

Principles of Faith for Salvation

Romans 10:1-21

What a wonderful parade of truth these chapters have been. There is grand precision and deeply stirring majesty as each one marches by. We can see the individual band members, hear the instruments, but the great glory is in a view of the whole – of seeing it all pass by. Doug Moo helps us make the connections to Romans 9:30-33. Paul has shown that Israel's failure is ultimately Christological: by failing to believe in Him, He has become for Israel the cause of her downfall. (See Moo, *Romans*, p. 617). So Christ is at the center of Israel's disbelief and is the grand object of faith and trust for all.

We are brought here to see how the elective purpose of God is worked out in terms of Israel's rejection of God and the centrality and necessity of faith in God for salvation. It answers what can easily be the next objection: how can I be saved or know that I am saved if it ultimately rests in God's choosing? Paul's answer to that is not a complex treatise on the relationship between God's will and man's will, but rather the simple proclamation and invitation to believe.

So, we must not take the vertical theology of Romans 9 and reject the horizontal responsibility of Romans 10. (See Hughes, p. 184). God has an elective purpose that chooses, calls and completes. But there is within that an invitation to all and the responsibility to respond. To reject God's offer of salvation on the grounds of not being elect is in and of itself a form of rebellion against God. You can do nothing about Romans 9 – it is solely of God and God alone. But you can respond in the context of Romans 10 – so we invite you to hear and heed the Word.

The Problem of Lostness

(v.1-4)

I am convinced it is harder to get people lost, than it is to get them saved. And no man is saved who does not understand the Biblical nature of his lostness.

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ²I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

In Truth Shaped Affections

(v.1)

Paul here understands what God intends for Israel and then his affections and prayers are shaped by that. God's purpose is to save those whom He has chosen and to fulfill all His promises to them. So, we long for their salvation, for them to become the true people of God.

This is so important. Our desire and prayer now for Jews is not that they will have a homeland in Israel or reenter the land – these are their limited Old Testament hopes. Our desire and prayer for Jews is that they will be saved – they will enter all the Christ centered glory of greater hopes and promises and fulfillments.

And this also is to shape our evangelism of Gentiles as well. Understand this – God is not here to meet all your social, emotional, physical, relational, financial “felt” needs. He is here to save you from needing and wanting and bowing to all those things – He is here to give you Himself as your Redeemer and Ruler and thus, by faith, His righteousness.

In Accurate Spiritual Analysis

(v.2-3)

Paul writes of three essential elements of lostness and particularly, that of the Jews. He wants us to see that even zealous people for God (much less just zealous people) can still be lost. Strong and passionate belief in error or false gods is condemning, not commendable.

They are ignorant of God’s righteousness. They either do not know or do not see in the Scriptures they read or hear that what is required is a right standing before God solely on the holiness of God. Even in reading and obeying the Law, they do not understand the standard of God. In effect, they do not see Jesus Christ, the Lord.

They attempt to establish their own righteousness. Lost people are trying either to set their own standard, substituting it for God’s or they are trying to prove that they live up to God’s standard. This double idea is contained in establishing our own righteousness.

They do not submit to God’s righteousness. Here is the stunning result. They do not submit – stop – why *submit*? Because one of the main arguments Paul is going to develop is that Christ is God’s righteousness as Lord and Messiah. So their being ignorant of God’s righteousness in Christ and establishing their own righteousness is rejection and rebellion against Jesus, who is the very righteousness of God.

Once again, our categories are being deeply challenged. When you attempt to be self-righteous in God’s sight, you are in open rebellion to the Lordship of Jesus, the righteousness of God. This is not often how we think of religious and good/moral people. But when religious or moral people offer up their own righteousness, then they reject Christ.

In Christ Centered Belief

(v.4)

Here is the explanation: “Christ is the *telos* of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” This is the theme of this text.

So, there is a question that arises from this text. In what way is Christ the end of the Law? Does He terminate the Law? Does He complete the Law’s purpose? Or does He end a function of the Law, that is, is He the end of Law for righteousness? I am of the conviction that Christ is the end of Law: He is righteousness apart from the Law in the sphere of His Lordship and salvation thus He serves to complete the Law’s purpose – He is its fulfillment, its ultimate reality. And since no one has achieved a law righteousness and He has been subjected to the righteous demands of a broken law, He is now the standard for righteousness – not by works but by faith. Does the Law still exist and have force? Yes, over those in the flesh who are striving to assert their own righteousness. It continues to set a standard, to inflame depravity and eventually to pass the death sentence.

But, praise God, believing in Jesus transfers us out of the realm of its rule into the realm of Christ’s rule so that we recognize and submit to the righteousness of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Salvation by Faith

(v.5-13)

Kent Hughes wonderfully summarizes this paragraph for us when he writes, “We do not have to go to Heaven or into the world of the dead to find Christ. He is near us. Nor does salvation belong to the elite who have taken mystical journeys to Heaven or Hell. For those who knew something of the Scriptures...the saving words was on their lips and in their heart. That is, the gospel of Christ – the Word of faith – was (and is) available, accessible and simple.” (Hughes, *Romans*, p.187.)

Its Practical Accessibility

(v.5-8)

⁵For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. ⁶But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷or “‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);

This part of the paragraph is both clear in some respects and quite challenging on another. Paul is going to show how Christ’s being the end of the Law means that salvation is near and accessible. This is one of the glories of the gospel.

Let me begin with what is challenging here. First, the two quotes from the Old Testament setup a contrast, not to pit Moses against himself, but rather to show how Israel misconstrued Leviticus to offer a righteousness based on the Law. Deuteronomy, which is an explanation of the nature of the Law points then to a righteousness by faith. Listen to the whole paragraph from Deuteronomy 30:11-14:

“For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it. [ESV] So what God commands its easy and accessible.

The question arises about how Paul is using the Old Testament here. How can the texts he quotes be used to prove his point? On what sound hermeneutical principle does he reach back and take Deuteronomy 30:12-13 and use it to prove that faith in Christ is what they refer to? Now the solutions are wide and varied. I believe John Stott has hit on it. To ask, “How can Paul use the texts to *prove* his point?” has already misled us. Paul is not using these texts to prove his assertion. He is developing a parallel. He is showing a similarity. He is showing that Israel has no excuse for rejecting the word of faith, near and accessible to them because they should have never relied on a law righteousness. They should have relied on a faith righteousness that obeys. So, he is showing that salvation has always been available and accessible.

What is clear here is that Christ is not distant from us so that we have to go up into the heavens to bring Him down and we do not have go into the depths of death to bring Him up. In other words, Christ has already come in the flesh in the incarnation. He has been

raised from the dead. This means that salvation is no longer a matter of physical contact with Christ, but of spiritual receiving by faith. He is just as near as our confession of faith in Him, bowing to Him as our Ruler and trusting in Him as our Redeemer.

Its Personal Responsibility

(v.9-10)

⁹because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

But we are not passive in this. We have a responsibility to respond. There is a very clear “if – then” in this portion of the paragraph. *If* you confess and believe, *then* you will be saved. Salvation then is not far off and distant. It is not some esoteric body of philosophical speculation or religious formulas or secret words – it is the simplicity of bowing to sovereign Ruler of the universe, acknowledging His authority and rights over us and believing and trusting Jesus is the only Redeemer through the real, historical events of His life, death and resurrection.

Paul makes a most glorious statement in verse 10. When we believe in our hearts, then we have a right standing with God. And when we publicly confess or swear our allegiance to God, then we are saved. We long for Israel (and Gentiles to be saved). But no one can be saved by works, by a legal righteousness. But you can be saved by believing the gospel and bowing to Christ. In this way, you will turn away from establishing your own righteousness and will submit to Jesus Christ, who is the righteousness of God.

Its Scriptural Universality

(v.11-13)

¹¹For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

The greater glory of the gospel is that this invitation is not merely extended to Jews, but to everyone. “Everyone who believes will not be put to shame.” Paul is now coming back to one of his major themes, that the Jew and Gentile are now on the same footing – there is no distinction between them. Not just Jews, but everyone who believes. Not salvation by the Jewish Law, but salvation by faith in Christ.

This universality is grounded, not just in the Scripture, but also in the very nature and character of God. He is Lord over all. Since He is Lord over all then everyone who believes and bows is saved and justified. He is rich to all. He bountifully and gladly pours out all His riches in Christ to any who believe.

Why is this so? Because the fulfillment of God’s promises has begun in Christ. Both Peter in Acts 2:21 and Paul here understand Joel 2:32 as referring to salvation in this era of the Spirit. Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. What is interesting here is that we must call on the name of the Lord, not just so that God will know that He is being addressed, but also so that we will know the kind of God we are calling on. We are not just calling on God for salvation – we are calling on His Name – His character and attributes and mighty saving work as revealed and disclosed in the Scriptures.

The Responsibility for Evangelism

(v.14-17)

From man's responsibility to believe the gospel, Paul leads us back to our responsibility to send proclaimers – in personal witness and public preaching because faith to believe comes through hearing the Word.

¹⁴But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" ¹⁶But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" ¹⁷So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Its Compelling Logic

(v.14-15)

The questions are meant to bring us from understanding man's responsibility to call on God to our responsibility to call to sinners. How can people call unless they believe? How can they believe if they do not know? How can they know if we do not tell them? The answer to all this is *they won't*. Now this is surprising following on Romans 9. But understand this: the responsibility to believe is enfolded in the responsibility to proclaim. We must spread the good news of the glory of God to everyone – to every people group – **because** God has chosen to love and save some people everywhere.

How will we go if we are not sent? We won't. The point here is to send us. This is not the special sending of apostles, missionaries or evangelists. Rather, this is a sending of all of God's people to the work of spreading the gospel. Yes, some will go as office bearers and others will be specially enabled by God's Spirit. But if we love our Ruler and Redeemer we will speak of Him and invite others to Him and tell the good news about Him as much as we can.

Its Obvious Problem

(v.16)

Paul then quotes from Isaiah 52:7 leading us into Isaiah 53. Once again let me remind that often an Old Testament portion is quoted in the New Testament so as to send us back to the *whole context*. So how beautiful are the feet of gospel proclaimers. Yet they will often be met with disbelief and disobedience. Here is quite an interesting run of words. Not all have "obeyed the gospel." Obeyed the gospel? Why "obeyed"? Don't we believe the gospel? Yes, we do. But a true believing of the gospel will obey the gospel's invitations and commands. Those who do not believe disobey the gospel's summons. See, what we offer is a salvation free to all – but in the imperative of a command. This is after all, GOD WHO INVITES – so to reject the invitation is to disobey the gospel summons and turn away from the God who commands. This is why Paul says at the beginning and at the end of the letter to the Romans that he aims to bring the "obedience of faith to all the people groups."

This rejection of the gospel is not unexpected. Isaiah predicted that Israel would reject the suffering Servant, the sacrificial Lamb, the crucified Christ. The point here is once to again to show how and why Israel rejected Christ so that in later, in chapter 11, he can show how that brought riches to the Gentiles and how Jews will eventually be restored.

Its Foundational Principle**(v.17)**

Here is the conclusion. Faith then comes through hearing and hearing through the spoken (possibly preached) word of Christ. “Word” here is not Scripture, but rather the act of speaking, preaching, declaring. The word we say about faith (v.8) is also the word we say about Christ (v.17). In the context, Paul is pointing to the speaking about Christ and the calling for faith (trust, believing God in an obeying way) as how God imparts the faith to believe. In other words, our preaching, witness, speaking about Christ is the way God gives faith as well as being what faith believes.

In all the Scriptures, while the ultimate determination and initiative is on God’s part, the means to those ends is always, always upheld. So, God has chosen whom He will save (Romans 9) and that He will save them through their hearing the gospel and believing in Christ (Romans 10).

Their Rejection of God**(v.18-21)**

Israel’s unbelief and rejection is proof that salvation is by faith. So, Paul counters two untruths about why Israel has rejected the Messiah.

¹⁸But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for “Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.”

¹⁹But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, “I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry.” ²⁰Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, “I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.” ²¹But of Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”

Availability of the Gospel**(v.18)**

So, is the problem then that Israel just hasn’t heard? No. All Israel (the “they” here) heard because, if the revelation of God has gone throughout the world through creation, how much more then has the gospel through preaching.

Responses to the Gospel**(v.19-21)**

Well then, is the problem that they didn’t understand? The answer is actually in the last phrase – it is not they just didn’t get it, they were stubborn and hard-hearted, that is, disobedient and contrary. The quote from Deuteronomy 32:21 and Isaiah 65:1 shows that Israel ought to have understood – that is, they are accountable. It also shows that God has an agenda and a purpose that He is accomplishing. The truth and principles in these verses are expounded on and explained in Romans 11. So the argument of Paul keeps pressing relentlessly on. Are we breathless? Yes. Will we set ourselves to listen and learn? Yes, we will.

Yet, here is a great surprise. While Israel is condemned as unbelieving, God has been stretching out an inviting hand to a disobedient and stubborn people (v.21). Why are they here said to be *disobedient* instead of characterizing them as *unbelieving*? Because Paul has

been sent to procure the *obedience of faith* and those who seek establish their own righteousness *do not submit to Christ's righteousness*. It confirms that Paul expects faith and obedience to go hand in hand. It warrants our defining faith as "believing God in an obeying way." Unbelief yields disobedience. So Israel is stubborn and disobedient in her unbelief.

Reflect and Respond

Thus, the invitation in the gospel is to believe and bow. It is truly surrender to a Sovereign and trusting on the only Savior. And that is the invitation of this preacher and the gospel and this church to you this morning - acknowledge that Jesus is Lord and believe the gospel. Call on Him today - and you will be saved from sin.