

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY WORKS AND BY FAITH

TEXT: ROMANS 10:5-11

INTRODUCTION:

1. The book of Romans emphasizes God's gift of righteousness, which is given to "all that believe" (3:22).
2. The word "righteousness" is used thirteen times between Romans 9:28 and 10:10. The word "righteousness" has reference to man's rightness, or state of being right with God.
3. In our text, we have a contrast between righteousness by works, and righteousness by faith.
4. The apostle Paul says the Israelites should not be ignorant of righteousness by faith because it is taught in the Old Testament.

I. RIGHTEOUSNESS BY LAW (10:5)

1. Paul often quoted from the Old Testament to show that he was not introducing new doctrines, but was only affirming that which had already been taught in the writings of the Jews themselves.
2. Here Paul is quoting Leviticus 18:5.
3. No one could ever keep the law perfectly – "the man which doeth those things (God's commandments) shall live by them"(10:5).
4. The law demands perfect obedience. This is an ideal which no sinful man can meet.
5. The Bible says that if a man keeps the whole law and stumbles in one point, he is guilty of all.
6. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).
7. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written (in Deuteronomy 27:26), Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Galatians 3:10).
8. "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen" (Deuteronomy 27:26).

9. If righteousness comes by doing (Romans 10:5), this righteousness would be man's own righteousness and not God's.
10. There are basically only two religions in this world – “do” and “done.”
11. *Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.* (Elvina M. Hall)
12. The purpose of the law is not to save, but to expose sin. The law condemns. Sinners are saved by grace (cf. Rom. 11:6).

II. RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH (10:6-8)

1. Again Paul quotes the Old Testament (Romans 10:6-8; cf. Deuteronomy 30:12, 13).
2. These Scriptures emphasize the accessibility of the Gospel – “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart...” (10:8).
3. We do not have to go a great distance in order to obtain it. We do not need to perform difficult works in order to be saved. All one has to do is trust Christ.
4. Paul quotes these Scriptures almost word for word, with one important addition – “that is, to bring Christ down from above...that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead” (Romans 10:6, 7).
5. A sinner does not need to bring Christ down from heaven. God the Father has already sent the Son! Christ has already come! “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (I Timothy 1:15).
6. Christ does not need to be raised from the dead. That has already happened, and the world commemorates it this Sunday. Even worldly people will celebrate Easter Sunday, though it means very little to them.
7. Deuteronomy 30 contains Moses' last public exhortation to the children of Israel. Israel would be driven out of the land for breaking God's law, and then afterwards, God will restore them (cf. Deut. 30:1-9).
8. The emphasis in Deuteronomy 30 is not on man doing anything, but on what God would do for them.
 - The LORD will turn their captivity (30:3)
 - The LORD will have compassion upon them (30:3)

- The LORD will return and gather them from all the nations, whither the LORD had scattered them (30:3-5)
 - The LORD will circumcise their heart, and the heart of their seed (30:6).
 - The LORD will put all these curses upon their enemies, and on them that hated them and persecuted them (30:7).
9. Deuteronomy 30 points forward to the New Covenant, which follows the old Mosaic Covenant. God will regather Israel and restore Israel.
 10. Therefore, Deuteronomy 30 reinforces the doctrine of righteousness by faith. Israel would keep God's commandments and His statutes, and would turn to the LORD because God will give them a new heart (cf. Ezekiel 36:26).
 11. The *Scofield Study Bible* has a good summary of the New Covenant (page 1297): In the Mosaic Covenant God said, "If ye will" (Exodus 19:5; in the New Covenant God says, "I will" Hebrews 8:10, 12).
 12. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Hebrews 8:10).
 13. "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12).
 14. All the doing (cf. Romans 10:5 – "doeth") required by the law has been accomplished by Christ.
 15. Everything that is required from men is to believe what Christ has done (Romans 10:9).
 16. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, "Christ has neither to be brought down from heaven, nor to be raised again from the dead; everything has been accomplished, and all that is left is to accept in trustful thankfulness" (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*).

17. Faith does not require us “to ascend into heaven...to bring Christ down from above” or “descend into the deep...to bring up Christ again from the dead” (10:6, 7).
18. Faith requires us to believe.
19. Faith requires us to accept the Lord Jesus Christ, who has already accomplished the work of redemption. We cannot add anything to His finished work.
20. God’s righteousness is not distant and difficult. It is near and it is easy (Romans 10:8; cf. Romans 10:13).

III. RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH REALIZED (10:9-11)

1. The word “heart” in Scripture always refers to the center of man’s moral being. Jesus said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37).
2. “And shalt believe in thine heart... For with the heart man believeth” (Romans 10:9, 10). Believing in the heart includes the assent of the mind and the consent of the will.
3. Faith expresses itself in confession (10:9). “Confess” means to agree with; to declare openly.
4. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, “The more we confess and profess our faith, the more it will obtain a hold upon our lives. It was never intended for mere private enjoyment, or even personal use; it was expected of us that we should spread it far and wide by confessing what Christ is to our souls” (*St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*).
5. Believing in Christ (“heart”) brings man into a right relationship with God, and confession of faith (“mouth”) maintains him in that right relationship.
6. Both heart and mouth are important. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, “The mouth without the heart might be hypocrisy, while the heart without the mouth might be cowardice” (*St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*).
7. Romans 10:11 is a quotation from Isaiah 28:16 (cf. Romans 9:33). Whosoever believes in Christ will not be put to shame.
8. Whosoever believes in Christ will not be disappointed.

CONCLUSION:

*O! how unlike the complex works of man,
Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan!
No meretricious graces to beguile,
No clustering ornaments to clog the pile;
From ostentation as from weakness free.
It stands like the cerulean arch we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity.
Inscribed above the portal, from afar
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star.
Legible only by the light they give,
Stand the soul-quick'ning words – "Believe and live."*

William Cowper