

Romans: The Two Ways of Righteousness

Romans 10:1-13

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If you have your Bibles I'd invite you to turn with me to Romans chapter 10. We've been working our way through the book of Romans, and over the last number of weeks, have been in Romans chapter 9. At the end of Romans 9, beginning in verse 30 we really move into a new section of this part of the book of Romans. In Romans 9, 10, and 11 Paul is answering the question, "But what about Israel? Paul, you've said that your gospel of justification by faith alone through the finished work of Christ alone was the teaching of the Bible, the Jewish Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ was the Messiah of the world, but what's happened Paul, Israel has by and large rejects the Messiah, they have rejected your gospel." They said, "No, that's not for us Paul, we disagree with you." What's happened? That's the question that's being put to the Apostle Paul. What's happened with Israel?

Paul answer's that question basically in three parts, roughly corresponding to Romans 9,10, and 11. His first answer is this: God's sovereignty. God has chosen some and He's passed by others, and he knows immediately there are going to be five hundred hand that go up and say, "Wait a minute, that's not fair." And so he spends a whole chapter explaining why it's not only fair, it's merciful.

Then in Romans chapter 9 beginning in verse 30 and in the bulk of chapter 10, he moves to the second part of his answer, which is man's responsibility, and especially faith in Jesus the Messiah. And then we'll see what he says in Romans chapter 11 when we get there as the third part of his answer. But that's the flow of the argument.

The last time we were together, looking at verses 30-33 of Romans chapter 9, Paul had explained that Israel's failure to embrace the gospel was directly related to their stumbling over Jesus Christ. He had argued in those verses that Israel was seeking salvation by law keeping, rather than by trusting in Jesus Christ, and that Israel had stumbled over the stumbling stone. The one who was the rock of salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ, was appointed both for the rise and the fall of many in Israel. Many had embraced Him, including Paul. Many more had turned their backs on Him and thus had stumbled over the very one appointed as the

rock of salvation. Paul continues that argument in Romans chapter 10, especially in verses 1 through 13. That's what we're going to look at today. So let's hear God's word.

Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. But the righteousness based on faith speaks thus, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into Heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down), or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"- that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed" For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; for "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Amen.

This is God's word, may He write His eternal truth upon our hearts. Let's pray.

Our Lord and our God, as we consider this Your word, we pray that You would open our eyes to embrace Jesus as he is offered in the gospel. We recognize that this is a word due to Your grace and so we ask for Your grace. In Jesus name. Amen.

This passage is rich with truth. So rich that we could spend many, many weeks and not have exhausted it looking at all of its phrases and aspects, but I want to help narrow down our focus by focusing on four particular phrases in this passage. Many of the phrases in this passage have become part of Christian vocabulary and many of those phrases have actually become anchor or summary phrases for major points of Christian understanding. I'd like to look at four of them in this passage with you. The first phrase you'll see in verse 2. Their zeal for God is unquestioned, but it is not enlightened, or to put it this way, they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. The second phrase you'll see in verse 4, Christ in the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. The third phrase is in verse 9, if you confess with your mouth, Jesus as Lord, and believe in you heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. The final phrase is in verse 12; the same Lord is Lord of all. I'd like to look at those four phrases with you as we unpack this great passage.

Paul again opens up Romans 10, just as he did in Romans 9, and just as he will

in Romans 11 expressing his great desire for the salvation of Israel, now, this is very significant. As you have already seen, Paul has some fairly hard words for Israel in Romans 9, 10, and 11. He has some hard words for the Gentiles, by the way in Romans 11, but here he has some hard words for Israel. My suspicion is, if you were talking with a Jewish friend about the gospel, Romans 9, 10, and 11 is probably not going to be the first passage you put in their hands. Chances are you'd take the opportunity to hand, say, a gospel of Matthew to them, but you wouldn't turn first and foremost to Romans 9, 10, and 11 because Paul is plain and unvarnished and his words are uncomfortable. He knows that, and so for the second time in this passage he says, now you need to understand I don't hate Israel. I am an Israelite, in fact, it is the desire of my heart and it is the goal of all my prayers that my own people will come to embrace the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is again showing his heart because he has hard words to say to us.

I. Sincerity and earnestness in religion cannot save.

In verses 1 through 3, what he is going to do first is show us the problem of current Jewish religious practice, and he sums that problem up in verse 3, by saying that the problem is this, they have failed to subject themselves to God's righteousness. Now, what does he mean by that? Well, the context makes it clear, he was already talking about this in Romans chapter 9 verses 30 through 33, and if you look specifically at verse 2 of Romans chapter 10 you'll see what he's talking about. His people, the Jewish people of his own time, had been seeking to establish their own righteousness through law keeping, rather than through trust through the promised Messiah. They have looked for right standing with God through their own obedience to the law. It is that law keeping that they see as the ground of their acceptance with, and continuing in the blessings of God.

But in verses 1 through 3, Paul, first of all makes it clear here that sincerity and earnestness in religion can not save you, and that is vitally important for us as American Christians to understand. Paul says, he grants the Jewish people that they have an intensity and earnestness, a zeal for God, but what does he say? Our first great phrase sums it up: they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. We Americans believe that as long as you're sincere it doesn't matter. As long as your intentions are good, it doesn't matter. If you really are seeking God and you're sincere, well, surely God will accept that and the Apostle Paul has a splash of cold water for our faces. His word is this, zeal is of no value unless it is according to knowledge, and of course, by that the Apostle Paul means that our zeal in religion must be directed by the word of God. His fundamental charge here is that Israel has not understood its own Scripture, and therefore their spiritual zeal, their religious practice, is not in accordance with the knowledge of God, which is revealed in the Scriptures. He is saying that they have not understood their own Scriptures and they have sought salvation in the

wrong way, and that's vitally important for us as American Christians to understand.

We often value experience over Scripture, we often value enthusiasm over right teaching, and so it is vitally important for us to understand that Paul is saying that it is the prerogative of God to say how we must approach Him, and He tells us how we must approach Him in His Scripture, and we can not make it up as we go along. And Paul is saying, this is one of the fundamental problems of his own people. At the time that he's preaching this word of the gospel they think that they can gain their salvation by law keeping, and he says, if they had read their Scriptures correctly, they would have known that is not right, because as far as Paul is concerned both the Old Testament and the New Testament make it clear that salvation is by God's grace. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament make it clear that God's grace is received by faith, and that law keeping is not able to justify anyone. So, both the Old Testament and the New Testament scriptures make it clear that perfect law keeping by sinners is impossible and therefore if there is going to be salvation, it must be by God's grace. That's the first thing that Paul points out in this passage. His people have a zeal for God, but it's not in accordance with knowledge, and they have sought for salvation by their own righteousness rather than seeking God's mercy and His righteousness.

II. Trust in Jesus Christ means the end of vain attempts at salvation by our own righteousness.

The second thing we see is this; you'll see it in verses 4 through 7. Here, Paul begins a two-part contrast between salvation by Christ and salvation by our own efforts, and he teaches us that trust in Jesus Christ means the end of our attempts at salvation by our own righteousness. Verse 4 is one of the most disputed verses in all of the New Testament. New Testament scholars of great learning disagree on exactly what Paul is saying, and we're not going to go into any great detail in answering this. What does he mean by "Christ is the end of the law of righteousness to those who believe"? I think the basic meaning of it is very, very clear. He is not simply saying that Christ is the fulfillment of the law, though that is true. Matthew stresses that. He's not just saying that Christ is the goal of the law, though that is true. He's saying that Christ is the end of the law. Paul's not saying that the law was ever a separate way of salvation apart from grace, in fact, the very point of quoting the Old Testament in this passage by the Apostle Paul is to show that the Old Testament teaches salvation by grace. So he's not saying, once upon a time you were saved by law, but now that Christ has come, you're not. What he's saying is this: that there are many people who are acting as if the law of Moses is the covenant of works, it's the way that you're saved, and that obedience to it gains you right standing with God, and Paul is saying, Christ is the end to that. The covenant of works in the garden had demanded personal and perfect obedience to its stipulations. God had commanded Adam to obey Him perfectly, and when he disobeyed he was cast

from the garden. But some have come along and they've treated Moses' law as if it were a separate way of salvation, that keeping its stipulation was the way to have a right relationship with God, and Paul is saying, Christ is the end of that. Christ has brought an end to that.

Think of it, if God had to send His son into the world to be incarnate, to live, to minister, to die, to be buried, to be raised again in order to fulfill the law, then could there be any other way of fulfilling the law? If God had to do that in order to fulfill the law, then is there any other way of right standing with God? And the answer is, of course, self-evident. Of course there is no other way. It would have been immoral. Had there been any other way for God to bring about a rectification of our relationship and to bring us back into reconciliation and fellowship with Him, He would have surely done it rather than giving the price of His own son. And so the very presence of Jesus Christ as the way of salvation is an end to the idea that we can earn our way back into fellowship with God by our own righteousness and deeds. Christ is the end of the law for our righteousness to everyone who believes, and this a very important message for religious people.

You see, most of us don't have a problem believing that sinners need to be saved from their sins. When we look at disaster, like the one that occurred on September the 11th, it's very apparent to us that those who do wicked deeds need to be forgiven of their sins, or else face the justice of God. But it may not be so apparent for us that we are not able to establish a righteousness for ourselves that enables us to be excepted by God. You see, we need to be saved not only from our sin, but from our righteousness. It is Christ's righteousness, and Christ alone that causes us to be accepted by God, and Christ's work is to save us from our own righteousness. The righteousness by faith does not look at our own deeds as the basis on which we are accepted by God; it looks to Christ and to His deeds, and it trusts in Him, and recognizes that He has kept the law perfectly alone. He has born the penalty for sin for His people alone, and it trusts in Him as a substitute. The law as a method for obtaining righteousness is abolished in Jesus Christ, and Paul makes that clear here in verses 4 through 7. And so, the great intent of that phrase, Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes, is to contrast two different approaches to a relationship with God: Salvation by Christ and salvation by our own righteousness. The apostle says, salvation by Christ is the only way and all other ways including attempts at obeying God's law in order to be accepted by Him are wrong.

III. Trust in Jesus Christ means the embrace of Jesus as Lord, acceptance of Him as Divine Master.

Thirdly, in verses 8 through 10, Paul continues this contrast. He contrasts the demands of the law, which he spoke about in verses 6 and 7, with the requirement of faith. If you'll look very quickly at verses 6 and 7, you'll see two

strange phrases: "Do not say in your heart, who shall ascend into Heaven or who shall descend into the abyss," and you may be scratching your head as to what in the world Paul is talking about. Paul is using two phrases which had become very common in Jewish literature to stand in for things that are impossible, and he's saying this, "Look in the way of salvation by faith, God is not asking you to do the Odyssey. He is not asking you to perform some monumental task of ascending into heaven, or descending into the abyss. In order to be saved, in order to have right standing with Him, in order to be right with God, you don't have to perform some Herculean task." You have to, as Paul says in verse 8, do what? Believe, because the word is near you. God hasn't called you to go up into heaven, or down in the abyss. The Lord Jesus Christ has come from heaven to you, near you, and He has been raised up from the dead, to you, near you, in order that you will believe on Him.

Paul is contrasting the demands of the law and the requirement of faith, and in verse 9 especially, he is stressing that trust in Jesus Christ means embracing Jesus Christ as Lord, and that means embracing Jesus Christ in three ways. I want you to think about them for a moment. Look at what he says in verses 9 and 10, and you'll see three things that Paul says are absolutely necessary in order to embrace Jesus Christ. You must embrace Him as Lord. Now you know that *Lord* is an Old Testament name for *God*, and so Paul is clearly testifying to the fact that Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God. Just in case you missed that, he quotes a couple of Old Testament passages that talk about the Lord and he applies them to Jesus Christ later in verses 1 through 13.

Secondly, when he says you embrace Jesus Christ as Lord, he means that you embrace Him as master, as king of your life. So often, we think of embracing Jesus Christ as Savior and then subsequently as Lord, but the basic, New Testament profession of faith is not Jesus as Savior, that is self evident. It is what? Jesus is Lord. That is the first and fundamental confession of the Christian.

Thirdly, look at verse 10. He says, what else must you do? You must believe that God raised Him from the dead. Now, I want to pause right there and say, there are many people who want to say, "Look, I'm a Christian, but I'm not sure I can really buy this, that Jesus is fully God. I think He was a great teacher who taught about love and gave us many principles for life, and so I follow Him and consider myself a Christian." As far as the Apostle Paul is concerned, A. a person who does not embrace the truth that Jesus is Lord, that is that He is divine, is not a Christian. Furthermore, the Apostle Paul demands that as a central confession of the Christian. Others will say, "Well I don't want to embrace Jesus as Lord, I only want Him as Savior," and then again Paul doesn't give you that option. You must confess Jesus is Lord. There are still others you want to say, "Well you know, I have problems with this whole idea of the resurrection. I believe in Jesus, but I'm not sure I believe in the resurrection." Paul says this, "The Jesus who saves, is the Jesus about whom Scripture testifies, and so if you are believing in a Jesus

who is not divine, who is not Lord and Master, and King, and who is not raised from the dead, you are not believing in the Jesus who saves."

You see, we can't pick and choose and make Jesus up to be the person we want Him to be. We must accept Him as He is offered in the word of God. That's one of the things that I love in the phrases of our membership questions, when we say, "Do you receive the Lord Jesus Christ and trust in Him alone for your salvation as He is offered in the gospel." This is the Jesus of the Bible, not the Jesus of our own fabrication, and it's the Jesus of the Bible who saves.

I have a former student, who is actually sitting in the congregation today, who said to me once, "You know, there are forty thousand people in Mexico named *Jesus*, and none of them will get you saved, because it's the Jesus of Scripture who saves." Not just this magical name Jesus, you have to believe the Jesus who is described in the gospels. So, the word of God cannot be set over against the person of Jesus Christ, they go together. The Scriptures tell us who the saving Jesus is. Jesus, of course, is the Lord of the book, and the author of the book, and so Jesus' person and work, and Jesus' person and the Scripture go hand in hand and we must embrace the Jesus of the Bible if we are to be Christians. Salvation depends on looking away from our own works, away from our own righteousness and looking to Jesus Christ alone.

IV. Trust in Jesus as Lord is the only way of salvation because "the Bible tells me so."

The last thing I want to say is this and you'll see it in verses 11 through 13. Paul, throughout this passage, has been emphasizing that the Bible, that the Old Testament teaches that the way of salvation is salvation by grace through faith. In other words, Paul is telling us in verses 11 through 13 specifically, that trust in Jesus as Lord, is the only way of salvation because it's what the Bible teaches us. Trust in Jesus as Lord is the only way of salvation because, Paul might put it this way, the Bible tells me so.

When I open up Moses, when I open up the law, the law tells me what? Trust in God for salvation, and he gives you some wonderful passages from the five books of Moses: whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed, whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved. He emphasizes that the law itself teaches salvation by grace.

Now of course, along the way, he also says something very important in verse 12: there is no distinction between Jew and Greek. There is not one way of salvation for the Jews, and another way for the Gentiles, much less multiple ways for the Gentiles. We've heard from many people over the last few weeks, that salvation happens in many ways, and by many means. One God is as good as another one, one religion is as good as another, and many of the people who

have been saying that have been Christians, or at least they profess to be Christians. Paul here is emphatically saying that there is one way of salvation, and that one way of salvation is through Jesus Christ. There is "No other name under Heaven by which a man may be saved than Jesus Christ," if I may paraphrase from Acts chapter 4. Paul is saying, and look at the phrase, "the same Lord is Lord of all." Jesus is the one way of salvation.

That again directly contradicts our modern pluralistic relativistic tenants of the age. It goes against the spirit of the age, but let me say this, the Apostle Paul is perfectly aware of pluralism. Do you realize that the New Testament was written in a context, in a day and age in the Greco Roman world where pluralism was every bit as strong as it is now? Don't think, "Well, these people were primitive, they just didn't understand pluralism." My friends, the New Testament was written in a pluralistic world, and here is the Apostle Paul saying, "Ok, hear me Greco Romans, there is one way of salvation." But nobody believes that. But hear me, there is one way of salvation. Paul wrote in a pluralistic age and he says, "There is one way."

The second thing is this, if you're a Christian and you have a hard time swallowing the idea that there is one way of salvation, realize you are arguing with Paul. This is clearly what Paul is saying. If ever Paul had a chance to say, "There are many roads up the mountain, there are lots of different maps for the way home to heaven that work, now is the time. And guess what, not only did he not say that, he explicitly says the exact opposite, "There is one Lord of all and it's Jesus Christ."

The third thing I would say is this. If you're doubting Jesus as the only way of salvation, if that sounds narrow minded to you, if that sounds primitive to you, consider this, there is no other religion in the world that says, "God so loved His people that He gave His own Son, that we were so desperately sinful and in need that we needed the grace of God manifested in God in the flesh to save us ." Think of it, what man would have invented a religion that said, 'Man is so bad that only God can save you?' And there is no other religion like that in the world. There is no other God amongst all the other world religions who knows what it is to lose a son, to give a son because of His love, and the Apostle Paul is saying, "I will not have any of that glory taken from Jesus Christ. He is Lord, He is the only Lord, He is Lord of all."

So it doesn't matter to say to Paul, "Oh I think Jesus is a great moral teacher." That's an insult to say that that's all Jesus is. He's Lord of all, He's not a great moral teacher. To say to Paul, "Oh, well we believe Jesus is a prophet." That's no compliment. He's Lord of all. You see, the Apostle Paul is calling on you right now to bow the knee to Jesus who is Lord. You see, that's the issue before every one of us today, in the church or out of it. Do we bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ? May God by His great grace grant that you do. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father Jesus, there is no other friend of sinners like Him. We praise You for Him and we ask, O God, that we would love Him and bow the knee to Him in faith. We ask it in His name. Amen.

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