn't where those he is speaking about looked. Rather than looking at Jesus as the fulfillment of the law, they used the law in an attempt to establish righteousness in themselves.

But Christ is the end of the law and they "have not submitted to the righteousness of God." To understand this, let's look at righteousness as a destination and different ways of attempting to get there:

The Island of Righteousness is in the middle of the ocean. Some may choose an airplane (representing being a philanthropist) to get there. But the destination has no airport and so airplanes crash in the ocean; all dead, donators drowned. Some may choose, a car (representing asceticism). But there is no road and they drive off the beach, into the water, and perish. Self-denial sinks. Some get onto a hot air balloon (representing the engagement in lofty thinking). However, the winds around the island never allow for a landing. All balloon attempts end in a bad way. Philosophy fails. These are all incorrect methods of reaching Righteousness. However, there is another way.

Some understand that one can get across the ocean by boat, and so they get onto the SS Law. God built the Law and so it is certainly fit for their journey to Righteousness. As they travel on the Law, some enjoy the mode of traveling and they start to help with the maintenance of the ship. The Law has become their obsession. When Righteousness is in sight, they don't realize it because they are so busy working on the Law. The ship pulls up to Righteousness and those who understand that this is the final destination get off, putting their faith in the fact

that they will be safe, even apart from the Law when it departs. The Island of Righteousness is their only hope, support, and source of life from that point on.

But there are those who never get off. They are so blinded by their obsession with SS Law that they never see what it was pointing to all along, Righteousness. Without leaving the ship, the Law goes back to the sea and sinks. It was designed for one purpose and one only, to reach Righteousness, which is apart from the Law. None of the other means of travel could ever safely get to Righteousness, and the SS Law had the purpose of getting there and then ending.

The last example is that which led to the state of the Jews who rejected Christ. They attempted to establish their own righteousness and failed to submit to the righteousness of God. They saw the law as a means to an end, never understanding that its intent and purpose (which is even described in the law itself) was to point to something greater; Jesus.

Life application: The Bible tells us how to reach Righteousness. When we follow the proper path and receive Christ Jesus, we are granted His righteousness. Nothing else will satisfy God. What Christ has done is all-sufficient for us to be reconciled once again to Him. Trust in Christ, live for Christ, and keep your eyes on Christ.

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Romans 10:4

For the third time in only four verses, Paul begins with "For." This time, it looks back to the thought that Israel, being ignorant of God's righteousness, sought instead to establish their own righteousness. By doing so, they "have not submitted to the righteousness of God." Based on this, Paul explains, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness." The law was put in place to show us of our desperately sinful state (refer to Romans 7) and to lead us to our need for Christ (see Galatians 3:21-25).

Jesus, being born without sin, was qualified to replace Adam. And living perfectly under the law without sinning, He fulfilled the law on our behalf. Now God offers us a trade. If we accept what Jesus did, believing that it was all-sufficient for us, He grants us Jesus' perfect righteousness and places our sins under His shed blood. In Him, we have peace with God. This is offered "to everyone who believes."

Nothing is said here, or at any other place in Scripture what Calvinists teach - that God first regenerates us in order to believe and then we exercise our faith. Belief is an act of the volitional will. We hear the message, we accept the premise, we believe that it is true, and God grants us Christ's righteousness. This is how it works and this is how the Bible describes the process time and time again.

So a question remains for consideration. "What happens to the law?" If Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes, then what does that mean about the law itself? The answer is twofold. First, the law remains in full force and effect for those who fail to believe in what Christ does. They must fulfill the law perfectly in order to stand justified before God. But Paul explains in Galatians 3:10-12 (and elsewhere) that no one is justified by the law. Because of this, those who fail to accept Christ stand condemned. Secondly however, the law is over for those who have accepted Christ. It is:

- 1) Annulled (Hebrews 7:18)
- 2) Obsolete (Hebrews 8:13)
- 3) Taken away (Hebrews 10:9)
- 4) Wiped out, taken out of the way, and nailed to the cross (Colossian 2:14)
- 5) Etc. elsewhere in multiple statements, explicitly and implicitly

In other words, we are free from the constraints of the law - completely and entirely. They are not binding on us. Our righteousness is an imputed righteousness based on the work of Christ. Therefore, to re-introduce the law in any precept (mandatory Sabbath day observance, circumcision, dietary restrictions such as "no pork", etc.) is to say to God, "I believe that what Christ did was insufficient to save me." It is a slap in the face of God.

The doctrine for our lives and conduct comes not from the law then, but from the New Testament epistles, particularly the writings of Paul who was selected to guide us during the church age.

Life application: Have faith in what Christ did, believe that what He did is all-sufficient, and be free from the requirements of the law which could never make you righteous in and of themselves.