

A Study in the Book of Romans

25

Romans 10:1-21

Key Verses

“ That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Despite the fact that the Jews, in large part, had rejected the Gospel, Paul doesn't give up praying for them. In fact, because the way of the Gospel is the way of individual faith, this meant there was always hope. He knew, from his own experience, how even the strongest opponent of the Gospel of Christ could be changed.

Read Acts 9:1-22

Thus Paul continued to express his heart's desire in prayer that the Jews would come to a personal revelation of faith in Christ. He understood the Jews so well, as one who had also, with great zealotry for God, persecuted the early believers. He describes something of this part of his life in **Galatians 1:13**:

Introduction

The Gospel's Three Revelations

The Gospel's Three Answers

The Gospel's Answer to Israel

The Gospel in Action

Conclusion

“For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it.”

Again, in **Philippians 3:4-6**, Paul writes:

“...If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.”

But though the zeal of the Jews was commendable, it was useless in God’s sight because it was a misplaced zeal – wrongly directed.

The Jews’ Mistake

The mistake of the Jews lay in two related areas:

Mistaken zeal

Read Romans 10:2

The story is told of a young boy who was very excited to have been chosen to be on his school football team. No one was more earnest in training and he was always first there for the practice games. At last the big day came for his first game. He played with all his heart – running and kicking and passing the ball to his teammates. Suddenly the big moment was his. He had the ball and there was a clear run to the touchdown. He could hear the spectators shouting as he tore down the field, zigzagging past all who might oppose him. Then he was there. With one swift movement, he scored. He’d made it! All those hours of hard practice had paid off!

As he stood there, puffing from his extended effort, but glowing with achievement, he was suddenly aware of a strange hush over the field. He looked around him and dismayed realization flooded him. He had been running in the wrong direction! He was standing in front of his own team’s line and had scored for the opposing side!

Zeal is a wonderful attribute – greatly desired and commended by the Lord. But it must be rightly directed to be of any worth. Speaking of the Judaizers in **Galatians 4:17-18**, Paul writes:

“Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may be zealous for them. It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good...”

In fact, zeal, if it is not based on truth, can be an extremely dangerous force – as was the case with the Jews. In **John 16:2-3**, Jesus described ahead of time what their wrongly based zeal would do.

“They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me.”

Mistaken concept

Read Romans 10:3

The zeal of the Jews was misdirected because it was not “based on knowledge” – they had a mistaken concept, and Paul analyzes their mistake into three parts:

- ☞ **“They did not know the righteousness that comes from God”** – In other words, they were ignorant of the fact that it is the Lord’s own righteousness (a righteousness that “comes from God”) and therefore must be his gift. It was not an ignorance through the lack of being informed about it, for the Gospel of God’s gift of righteousness had been preached to them. No, it was the ignorance of unbelief. They had refused to believe, so therefore they did not know it as a personal experience.
- ☞ **“They sought to establish their own”** – Instead of receiving from God what he alone could give, they were trying to make themselves righteous in his sight – as impossible a task as it would be if an animal desired and struggled to try to become a human being!
- ☞ **“They did not submit to God’s righteousness”** – Here is the crux of the whole issue – they would not “submit.” Man’s will lies at the heart of the issue with God. The Jews’ pride would not accept that they could not do it by themselves. It was too humbling an experience to acknowledge that they were sinners – like the Gentiles – and that they had no ability within themselves to achieve righteousness.

But does this mean that the Jews are beyond hope? Far from it, Paul himself was proof that God could break through any barrier – even the stubborn will of a man who thought he was already righteous in God’s eyes.

The Great Example of God’s Mercy

Paul regarded himself as the greatest example of how God can break through the hardness of a man’s heart. Speaking to his “true son in the faith” (**1 Timothy 1:2**), Paul writes in **1 Timothy 1:16**:

“But for that very reason *I was shown mercy* so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.”

Paul saw himself as the great example to both Jew and Gentile. In **1 Timothy 1:13-14**, Paul declared:

“Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.”

Just one encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ changed Paul from a persecutor of Christians to their foremost advocate. This encounter was a result of the “grace of

our Lord [being] poured out on [him] abundantly.” Though he was a man hardened against the Gospel, the Lord still showed him mercy. Paul is thus the great example of how God “will have mercy on whom [he will] have mercy”!

In **Philippians 3:7-10**, we find Paul’s personal declaration of his life’s whole orientation. Whereas prior to his encounter with Christ, his zeal had been misplaced, his zeal is now totally focused on “the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.” He writes:

“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ...I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, *not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ* – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...”

The Greatest News

Read Romans 10:4

Paul summarizes the truth that the Jews found so difficult to receive – a truth that is, in fact, the greatest news that could ever have been given to man!

Christ is the end of the Law...

This word “end” in the Greek has a double meaning. Firstly, it can mean “goal.” Indeed, Christ is the target at which the Law aimed, as Paul explains in **Galatians 3:24-25**:

“So the law was put in charge *to lead us to Christ* that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.”

Christ is the full expression of the Law’s perfect righteousness. As Jesus himself declared in **Matthew 5:17**:

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to *fulfill* them.”

Paul has already shown that the Law is fulfilled in the lives of those who are “in Christ.” All the provisions of the Sinai Covenant have been totally met and fulfilled in Christ. The *New Living Translation* brings out this meaning of **Romans 10:4**:

“For Christ has accomplished the whole purpose of the law. All who believe in him are made right with God.”

The second meaning of the word “end” is “termination” – and Jesus Christ is the termination of the Law. He put an end to the old order of the Law and replaced it with the new order of the Spirit, as we have seen in **Romans 8:2-4**:

“...through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful

man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.”

This is why Paul was able to say in **7:6**, in the words of the *New Living Translation*:

“But now we have been released from the law, for we died with Christ, and we are no longer captive to its power. Now we can really serve God, not in the old way by obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way, by the Spirit.”

So that there may be righteousness...

And this is the reason for it all! This one statement – “so that there might be righteousness” – summarizes Paul’s entire letter to the Romans. This is the foundation of the Gospel’s message – that in Christ there is available “a righteousness from God...that is by faith from first to last” (**1:17**). Instead of the curse of God’s judgment (**Galatians 3:10-11,13**), God has now “blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (**Ephesians 1:3**) – all because we know have the righteousness of Christ himself (**2 Corinthians 5:21**).

For everyone who believes!

This is the way of the Gospel! Now there is no more struggle, no more frustration – instead, through faith, righteousness is available “for everyone who believes.” As J. B. Philips expresses **10:4**:

“For Christ means the end of the struggle for righteousness-by-the-Law for everyone who believes in him.”

Faith and Law Contrasted

Paul uses two Old Testament scriptures, both quoting Moses, to illustrate the contrast between the way of law and the way of faith. His purpose is to show how impossible the Law’s demands were – and that the way of faith includes no such impossibilities and is therefore attainable by all.

Law

Read Leviticus 18:5

In this scripture, says Paul, the principle of righteousness by Law is expressed clearly – the man who does these things (i.e. obeys the commands of God) will achieve life by doing so. The whole principle of the Law is one of human action – by *doing* the things that God tells you to do, you gain acceptance and blessing from God. As God declared under the Old Covenant, in **Leviticus 18:5**:

“Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them.”

The only problem is, as Paul has so graphically shown, not one single person has succeeded in doing this! For, as James explains, if you fail in one you fail in them all (**James 2:10-11**), and no one has ever been able to keep all the Law perfectly.

Read Romans 3:9-20

In **Galatians 3:10-14**, like in **Romans 10:5**, Paul quotes from **Leviticus 18:5**, but this time expands on his meaning:

“All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.’ Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, ‘The righteous will live by faith.’ The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, ‘The man *who does these things* will live by them.’ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’”

Faith

To illustrate the righteousness which comes by faith, Paul again quotes Moses, this time from **Deuteronomy 30:11-14**:

“Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, ‘Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?’ Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, ‘Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?’ No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.”

What was it that Moses said was “not too difficult for your or beyond your reach”? **Deuteronomy 30:11-14** reveals exactly what it was that Moses was commanding the people of Israel:

“...if you obey the Lord your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”

This key commandment – to “turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul” – was identified by Jesus as being the crux of the whole Law (**Matthew 22:36-38**). This in particular is the command that Moses hinged the entire Law upon and of which he said, “Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach.”

Moses then uses several expressions that seem later to have become proverbial among the Israelites. To be “high up” or “far away” was to be unattainable (**Psalms 139:6; Proverbs 24:7**). To “ascend to heaven” or to “descend to hell” was to do what was impossible (**Amos 9:2; Psalm 139:8-9**). And to those of Moses’ day the sea was the ultimate impassable obstacle and so amounted to the same impossibility as “ascending to heaven.”

Paul borrows this proverbial statement from Moses to prove his point concerning the difference between way of law and the way of faith. Whereas the Law’s whole emphasis was on a man’s own efforts, the righteousness that is by faith brings a different declaration: “Do not say...!” There are two things that the way of faith

challenges us *not* to say:

- ☞ **“Who will ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down)”** – as though he had never been born as a man and lived on the earth. We do not have to struggle to climb to the “heavenly heights” ourselves to try to bring the righteousness of God down so we can take hold of it. Christ has already come down and brought his salvation and his righteousness with him (**1 Corinthians 1:30**).
- ☞ **“Who will descend into the deep? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)”** – as though he had not already been raised to life again. Here, instead of using Moses’ words “who will cross the sea to get it?”, Paul uses the *Septuagint’s* equivalent phrase: “...who will descend into the deep?” The word “deep” literally means “bottomless” – applying to the sea (**Genesis 1:2; 7:11**), and also to the grave and hell (**Job 28:14; Genesis 49:25; Luke 8:31; Philippians 2:10; Revelation 17:8; 20:1**). In other words, we do not need to search the lowest depths for righteousness, to try and break the bonds of sin and death that drag us down – for Christ has risen from the dead to secure our righteousness.

Thus we see that the way of faith is based on two absolute facts:

- ☞ The fact that Jesus Christ has come into the world – from heaven
- ☞ The fact that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead– from the depths

This is why **Ephesians 4:9-10** declares:

“(What does ‘he ascended’ mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)”

It is not our effort that brought Christ into the world or raised him from the dead. It is not our effort that wins us righteousness. It has all been done for us! We have only to believe and receive! Moses’ words in **Deuteronomy 30:11-14** were prophetic of the accessibility of Christ, for it is now his “word of faith” this is in our hearts and in our minds (**10:8-10**).

The Declaration of Faith

The righteousness that is by faith, says Paul, makes a declaration. We could paraphrase this declaration in this way:

“You do not have to go searching the heights and depths to try and find me. You do not have to struggle in your own effort to try and achieve me. I am right with you, available for you to take hold of. I am found in your heart and in your mouth!”

The way of faith makes righteousness accessible to everyone! How nearer could it be? It is right there in our heart and on our lips! This, says Paul, “is the word of faith we are proclaiming”!

Confess with your mouth – who he is!

In the Greek *Septuagint*, this word “Lord” is a divine title for God, so that if a man calls Jesus “Lord,” he is ranking him with God. Furthermore, he is giving Jesus the supreme place in his life and the obedience and worship that is due him. Paul has just said, “Do *not* say...‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down).” Here now is what faith *does* say: “Jesus is Lord!” In other words, this is an acknowledgement that the Lord Jesus has descended from God’s throne to the earth – and that he has returned against to his rightful place (**Philippians 2:6-11**). Faith acknowledges who Jesus is, not only in fact, but also in personal relationship – he is *my* Lord!

Believe in your heart – what he has done!

Faith in the Resurrection is an essential factor of salvation, as Paul clearly states in **1 Corinthians 15:12-22**:

“...if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith...And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive...”

The Resurrection was the climax of the entire work of Christ on our behalf and is the declaration by God of his acceptance of that work. So faith in the Resurrection is faith in Christ’s whole work of salvation for us!

Confession with the mouth without the backing of faith in the heart would be just empty words. The first brings us justification (before God), and the second, salvation (for ourselves). Combined together, they are the way of faith in action! What could be simpler than calling for help (**10:13**), trusting the One who answers our call, and then confessing who he is and what he has done (**10:9**)?

No Disappointment in Faith

Read Romans 10:11

For all their zealousness in trying to fulfill the Law, the Jews had only experienced frustration and disappointment. But, says Paul, there is no disappointment in the way of faith. The Law could not fulfill its promise because of the weakness of human nature (**8:3-4**). But the way of faith finds fulfillment because of the strength of God’s nature!

Different versions reflect different shades of meaning in the Old Testament and New Testament quotations of this verse:

- **New International Version, Isaiah 28:16** – “...the one who trusts will never be dismayed.”
- **New International Version, Romans 10:11** – “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”
- **New Living Translation, Romans 10:11** – “Anyone who believes in him will not be disappointed.”
- **The Message, Romans 10:11** – “Scripture reassures us, ‘No one who trusts God like this – heart and soul – will ever regret it.’”
- **The Amplified Bible, Isaiah 28:16**– “...he who believes – trusts in, relies on and adheres to that Stone – will not be ashamed or give way or make haste [in sudden panic].”
- **The Amplified Bible, Romans 10:11** – “The Scripture says, No man who believes in Him – who adheres to, relies on and trusts in Him – will [ever] be put to shame or be disappointed...”

What a contrast to the way of the law, which involved continual disappointments and resulted in being put to shame before the full revelation of God’s holiness! (see **Isaiah 6:1-5**). Instead, the way of faith means that there is no disappointment and no shame before the presence of God!

No Difference in Men

Read Romans 10:12-13

The first time Paul had said there was no difference between the Jews and the Gentiles, it had had a very grim sound – for he had declared that they *all* had sinned! (**3:23**). But now he states it with a joyous note. There is *still* no difference between Jew and Gentile, for *all* can be saved and receive the righteousness that comes by faith in Christ (note **3:24**). Peter declared this in **Acts 2:21** when he stood up before the crowds on the Day of Pentecost:

“And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Note that simple word “everyone” makes all the difference. It is not those who are educated or clever or good enough that are saved. It is “*everyone* who calls on the name of the Lord”!

Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

The Gospel is a universal message – without regard to race, sex, age, education or intelligence. Faith is the great leveller! For even a little child can receive Christ by faith! (**Luke 18:17**).

Read Galatians 3:28

Read Colossians 3:11

All Must Hear

Romans 10:14-17

Paul brings the logical conclusion to the good news that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” In order for this to come about, someone has to go and tell them about the Lord! Faith for all mankind alike is based on hearing God’s message of good news. Men and women, worldwide, are urged to call on the Name of the Lord, for it is in that Name alone that there is salvation.

Read Acts 4:12

But they can’t call on his Name, says Paul, unless they believe in him, and they can’t believe in him until they have heard about him, and they can’t hear about him until someone goes with the news, and no one can go unless God sends him. Centuries earlier, the prophet Isaiah described those who would bring this joyful news in **Isaiah 52:7**:

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’”

Every Christian has been “sent” into the world. Jesus said, “Go!” (**Matthew 28:19-20**) and even defined the nature of the commission he has given us: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (**John 20:21**). And Paul, in **2 Corinthians 5:18-20**, declares...

“...God...reconciled us to himself through Christ and *gave us the ministry of reconciliation*: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And *he has committed to us the message of reconciliation*. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, *as though God were making his appeal through us*. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”

The *New Living Translation* puts it this way:

“And God has *given us the task of reconciling people to him*. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. *This is the wonderful message he has given us to tell others*. We are Christ’s ambassadors, and *God is using us to speak to you*. We urge you, as though Christ himself were here pleading with you, “Be reconciled to God!”

Now Paul asks the obvious question – a possible excuse for the Jews not accepting the Gospel...

Didn’t they hear?

Read Romans 10:18

His answer is short and to the point: “Of course they did!” The message had begun in the capital city of the Jews on a day when Jews from all over the world had been gathered together and had heard it (**Acts 2:5-11**), and the message had

been preached “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (**Acts 1:8**). Even Paul himself had preached the message to the Jews in every city he visited (**Acts 19:10**) – in fact, that was what had caused him so much trouble everywhere he went.

So, he asks a second question – another possible reason someone might put forward for their rejection of the message...

Didn't they understand?

Romans 8:19-21

On the contrary, says Paul, the ones with no understanding were the Gentiles – but they responded to the simple message of the Gospel! (**Deuteronomy 32:21; Isaiah 65:1**). In other words, the Jews had no excuse for not understanding, for they had been the ones to whom all the promises of the coming Savior had been given. They had been prepared ahead of time and preconditioned for the Gospel where the Gentiles had not. Then, with another Old Testament scripture (**Isaiah 65:2**), Paul gives the true reason for Israel's refusal to accept the Gospel – disobedience and stubbornness! The responsibility, Paul explains, lay wholly upon their shoulders!

Personal Responsibility

All through this section Paul has been emphasizing the personal responsibility of the Jews. With all the privileges they had had they should have known better and they had every chance to know better. He finishes this passage with a picture of God with outstretched hands appealing to them – an appeal that they rejected. There is a warning in this for all people (as Paul will point out in the next chapter).

There are four attitudes we can take to God's word and these are also pictured for us in the parable Jesus told of the Sower.

Read Luke 8:5-15

Each place upon which the seed (God's Word) fell depicts the heart condition of those who heard the message:

- **We can reject it** – This is the way-side hearer. We can willfully close our hearts to God's word, as was the case with King Agrippa (**Acts 26:1-30**, especially **verses 28-29**).
- **We can neglect it** – This is the stony-ground hearer. We can hear the Gospel and do nothing about it, as was the case with Felix (**Acts 24:22-25**), who listened with interest to Paul, but closed his heart when it started to affect him personally (see also **Hebrews 2:3**).
- **We can mentally agree with it** – This is thorny-ground hearer. It is possible to believe God's word in theory but not in heart, and so, when times of a testing of priorities come, ultimately reject it. This was the case with

Herod (**Mark 6:14-29**). Herod believed that John was “a righteous and holy man” and yet, to keep his reputation with his peers, ordered John executed.

➔ **We can believe and receive it** – This is the good-ground hearer. This is the response of faith that God is looking for and which results in salvation and righteousness.

In **Romans 9-10**, Paul has addressed the questions of why Israel had rejected the message of the Gospel. Now, in **Romans 11**, Paul will address the question of Israel’s future and hope in Christ.