

“Did You Get the Message?” Romans 10

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Romans 10

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to

knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. 5 For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." 6 But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down from above) 7 or, "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 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 preach): 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." 14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" 17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. 18 But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world." 19 But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: "I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation." 20 But Isaiah is very bold and says: "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me." 21 But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people."

Paul has meticulously carried on for 9 chapters, driving home the point that we are not saved by or because of the good works we do; we are saved simply by virtue of our faith in Jesus and what He has accomplished for us through His perfect life, His atoning death, and His victorious resurrection. Now in the opening verses of chapter ten, Paul seems to be asking them “*did you get the message?*” For it is clear to Paul in His day...there in the early days of the church “post ascension,” that his sisters and brothers in Israel have failed to receive the memo...that the salvation of God is being offering to them in Jesus the Messiah. And the message that holy living will *follow* true redemption, not precede it. Despite all of his reasoning, many had *and have* chosen to continue in the useless attempt to set themselves right with God through their own strength and efforts, and have thus failed to find salvation and failed to live the holy life they were attempting to live under their own strength. Their lives were still controlled by worldly responses...things like fear, self-centeredness, self righteousness and pride, as well as the secondary aspects of frustration and anger. They have failed to see that the only way to a right relationship with God and joyous peace in living, is the way God has provided through faith in Jesus as Lord, Savior, and Protector.

Paul has already made the case that all our efforts to earn a right relationship with God by having a righteousness of our own, *one which is gained by our efforts and self-righteousness*, is doomed to failure. That approach will never work. Without true Christ centered redemption, we will never achieve the Christian dynamic because in our built-in sinfulness we will never achieve the level of holiness that is required to approach our Creator...to stand in His presence. The problem, says Paul, is not with the individual aspects of a holy life. The problem is with us because our sinful natures have made us weak and unable to obey the commandments perfectly, and thus unable to enjoy life fully. Everything we



do, even the very best things we do, are contaminated by that self-centeredness which lies at the heart of what it means to be a sinner.

1- 2 “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.”

Paul’s “heart’s desire” was that they might even yet be saved! As long as there was breath in his body, Paul was not going to give up. He not only *felt* for them, but he sought God on their behalf. After all, the residents of the *world* feel bad for the state of things around us, even if we don’t understand it and we haven’t a clue as to a remedy! But Paul did more than just *feel* for them, he *prayed* for them. Paul was no fatalist nor was he apparently a Calvinist! He operated on the assumption that it was ‘game on’ on behalf of all of them.

In verse 2 Paul acknowledges that his brethren certainly were a zealous bunch. However such did nothing to set them apart from the rest of the world at large. For they stood, and further *they yet stand*, in a field of millions that have been “zealous” toward God! But Paul was making clear that alone zeal doesn’t make it. There have been countless individuals who have knocked on doors, lit candles, and wore their holy underwear that have had great “zeal” but are still lost. For despite their zeal, they are operating “without knowledge.” Zeal alone will never open the gates of heaven. All of us must decide where the “buck stops.” Is it with a pastor? A denomination? A priest? (the corona virus?) What or who has the final word? Because the wrong choice there will manifest your heart and true commitment. Such may very well cost you your eternity, but it will for sure express the fate of your life. Where you stand! When we are tested, we will show our hand.

3- 4 “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

Verse 3 paints a vivid picture of history repeating itself. For Paul’s brethren certainly weren’t the last to try to make it on their own. Over and over individuals and groups have come upon the scene inexplicably blowing the same horn...touting the same message. Men continuing to advocate and preach a message of reaching God through works, efforts, and personal reason and wisdom! And inevitably...coming up empty and without peace, we keep looking for the answer...for that which escapes us. Today I see a desperate world trying frantically to find God but sadly it appears they are looking in all the wrong places. Even their basic premise is in error, as they inevitably try to find Him...to *get to Him*. But we miss the reality that *He already came for us!* We look so hard for the one standing right beside us! Truly we manifest the proverbial “if it was a snake it would have bit us...”

Jesus told the woman at the well “...*If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.*” **John 4:10**

“His purpose in all of this was that the nations should seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us.” **Acts 17:27**

Throughout the ions of history...through innumerable religious and non-religious avenues, men keep seeking to stand upon or at least approach our Creator through our *own* works, our *own* path, our *own* righteousness. Such a premise should effectively be a non-starter for it encompasses a fundamental flaw: *we don’t have any righteousness!*

Jer 17:9 *“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?”*

Gen 6:5 *“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”*

So even now our efforts continue to be poured out upon the doing, the earning, the acquiring, *the rules*. Whether it be the law of Moses, a church or self-imposed ritual, or any number of “grit your teeth” disciplines that exist out there...it

appears that a “new law” keeps being “reinvented.” But invariably it is the same old recycled hash. The Old Testament law was never intended to lead us to self-righteousness, but rather to self-despair! And it seems that all of these other methods and paths lead to that same dead end!

“When a sinner receives the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior, the law has nothing more to say to him. Through the death of his Substitute, he has died to the law. He is through with the law and with the futile attempt to achieve righteousness through it.” Believers Bible Commentary

I know that it is not easy to subject ourselves to God’s righteousness. We invariably want to do it ourselves, do it our own way, or at least to add to what God has done. We know that worldly sin is a problem for us, but what inevitably is our undoing is so often not overt sin but rather covert self. The problem is us. We are broken. How silly it is that in that broken state we want to try to earn our righteousness, and the greatest irony is we actually think we can! We want to climb mountains and swim oceans to make things right and earn our keep! So joy and peace remains forever illusive because He is pulling one way and we are pulling in another.

When we are born again, we are set free. We live and die now under God’s grace...in His hands of direction and grace! But understand, Jesus didn’t kill the Old Testament law. He ‘fulfilled it.’ It is still real and active in its work to condemn the sinner and the rebel. But for those of us who walk with our ear toward Him, the law is “finished.” Jesus was and is the “end” of it! Like a movie or a book, we can watch it again or read it again, but it will end the same way as the first time! Jesus is the fulfillment...the explanation...the meaning . We keep going back to it, giving it another try, and expecting it to come out differently. We must wake up...the battle is over!

5 – 8 “For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, “The man who does those things shall live by them.” But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down from above) 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 preach):”

While verses 5-8 can be somewhat difficult to wrap our minds around, it’s corresponding passage in Deut 30:11-14 clarifies such saying this: *“This command I am giving you today is not too difficult for you to understand, and it is not beyond your reach. It is not kept in heaven, so distant that you must ask, ‘Who will go up to heaven and bring it down so we can hear it and obey?’ It is not kept beyond the sea, so far away that you must ask, ‘Who will cross the sea to bring it to us so we can hear it and obey?’ No, the message is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart so that you can obey it.”*

It is truly amazing just how close people can dance to the truth, to peace and joy, and yet still never find it! Perhaps it’s because we’re still looking for another savior...a different path to God. Many of us have spent every Sunday for years going through the motions, while never surrendering ourselves, our lives to the one who bought us out of slavery. The living Word of John chapter 1, is near you today. Stop looking over and past Him. For it doesn’t get any better than Him.

9 - “if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Verse 9 says *“...if you confess...”* There appears to be a direct correlation between confession of our faith and our very rebirth. Note John 12:42-43; *“Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”*

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 1 Jn 4:15

Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. 1 Jn 2:23

Verse 9 says our confession is to be of the “**Lord** Jesus.” Confession that He is not only Jesus Son of God, but our **Lord**. That word means “ruler, emperor.” Paul clearly here and elsewhere takes the position that Christ cannot be merely our “Savior.” He must be our Lord! (we are about to find out whether that is true of each of us over the next few months.)

*Mark 12:30 “And you shall love the **LORD** your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength...”*

This of course would lead us to the debate commonly known as “Lordship Theology.” In a nutshell, this says that unless Christ is your Lord, then He is not your Savior. There are plenty of folks who want to reject this premise, but one is hard-pressed to do so successfully because Jesus doesn’t! He comes to us only one way. Salvation is a surrender to Him and His control. Once again, we cannot change the playing field any more than the Jews of old could. The movie ends the same way no matter how many times we watch it. Scripture is emphatic in its description of the life of a believer. Certainly our transformation upon rebirth occurs on the positional level instantaneously, but practically it is a journey. There is the struggle with the flesh, and some days I can tend to move to control my life outside of God’s will for me; however, thankfully, this does not negate my rebirth. But the Bible also teaches clearly that the transformation will and does naturally occur in every rebirth. Our assurance...our proof (fruit) of our rebirth.

2 Corinthians 13:5 “Examine yourselves to see if your faith is really genuine. Test yourselves. If you cannot tell that Jesus Christ is among you, it means you have failed the test.”

We must resist the temptation of “re-writing” or ignoring vast passages of Scripture to provide ourselves an excuse or a way out on this matter. That metamorphosis of life and spirit is not an option, it is a fact. Indeed Jesus may not be Lord practically when you are first reborn, but if you are indeed reborn, He will become Lord, and rather quickly. It is an absolute and undying reality. To believe otherwise is to deny the very Living Word of God.

Again, verse 9 says we must “believe in our heart...” Not just in our heads! It is the heart that is the center of our passions and desires. It is the place from which we draw out the impossible, the unthinkable, the love that drives us to our knees before our Ruler and Emperor!” It is the heart that moves us when our heads will not. If you believe in this way, you are truly saved.

10:10-11 “For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”

It is the mind that seeks to understand, and it is the heart that seeks to believe. It is not enough to know *of* Him, we must **know Him!** We tend to wage the war in our minds when the true battlefield is in our hearts. The life I have with my wife is not earned in my brain, but in my heart. For it is the heart that is the center of my passion and love. My head reasons my love for her, but it is my heart that “believes” it. It is my heart that moves me to action.

How we try to fight for the righteousness of God on the ground of the mind, when the love of the heart carries us to a motivation based on that love. Out of that love, comes that confession of the mouth. For there is no shame in the love that manifests from the heart. The word “shame” means to “flee in fear.” Like the act of baptism, our confession is an outward sign of an inward work. Such confession has the effect of “burning bridges” to the world we left behind.

Please note the use of the word “whoever” in verse 11. Some versions say “everyone” or “anybody.” When we deal with issues of Calvinism and individual predestination, the issue is settled here in verse 11 with the call to whoever. The call to everyone. Let it be known: ***all are welcome at the feet of Christ.***

10:12-13 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”

Paul reiterates the fact that the door is open to all who desire to come to Christ. There are no works, or legalism involved in this promise! If we “call upon Him” we **will** be saved. Period. Thus no pre-requisite exists. And neither is there any

verse in scripture to tell us how to become “un-saved.” “Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Note that He does the saving, not us!

10:14-15 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

Coming off of the promise that all can come to Christ, Paul now reflects upon just how such occurs in the practical realm. Isaiah was asked the question, “Whom shall I send?” And Isaiah’s answer was, “Here am I; send me” (Isa 6:8). Paul emphasizes the roll of the preacher in this process; *the “proclaimer” of the gospel - “good news.”* For the individual that has been called to the ministry, this passage is our battle cry!

10:16-17 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Despite the preaching, the teaching and the ministry of discipleship, there will always be many who will not receive the message. This is the burden of a pastor, one that Paul chose to share with the reader. Like Isaiah, pastors are called to the position of messenger, even when the message is not received. This fact focuses a pastor’s commitment to obedience, even when the rewards of his efforts fail to materialize. Paul states clearly that the faith that is asked of us comes through our hearing of the Word. The question always is, “are we hearing?” **Did we get the message?**

As pastors preach and teach, we are “sowing the seed” that will no doubt bear a harvest. But we know that much of that seed will “*fall by the wayside, or among the rocks and thorns of this life.*” So the seed must be plentiful, sown with diligence and earnest. The apostles said to the Lord, “*Increase our faith.*” Luke 17:5. Those same apostles went on to demonstrate great faith in God. They heard the message, received it, believed it, and went on to live it. They lived the Word of God! They “got the message.”

10:18-19 But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world." But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: "I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation."

It’s not that the Word has not went forth, indeed it has gone forth to “all the world.” Scripture tells us in Romans 1, verse 20, that all of creation speaks of His glory! And yet so many millions have still failed to find Him.

10:20-21 But Isaiah is very bold and says: "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me." But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people."

Today we live in a world that searches relentlessly for deity. We try to find Him in the futility of our minds and understanding, and in various self efforts and disciplines. We often try to earn His favor and love through works and ritual. But it is not these folks which ultimately find the true and living God. It is those who confess despite the lack of full mental understanding, of which I am one of them. This does not mean there isn’t plenty of data and facts which support our faith, because there is enough of such to fill volumes. But it is rather my heart belief that Jesus is Lord and Savior, raised from the dead, that drives my life confession. His hands are “stretched out still” to those who are yet in the land of the living. So the preaching continues. The “message” is still going forth...