

Romans 10:1-13 - The Righteousness of God

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10:1 - My Heart's Desire

- **"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer"**

Paul returns to the theme which opened chapter 9--his strong desire that Israel come to understand the gospel. The untranslated particle *men* correlates his statement with the previous passage recognizing that Israel has stumbled at the rock of offense:

" Brothers, [*men* = surely, nevertheless] the desire of my heart . . . "

- **A Passionate Prayer**

"Prayer is" *DEhsis* meaning a "plea," or "entreaty" -- a passionate prayer. This topic is near and dear to Paul's heart!

10:2 - Zeal without Knowledge

- **"not according to knowledge"**

"Knowledge" is *ePIgnōsis*: "intense religious or moral knowledge that is true." The zeal of the Jews was not in accordance with real knowledge.

- **A Double-Edged Sword**

God wants us to have zeal ([John 2:17](#)), but not apart from knowledge.

10:3 - Righteousness of God

- **"they being ignorant"**

"While being ignorant" is *agnoOUntes*: an ongoing, present-tense ignorance. They were remaining ignorant. This is the word from which we derive *agnostic* meaning "without knowledge."

- **"God's righteousness . . . their own righteousness"**

The Greek text compares the "of God righteousness" with the "of own righteousness." The righteousness in both these phrases is best understood as the righteousness *pertaining to* God and *pertaining to* self (objective genitives). The righteousness pertaining to God is **infinite** whereas the righteousness pertaining to man is **nonexistent** ([Isa. 64:6](#)). Righteousness involves not just *actions*, but *motives*. Man's righteousness fails on both counts.

- **"seeking to establish their own righteousness"**

"To establish" is *STĒsai*, "setting up," "weighing out," "putting forward." Ignorance of God's righteousness is a *requisite* for even presuming to put forth our own righteousness! Those who trust in their own righteousness have not even begun to see God accurately.

10:3 - Have Not Submitted

- **"have not submitted"**

"Submitted" is *hypoTASsō*, a compound word made up of *HYpo* (under, beneath) and *TASsō* (to appoint, order). This was a Greek military term meaning "to arrange in divisions." In non-military use it indicated a voluntary "giving in."

- **"the righteousness of God"**

This speaks of righteousness *provided by* God (subjective genitive). This righteousness, true righteousness, **cannot be provided by man!** This is the dividing line between Christianity and every other religion! Christianity alone recognizes man's total inability to please God requiring that righteousness, which cannot be earned, be given to man as a free gift by God.

10:4 - End of the Law

- **"Christ is the end of the law"**

The order of wording in the Greek emphasizes *end* by promoting it to the beginning of the sentence: "For the END of the law [is] Christ . . ." "End" is *TElos* which can mean:

1. **goal** - that to which the law leads
2. **fulfillment** - Christ fulfilled the law
3. **termination** or **completion** - the law has come to an end as a means of righteousness

The immediate context, and the fact that the Mosaic Covenant was broken and has become obsolete ([Jer. 31:31-32](#) ; [Heb. 8:13](#)), favor understanding *TElos* to mean that the law has been *terminated* or *abolished* as a means of righteousness.

- **"for righteousness"**

The law is not a means of obtaining righteousness before God. However, the law is "holy and just and good" ([Rom. 7:12](#)). Even after Christ, freedom remains to *practice* the law. For example, the Apostle Paul took a Nazirite vow ([Acts 18:18](#)), he was purified and paid vows for four men ([Acts 21:24](#)), and for practical ministry reasons he circumcised Timothy who had a Jewish mother but a Greek father ([Acts 16:3](#)). The freedom to practice the law is clearly set forth in the NT ([Rom. 14:5-6](#)).

- **"to everyone who believes"**

Believers, those who trust in Christ Who kept the law, will not be judged by their ability to keep the law. However, **the works of unbelievers are still judged by the law** ([Rev. 20:12-13](#)). Lacking true righteousness (sinlessness, [Mtt. 5:20](#)), they will be condemned by their inability to keep the law. This is why the Ark of the Testimony, containing the tablets of the law, is highlighted during God's final outpouring of wrath ([Rev. 11:19](#) ; [15:5](#)). It *testifies* of man's unrighteousness.

10:5 - Righteousness of the Law

- **"righteousness which is of the law"**

The "righteousness which is of the law" is contrasted with the "righteousness of faith" in the next verse. The righteousness of the **law** is unattainable by all men except one: Jesus Christ! The righteousness of **faith** is attainable by all men simply by trusting in the work of Jesus Christ.

- **"the man who does those things shall live by them"**

In context, this speaks of *righteous living*, not *salvation* ([Lev. 18:3-5](#) , [24](#)). Righteous living involves *works*, but because of the weakness of our sinful flesh, we cannot keep the law and therefore it cannot save ([Acts 13:38-39](#) ; [Rom. 3:19-22](#) ; [Gal. 2:21](#) ; [3:10-12](#) ; [Heb. 10:1-2](#)).

- **How were People Saved Prior to Christ?**
Men have never been able to attain righteousness and be justified before God based on keeping the law. Therefore **salvation has always been by faith and never by works** ([Gen. 15:6](#) ; [Rom. 4:2-5](#)).

10:6 - Ascent to Heaven

- **"righteousness of faith speaks in this way"**
This is righteousness which results from faith in God. It is not based on difficult works or mysterious knowledge, but is easily understood and completely accessible ([Deu. 30:9-14](#)). God has removed all man's excuses for claiming God's will is unknowable.
- **"to bring Christ down from above"**
Paul substitutes "Christ" for that which is to be fetched from heaven to be heard and obeyed: "the commandment . . . the word . . ." This echoes Jesus' title as the *Word* ([John 1:1](#) ; [Rev. 19:13](#)). In His incarnation, Jesus is the revelation of God ([John 1:14](#) ; [Heb. 1:1-3](#)). He is **Jacob's Ladder** -- spanning between God and man. He conveys the revelation of the Father down to man and atones for sinful men in His ascension to God. He is the **only conduit** by which man may rise to stand before God ([1Ti. 2:5](#)).

10:7 - Descent into the Abyss

- **"who will descend into the abyss?"**
"Abyss" is *Abusson*, a compound word made up from *ā* (without) and *bathos* (depth). It is "without depth" or "bottomless." Paul is contrasting the deepest possible place, corresponding to the place of departed spirits, with the highest possible place--heaven. This contrast is a frequent theme found in the OT (e.g., [Amos 9:1-2](#) ; [Ps. 139:7-10](#)). The *Septuagint* uses the same term for the "darkness over the face of the DEEP" ([Gen. 1:2](#)) and "the fountains of the great DEEP" ([Gen. 7:11](#)). In the NT, it is said to be the abode of demons ([Luke 8:31](#) ; [Rev. 9:1-2](#) , [11](#)) and the location from which the Beast ascends ([Rev. 11:7](#) ; [17:8](#)) and where Satan is bound during the millennial kingdom ([Rev. 20:1-3](#)).
- **"to bring Christ up from the dead"**
Paul emphasizes both ends of Christ's ministry in His first coming ([Rom. 1:1-4](#)) :
 1. His descent to earth at His virgin birth.
 2. His ascent back to heaven at His resurrection and ascension.
These events constitute communication between God and man -- the theme of Jacob's Ladder ([Gen. 28:12-13](#)).

10:8-9 - The Word is Near You

- **"the word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"**
Emphasis is placed on the *nearness* (accessibility) of God's commandments. There is an intimate connection between the heart and mouth. The mouth speaks forth that which is in the heart ([Mtt. 12:34](#) ; [15:17-19](#) ; [Luke 6:44-45](#)). Our problem is not one of **access** to God's will, but **obedience!**
- **"if you confess with your mouth . . . believe in your heart"**
"Confess" is *homoloGēsēs*, a compound word made up of *homo* (same) and *LOGos* (word).

Coming to faith involves agreement with what God has declared concerning His Son--that He is **Lord** . Jesus is not a "holy man" or a "guru," He is **very God!**

- **"that God raised Him from the dead"**

His resurrection is a declaration of His identity as the Son of God and His acceptability to God as the sinless sacrifice ([Rom. 1:1-4](#)) . Our salvation is only as good as His resurrection ([John 11:23-26](#) ; [14:19](#) ; [1Cor. 15:17](#)).

10:10 - With the Heart One Believes

- **"With the heart one believes unto righteousness"**

The moment we believe, we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Our sins are "covered" by His righteousness.

- **"with the mouth confession is made unto salvation"**

True conversion will eventually result in outward manifestation in the life of the new believer.

Faith (in the heart) without works (e.g., what we say) is not true Biblical faith ([Jas 2:18-26](#)) . It is with our mouth that we speak forth:

1. that which we believe,
2. that which we call upon in time of need,
3. that which we praise.

Yet there is no fixed formula with specific outward signs or steps for salvation.

10:11 - Not be Put to Shame

- **"will not be put to shame"**

Those who believe will not be embarrassed or disappointed as when having trusted in something which proved to be vain or futile. In the passage Paul quotes ([Isa. 28:16](#)) , the Hebrew word for "put to shame" conveys the idea of "acting hastily" or "panicking." Trust in Christ will prove to be a reliable decision which brings peace. It will not result in panic when the believer stands before God and all is laid bare.

10:12-13 - No Distinction

- **"there is no distinction between Jew and Greek"**

This statement concerns *the accessibility and manner of salvation*. " There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one **in Christ Jesus** " ([Gal. 3:28](#)) . Paul is not saying that all distinctions between Jews and Gentiles ([Rom. 3:1-2](#) ; [9:4](#)) or between men and women ([Eph. 5:22](#) ; [1Ti. 2:12](#) ; [3:1-5](#) ; [Tit. 1:6](#)) have been done away with in Christ.

- **"whoever calls . . . shall be saved"**

Anyone and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Nationality, age, sex, race, and station in life are all immaterial in attaining salvation.

Application

1. **Self-Righteousness is No Righteousness** - To be saved, we must jettison our "self-righteousness" which is really no righteousness and place our faith in Jesus Who provides the righteousness of God. We must reject *religion* -- our own puny efforts to justify ourselves to God -- in favor of *relationship* with God through trusting in His Son.
2. **Only Jesus Bridges the Gap between God and Man** - Jesus is the only ladder between God and man. The ultimate revelation of God made understandable to man is found in the incarnation of Jesus: the God-man. Conversely, the only sufficient representation we have before God is standing in the righteousness provided by Christ. We will find no alternate avenue for salvation ([1Ti. 2:5](#)) .
3. **Salvation is Near** - The way of salvation is neither esoteric nor distant. It is not found in a mountain cave in Tibet, by acts of deprivation, or by "always learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth" ([2Ti. 3:6-7](#)) . It is so simple that *even a child can grasp it* ([Mark 10:15](#)) . It is within our reach if we will but reach out and grasp God's free gift.
4. **Equally Available to All** - All people have equal access to the salvation of God. All that is required is agreeing with what God has said by placing faith in Jesus Christ. "All who call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

