

Romans 10:1-9

“Submitting To The Righteousness Of God”

As we mentioned last week, here we just teach God’s Word for what it says. We don’t *apologize* for it, *make excuses* for it, or seek to *justify* it in any way. and There’s great freedom for us in simply *believing* it not feeling like we have to understand every nuance with in the inexhaustible riches to be found with in the deep recesses *of* it. Because the fact of the matter is that God doesn’t think like we think, nor is He limited in His understanding or ability to comprehend. However *we are* limited in our ability to comprehend, our thought patterns are tainted by sin and all the rest. Therefore its inevitable that you and I are going to at times encounter a particular principle, or premise in the Word of God that short circuits our ability to reason or bring together what seems to be extreme opposite points of view. Yet the bible teaches no inconsistency in the character of God, but rather total harmony. So when we come across something that doesn’t seem to come together in *our* heart or mind, we have to concede (by faith) to the fact that it must come together perfectly in *God’s* heart and mind. and It’s ok to come into contact with those types of things because they give us another opportunity to exercise our faith in the Lord. The bible teaches us that, “...*without faith it is impossible to please Him,*” Heb 11:6 that *I am* and *you are* to, “*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;*” Prov 3:5

The particular premise that’s been put before us as of late is the sovereignty of God. The fact that God has a plan for this world collectively, and our lives personally, and that nothing is able to thwart those plans ultimately. But if you start teetering on the edge of that mentality you exempt man of all ability to choose and alleviate all personal accountability/responsibility before God. Because we’re all simply pawns in the big picture of God’s plan, yet the bible teaches just as emphatically the personal responsibility and free will choice of man for which God *holds man* accountable. and Though these things escape our ability to get a grip on as to how exactly they coincide with one another, we realize that for God its just not a problem, He’s in control, and we have a choice. and The reason I’m rehearsing all of this is because last week the pendulum seemed to swing to the side of God’s sovereignty, but here in Ch 10 it swings to the other side of personal responsibility.

You can submit to the righteousness of God *receiving* Jesus Christ or you can harden yourself against the righteousness of God *rejecting* Jesus Christ and God will hold you personally responsible, and accountable for that choice, that’s where we left off last time. with the understanding that Israel made the choice (obviously not all of them individually) in the big picture, that is, nationally to reject Jesus Christ Choosing to try and gain acceptance before God on the basis of “by law” righteousness, rather than simply submitting to, and receiving acceptance before God through the “by faith” righteousness accredited to us in Christ.

That was a fatal mistake because the law was never meant to make us righteous but rather to reveal to us our *unrighteousness*, assure us of our need for a Savior. But instead (on a national level) Israel interpreted the law as a *means* of righteousness and sought to meet that standard accordingly not realizing that the law wasn't aimed only at the outward harnessing of the body, but it also encompassed the inward depravity of the heart. Besides they were "God's chosen nation" saved as it were by default, they didn't perceive themselves as needing deliverance from sin, they were looking more for a political Messiah that would deliver them from the oppression of Rome. So when Jesus came preaching repentance from sin, faith in Him for salvation and acceptance in the sight of God, that He would lay down His life for the sin of the world, that He was the way, the truth and the life and that *no one* would come to the Father but through Him, they stumbled. Vs 32-33 of Ch 9 tells us in regards to Christ that Israel stumbled over the stumbling stone.

Vs1-3

Perhaps you recall from the opening Vs of Ch 9 that Paul was expressing his compassion *for*, and desire *towards* his brethren according to the flesh there as well. That if it was possible that he would forfeit his salvation if it would make it possible for his own countrymen to be saved. and We spent some time speaking about the gravity, and the magnitude of that type of statement. Here in Vs 1 of Ch 10 he reiterates his heart towards Israel, stating that it's his hearts desire and prayer to God for them that they might be saved.

In Ch 9 we considered the fact that perhaps the reason he had such a huge heart *towards* them is because he was constantly praying *for* them. and Certainly something happens in *our* heart when we pray for those who might otherwise be against us, or in no way *for* us, remember that Israel was in many ways Paul's persecutors at this point. He'd been stoned and left for dead; he'd had a band of assassins after him who's express and avowed agenda was to *murder him*. Yet here he is, he's *praying for them*, amazing. But I want to consider here for a moment the subject from another legitimate angle.

Because in many ways they feed on one another, he says here that his hearts desire for Israel is that they be saved. Translation, he *cared about* them, therefore he spent time in *prayer for* them. Here's what I'm saying, he funneled his compassion, his care *for* them in to time spent in prayer on behalf *of* them. Listen, lets get to the nitty gritty here of what I'm trying to communicate. Why is it that so often we don't spend time in prayer about a certain subject, or a particular crisis that may be occurring in someone's life, or perhaps the spiritual condition of someone in need of Christ or whatever? "Well, I forget," or "Well, I got sidetracked," and those things may be true to an extent but most generally the fact of the matter is, be it with you, or be it with me is that the reason we don't take to our knees in prayer for whatever the case may be is simply because we don't care. Oh, perhaps we'd never openly articulate that, but the fact is that if we cared, we'd pray.

When you care for someone, or a certain circumstance, or the need in a person's life, so often that'll translate in the form of prayer in our lives, so perhaps the issue isn't that there isn't enough *prayer* taking place from the people of God as it is that there isn't enough *care* in the people of God. Where does it start, from prayer, or from care, perhaps prayer for care, "God just help me to care, about what you care about, Lord the things that are on your heart, would you place them on my heart?" "Lord when a brother or sister is in need of prayer, help me to care, Lord I know so many people who don't know you, help me to care that I might spend time in prayer for the salvation of their souls."

Because it seems to me that if we truly believed that there was God in Heaven who answered prayer, and we were truly concerned for the needs of this community, or for what God wants to do in this fellowship specifically, or that brother or sister personally, we'd spend more time in prayer. The bible exhorts us, "...*pray without ceasing*," 1 Thess 5:17 But it's difficult to be a person of persistent prayer, if you're a person that just really doesn't care. Paul was concerned for Israel, therefore he prayed for Israel. and As I mentioned those things just seem to feed on one another, your prayer for them, and your compassion towards them, they build on one another.

In Vs 2 Paul bears witness to the fact that they have a zeal for God, but that it's not according to knowledge. That is its not according to a full and accurate knowledge, they're limited, short sighted in their spiritual understanding, which makes for problems and so often this serves as the snare for many. It's not their zeal for God that's their problem, it's their knowledge, they don't really have an accurate understanding of the *heart* and *mind* of God as portrayed in the *Word* of God.

Instead of finding balanced contextual credence in the Word as to what they believe, why they believe it, what they do and why they do it, they just sort of gun from the hip and do whatever feels right, then maybe they'll look for a single Vs here and there that (out of its context) seems to support their ideals. You can't do that, you've got to take in the whole counsel of the Word of God, find the heart of God, the will of God and the ways of God in the *totality* of Word of God. If not you're liable to wind up in any # of weird, esoteric, or out of line movements that have no biblical credence whatsoever.

But for all that its amazing to me that though Israel basically wanted to kill Paul (thinking they were doing God a favor) yet he still speaks well *of* and prays *for* them. "They want to kill me, but at least they're zealous, I'll give them that much." Remember when Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin and they had him stoned to death, while they were *killing him*, he was *praying for them*. Of course Paul was there witnessing all of that, at that time he wasn't even a believer, but was in this crowd of zeal, but not according to knowledge.

Of course while Jesus was being persecuted and put to death for no wrong of His own, He cried out to the Father, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Praying *for* speaking kindly *of* our enemies, it’s a Christ-like characteristic that we’d do well to emulate. Because by the grace of God we can have that type of heart that looks for something good to say even about our enemies; or should you so choose you can have a heart that looks for something bad to say, even about your friends. You see do you *insult* people, or *intercede* for people, if you have a problem with someone – don’t *pick on* them, *pray for* them. Pray for yourself, who knows perhaps you’re the one with the problem, or improper perspective. Paul found something pleasant to say, even of his persecutors, “They want to do the right thing, they just don’t understand.”

Vs3

So you see there’s no getting around the reality of personal responsibility, “...seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted (which is a matter of my free will) to the righteousness of God.”

Now I want you to see something here, there was never any doubt in Israel about the need to be righteous, they realized that righteousness was a requirement if you were to be found acceptable in the sight of God. The problem is that they sought to establish their own righteousness rather than submitting to the righteousness of God. In other words, they were a very *religious* people, but here’s the deal, being religious doesn’t in any way make you *righteous*. They were incredibly religious, but they were still lost, why? Because they sought after righteousness according to their own merit and again this is what serves as the snare for so many today. Because they realize the need to be righteous before God, they’re seeking after righteousness, the problem is that they’re seeking to establish *their own*, they have their own standards, and they think that God grades them according to their works. Oh they’re zealous, but not according to knowledge.

Such a one, or perhaps a handful of you are here today. and Though you’d never outwardly articulate it in this fashion, it’s as though you perceive God’s gold star chart in Heaven, and if you get so many gold stars, you go to Heaven. So you come to church, and in your mind you get a gold star for coming to church, and you brought your bible, that’s another gold star, you’re doing your very best to pay attention, 1 more gold star, and when the offering basket comes around perhaps you toss in a \$5 spot, that’s a gold star 2 gold stars for a \$20. and In so doing you’re seeking to establish a merit system before God, and when you compile enough gold stars, “Congratulations you’re going to Heaven.”

The problem is that you’re seeking to establish a righteousness of your own, rather than submitting to the righteousness of God, you have zeal for God, but it’s not according to a full or accurate knowledge. and That’s reflected in an ignorance of God’s righteousness, therefore there’s a seeking to establish an acceptable righteousness of your own before Him.

That was Israel's problem, why would they seek to establish their own righteousness? Because they were ignorant of God's, or to understand that another way, if I had any real clue as to the reality of righteousness, and the depth of true holiness that was intrinsic with in the very nature of God I would realize that I'm a sin infested individual who could never hope to provide anything before God that would amount to His standards, and that the best I could produce would be filthy rags in His sight. I would be overwhelmed with the depravity of my own heart, remember when Isaiah got a glimpse of the Lord high and lifted up? What did he say? "*Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts.*" Isa 6:5 When Daniel saw the vision he said that his vigor turned to frailty and that he retained no strength, when Peter got an glimpse as to the reality of who it was who stood before him in the person of Jesus Christ he said, "Depart from me Lord, for I am a sinful man." and Such is always the case, you can't have an accurate understanding of the righteousness of God and somehow think that you'll add up. The Psalmist said, "*For in Your sight no one living is righteous.*" Ps 143:2 But being ignorant of God's righteousness so often people think they can establish their own, how much easier to simply humble oneself and submit to the righteousness of God?

But therein lies the problem doesn't it? It's that one little word, "Submit" *man* we don't like that word, we could be told all the information that's needed, but information alone won't save you. I could tell you plainly that Christ is the righteousness of God for your life, I could tell you that Jesus lived a sinless life, died a sinner's death, took your sin/my sin upon Himself paid the penalty in full, lie dead in a tomb for 3 days and on the 3rd day rose again. That He was delivered up for our transgression, and was raised for our justification, and that if you'll just believe in Jesus Christ you can be saved. and You can have all the right *information*, but information alone won't make for your *salvation* will it? There has to be a *submission* in your heart and in your life, a humbling of your heart that says, "God I can't save myself, I'm done working for my own salvation, and I'm willing in faith to receive *Your* salvation."

Many times people don't like that because they want bragging rights, "I'm saved because I went to church for 30 straight years, never missed a Sunday, brought my bible every week, was baptized the moment I gave my heart to Christ, and gave 12% of my income for as long as I can remember." Or, "I traveled to Rome, waited 3 weeks in rain or shine, and when the Pope made his appearance I kissed the ring on his finger, I've said this many "Hail Mary's" and attended Mass faithfully for such and such a time." and On and on the list could go, gave so much to the poor, supported that many missions, single handedly paid off the church debt, or whatever, but submitting to the righteousness of God forfeits all of those things and places us all on equal and needy ground before our Creator. Because at that point I surrender all claims to righteousness, I take all the focus off of myself, and my long list of self imposed do's and don'ts and place all the focus and attention on what He's done. and That's what it all boils down to, it's not about what I *do*, it's about what *He's done* for you and for me on the cross.

Vs4

To the Galatians Paul put it like this, “...*the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.*” Gal 3:24-25 Now before we get out of control here we want to be careful not to throw the baby out with the bath water.

We should realize here what Paul *doesn't* say. He doesn't say that Christ is the end of the law for recognition of that which is good and holy, and just in the sight of God. But what he *does* say is that our righteousness before God isn't established in the law, our relationship *with* God, our righteousness *before* god isn't predicated upon keeping the law, but rather upon our being found *in* Christ. God's standards aren't lower because we're in Christ, but our righteousness before God isn't predicated upon our being able to meet those standards, our righteousness is of Christ. The bible says, “*But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God -- and righteousness and sanctification and redemption*” 1 Cor 1:30 Put simply God doesn't recognize “By law” righteousness, righteousness on the principle of law, He honors “by faith” righteousness, by coming to and resting in His Son.

Now that's good news, and no doubt a much needed reminder for some of you, because I would guess that some of you came in here this morning and you sat down with this overwhelming feeling that you're disqualified from being blessed by God today. Why? Because you've sinned over this past week, you're a man and you've subjected yourself to the snares of internet pornography. You're a woman, and you know that you've been backbiting, complaining and murmuring and you came here this morning and the devil just started pouring on you. and You sort of look around and you think, “Here I am, in the middle of all these people who so desperately love God and I'm just scum.” I mean, you're glad you're here, and we are too, but you feel sort of like you're on probation before God for awhile, He's not going to bless you, in fact this last week He had to remove several gold stars from your chart. Oh He loves you and you understand that, He has to love you right, I mean God is love... but He's not going to bless you until you're off probation, served your sentence, out on good behavior or whatever. Do you realize what you've just done? You've in essence said that you have to *earn* God's blessing predicated on your good behavior, you're seeking to relate to God on the principle of law. Look at the Vs 4 again (read).

“But you know what I've done, the things I've been engaged in, how can God bless me?” Well, He can't – on the principle of law, but He can on the principle of *faith*, Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. How's that, because He fulfilled it, and you're in Him, therefore His righteousness is your righteousness. and Your relationship to God is predicated upon faith in and through the person of Jesus Christ not upon law.

So then what prohibits you from being blessed this morning? Unbelief; if you would humble your heart before God and come to Him in faith and simply say, “God I know I’m a sinner, but Your word says that You’ve come to save sinners, that You became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in You. So I open my life, and my heart to You today, Lord restore me, renew me, revive me and bless me, not for my sake, but for Christ’s sake, that *He* might be glorified and magnified in my life. Lord I’ll receive blessing from You to the glory of Jesus Christ ” You see what a revolution that can be in your life, you can’t make it on the principle of law with legalism.

Vs5

In other words if you’re have life via the law, you have to do it, or fulfill it all, completely and in its totality. Not only outwardly, but inwardly in the attitude of your heart, James told us, “...*whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.*” James 2:10 Which is another way of saying in no uncertain terms that you’ve either broken the law or you haven’t, it doesn’t matter if you’ve kept 99% of it perfectly, if you err on one point, you’ve violated the law, period. The idea that’s seeking to be communicated is that it’s a human impossibility. Because as soon as there’s lust in my heart I’m an adulterer, as soon as I’m disgruntled towards someone I’m a murderer, as soon as I want what you’ve got, I’m covetous, I can’t hit the mark.

Vs6-9

Let me make this as simple as I can, the law says you’ve got to go to great lengths to achieve righteousness. Faith forfeits human achievement, faith doesn’t require your great quest to heaven to bring Christ down, or your ascetic descent into the abyss to somehow help Christ to obtain your righteous requirement. God has made it incredibly simple, salvation, blessing is right near you, even in your mouth and in your heart.

But we have another problem on the other side of the scale (we’ve made reference to it already, but I want to be specific for a moment). On the one extreme we have those of you here who feel disqualified from blessing because of where you’ve been and what you’ve done, but there’s a worse category here yet. There are those of you here who actually feel as though you *deserve* God’s blessing because you’ve been good all week! Read your bible everyday, spent no less than 10-15 minutes in prayer every night, and maybe they didn’t make it but you even invite a friend or 2 to church on top of it. “So God here I am, ready and prepared, bring on the blessing.” Can I say to you that you’re in a worse position than the one who fills unqualified, because your heart is filled with pride, you’ve gone to great lengths and you’ve earned God’s blessing. Remember that scene in Luke 18 regarding the Pharisee and the tax collector? The Pharisee sharing with God all he’d done for him, thanking God that he wasn’t some rank sinner and all, the tax collector standing there in shame wouldn’t even so much as raise his eyes to heaven but just beat his chest saying, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!” Jesus said that man went away justified, not so with the Pharisee.

You see grace and faith takes our righteousness totally out of the realm of earning and deserving, and places it with in the realm of *believing* and *receiving*. and That's what its all about, casting off our own ideals and attempts of righteousness, earning and deserving and all the rest, and humbly submitting to the righteousness of God, believing in Christ, receiving salvation, justification and even our sanctification by grace, through faith in Him.

Salvation comes not from what we do, but what He's done, confessing Jesus as Lord with our mouths and believing in His atoning death and resurrection in our hearts, how does that apply to you practically? Very emphatically, it makes for your salvation, (Lord willing we'll pick up on this thought next time).

Prayer Points: God free us from this legalistic mentality that so easily enslaves us. Whether we find ourselves in the category of feeling disqualified because of sin, or deserving because of our good moral conduct, either way Lord we want to repent and simply cling to the foot of the cross confessing that it's not about us, or what we do, its all about You, and what You've done for us. Would You bless us accordingly Lord? Not for our sake but for Your sake, that You might be glorified in our lives. May we simply submit to Your righteousness, and Father help us to see You for who You are that we might be remedied of our desire to somehow stand righteous before You in our own merit. and Would You help us Lord to be a people who truly cares, that You might make of us a people of prayer.

Listen, if you're here and you know in your own heart that you've never given your heart to Christ. Perhaps you've found yourself in one of these categories we've spoken of today, trying to do it on your own. Or perhaps just thinking you're a pretty good person not really realizing the depravity of the human heart or seeing the righteous standard of God, but you're beginning to realize that there's a righteous standard and we can never hope to hit it. Maybe you don't fit in either one of those categories but that doesn't matter you know you need Jesus and you're prepared to submit to the righteousness of God in Christ today, than let me encourage you to open your heart to Jesus. I've given you all the information you need, but until you're ready to surrender to Christ, it won't make for your salvation. If you're willing to surrender to Christ, you can be forgiven, made brand new today.