

## XXII. Call on the Name of the LORD

October 18/19/20, 2016

Romans 10:1-13

**Aim:** To understand the ‘universality’ of the gospel—that everyone and anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord and believes in Jesus Christ will be saved.

Romans chapter 9 teaches the majestic, inscrutable doctrine of divine sovereign election. This is a marvelous doctrine to be believed, though we cannot fully understand it. Now we come to chapter 10, which presents us with the other side of the coin: *human responsibility*. The fact is, the Word of God teaches both God’s elective sovereignty and man’s responsibility, though it does not show us how to reconcile this paradox. It is possible to get just enough of the vertical theology of chapter 9 to make us horizontally irresponsible. Some believers have abdicated their duty because of a misappropriation of the doctrine of election, and some unbelievers have remained frozen in their unbelief because they have been told they can do nothing about it. We humans like to be absolved of responsibility.

In Romans chapter 10 God places the responsibility for Israel’s lostness on Israel. God rejected Israel because Israel had rejected the gospel. If you are without Christ, it is not because you are non-elect, but because you are rejecting Christ. You cannot place the blame on anyone else. At least five times in this chapter (vv. 8, 11, 12, 16, and 21) the responsibility of the Jews is implicitly emphasized.

In Romans 9, Paul focuses on God’s sovereign election and on the elect’s response of faith in Him. The corollary is that because God has not elected all Jews, all Jews have not had saving faith. Because Paul knew how offensive that truth would be to most Jews, he began that chapter of Romans with great compassion and sorrow, testifying that he would gladly sacrifice his own salvation if doing so would bring salvation to his unbelieving kinsmen according to the flesh (9:1-3). Romans 10 is equally offensive to Jews, because the apostle here focuses on Israel’s willing unbelief and the spiritual ignorance and divine condemnation that this unbelief brings.

### A. Zeal Not According to Knowledge (Romans 10:1-4)

Paul begins by reasserting his deep concern for the salvation of his ‘kindred according to the flesh’ (cp. 9:1-3). Assumed in this expression of concern is, of course, the fact that most of his fellow Jews are not finding salvation. It is this assumption that is the basis for v. 2, as Paul explains why Jews have not found salvation; their commendable zeal for the Lord has not been matched by a comparable degree of knowledge. What have the Jews not understood? In a word, righteousness. As Paul sows in v. 3, the Jews have not recognized the manifestation of God’s righteousness in Christ and have sought rather to establish their own, based on the doing of the law (cp. 9:32 and 10:5). That this is truly a serious misunderstanding is demonstrated in v. 4: Christ has brought the law to its culmination: it is in Him that the righteousness is now available, and for anyone who believes. Verse 4 is justly famous as one of the most succinct yet significant theological assertions in all of the Pauline letters.

#### 1. The Prayer of Paul (10:1)

<sup>1</sup>*Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.*

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The address ‘brothers and sisters’ (*αδελφοι, adelphoi*), as elsewhere in Romans, signals a transition. In this case, however, the transition is not from one topic to another but from one aspect of a topic to another. Paul has given a brief explanation of Israel’s failure to find inclusion in the eschatological people of God; now he will expand further on this explanation. At the same time, Paul’s direct address of his mainly Gentile Christian readers serves to underline his sincerity and the importance of what he says in v. 1. He wants his predominantly Gentile Christian readers to know that he takes no delight or satisfaction from Israel’s fall. Quite the contrary, on his part, Paul remains passionately committed to the salvation of the Jews. It comes to expression in his prayer of petition on behalf of Israel, that they might experience the salvation that has been made available in the gospel. As Murray points out, the juxtaposition of this heartfelt prayer for Israel’s salvation almost immediately after Paul’s teaching about the ultimate determinacy of the will of God in salvation (9:6b-29) carries an important reminder: ‘We violate the order of human thought and trespass the boundary between God’s prerogative and man’s when the truth of God’s sovereign counsel constrains despair or abandonment of concern for the eternal interests of men.

In the last sections of the previous chapter Paul noted with sadness that a mere ‘remnant’ of his nation had found salvation (9:27-29). Paul continues in this vein. He begins by expressing his passionate grief for his people, as he had at the beginning of chapter 9. His words are addressed to the Gentile readers, though doubtless he knew his fellow-Jews would also hear.

As Paul launches into the subject, he again lets his readers know where his heart is. Paul’s continued prayer for Israel is evidence that he did not regard their rejection as final. Moreover, what he now says about their spiritual condition is said from a heart of love and intercession. He prays for nothing short of their redemption. To such a caring heart we are compelled to listen.

Paul did not have a cold and indifferent acquiescence to God’s sovereign election. He had a compelling, heartfelt longing to bring his physical kinsmen to Christ. His deepest ‘heart’s desire’ was that every Jew be saved, and his earnest ‘prayer to God’ on their behalf was ‘for their salvation.’ *Deēsis* (‘prayer’) conveys the idea of pleading and entreaty, of persistent petition to God. Paul was not making a hopeless plea that he did not expect God to answer. He prayed because he fully believed God could save all Israel, that, no matter how seemingly unlikely, the people of Israel *could be saved* if they would place their trust in their Messiah and Savior.

Believers are to pray for and witness to all unbelievers, knowing that God will faithfully save those who believe in His Son. God’s redemptive program is not one-dimensional. To isolate God’s sovereign choice from the believer’s personal faith is to foolishly and presumptuously separate what God has inextricably united. A theology that does not reflect genuine, heartfelt compassion for the lost and a deep desire for their salvation is a theology that is unbiblical.

### 2. The Zeal of the Jews (10:2)

<sup>2</sup>*For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.*

Paul’s ‘testimony’ about Israel begins on a positive note: they have a praiseworthy devotion to God. The problem with Israel and the reason why Paul must continue to pray for their salvation is that, like the pre-Christian Paul (see Acts 22:3; Phil. 3:6), their zeal is not driven by ‘knowledge.’

Paul recognized that the Jews had a genuine zeal. Ever since returning from the Babylonian Captivity, the Jews had been cured of idolatry. They never again fell to national apostasy. Even

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today Orthodox Judaism puts many Christians to shame with its zeal. But zeal alone will not suffice as Paul shows. The sad fact is, there are thousands of zealous people who are abysmally lost. Even an orthodox zeal for the God of the Bible will not guarantee Heaven. Sincerity never replaces truth!

Paul recognized that they were zealous for religion; they never missed the meetings in the synagogue. They had a zeal for God, but their zeal was based on ignorance. A fanatic is somebody who loses sight of where he is going but redoubles his efforts to get there. He is full of zeal, but he has no knowledge or understand of that for which he is zealous.

What hindered the Jews finding ‘salvation’? Remarkably it was, Paul says, ‘zeal for God.’ But it was ‘zeal’ (*zēlos*) ‘not according to knowledge.’ There is more to these words than is commonly understood. Paul does not simply mean that their eagerness exceeded their common sense, a failing we associate with the immature. Rather, ‘zeal’ was a technical term belonging to the religious culture of the Jews from the time of Judas Maccabeus’ uprising against the Greco-Syrian attempt to subvert Judaism two hundred years earlier. ‘Zealot’ was the name given to the Jew who had a life and death devotion to Yahweh, and who practiced the symbols of His covenant such as the rite of circumcision, the Torah, the religious calendar, the dietary laws, and the sanctity of the Temple. The zealot was prepared to kill and be killed for the honor of the Lord if any of these symbols was violated. None knew better than Paul the dangers of ‘zeal.’ The pre-Christian Paul had been just that, a ‘zealot’ for God (Phil. 3:6). But their patriotic ‘zeal’ for the symbols of the covenant was not informed by ‘knowledge,’ that is, of the crucified and risen Messiah, Jesus.

By his own words, Paul had been a zealous member of the most zealous Jewish sect. No one understood better than he what it was to ‘have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.’ The Jews had a certain degree or kind of knowledge (*gnosis*), an intellectual awareness of the outward demands of God’s law. But they did not have the discerning spiritual ‘knowledge’ (*epignōsis*) that comes only from a saving relationship to God. They had the kind of superficial religious knowledge that causes pride and arrogance (1 Cor. 8:1), but not the godly knowledge that both comes from and produces humility and holiness.

It is so easy for a zealous person to be lost if one thinks religion exists as a ladder to elevate oneself to righteousness and acceptance before God. Now, a true believer ought to be filled with zeal (a lack of zeal may even mean one is not a believer). But a religious zeal is not an infallible sign that one knows the truth. The fact is, a man or woman can be zealous for the Scriptures, zealous for Sunday school, zealous for the programs of the Church, zealous for body life, zealous for all of these things, and still be unregenerate. Each person must ask himself or herself where he or she is in relation to Christ. Paul wanted the Romans to see that zealous people can be lost people. That was (and is) a matter of life and death.

### 3. The Ignorance of the Jews (10:3)

<sup>3</sup>*For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.*

God’s plan has reached its climax in the gospel of Jesus Christ (1:2-4). And at the heart of the gospel Paul has placed the revelation of the righteousness of God (1:16-17). It is natural, therefore, for Paul to characterize the Jews’ lack of understanding (v. 2b) as consisting in their ignorance of ‘the righteousness of God.’ This does not mean that the Jews did not understand

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that God was a righteous God. The Jews' ignorance involves their failing to understand that God has fulfilled His promise to reveal His saving activity in Jesus Christ.

Israel was willingly and inexcusably ignorant of 'God's righteousness' because she sought 'to establish' her own righteousness and refused to subject herself 'to the righteousness of God.' Such a charge was a terrible blow to a people who prided themselves in knowing the truth about God and in being His chosen ones. Paul makes clear that Israel's most serious ignorance was about 'God's righteousness,' the central nature of His personhood. Most Jews of Paul's day *did* boast in their own righteousness and considered themselves pleasing to God simply because they were His ancient chosen people. Not only were they willingly ignorant of 'God's righteousness,' but they also had no understanding of their own unrighteousness. Consequently, they felt no need for a Messiah to save them from sin but rather a Messiah to deliver them from their earthly oppressors, namely Rome. That heinous misjudgment and ignorance about God's righteousness and their own unrighteousness was the basis for their whole system of legalistic self-righteousness.

'The righteousness of God,' in this sense, embraces on one side God's activity of 'declaring right' and on the other the status of 'being right' with God that people receive when they respond in faith to that activity. Paul's language in this verse implies the presence of both these concepts. The nuance of divine activity is evident in the language of the last clause of the verse: the Jews 'have not submitted to the righteousness of God.' Paul's use of the verb 'submit' shows that the righteousness of God is an active force to which one must humbly and obediently subordinate oneself. Another way to put the matter would be to say that the Jews have not responded to God's righteousness in faith. But the second participial clause in the verse – 'seeking to establish their own righteousness' – suggests that 'righteousness of God' includes also the nuance of 'right status.' 'Their own' must have a generally possessive sense and the righteousness 'they' possess accordingly the notion of status. As its opposite, therefore, 'the righteousness of God' must also include the idea of a status of righteousness conferred by God. The Jews failed to 'submit' to God's righteousness not only because they did not recognize God's righteousness when it arrived but also because they were too narrowly focused on seeking a righteousness in connection with their obedience to the law.

Paul's words 'the righteousness of God' have a double intent here. First and foremost, Paul means that 'righteousness' which belongs to God and is a mark of His character. As well, however, it is a 'righteousness' God shares with humans, by acquitting them of sins. They can only come by this 'righteousness' on God's terms, not their own. God's way of sharing His righteousness is unexpected. It is only by His grace to those who by believing in Christ are 'in' Him, that is, belong to Him. But the Jews of whom Paul now speaks know better than God. They seek to establish their own 'righteousness' with God, based on 'works' of the 'Law' (see 9:31-32).

The Law was given as a tutor to lead the Jewish nation to Christ. God never intended that the Jews would be saved through perfect obedience to the Law, but rather that by their failure to live up to it they would be driven to grace (cp. Gal. 3:24). The futility and frustration of falling short of the Law's demands were meant to open them up to God's grace and imputed righteousness—the righteousness that He bestows apart from works on the basis of faith (3:21-22; Phil. 3:9). However, instead of turning to God in repentance the Jews sought 'to establish their own' righteousness. They saw the Law as a way to lift themselves up to God.

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### 4. The End of the Law (10:4)

<sup>4</sup>*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

This verse, containing one of the most famous of all of Paul's theological 'slogans,' grounds what Paul has said about the Jews in v. 3. Specifically he shows that the Jews' pursuit of a righteousness of their own, based on the law is wrong because Christ has brought the law to its culmination and thereby made righteousness available to everyone who believes.

Scholars have argued for four different meanings of the word *nomos* in this verse: 'law' in general, in whatever form; 'OT revelation' broadly; 'legalism'; and Mosaic Law. The great majority of commentators have concluded that *nomos* refers in this verse, as usually in Paul, to the Mosaic Law.

Verse 4 contains an assertion – 'Christ is the *telos* (τέλος) of the law' – and a prepositional phrase – '*eis* righteousness for everyone who believes.' How are we to connect the prepositional phrase to the assertion? It is most likely that the prepositional phrase introduced by *eis* functions as a purpose or result clause attached to the assertion as a whole: 'Christ is the *telos* of the law, with the result that there is (or with the purpose that there might be) righteousness for everyone who believes' (so, essentially, most modern English translations).

This leaves the question of the meaning of the word *telos*. All major English versions translate this word 'end.' But this translation contains a crucial ambiguity: does 'end' mean: 1) 'termination,' as in the sentence, 'The end of the class finally came!'; or 2) 'goal,' as in the sentence 'The end of government is the welfare of the people'; or 3) 'result,' as in the sentence, 'She did not foresee the end of her actions.' Each of these meanings is possible for the Greek word *telos*, and each is attested in Paul. If we accept the first meaning, Paul's point will be a purely temporal one: the coming of Christ means that, in some manner, the period of the law's significance and/or authority is at an end. If we choose either the second or third meaning, however, Paul will be presenting the law and Christ in a dynamic relationship, with the law in some sense directed toward, or pointing forward, to Christ.

There is much in both the immediate and wider context to favor a temporal translation. The relationship between v. 4 and v. 3 shows that Paul wants to stress the discontinuity between Christ and the law. The Jews' striving for a righteousness of 'their own,' based on the law (v. 3), is wrong (among other reasons) because Christ has brought an end to the law and to the era of which it was the center. This is the same point that Paul has made in 3:21: God's righteousness has been made manifest 'apart from the law.' Indeed, the salvation-historical disjunction between the era of the law and the era of Christ is one that is basic to Paul's teaching in Romans (see also 6:14, 15; 7:1-6). These considerations require that *telos* have a temporal nuance: with the coming of Christ the authority of the law of Moses is, in some basic sense, at an end. At the same time, a teleological nuance is also present. The analogy of a racecourse (which many scholars think *telos* is meant to convey) is helpful: the finish line is both the 'termination' of the race (the race is over when it is reached) and the 'goal' of the race (the race is run for the sake of reaching the finish line). Likewise, Paul is implying that Christ is the 'end' of the law (He brings it era to a close) and its 'goal' (He is what the law anticipated and pointed towards. The English word 'end' perfectly captures this nuance; but, if it is thought that it implies to temporal a meaning, we might also use the words 'culmination,' 'consummation,' or 'climax.'

By his word 'end' (*telos*) Paul has in mind several layers of meaning. First, 'end' means 'end point' or 'goal.' In this sense, Christ is the 'fulfillment' of all the hopes, promises, and visions of

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the ‘Law,’ that is, the entire corpus of the Old Testament. But ‘end’ also means ‘that which terminates.’ Understood like this, Christ crucified and risen brings Law to an ‘end.’ In this second layer of meaning, ‘Law’ is the covenant God gave to the people through Moses at Mt. Sinai. As promised by the prophets, however, God established a ‘new covenant’ based not on the Law, but on the promised Christ who died for sins, and on the Spirit who changes the hearts (cp. Jer. 31:31-35; Ez. 36:26). But this way of ‘righteousness’ Israel has rejected.

Paul cannot be speaking of Christ’s historical fulfillment of the law, as important as that truth is. Christ did indeed historically fulfill the law and the entire Old Covenant by His perfect, sinless life—whether anyone believed in Him or not. But that accomplishment does not provide anyone else with saving righteousness. Rather, as indicated at the end of verse 4, Paul is saying that 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.

The goal and purpose of the law is Christ. God did not give the law as a way for us to attain status in his family. The law was given to show us the righteousness of God. It was given so that we can see the perfect righteousness of God and by comparison see ourselves, warts and all, and despair of our own righteousness. The law sends us rushing to the cross and running for grace. The law exposes our sin, and anything that exposes our sin screams to our need for the Savior, whose righteousness alone can justify. Paul said that this is the tragedy of the people he loved. They had missed it. They had sought the righteousness of God through their obedience to the law and had failed to see that the goal of the law is Christ and his righteousness, which can never be earned, bought, or deserved.

As Christ consummates one era of salvation history, so He inaugurates a new one. In this new era, God’s eschatological righteousness is available to those who *believe*; and it is available to *everyone* who believes. Both emphases are important and reflect one of the most basic themes of the letter (cp. 1:16; 3:22, 28-30; 4:16-17). Because the Jews have not understood that Christ has brought the law to its culmination, they have not responded in faith to Christ; and they have therefore missed the righteousness of God, available only in Christ on the basis of faith. At the same time, Christ, by ending the era of the law, during which God was dealing mainly with Israel, has made righteousness more readily available for Gentiles.

‘All who believe’ has a precise meaning. It is not a vague ‘believing,’ a misty religiosity but a personal trust informed by the apostolic gospel that is intentionally directed towards the Son of God and away from any kind of self-effort hoping for acceptance by God.

Christ perfectly fulfilled the Law through His perfect obedience, something none of us could ever do. Therefore Christ offers a new righteousness to those who will receive it. The fact that the Jews would not accept what Christ had done on their behalf demonstrates that they had never understood what the Law was.

Verse 4 is, then, the hinge on which the entire section 9:30-10:13 turns. It justifies Paul’s claim that the Jews, by their preoccupation with the law, have missed God’s righteousness (9:30-10:3); for righteousness is now found only in Christ and only through faith in Christ, the one who has brought the law to its climax and thereby ended its reign. It also announces the theme that Paul will expound in 10:5-13; righteousness by faith in Christ for all who believe.

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### 5. Summary

Two theological reflections on this much-quoted verse (10:4) are in order. First, while I have argued that Paul is teaching that Christ brought an ‘end’ to the law, it is important to clarify what this means and, perhaps, more importantly, what it does *not* mean. Paul is thinking in this verse in his usual category of salvation history. He is picturing the Mosaic Law as the center of an epoch in God’s dealings with human beings that has now come to an end. The believer’s relationship to God is mediated in and through Christ, and the Mosaic Law is no longer basic to that relationship. But Paul is *not* saying that Christ has ended all ‘law’; the believer remains bound to God’s law as it now is mediated in and through Christ (see Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:19-21). Nor is he saying that the Mosaic Law is no longer part of God’s revelation or of no more use to the believer. The Mosaic Law, like all of Scripture, is ‘profitable’ for the believer (2 Tim. 3:16) and must continue to be read, pondered, and responded to by the faithful believer.

Second, we find in Paul’s teaching about Christ as the culmination of the law another evidence of the beautiful unity of the NT message. For what Paul says here is almost exactly what Jesus claims in one of His most famous theological pronouncements: ‘Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them (Mt. 5:17). Each text pictures Christ as the promised culmination of the OT law. And together they sound a note of balance in the Christian’s approach to the OT and its law that is vital to maintain. On the one hand, both Jesus and Paul warn us about undervaluing the degree to which Christ now embodies and mediates to us what the OT law was teaching and doing. Our relationship with God is now found in Christ, not through the law; and our day-to-day behavior is to be guided primarily by the teaching of Christ and His apostles rather than by the law. On the other hand, Jesus and Paul also caution us against severing Christ from the law. For He is its fulfillment and consummation and He cannot be understood or appreciated unless He is seen in light of the preparatory period of which the law was the center.

### B. Righteousness Based on Faith (Romans 10:5-13)

Central to the Reformers’ teaching about salvation was their distinction between ‘law’ and ‘gospel.’ ‘Law’ is whatever God commands us to do; ‘gospel’ is what God in His grace gives to us. The Reformers uniformly insisted that human depravity made it impossible for a person to be saved by doing what God commands; only by humbly accepting, in faith, the ‘good news’ of God’s work on our behalf could a person be saved. This theological ‘law’ / ‘gospel’ antithesis is at the heart of this paragraph, as Paul contrasts the righteousness that is based on ‘doing’ the law (v. 5) with the righteousness that is based on faith (vv. 6-13). Significantly, Paul finds this distinction in the OT itself, manifesting his concern to prove that the gospel that has proved a stumbling block for so many Jews and a foundation stone for so many Gentiles is in continuity with the OT. In 10:5-13, Paul gives special attention to the way in which the revelation of God’s righteousness, the righteousness that is based on faith, opens the door wide to the inclusion of Gentiles. This focus becomes especially evident at the end of this paragraph (vv. 11-13). Paul thereby creates an *inclusio*, with concern for the Gentiles’ acceptance both beginning (9:30) and ending this section.

Verses 5-13 exposit the final words of v. 4: ‘so that there might be righteousness for everyone who believes.’ Paul begins by anchoring the connection between righteousness and faith in Scripture (vv. 5-8). His appeal to Scripture here suggests that, for all his interest in the Gentiles, he still has Israel very much in mind. If the Jews would only see the message of the OT as Paul

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sees it, they would recognize that the OT itself proclaims the indispensability of faith – the very message that Paul and the other apostles are preaching (vv. 6-8, quoting Dt. 9:4 and 30:12-14). Verses 9-10 are transitional. They highlight the point that Paul has discovered in Dt. 30: a person experiences righteousness and salvation simply by believing the message. Since salvation is therefore not bound to the law but to faith, ‘anyone’ can believe and be saved (vv. 11-13, quoting Is. 28:16 and Joel 2:32). Thus the way is opened for Gentiles. At the same time, we should not diminish the genuine ‘universalism’ Paul teaches here: if the way is opened for Gentiles, it is certainly not closed to Jews. They, especially, should recognize from their own Scriptures, the importance of submitting to God’s new work in Christ for humble faith.

### 1. Law and Faith (10:5-8)

#### a) *Based on the Law (10:5)*

<sup>5</sup>*For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.*

‘The righteousness based on the law’ is a *negative* conception, in direct contrast to ‘the righteousness based on faith’ (v. 6). It is that ‘right standing with God,’ bound up with the law and one’s own works, that Israel had pursued but not attained (cp. 9:31-32a; 10:3) and which Paul discarded in favor of the ‘righteousness from God’ (Phil. 3:9). Such an antithetical understand of vv. 5-6 could be intended to illustrate the way in which Christ ‘brings to an end’ the law (v. 4a). But the focus on righteousness and faith in vv. 6ff. suggests rather that for Paul the connection is with v. 4b: ‘so that there might be righteousness for all who believe.’ The ‘for’ in v. 5 therefore introduces all of vv. 5-8 (or vv. 5-13) as an elaboration of the connection between righteousness and faith and its significance. Verse 6 and following give a positive argument for this connection; v. 5 a negative one.

Before we can understand what this negative point is, we need to know how Paul’s quotation of Lev. 18:5 contributes to the argument. In its context, Lev. 18:5 summons Israel to obedience to the commandments of the Lord as a means of prolonging her enjoyment of the blessings of God in the Promised Land. The verse is not speaking about the attainment of eternal life; and Paul clearly does not believe that the OT teaches that righteousness is based on the law (see Rom. 4). Paul is *not*, therefore, claiming that Christ has replaced the old way of salvation – by obedience to the law – with a new one – by faith in Christ.

Paul’s point is a more nuanced one. His purpose in quoting Lev. 18:5 is succinctly to summarize what for him is the essence of the law: blessing is contingent on obedience. It is the one who *does* the works required by the laws whom must find life through them. The emphasis lies on the word ‘doing’ and not on the promise of ‘life.’ Paul states this principle here as a warning. The Jew who refuses to submit to the righteousness of God in Christ, ignoring the fact that the law has come to its culmination in Christ and seeking to establish a relationship with God through the law, must be content in seeking that relationship through ‘doing.’ Yet human doing, imperfect as even the most sincere striving must be, is always inadequate to bring a person into relationship with God – as Paul has shown in 1:18-3:20.

Paul is quoting Leviticus 18:5 where Moses is speaking to the people at Mt. Sinai, setting before them the requirements of the covenant of their rescuer-Lord. That covenant with its requirements was a gift of the Lord. It is untrue to claim that the Old Testament is ‘works-based’ and the New Testament is ‘grace-based.’ God’s initiative in making both the old covenant and

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the new covenant was ‘grace.’ Nonetheless, as the unfolding history of the Old Testament shows, Israel failed to ‘live by’ the Lord’s covenantal requirements, just and holy though they were. As Jeremiah observed, ‘they broke My covenant’ (Jer. 31:32). Paul’s point from the quotation from Leviticus is straightforward. The old covenant required the people to ‘live by’ its terms. Since they did not do so, that covenant became a ‘letter’ that ‘kills’ because it ‘condemns’ (2 Cor. 3:6, 9). Paul also quotes Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12, to the same end, that is, under that covenant the people were bound to achieve its terms. Evidently Leviticus 19:5 was a text Paul used in his debates with Jews over Law-based righteousness.

### *b) Based on Faith (10:6-8)*

#### (1) Quotation of Deuteronomy 9:4 (10:6a)

<sup>6</sup>*But the righteousness based on faith says, ‘Do not say in your heart...*

‘The ‘righteousness based on faith’ is active and powerful because it is also ‘the righteousness of God’ (see v. 3) – in contrast to the righteousness based on the law that Moses wrote about. Paul relates what this righteousness based on faith ‘says’ in vv. 6b-8, using language drawn from Deuteronomy. The introductory warning, ‘Do not say in your heart,’ is taken from Dt. 9:4. Paul’s quotation of this clause is not haphazard; he wants his readers to associate these words with the context from which they are drawn. For in Dt. 9:4-6 Moses warns the people of Israel that when they have taken possession of the land God is bringing them to, they must not think that they have earned it because of ‘their own righteousness.’ Paul therefore adds implicit biblical support to his criticism of the Israel of his day for its pursuit of their own righteousness (see v. 5).

#### (2) Quotation of Deuteronomy 30:12-14 (10:6b-8)

If Paul’s attribution of Dt. 9:4 to the righteousness based on faith is particularly apropos, the same cannot be said about his use of this clause from Dt. 30:11-14. Moses’ purpose is to prevent the Israelites from evading responsibility for doing the will of God by pleading that they do not know it. In God’s laws, mediated through Moses and set forth in Deuteronomy, God has made His will for His people known to them. How, then, can Paul take a passage that is about the law of God and find in it the voice of righteousness by *faith*? And how, in his explanatory comments, can he claim that what the text is talking about is not the commandment but Christ?

The best explanation for Paul’s use of the Dt. 30 text is to think that he finds in this passage an expression of the grace of God in establishing a relationship with His people. As God brought His word near to Israel so they might know and obey Him, so God now brings His word ‘near’ to both Jews and Gentiles that they might know Him through His Son Jesus Christ and respond in faith and obedience. Because Christ, rather than the law, is now the focus of God’s revelatory word (see 10:4), Paul can ‘replace’ the commandment of Dt. 30:11-14 with Christ. Paul’s application of Dt. 30:12-14, then, is of course not a straightforward exegesis of the passage. But it is a valid application of the principle of that passage in the context of the development of salvation history. The grace of God that underlies the Mosaic covenant is operative now in the New Covenant; and, just as Israel could not plead the excuse that she did not know God’s will, so now, Paul says, neither Jew nor Gentile can plead ignorance of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ.

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### (a) Ascend or Descend (10:6b-7)

... “Who will ascend into heaven?” (that is, to bring Christ down),<sup>7</sup> or “Who will descend into the abyss?” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

After the fragment of Dt. 9:4, Paul then adds directly to it a clause from Dt. 30:12: ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ He then adds an explanatory phrase, claiming that the object of this ascent into heaven is ‘to bring Christ down.’ In the OT, the language of ‘ascending into heaven’ becomes almost proverbial for a task impossible for human beings to perform. In Dt. 30, this impossible task is the bringing of God’s commandment to His people. Paul, however, eliminates any reference to the commandment and applies the language to Christ. Paul uses these explanatory comments to suggest a contemporary application of the significance of the Deuteronomy text in the light of the movement of salvation history. Viewed in the light of what God has done in and through His Son, ‘going into heaven’ takes on a new and more literal significance. As the Israelite did not need to ‘ascend into heaven’ to find God’s commandment, so, Paul suggests, there is no need to ascend into heaven to ‘bring down Christ.’ For in the incarnation, the Messiah, God’s Son, has been truly ‘brought down’ already.

In the second quotation of language from Dt. 30 we find a significant difference between Paul’s wording and the original: for Deuteronomy’s ‘Who will go across the sea?’ Paul has ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ This difference has led some scholars to think that Paul may here be quoting Ps. 107:26 rather than Dt. 30:13. But this is unlikely since Paul’s language is generally parallel to that of Deuteronomy and since it is sandwiched between two other references to Dt. 30. In fact, the ‘sea’ and the ‘abyss’ were somewhat interchangeable concepts in the OT and in Judaism. Therefore, Paul could very easily change the horizontal imagery of the crossing of the sea in Dt. 30:13 to the conceptually similar vertical imagery of descent into the underworld. His purpose for making such a change was to facilitate his Christological application. As he could use the fact of the incarnation to suggest the foolishness of ‘going into heaven’ to bring Christ down, so now he can use the fact of the resurrection to deny any need to ‘go down to the abyss’ to bring Christ up from ‘the realm of the dead.’

Paul’s thoughts seem somewhat oblique at first glance. He is setting forth two ideas that represent manifest impossibilities. It is just as impossible for a person to be justified by the law or their works as for a human being to ascend into the highest heaven and drag the Messiah from heaven to earth. The only way Messiah can descend from heaven is if God Omnipotent sends Him, which is exactly what God the Father did in sending the Son into the world to be our mediator. It is also equally impossible for any human being by strength of his virtue or righteousness to descend into the pit of hell and bring back Christ from the dead. When Christ was executed, the disciples fled as sheep without a shepherd. They were in despair because they knew it was totally beyond their power to bring Jesus back from the grave. Paul is saying that it is impossible for someone to be saved through the works of the law just as it is impossible to bring Jesus back from the dead or to bring Him down from heaven.

Paul’s point in Romans 10:6-7 is that, even if such things were possible, men could not come to salvation by searching for Christ in ‘heaven...to bring [Him] down,’ or by descending ‘into the abyss,’ the depths of the earth or of the oceans, to raise Him ‘up from the dead.’ The righteousness of faith does not require some mystical, esoteric, and impossible journey through the universe to find Christ.

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### (b) The Word Is Near (10:8)

<sup>8</sup>*But 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)...*

The introductory formula 'But what does it say?' reiterates the initial introduction to the series of quotations from Dt. 30 in v. 6a – the subject of the verb being, then, 'the righteousness based on faith.' Paul uses the adversative 'but' because he now tells us what the righteousness based on faith *does* say, in contrast to what it warns us not to say (vv. 6-7). This positive assertion about the nature of the righteousness based on faith is therefore the key point that Paul wants to get across through his use of Dt. 30. What is this point? That the message about the righteousness of faith, preached by Paul and the other apostles, is, like the law of God, accessible and understandable: 'the word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.' The word in Deuteronomy takes the form of a word of command; here in Romans, that word of God is 'the word of faith that we are preaching.' But both words have in common that God has brought them 'near.' Yet there is in the gospel that Paul and the other apostles are preaching an added sense in which the word is 'near.' For not only does the gospel proclaim and embody the fulfillment of God's promise to bring His righteousness 'near' to His people; it also provides for the writing of God's law on the heart, in fulfillment of the New Covenant prophecy. In Christ, the culmination of the law, God's word is near in a way that it has never been before. And all that is now required of human beings is the response of faith. For the gospel is 'the word of faith'" a message that calls for faith.

In stark contrast to the impossibility of the first two phrases from Deuteronomy, Paul quotes Moses concerning God's Word. In other words, the central truth about justification is not so high or abstract or deep or profound as to be beyond our understanding. Understanding the gospel does not require a PhD in theology. The gospel is 'near you,' a Hebrew idiom meaning that it is within our grasp. It is right in front of us. The word of faith is simple.

In other words, men do not have to ascend or descend to find it, because God's way of salvation had already been clearly and abundantly revealed. His chosen people had been engulfed in and surrounded by 'the word of faith' that Paul was now 'preaching.' Even under the Old Covenant men could claim God's grace simply by receiving it in faith.

Simply stated, 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 (as the Jews knew the Law), the saving word was on their lips and heart. That is, the gospel of Christ—the word of faith—was (and is) available, accessible, and simple.

Paul's calculated adaptation of Moses' words is striking in its affirmation about Christ. In the dispensation of the new covenant there are new terms from God's side. Christ, who is to be *believed*, has replaced Law that is to be *obeyed*. The new covenant is personal and relational in character. The old covenant was national and 'works' based.

As Paul therefore uses Lev. 18:5 to summarize the essence of 'the law,' so he quotes Dt. 30:12-14 to encapsulate 'the gospel.' Throughout salvation history, these two 'words' from the Lord have operated side-by-side: God making His demand of His people on the one hand and providing His grace for their deliverance on the other.

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### 2. Heart and Mouth (10:9-10)

In simplest terms, what does Romans 10:9-10 require? It requires a belief in two things: First, that ‘Jesus is Lord.’ The confession that Jesus is Lord meant the acknowledgement that Jesus shares the name and the nature, the holiness, the authority, power, majesty, and eternity of the one and only true God...there is expressed in addition the sense of His ownership of those who acknowledge Him and of their consciousness of being His property. And secondly, Romans 10:9-10 requires that you believe that ‘God raised [Christ] from the dead.’ Further, true faith always leads to confession. Jesus said, ‘For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks’ (Mt. 12:34). Do we believe like that?

Following the order of verse 8, which quotes Deuteronomy 30:14, Paul speaks first of confession, which is ‘with the mouth,’ and then of faith, which is in the ‘heart.’ In verse 10, however, he mentions them in reverse order, which is the chronological order of redemption. First, ‘with the heart man believes’ and is granted righteousness; second, ‘with the mouth he confesses’ and is granted salvation. Another contrast between the two verses is that, whereas verse 9 is a personal invitation to believe, focusing on the individual (‘you’), verse 10 presents gospel truth concerning ‘man’ in general.

#### a) Confess and Believe (10:9)

*...<sup>9</sup>because, 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.*

Paul is explaining the ‘nearness’ of the word of faith, the gospel, by emphasizing that it demands only a simple response and that, when responded to, it mediates God’s salvation. This simple response, surprisingly in light of Paul’s stress on faith in this context, is a twofold one: ‘if you confess with your mouth’ and ‘if you believe in your heart.’ Both the presence of these two conditions and the order in which they occur are due to Paul’s desire to show how his ‘word of faith’ precisely matches the description of the word in Dt. 30:14, as being ‘in your mouth’ and ‘in your heart.’ Paul’s rhetorical purpose at this point should make us cautious about finding great significance in the reference to confession here, as if Paul were making oral confession a second requirement for salvation. Belief in the heart is clearly the crucial requirement, as Paul makes clear even in this context (9:30; 10:4, 11). Confession is the outward manifestation of this critical inner response.

*Homologeō*, (‘confess’) has the root meaning of speaking the same things, of being in agreement and accord with someone. The person who confesses Jesus as Lord agrees with God the Father, and that confession mixed with genuine trust brings ‘salvation.’

Paul conjoins two elements here. He does not just say that you must confess with your lips and profess with your mouth in order to be saved. Every Christian is called to profess their faith. We are to profess the faith, but the profession without authentic faith attending it will justify no one. The possession of faith, not the profession of it, is the necessary condition for our justification. That is why Paul does not say that we will be saved if we confess with our mouth. He adds a condition: you must ‘believe with your heart.’

The content of what we are to confess and to believe reflects basic early Christian proclamation. The acclamation of Jesus as Lord is a very early and very central element of Christian confession; as is the conviction that God raised Jesus from the dead. The gospel, then, is ‘near’

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to us because it requires only what our own hearts and mouths can do; and when we respond, it brings near to us God's salvation.

By the 'word about Christ' being in the 'mouth' Paul means the public confession by the individual in the church (at baptism) and by the gathered assembly that 'Jesus is Lord.' In turn, however, this confession must issue forth from what the 'heart' 'believes.'

### *b) Believe and Confess (10:10)*

<sup>10</sup>*For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.*

Verse 10 provides corroboration of the connection between confession and faith on the one hand and salvation on the other. The general way here of stating the matter prepares the way for Paul's universalizing application in vv. 11-13. Paul again writes rhetorically: the wording of the two parallel clauses follows the same order; and each clause reiterates one of the conditions of v. 9, but is in reverse order (thus forming a chiasm). This evident rhetorical interest suggests that Paul would not want us to find any difference in the meanings of 'righteousness' and 'salvation' here. Each expresses in a general way the new relationship with God that is the result of believing 'with the heart' and confessing 'with the mouth.'

Instead of worrying about the intricacies that attend the doctrine of election, we must get down to the simplest principle: if we confess with our mouths and believe with our hearts, we shall be saved. We will not do that unless we are elect. Do you believe in your heart and trust in Christ alone? If so, then you can have full assurance of your salvation.

The 'confession' of the *mouth* follows upon the 'belief' of the *heart* (or, mind). Mouth follows mind. 'Righteousness' – the key word of the letter and of this passage – is equated with 'salvation.' Both are blessings of the end-time, appropriated now by 'faith' in the Messiah, Jesus.

### **3. Jew and Greek (10:11-13)**

#### *a) Quotation of Isaiah 28:16 (10:11)*

<sup>11</sup>*For the Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.'*

Paul's quotation of Is. 28:16 in this verse has two purposes. First, it provides further scriptural support for his critical connection of faith and salvation. For 'not being put to shame' refers to deliverance at the time of judgment. Second, Paul is able to cite the text to support his contention that the salvation now made available in Christ is for anyone who believes. This verse therefore finally picks up on the element of universality in 10:4b: 'for *everyone* who believes.'

Paul reintroduces a partial quote of Isaiah 28:16 (cited more fully in 9:33). Clearly Paul placed great importance on this text which spoke of the Messiah-'Stone' God had laid in Zion. In this briefer adaptation of Isaiah's text Paul is emphasizing three things. First, while the base Old Testament text spoke of the individual ('*he* who believes'), Paul's citation is global ('*all* who believe'), preparing us for God's provision of *universal* salvation in the next two verses. Second, 'believe' is directed to 'Him' (the Messiah-'Stone'); the act of 'believing' cannot be separated from its object, Christ. 'Believing' is never undirected. Third, since 'shame' is an end-time reference to God's rejection of the unworthy, the negative 'not be put to shame' is synonymous with the positives, God's declaration of 'righteousness' to believers and His gift of 'salvation' to them (v. 10).

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Paul declares that God's extending His salvation to *all* Gentiles was nothing new. That gracious offer did not begin with the all-inclusive gospel of Jesus Christ, which Christians, most of whom were Jews, were then proclaiming to everyone who would hear. To the contrary, as Paul had already cited (9:33), 'The Scripture says' through Isaiah, 'Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed' (cp. Is. 28:16). God had always been calling to Gentiles ('whoever'). This wondrous truth is a balance to the great emphasis Paul has been placing on God's sovereignty (see 9:6-26). Although the two truths seem mutually exclusive to our finite minds, God's sovereign choice of every person who is saved is, in His infinite mind, perfectly consistent with His promise that 'whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.' Both the Old and New Testaments make clear that salvation is granted only to those who trust in God and that He offers His gracious redemption to all mankind, Jew and Gentile. No one who believes in Him will ever be disappointed by the salvation that He so graciously and universally offers.

If you put your trust in Christ from the heart, you have no need of future embarrassment. You will not be put to shame for having held a false hope or having devoted your life to a myth.

### *b) Application of Both Quotations (10:12)*

<sup>12</sup>*For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.*

Paul unpacks the universality inherent in 'everyone' in this verse. As so often in Romans, Paul is particularly concerned with the equal footing given to both Jews and Gentiles by the gospel. As there is 'no distinction' between the two groups of people in sin and judgment (3:23), so there is 'no distinction' between them as far as the Lord who rules over them or in the grace that the Lord offers to them. 'Lord' (*kyrios*) in v. 9 refers to Jesus and Christ is also the implicit antecedent of 'him' in whom people believe in v. 11. Moreover, Paul's language here probably echoes again an early Christian acclamation of Jesus as 'Lord of all.' The 'Lord' here will then be Jesus. As Lord, Jesus not only demands allegiance from all; He graciously shows His 'riches' on all who 'call upon Him.' Paul frequently uses the language of 'wealth' to connote the unlimited resources of God that He makes available to His people in and through His Son. Often, these riches are defined in terms of God's grace or mercy (2:4; Eph. 1:7; 2:7), and this is certainly Paul's intention here as well. 'Call upon' with a personal object is used in secular Greek for asking someone for assistance, and especially of asking God, or the gods, for help or intervention. But 'calling on the Lord' is also quite common in the LXX and Jewish literature, and was taken over by the early Christian with reference both to the Father and to Christ.

The 'all' encompasses the human race, represented by its two categories, 'Jew' and 'Greek.' The former are the covenant people Israel; the latter are the Gentiles, the people of the nations. Implicit here is Paul's earlier verdict that 'all are under sin,' regardless of whether they are Jews or Greeks (see 3:9). This was a bitter pill for Jews to swallow. Many Jews patronizingly looked for the inclusion of the Gentiles in the covenant people, provided various conditions were fulfilled (notably circumcision). Their assumption, however, was the absolute security of their own special place in God's purposes. It would not have occurred to them to doubt their own 'inclusion.' Explicit is the Lordship of Christ – incarnate, risen, ascended – over *both* peoples, Jews and Greeks. 'For He is Lord of all.' What are the 'riches' He grants to those who 'call upon Him'? The context makes clear that such 'riches' are the end-time blessings realized now, God's removal of 'shame' and His gifts of 'righteousness' and 'salvation.' What does it mean to 'call upon Him'? Quite simply, it means to speak to Him in prayer as Lord, asking Him for deliverance from the human condition (mortality and sin) as well as other pressing needs.

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### *c) Quotation of Joel 2:32 (10:13)*

<sup>13</sup>*For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’*

Paul brings to a close this paragraph with an implicit quotation from Joel 2:32. The catchword ‘call upon’ is clearly the link between the context and the quotation, which was important in early Christian preaching. But perhaps even more important for Paul was its emphasis on the universal availability of salvation. The quotation brings together two crucial terms from this context: ‘everyone’ (cp. vv. 4, 11, 12) and ‘salvation’ (cp. vv. 1, 9, 10).

The ‘Lord’ in Joel’s text is Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament. Yet the context shows that Paul is referring to the ‘Lord’ who is ‘Christ...raised from the dead’ (v. 7). Remarkably, therefore, Paul is identifying Christ with Yahweh.

In the Old Testament, the phrase ‘call upon the name of the Lord’ was especially associated with right worship of the true God. It carried the connotations of worship, adoration, and praise and extolled God’s majesty, power, and holiness. Therefore, ‘to call upon the name of the Lord’ was not a desperate cry to just any deity—whoever, whatever, and wherever he or she might be—but a cry to the one true God, the Creator-Lord of all men and all things. To ‘call upon the name’ of Jesus as Lord is to recognize and submit to His deity, His authority, His sovereignty, His power, His majesty, His Word, and His grace. Everyone, Jew or Gentile, who does so ‘will be saved.’

For next time: Read Romans 10:14-21.