

"Righteousness Speaks"

Romans 10:5-8

INTRO:

The last time we were here we listened as Paul told us in **10:4**, ***"For Christ is the fulfillment of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."*** As we move on into **verses 5-8**, the Apostle Paul continues to contrast the difference between the righteousness the Jewish people pursued and the righteousness is ours by faith in Jesus Christ. Paul did this in an unique way. He gives each kind of righteousness a voice and lets them speak for themselves.

I. VOICE ONE: THE RIGHTEOUSNESS FROM THE LAW (v. 5)

II. VOICE TWO: THE RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH (v. 6-8)

I. VOICE ONE: THE RIGHTEOUSNESS FROM THE LAW (v. 5)

A. The first voice that Paul wants us to hear is that of the Law giver, Moses.

"For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, 'The man who does those things shall live by them.'"

1. Already in the verses leading up to this paragraph, Paul twice contrasted the righteousness which is of the law with the righteousness which is by faith. In **chapter 9:30-32** Paul wrote:

"What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law."

2. Again in **10:3** we read,

"For [the Jewish people] being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God."

Obviously then, the righteousness of the Law and the righteousness of faith are not complementary. They are different and indeed the difference determines our eternal destination.

B. To let Moses' words speak, Paul quotes from **Leviticus 18:5**.

"You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD."

Paul was satisfied just to quote the latter part of this verse.

"The man who does those things shall live by them."

1. Paul's point in choosing this phrase chose to encapsulate the teaching of the Law. Moses is not talking specifically about salvation by keeping the Law in this context. He is just repeating the LORD's demand that they obey Him because He is their God.

2. Paul did not intend this quote to indicate God's way of salvation before Jesus came was the keeping of the Law. Paul clearly teaches otherwise earlier in this epistle (**Romans 4**). Rather, this statement serves as a summary of the error of the Jewish people. Many in Paul's day saw the means of salvation in "*doing*" rather than in "*faith*." They were trusting in their own ability to keep the Law instead of trusting in God's gracious provision in Christ.

II. VOICE TWO: THE RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH (v. 6-8)

A. To demonstrate their error, the Apostle Paul gives a voice to true righteousness, the righteousness which is by faith.

"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)."

B. These three verses contain snatches of quotes from the Book of **Deuteronomy** which cause some great consternation. The main reference is a passage found in **Deuteronomy 30:11-14** ***"For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us so that we may hear it and do it? But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it."***

1. The point of this text is that the commandment God gave Israel through Moses is not hard to understand or to find. God has not hidden it nor has He put it out of their reach where someone who would have to go and get it so that they would know what is required of them.

2. While it is true the **Deuteronomy** text speaks of the Law of God, Paul speaks of its fulfillment in the One who is the goal of the Law (**Romans 10:4**).

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

In quoting **Deuteronomy**, Paul did not use it word for word. Rather he but borrowed the emphasis that the revelation is readily available. God has not made His Gospel or the Lord Jesus Christ hard to find or hard to reach. Righteousness by faith is not difficult to have.

3. The fact Paul was not expounding **Deuteronomy 30** is apparent in the editorial comments he included between the phrases. To be saved, no one has to ascend into heaven and bring Christ down to us again, nor do they have to descend into the abyss and bring Christ up from the dead. All they have to do is believe the Word which is right here before their faces, as if it were already in their mouths!

C. This is the very point at which the Jewish people failed.

1. They thought they could have a righteous standing before God they could earn. They could not just believe. This was the teaching of righteousness from the Law. Yet they did not understand God did not demand they obey a little better than the next guy. If works were to save them, God demanded they have perfect obedience. They already fell short of that standard. They had failed.

2. God provided for us the Lamb. He gave us the Savior. All we could do is believe in Him.

D. It is vitally important we get this point. Some have taught over the years we are saved by our faith plus our works. Others say we are saved but faith alone but we are kept in our salvation by works. They teach, our faith is the basis of our initial justification, but our sin can destroy this justification. Some assert, sin can kill the life of God in us, and to be restored we need to take part in the sacrament of penance. In other words, we have to do something to re-instate our salvation.

1. Paul's point is: we cannot do anything to save ourselves or even to keep ourselves saved. We cannot ascend to heaven to bring Him down, nor descend into hell to bring Him back from the dead. God the Father already did all of that for us!

2. All we can do is to believe and embrace the word that is near us even in our mouths! The only thing we can do is believe.

E. Although we will treat these verses in greater detail next time, note briefly the content of the word of faith which Paul preached in **verses 9-10**.

“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. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Instead of some herculean effort, we confess with our mouth what we believe in our hearts.

F. Here again is nothing to do, only to believe.

Do we understand this? Do we believe this?

Are we presenting this to others as the Gospel?

Do we actively daily thank God for this reality?

Hymn #405 *My Faith Has Found A Resting Place*