

A Sermon on ROMANS 10:5–21
 Emmaus Church, 3/7/2021
 Jason S. DeRouchie, PhD

Introduction

In Rom 10:1 Paul identified that many of his Jewish kinsmen were not saved from God’s coming wrath. Why? Look at verse 3: “For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.” Being righteous is about aligning with God’s standard of right order, wherein he is always at the top. Israel could never meet the perfect standard of God’s Mosaic covenant because they were sinners, and so are you. We all need Jesus’s perfect obedience (i.e., his righteousness) to count as our own, because all of our attempts to stand right before God on our own fail. We are a people who fall short of God’s glory (3:23). The righteousness God desires, therefore, is “a righteousness that is by faith” (9:30). The Lord intended that the Mosaic Law would show people that they weren’t good enough and needed Jesus. This is why Paul says in 10:4, “The end of the Law is Christ for righteousness to everyone who believes.” Jesus’s coming marks the conclusion to the age of Law and stands as the goal to which that age pointed.

And now we come to this week’s passage, which has two main sections: (1) Vv. 5–13 highlight that God will save everyone who believes in Christ for righteousness, but (2) then vv. 14–21 note that most in Israel refuse to believe and so will not be saved.

God Will Save Everyone Who Believes in Christ for Righteousness (10:5–13)

A. God has brought his righteousness near to us by sending Christ to earth and by raising Christ from the dead (10:5–8).

Notice how 10:5 begins with the word “for.” Paul’s logic is this: The end of the Law is Christ for righteousness to everyone who believes (10:4) *for* the righteousness by law requires the impossible in order to live (10:5), whereas the righteousness by faith in Christ requires believing in order to be saved (10:6–8). Believing and not doing is the true way to right standing with God.

1. The Law of Moses was about “doing” in order to enjoy righteousness and life (10:5).

But the Law was about doing. Paul opens by alluding to Lev 18:5—a famous OT verse that captures the essence of old covenant structure: “You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a man does them, he shall live by them.” While God had redeemed Israel from Egypt, most of Moses’s audience remained stubborn, unbelieving, and rebellious. To such a group, the old covenant demanded: “Do” in order to live. Only by righteous obedience meeting God’s requirements would Israel experience “life.”

So how did Israel succeed under the Law in gaining life? Listen to the commentary in Ezek 20:11, 13: “I gave them my statutes and made known to them my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live... But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness. They did not walk in my statutes but rejected my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live.” Rather than bringing life, the old covenant resulted in death (2 Cor 3:7). As such, Ezekiel later tells us that the nation was dead, having become like dry bones in a valley (37:1–2).

As Romans 10:3 says, “Being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.” The result was condemnation. This is why the Law’s purpose all along was to point people to Jesus as the only hope for righteousness and life. Do not, like so many Jews, stumble over the stumbling stone today (9:32–33). Allow Israel’s Law to have its God-intended effect on you. “The end of the law is Christ for righteousness to everyone who believes” (10:4).

2. The righteousness by faith requires “believing” in order to be saved (10:6–8)

Now, having noted how pursuing righteousness by law always ends in death, he now contrasts this with righteousness based on faith by drawing on more verses from Moses, now in Deuteronomy.

Paul opens portraying the righteousness from faith as alive and able to talk: “But the righteousness based on faith says, ‘Do not say in your heart’ (10:6). This wording comes from Deut 9:4, where Moses asserted:

Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust [the Canaanites] out before you, “It is because of my righteousness ...” (Deut 9:4).

For mere humans, God’s benefits come by his grace alone working through our faith alone, for like Israel, none of us is righteous on our own.

Now, citing Deut 30:12–14, Paul highlights that the righteousness based on faith does not need to look for someone like Moses to bring us what we need from God. “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is to bring Christ down) or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)” (Rom 10:6–7). Moses crossed the waters of the deep and ascended the mountain to secure God’s old covenant Law for the people, yet ultimately even having the Law was not enough, for the Law could not produce the life it promised (7:10; 8:3). In contrast, in the new covenant, no one needs to ascend into heaven to initiate the incarnation, and no one needs to enter the depths in order to raise Jesus from the grave. Why? Because God has done for us what was humanly impossible in making a way for sinners to be declared righteous. We didn’t have to be an Everest climber or a deep sea diver. In Paul’s words from 10:8: “But what does [the righteousness by faith] say, “The word [of Christ] is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim).”

I believe that Paul reads Deut 30:11–14 as predicting the new covenant. In the original context, these verses clarify the reason why the renewed Israel after exile will turn to the Lord with all their heart and soul (30:10). It will be because God’s words, once in the mouth of the new prophet like Moses (18:15–19), will have planted themselves in the hearts and mouths of his followers (30:14).

Now notice how Paul is stressing in Rom 10:6 that Christ is already near; they need not bring him down. And in 10:7, Christ is already near; they need not bring him up. Then in 10:8, “The *word* is near ... (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim).” Christ is near; the word of faith is near. The word of faith is directly related to Christ.

B. We know God’s righteousness is near because God justifies and saves everyone who believes in Christ’s victory and surrenders to his Lordship (10:9–13).

But how do we know God’s word concerning faith and its accompanying righteousness is near? We know because God justifies and saves everyone who believes in Christ’s victory and surrenders to his Lordship; this is the point Paul makes in 10:9–13. He writes, “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart ... 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” (10:8–9). Paul gives two qualifications for salvation: (1) verbally testifying that Jesus is your master and (2) embracing in your inner being the truth that he conquered the grave.

With respect to the former, where is your allegiance today? If you are surrendered to Christ today, I ask you to proclaim with me out loud: “Jesus-is-Lord”? Could you say it? If not, why not? I add, does your life align with this profession, or are you concerned more with your kingdom than his? Does he govern your schedule, your Twitter feed, your money, your leisure, your wardrobe? Would your spouse or your kids or your roommate say that Jesus is Lord of every room in your life, or are there areas that you will not yet surrender to his oversight? Is your lord Jesus?

And do you believe that God raised him from the dead? This is no small matter, for death is the last great enemy. Once it happens, no human can reverse it. Death is final.... At least it was, until God raised Jesus to never die again. Jesus’s resurrection marks the turning point in the history of redemption. Had Jesus died but never rose, the evidence would be that our sins were indeed not paid for, that the powers of darkness were still in charge. But as Paul says in Rom 1:4, Christ Jesus “was declared to be the Son of God in power ... by his resurrection from the dead.” At his resurrection, new creation dawned as eternal life overcame the prospect of eternal death. Rom 4:24–25 says, “[Righteousness] will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.” Our having peace with God is fully contingent on Jesus’s raising from the dead. Do you believe he is risen?

If you confess Jesus’s Lordship and believe in his victory, “you will be saved” (10:9). Saved from what? God must save us from his own just wrath against our sins (1:18; 2:5). Friends, all of us in this room need God to save us, but God will only save those who surrender and believe. We have all sinned and fallen short of God’s glory (3:23), and the wages of sin is death (6:23). But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (5:8), and if you will but confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved (10:9). And having been justified by faith, much more will you be saved by him from the wrath of God (5:9).

Paul now supplies a reason why we know the logic of verse 9 is true. If you confess ... and believe ..., you will be saved, “*for* with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved” (10:10). Paul now places the order of activities as we would expect them: believing precedes confessing. The Greek word translated “justified” here is related to the term for “righteousness” in verse 6, and now we see it closely tied with salvation.

And how can we be certain that we can truly enjoy right standing with God and be saved? Citing Isaiah 28:16, Paul provides the answer in 10:11: “*For* the

Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’” And amazingly, this shame-free hope is for *everyone*. Why?

Verse 12 declares: “*For* there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing riches on all who call on him.” Who is the Lord? Verse 9 identified that he is Jesus, who now reigns as king of the world. As an Israelite, Paul spoke of just two groups; one was either a Jew or Greek, a part of Israel or one of the Gentiles. The point is that, because God declares people righteous by faith and not by the Mosaic Law, righteousness is available to all without any distinction.

How do we know? Verse 13: “*For* ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’” Paul cites this passage from Joel 2:32, the same text that Peter cited at Pentecost in Acts 2. But whereas “the Lord” in Joel 2 is Yahweh God, Paul now identifies Jesus as Lord and God. His name, which represents all his power and all his saving love, is the name upon which we must call in order to be saved.

Notice how Paul has been building an argument. These verses are not just filled with beautiful truths. They support one another, through the conjunction “for” found at the head of verses 10–13. Let’s go in reverse order just to ensure that you have grasped Paul’s logic. Beginning in verse 13, *because* everyone who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved, there is no distinction between how God saves a Jew or a Greek. And *because* there is no distinction, *everyone* who believes in him will not be put to shame. And *because* every believer can enjoy such protection, Scripture testifies that God justifies all who believe and saves all who confess. And *because* of Scripture’s word, we know that confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in your heart that God raised him from the dead will result in God’s saving you. This is how we know that the word concerning faith in Christ is near.

Most in Israel Refuse to Believe and So Will Not Be Saved (10:14–21)

But in Paul’s day, most in Israel had not taken advantage of the opportunity to become right with God. Indeed, we all know people and you may be among those who refuse to believe and so be saved. This is the point of 10:14–21.

A. People must believe the gospel they hear in order to call on the Lord’s name and be saved (10:14–17)

The apostle begins by highlighting what is needed for people to call on the Lord’s name and so be saved. 10:14–15: “How then will they call on him in whom

they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’”

Paul’s point is that unless someone shares with you the good news that the reigning God is willing and able to eternally save and satisfy believing sinners through Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, you would never believe. We have already seen in Rom 9 that God chooses whom he will save. But Paul also recognizes that God only saves with conditions and by means. The conditions for salvation we have already seen—you must believe in your heart that Jesus conquered death through his resurrection and must confess with your mouth that he is your Lord. The means are the focus in these verses, and they stress the need for evangelists, preachers, missionaries, and every-day folk to boldly proclaim the good news of the righteousness that is based on faith and the salvation from God’s wrath that is possible for all who believe and call on Jesus’s name.

No one will call unless they first believe. And no one can believe unless they first hear. And no one can hear unless they are told. Not one of you believed in Jesus apart from hearing the gospel. Perhaps it was from your parents or a preacher at a youth camp. Perhaps it was from a Gideon Bible in a hotel or a testimony of a college friend. You called on Jesus because someone first told you that sin is serious, that hell exists because God is a good judge, and that there is hope through Jesus, who is *the way, the truth, and the life* (John 14:6).

Paul cites Isa 52:7 in Rom 10:15, but he alters the text in one key way. Whereas Paul says, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news,” Isaiah said, “How beautiful are the feet of the one who brings good news.” In context, Isaiah was talking about the Messiah who declares God’s victory and reign and the hope of peace and happiness. But in Isaiah there are those who hear him, who embrace his good news, and in turn begin to proclaim his word to others. You and I have the opportunity, indeed the responsibility, to proclaim the good news that God reigns in Jesus and that he has provided a way for hope and help and salvation. All who fail to call on the Lord will perish, but everyone who calls will be saved.

But now look at 10:16: “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?’,” a citation from Isa 53:1. Isaiah 53 is the great OT chapter that highlights God’s great saving exchange through Jesus, as God places the sins of the many on Christ and counts his righteousness as theirs (53:11). Yet in this context, while many nations stand in

awe of such mercy, we are told that many from Isaiah's own Jewish nation reject. They resist, not believing—that is, not receiving—the good news they hear.

Nevertheless, in Rom 10:17 Paul infers that “faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ.” Saving righteousness comes by faith; faith is awakened only by hearing; and hearing is only possible when one is told good news about Jesus. There is no other way for people to be saved.

B. Most in Israel have heard the gospel but not believed (10:18–21)

Paul now concludes this unit by highlighting that most in Israel have heard the gospel but not believed, whereas many from other nations have embraced Christ. 10:18: “But I ask, have [the Israelites] not heard? Indeed, they have, for ‘Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.’” This is a direct citation from Ps 19:4, which opens, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.” And like the testimony of God's greatness that circles the globe, so too has the gospel spread. Thus, Paul will write in Rom 15:19, “From Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel.”

But not only this, in Rom 1:1–3 we learned that the gospel concerning the Son was promised in the Jewish Scriptures. Thus, Paul states in 10:19, “But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, ‘I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry’” (Deut 32:21). Moses predicted that, because Israel would make God jealous from their idolatry, God would make them jealous by giving the blessing of righteousness to those who were not his special nation. Moses saw that God would save Gentiles and that, by doing so, Jews would become jealous and angry over God's mercy.

With this, Paul asserts, “Isaiah is so bold as to say, ‘I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask of me’,” citing Isa 65:1. This verse recalls Paul's statement in Rom 9:30 and highlights again how the OT prophets foresaw that God would save Gentiles by faith. But then he adds in 10:21, citing the very next verse in Isa 65:2: “But of Israel he says, ‘All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.’”

Conclusion

There are three groups of people in this passage, only one of whom God will save: (1) Those who have never heard the gospel and so have never believed. Will they be saved? No, because saving faith comes by hearing God's word. (2) Those who have heard the gospel but refuse to believe. Will God save them? No, for only

those who believe will not be put to shame. (3) Those who have heard the gospel and believed; these enjoy the righteousness that is by faith and will be saved from God's just wrath.

In this room, only the last two groups are present, for all of you have now heard the good news that the reigning God will eternally save and satisfy any believing sinner through Christ's life, death, and resurrection. My first question of application, then, is this:

A. Have you believed in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, and have you confessed that Jesus is Lord?

If you haven't, I invite you right now to believe and surrender—to move out of darkness into light and to shift from a future of eternal death to enjoying a living hope, whose end is eternal life. Sin is serious, and you will experience eternal torment if you do not surrender to King Jesus and believe in him as the only way to life. This is not an easy choice, but right standing with God is near if you will but act. This decision will alter your view of right and wrong. It will guide what you delight in and treasure and determine your hates and displeasures. A relationship with God should impact your movies and music, how you manage money and time, what you embrace in culture and what you confront. It will make you more a servant than a king, and it will move you to pray for help rather than rely on your own strength. Yet it will also supply you with power and hope, freedom and joy. It will grant you endurance in suffering and a reason to live. Walking with Jesus can heal marriages, supply wisdom for parenting, and give you a church family that is present. It will help you “care more than some think is wise, risk more than some think is safe, dream more than some think is practical, and expect more than some think is possible” (the missionary heart). And it will open the door for you to enjoy Christ, who is the greatest treasure of all. In him is all hope and help, rest and peace, provision and protection found. In him you will be saved.

So, I ask again, have you called on Jesus's name in order to be saved? Have you attained the true righteousness of God that only comes by faith? If you haven't but long to do so even now, I want to invite you to find me or one of the pastors after the service, so that we can pray with you and guide you in next steps.

B. Knowing that people can only believe in Jesus if they have heard about him, will you commit to share the gospel with one non-believer this March?

Not one of us in this room believed in Jesus apart from hearing the gospel. You may be the very agent through whom God intends to awaken saving faith in

another. Our responsibility before God is to share; those to whom we share are responsible for whether they believe. Our responsibility is to share, and then we leave the results to God.

Think of one unsaved person you know. What neighbor or family member will you boldly share the gospel with sometime in the next three weeks? Do you have a name? Who is your one? Let's pray for that person together right now.

Lord God, you alone can save. I am weak, and my witness for you is imperfect. But I want to be used. And just as you graciously saved me through the hearing of the Word, I pray that you would help me prioritize a purposeful connection with XXX (you say the name). Grant me humility to not lift myself up as better, grant me boldness to open my mouth, and grant me clarity as I share the hope of salvation and the treasure that is Christ. Help me, God, and mercifully bring salvation to this one that I care about. Amen.

C. Will you join a rising number of us in praying for God to let Emmaus Church become a thriving body of senders and goers for the sake of Christ's name?

We at Emmaus seek to glorify God and multiply churches by declaring and displaying the gospel in our neighborhoods and among the nations. We increasingly want to be a church that sends missionaries and that supports many who go. 10:14–15 stated that people are sent to preach, preaching enables the unsaved to hear, hearing is the means by which God awakens people to believe, and believing moves people to call on Jesus's name and be saved. God calls all of us to share the gospel where we are planted, but God also calls some of us to share that gospel across cultures and at times where no one else is heralding the good news. We have some who have returned from two-year stints in the Middle East and North Africa. We have just sent one couple to the Muslims of Indonesia. We have others readying for various countries in South Asia and still others praying about work near the Persian Gulf. The global need for gospel messengers is massive! And there is a massive difference in numbers between those sending and those going. Right now we have around 15 million Southern Baptists, but only around 4000 missionaries with the International Mission Board. If gospel need is like moving the largest telephone pole on the planet, the senders would have 3750 people on their side to only one on the other side. If you were awakened to the need, on which side would you go to help? We need men and women, marrieds and singles who have tasted and seen the goodness of God and who are willing to proclaim the hope we have in a place not their own. "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" (Rom 10:15).

Missions is part of the church's mandate, and bold, gospel-proclaiming Christians are the means by which the Lord is drawing a global, omni-ethnic bride to himself. Are you among those who are already sensing that God may be leading you toward missions? If so, I encourage you to let leaders know. We are still developing our Global Outreach strategy, but we are praying that God would be pleased to help us become a thriving body of senders and goers for the sake of Christ's name. Please join us in praying toward that end.

We have now come to that time in the service where we celebrate the Lord's Supper—remembering together that Christ's body was broken for our healing and that his blood was shed for our justification. The bread and the juice are for those who have called on Jesus's name for salvation, who have confessed with their mouths that Jesus is Lord and believed in their hearts that God raised him from the dead. If you have believed and surrendered, I invite you to come down the right aisle, get your hands cleansed pass the front, take the elements from the table to right, and then return to your seats. There is a gluten free option available. If you have yet to entrust your life to Jesus, my invitation to you is to call upon him even now, believing in his victory and surrendering to his Lordship. Let us celebrate the righteousness that is by faith today.