

The Problem of Self-Righteousness
Romans 10:1-4
May 26, 2021

Review and Context

Theme of Romans: The gospel of God (1:16-17)

Chs 9-11 The gospel and Israel

- In 9:1-5, the apostle in a very personal way introduced the problem (from the human standpoint) of Israel's unbelief (rejection of the Messiah)

- *Thesis:* 9:6a "But it is not as though the word of God has failed."
 - The OT's numerous promises to the nation of Israel, of spiritual salvation through the Messiah
 - Examples include Deut 30:6; Eze 36:24-28; Jer 31:31-36; Zech 12:10-13:1

- The apostle proves that the word of God has not failed, using five arguments.
 - The first argument centers on God's sovereign election of some individuals and not others (9:6b-29)
 - The second argument centers on Israel's reliance on works rather than faith (9:30-10:21).
 - Israel is responsible for their failure to believe in Christ

Heart-felt desire and prayer for Israel's salvation (1)

"them" refers to Israel, of whom Paul has been speaking since 9:31

The apostle cannot talk about Israel's lost condition without also expressing this (cf. 9:1-3)

Question: Why should every believer pray for the salvation of lost people? How does this relate to what Paul taught in chapter 9 about God's sovereignty in salvation?

Do you desire, and faithfully pray for, the salvation of the lost?

Self-righteousness as a reason for Israel's lost condition (2-4)

verse 2

Question: How is it possible to have a zeal for God, but not know Him?

Acts 22:1-4 (cf. 21:27-28)

John 16:2-3

verse 3

“the righteousness of God”

1. “a righteousness that is by faith” (9:30-33)
2. A righteous standing given freely by God in justification
3. **1:17** "For in [the gospel] **the righteousness of God** is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”"

“ignorant of the righteousness of God”

1. Willful ignorance
 - **3:21–22** "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe..."
 - **4:3** "For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”"

“seeking to establish their own”

1. Their own righteousness
2. Based on the doing of the law (9:31-32a; 10:5)

“did not submit to God’s righteousness”

1. Failed to submit to God’s way of being declared righteous
2. Did not acknowledge they needed God’s gift, nor seek it by faith
3. Submission involves humbling yourself

Self-righteousness blinds you to the righteousness given by God’s grace

As long as you are pleased with your own “righteousness” or think that you can establish your own righteousness, you will be utterly lost.

verse 4

When a sinner believes in Christ, he receives Christ's own righteousness, and his effort to establish his own righteousness by works of the law is ended (cf. 9:30-32; 10:3, 5-6).

John Murray: "Every believer is done with the law as a way of attaining to righteousness."¹

John MacArthur: "Belief in Christ as Savior and Lord brings to an end the sinner's futile quest for righteousness through his own imperfect attempts to fulfill the law. When a sinner receives Christ, he also receives the gift of Christ's own righteousness."²

Philippians 3:3-9

Does not mean the Christian is not responsible to obey God's law

- The Christian is "under the law of Christ" (1 Cor 9:21)
- **Matt. 28:20a** "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

Conclusion & Application

Has God's word to Israel failed (9:6a)? Paul is saying, "No, Israel has failed."

We need to learn from Israel's failure.

- Each of us should examine ourselves to see if we are self-righteous, or if we have received God's free gift of a righteous standing with Him.

When we pray for the salvation of others, and when we witness, we need to be mindful that the self-righteous need to be humbled in order for them to understand the gospel of the righteousness of God.

- Romans 1:18-3:20 is essential teaching

When we raise children, we must avoid feeding their self-righteousness, and instead help them see their sin and their need of God's free gift of righteousness.

¹ Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2:50.

² MacArthur, *Romans 9-16*, 67.