

ROMANS XXXVIII: THE GOSPEL STONE

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INTRODUCTION:

If Christ is the stone, then the message of Christ is the message stone. People confess with their mouth and are saved, and people stumble over the words of grace and are lost forever. Preaching the stone is therefore a preaching of a gospel stone, and not a gospel cushion or pillow. The stone, when it is good news, is a stone. The stone, when it offends, is a stone.

THE TEXT:

"For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law . . ." ([Rom. 10:5-13](#)).

SUMMARY OF THE TEXT:

Remember that we have two different responses to the one stone. For the one with faith, it is a cornerstone. For the unbeliever, it is a stone of stumbling and offense. The gospel stone works the same way. Moses describes one kind of man, the man who wants to go about to establish his own righteousness. He says, the man who *does* these things shall live by them (v. 5). This is a quotation from [Lev. 18:5](#). Interestingly, this is part of the preamble to a list of sexual prohibitions. But Moses also is the voice of the other kind of righteousness, the righteousness that is "of faith." *It* says (v. 6), quoting [Deuteronomy 30:12](#), that men should not pretend that Christ is way up in Heaven, needing to be fetched. Don't pretend there was no Incarnation. And it also says that men should not pretend that Christ is beneath the sea (v. 7; [Dt. 30:13](#)), as though there was no resurrection. No, Moses told the Israelites that the word was near them, in their hearts, and in their mouths (v. 8; [Dt. 30:14](#)). So what was in their mouths and hearts? The Torah—that is, Paul says the word of faith that he is preaching (v. 8). Christ is the end of the law, remember (v. 4)? The summary is this: if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord (v. 9), and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead (v. 9), you will be saved. For men believe unto righteousness, and they confess unto salvation (v. 10). This is true because everyone who believes on the *Stone* ([Is. 28:16](#)) will never be put to shame. This is the cornerstone; who may build upon it? There is no difference between Jew or Gentile here (v. 12). The Lord is *rich* to all who call upon Him. How do we know? Joel promises that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (v. 13; [Joel 2:32](#)). Who have we just confessed as Lord? Jesus. Who is Joel talking about? Yahweh. Jesus is Yahweh, Jesus is Jehovah.

RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW:

In Leviticus 18, Moses tells the people first that they are not to do what is customary in Egypt, where they came from (18:3), or in Canaan, where they are going (v. 4). They must obey the law of God (18:4), and the man who *obeys* them will live by them (v. 5). What follows is a prohibition of multiple forms of incest (vv. 6-18), sex during a woman's period (v. 19), adultery (v. 20), child sacrifice (v. 21), homosexuality (v. 22), or bestiality (v. 23).

Now if we have learned the gospel rightly, the man who sees *Christ* in this part of the Torah is living by faith. The man who sees *rules* is not. Flipped around, the man with faith sees Christ. The man in unbelief sees rules. The man of faith sees a sexual stone to build on. The man of unbelief is crushed by the sexual stone, crushed by his lust. How so?

HOW EASY, HOW HARD:

At first glance, this list of rules looks pretty easy. A fairly low bar, right? Avoid sex with your sister, your aunt, and with barnyard animals. Going to Heaven is a cakewalk, right? Not so fast.

First, note that these things were customary in Egypt and in Canaan. The underlying command here is not to "not have sex with," but "not to *imitate*." Judging from how easily modern Christians imitate the unbelieving culture around us, we ought not to pat ourselves on the back too readily. Second, if you are not looking to Christ, then you have no choice but to reflect the image of that which is *not Christ*. And *not Christ* eventually looks like this list of perversions, whether or not it is studying the Torah, a scriptural devotional, or looking at hard-R raunch. Third, this is because the law (pursued as *not Christ*) is law that provokes and stirs up sin ([Rom. 3:20](#); [5:20](#)), and the sexual element is never far away ([Rom. 7:7](#)). One of the things we are not to covet is our neighbor's wife, also mentioned here in this list ([Lev. 18:20](#)). This means that traditional values without Christ are nothing less than a perversion generator. And open immorality is no better. There is no salvation anywhere apart from Jesus.

SPEAKING OF JESUS . . .

Jesus Christ is everywhere. He is in Heaven, and He came down from Heaven. He is beneath the sea, and He rose up from Sheol, just as Jonah did. He is pervasive throughout the Torah, for those who have the eyes of faith to see. He is in the gospel declared and preached, for those who respond in faith. For those without faith, He is God AWOL and all that is left are the dry bones and dusty rags of moralism.

JESUS IS TRULY LORD:

The confession of verse 9 is glorious—if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord (of your mouth), and believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, out of the graveyard of your heart, then you shall be saved. If the Spirit has been teaching us, we should see that fulfilling what this verse is talking about is *not* like touching second base as you run by. Christ is found in every word of v. 9—do you believe? Christ is found in every sexual prohibition of Leviticus 18—do you believe? And *Jesus is Lord* is just another phrase that Jesus can be missing from, if it is found in the mouth of a man with no faith.

Who will touch the eyes of the blind men? Who will speak to the ears of deaf? Who will tell the lame to leap for joy? How will this be done? How will it happen? When Paul tells us that Moses is speaking about the word of faith that he, Paul, is preaching, he is not wrenching words out of context. "And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live" ([Dt. 30:6](#)). In short, *you must be born again*.

With this regenerate heart, which alone is capable of believing, what do you see brought down from Heaven? What do you see brought up from the depths of Jonah's sea? You see the good of the land. "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it" ([Dt. 30:15-16](#)). This is the gospel stone. Built upon it, and live.

