

Romans 10:5-10

Contrasting Two Ways of Righteousness, pt. 2

My daily Bible reading schedule has had me in the book of Revelation over the past week

- Some things in the book are hard to understand
- But a good bit of it is very straightforward and understandable

I found myself captivated by the descriptions of the living creatures, the 24 elders, and the angels

- Even with the descriptions that are given, we still find it hard to imagine what they look like

Heaven is a place of perpetual worship

- The angels and the living creatures cry out incessantly, “**Holy, holy, holy**” (Rev 4:8; Isa 6:3)

There are many songs that are presented to the Lord

- They are all focused toward God and to His Word

No angel is worshipped in heaven

- No living creature
- No elder

Worship is attributed directly to God alone

- That is the essence of heaven

I found myself thinking, “What a place! What a wonderful place this is!”

- Then I began thinking, “How amazing is it that I will one day live in heaven, forever worshipping, exalting, singing, and serving the Lamb of God!”

But the question begs to be answered, “[How can a condemned, undeserving sinner like myself possibly have the assurance that I will go to heaven?](#)”

- This is what the book of Romans is all about

I found it to be a time of worship to meditate on the Gospel

- That God came to this Earth in the Incarnation
- Without diminishing His deity, He took on humanity
- He lived the perfect life that no man could live
- He offered His life as the only fit Substitute and Sacrifice for sinners
- He died and was buried
- He rose again on the third day, victorious over death, sin, and Satan

This is the Gospel!

- This is the only way that I, a sinner, can have assurance that I will go to heaven

But many people have assurance in other things

- Their supposed morality
- Their physical lineage
- Their charitable deeds and donations

In Romans 9-11, the apostle Paul sets his sight on the Jews

- They were the national people of God
- They had immense privileges
- They had a zeal for God

But for many Jews, they were still in their unbelief

- They had rejected the Messiah, a Jew Himself!

As bad as it is to reject the Messiah, the Jews went one step further

- They embraced a works-righteousness
- They used God's Law as their crutch to bolster their self-confidence

This morning, Paul will continue to dismantle the Jewish self-based works-righteousness

- He will contrast their false righteousness with the true righteousness which has always been based on faith

Let's read Romans 10:5-10

This morning's sermon will focus on two (2) elements related to righteousness

- The contrast of righteousness (10:5-8)
- The object of righteousness (10:9-10)

I. The contrast of righteousness (10:5-8)

5 For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.

In the early verses of Romans 10, Paul has testified to the Jewish zeal for righteousness

- But zeal, in and of itself, is not enough

Zeal must have the right target and focus

- And that target must be Christ

In verse 4, Paul wrote, "**For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes**"

- Christ didn't intend to abolish the Law
- Christ came to fulfill the Law and its perfect demands

Christ accomplished this for "**everyone who believes**"

- Not just for Jews
- Not just for Gentiles
- But for anyone who believes

This will be a recurring theme throughout the rest of Romans 10

- Salvation is offered to anyone who expresses personal trust in Jesus Christ

The word “**righteousness**” is repeated quite often here in the book of Romans

- 9:30 – 3x
- 9:31 – 1x
- 10:3 – 3x
- 10:4 – 1x
- 10:5 – 1x
- 10:6 – 1x
- 10:10 – 1x

The contrast is very clear

- Some were seeking God’s righteousness by faith
- Others were seeking their own righteousness by works

In Romans 10:5, Paul goes back to the Old Testament Scriptures

- Specifically, the apostle references Moses himself

You see, the Jews were used to supporting their claims by the use of the Old Testament

- Paul was a Jew – a believing Jew
- So he knew the OT as well

So Paul quotes Leviticus 18:5, “**So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD**”

If Israel wanted to enjoy the blessings of God in the Promised Land, then she had better focus on obedience

- The lesson was simple – ***blessing is contingent upon obedience***¹

But this passage was a warning

- No one could perfectly obey God’s Law all the time

Theoretically, God says, if a man keeps the statutes and judgments of God, he will live “**if he does them**”

- The key ingredient is obedience

But not just any obedience

- God required perfect, blameless obedience

Half-hearted obedience was not enough

- 99% obedience was not enough

Unbelievers make two mistakes as it relates to obedience to the Law²

- First, they believe that the “good” that they have done will outweigh the “bad”
- Second, they believe that whatever doesn’t balance will simply be overlooked by God

If someone wanted to obtain righteousness through the Law, then that person needed to be perfectly perfect

- But no human could accomplish this

The Law was never given to make anyone righteous

- The Law was given to show sinners their need of Christ

¹ Douglas J. Moo, *NICNT, Romans*, 648.

² Alan F. Johnson, *Everyman’s Bible Commentary, Romans*, 183.

The Law was not an end in itself (righteousness)

- But a means to a greater end (showing them their need of a Savior)

This is what Paul writes in Romans 10:5

- If the Jews tried to achieve a righteousness based on the Law, then they had better have perfect obedience

But a works-based righteousness is based on self-effort

- It does not bring honor and glory to Jesus Christ
- It brings glory to self

A works-based righteousness does not promote humility and dependence

- It breeds arrogance and independence

6 But the righteousness based on faith speaks thus.

Verse 6 is the flipside of verse 5

- Verse 5 was a works-based righteousness based on a feigned, imperfect obedience
- Verses 6-8 focus on a faith-based righteousness

Notice how the apostle Paul personifies the God-centered, faith-based righteousness

- He says that this true righteousness “**speaks**”

This is because the true righteousness of God has been declared and manifested in the Old Testament

- It still speaks!

God has made His righteousness known to sinners since the dawn of creation

- It has not been hidden or kept secret

Immediately after the Fall of man, what did God do?

- He proclaimed the Gospel

God took an innocent animal and killed it

- He then clothed the two sinners
- This was a foreshadowing of the Cross whereby God would clothe sinners with righteousness

So it shouldn't surprise us, then, that Romans 10:6-8 quote an Old Testament portion of Scripture

- These three verses quote and follow Deuteronomy 30:12-14

I had Bruce read this portion of Scripture earlier to set the verses in our mind

- But I want you to turn back to Deuteronomy 30

The title Deuteronomy means, “second law”

- It is the re-telling of the Law

Moses was not permitted to enter the Promised Land due to his disobedience

- So he was reminding Israel of God's commands
- Deuteronomy 30 was part of his “farewell speech” to the nation Israel³

³ F.F. Bruce, *Tyndale NT Commentaries, Romans*, 191.

Moses had put forth both blessings and cursings before the people as a way of motivating them toward obedience

- He knew that God wanted their obedience out of a loyal, loving heart

Nevertheless, Moses knew that the people would be disobedient

- They would be taken away into exile

But God would be faithful

- God would bring them back to the Promised Land

Moses then promised that God would circumcise the hearts of the Israelites, “to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live” (Deut 30:6)

- God would be gracious to give the nation a stronger desire and ability to love Him

Then in verse 11, Moses tells the nation Israel that God’s Law “is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach” (30:11)

- God had made Himself known
- God had made His Law known

Then in Deuteronomy 30:12-14, Moses writes, “It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.”

- This is the passage that Paul picks up in Romans 10:6-8

You will see many similarities between these two texts

- You will see a few differences

Paul is not quoting this portion of Deuteronomy verbatim

- He is alluding to it with the goal that he might extract an application from it

Moses’ original intent was to remind Israel of the Law

- Paul’s intent is to point Israel to Christ

“DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, ‘WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?’ (that is, to bring Christ down).

The true righteousness based on faith does not say, “Who will ascend into heaven?”

Moses had reminded Israel that God’s Law was near to them

- They didn’t have to ascend into heaven

In other words, the Israelites during Moses’ day did not have to take extreme measures in order to have access to God’s Law

- God had initiated the process of making His Law known to them

Likewise, Paul reminds the Israelites that they did not have to take extreme measures in order to know Christ

- God had initiated the process of making Himself known
- God had sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, to be their Messiah

What is so bad about a Jew during Paul's day to say, "Who will ascend into heaven?"

- That would be denying Jesus' Incarnation!

This attitude would be one of works-righteousness

- Denying Jesus' Incarnation
- Assuming that someone else had to do this work

But the good news is that Christ has come to the Earth in the Incarnation

- He is the Messiah
- He is the Savior for those who believe

It is not up to a person to scale the heights of heaven or plumb the depths of hell⁴

- Jesus Christ has accomplished the humanly impossible!

God doesn't expect sinners to be spiritual SuperMen⁵

- Rather, He expects sinners to understand that they can't do what the Law demands
- They are entirely dependent upon Him for salvation

7 or 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."

But there is a second issue that both Moses and Paul address

Another extreme measure is hypothetically stated by Moses about the Law

- Remember, the Law was brought to them by God Himself

They didn't need to take radical measures such as descending into the abyss

- In the mind of someone during Moses' day, the abyss was the place of departed souls

Again, God had made His Law known to the Israelites

- They didn't have to resort to extreme measures

Not only had God had initiated the process of making Himself known in the Incarnation

- But God had raised His Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead

What is so bad about a Jew during Paul's day to say, "Who will descend into the abyss?"

- That would be denying Jesus' resurrection!

If a Jew rejected Jesus Christ as the Messiah, then this would involve a denial of both the Incarnation and the resurrection

- To deny this is to deny the Gospel
- To deny the Gospel is to deny the faith-based righteousness
- To deny the faith-based righteousness is to establish a self-based, works-righteousness

⁴ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Romans*, 344.

⁵ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 383.

8 But what does it say? “THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, in your mouth and in your heart” —

Moses told the Israelites, “But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it”

- They didn’t have to ascend into heaven
- They didn’t have to descend into the abyss

For the Israelites during Moses’ day, God had caused the Word to be near them

- As a matter of fact, Moses says that the Law was “in your mouth and in your heart”

The Jews had no excuse when it came to the Law

- God had made His Law accessible to them

Paul picks up this point and applies it to Christ

- The apostle writes in Romans 10:8, “The Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”

The Jews had no excuse as it pertained to Christ

- They could not plead ignorance

that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,

What was the “word” that Paul had in mind?

- Quite bluntly, it is “the word of faith which we are preaching”

Paul takes the Deuteronomy 30 passage and tells the Jews that it is the word of faith

- Not the word of works

The apostle Paul reminds the Jews that Moses spoke of a faith-based righteousness

- The Jews in Moses’ day were not perfect
- They were not blameless in their obedience
- *Moses himself was not blameless!*

Paul could tell the Jews that he was preaching the same Gospel that had been revealed in the Old Testament

- Righteousness by faith alone

So Paul was not bringing a new message

- He was proclaiming the same message that Moses told the Israelites prior to entering the Promised Land!

The Jews had to face the fact that the apostle Paul was not the one in error

- They were!

There is only one saving Gospel

- It is the Gospel by grace through faith

Listen to the concern of Paul as he wrote to the believers around Galatia,

- “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so

I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.” (Gal 1:6-10)

What gospel are you trusting in this morning?

- The Gospel of faith
- Or the gospel of works?

Friend, if you are trying to earn righteousness, you had better be perfect

- But God has already written that no man is perfect
- “**THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE**” (Rom 3:10)

Partial obedience is not enough

- God requires perfect obedience if you pursue righteousness from the Law

“**For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all**” (James 2:10)

Understand that you not perfect

- Look to the Lord Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior

This is the contrast of righteousness in verses 5-8

- Let’s now look at the object of righteousness

II. The object of righteousness (10:9-10)

9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord,

Romans 10:9-10 don’t contain any direct references to the Old Testament

- Paul had already proved that his message is the same message that Moses proclaimed

Now it is time for Paul to hammer home that the content of saving faith is not the Law

- The content of saving faith is Christ

Romans 10:9 is Paul’s exhortation to the Jews to believe, “**that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved**”

Does it strike you as strange that Paul places confession before believing?

- Isn’t that backward?

Paul inverts the normal, chronological order for a very specific reason

- In Deuteronomy 30:14, Moses wrote, “**But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it**”
- *Paul is simply following the same order that Moses prescribed to the Jews in his day*

Paul lists confession first

- What does he mean by this?

“**confess**” is a Greek word that means, “to speak the same”

- In confessing sin, it implies that we say the same thing about sin that God says about our sin

We don't redefine our sin

- We admit that lying is lying (not a half-truth)
- We admit that stealing is stealing (not an opportunity)

To confess Jesus is to come to an agreement about who He is

- It is to agree that Jesus is Lord
- It is to align yourself with who He claims to be

The specific confession here is, “**Jesus as Lord**”

- This was a common confession in the early Church
- It may have been spoken before someone entered the baptismal waters

What does Paul imply about Jesus being “**Lord**”?

- The word implies a sovereign, whether an earthly leader or Deity

Jesus as “**Lord**” implies that He is sovereign

- He is in control
- He directs our steps
- His will overrules our own

We should live our lives in submission to Christ's Lordship

- We never usurp His authority
- He has authority over us

Yet it is becoming less and less popular to speak of Jesus as Lord

- People don't want to submit to Jesus
- They want a part in running and ruling their lives

But Jesus is the Lord of every born-again believer

- Submitting to His Lordship is synonymous with salvation

A person doesn't submit to Christ as Savior at the moment of conversion and then later submit to Him as Lord

- We don't see that in Scripture

In coming to Christ, you wouldn't dare say, “I want forgiveness of sin and hope of heaven. But I don't want You to rule over my life.”

- Yet that is what many affirm is the essence of Christianity!

Christ's Lordship is not a part of the Gospel message

- It is the Gospel message!

I did a search for “**Savior**” and “**Lord**” in the NT

- Which do you think was repeated more?

If you were to search for “**Savior**” in the entire NT, you would find 24 hits

- If you were to search for “**Lord**” in the entire NT, you would find 650 hits

So the predominant term that is attributed to Christ in the NT is Lord

- Yet that is the term that few people want to confess!

In the Old Testament, Yahweh was the predominant name for “Lord”

- It was used over 6000 times

When a Greek version of the Old Testament was written, the same word for “Lord” that is used here in Romans 10:9 is used throughout the Old Testament⁶

- That is because Yahweh of the Old Testament is Jesus in the New Testament!
- They are one and the same!

Jesus is Yahweh!

- Jesus is the Messiah!

What does Paul tell unbelieving Jews that they must confess?

- “Jesus as Lord”

That was potentially offensive to a Jew

- Paul was telling them that Jesus Christ was their Messiah that they had rejected!

But don’t think that it is any less offensive to a Greek

- Gentiles are notorious idol-worshippers
- John Calvin said that our hearts are idol factories!

Confessing Jesus as Lord is agreeing that He is the object of worship

- Not one among many

and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead.

What else does Paul say about true conversion?

- He tells unbelieving Jews, “believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead”

Let’s not assume that everyone understands the word “believe”

- It’s not just agreeing to certain intellectual or historical facts
- It is expressing personal, saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and entering into a living, personal relationship with Him

Listen to James 2:19, “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder”

- Do you realize that demons have an intellectual awareness of who Jesus is?

Simply believing that Jesus existed is not enough

- Simply believing that Jesus was a good person is not enough
- Simply believing that Jesus could forgive sins is not enough

True, saving faith is admitting personal faith in Christ

- Jesus died for me
- Jesus forgave me
- Jesus is changing me

⁶ Robert H. Mounce, *NAC, Romans*, 209.

Notice something else

- Paul isn't contrasting confession with belief
- These are the same

So let's think about this

- Confessing Jesus as Lord is the same thing as believing that God has raised Jesus from the dead

Let's take this one step further

- True, saving belief is the same as submitting to Christ's Lordship

Paul is not content to define faith as just believing that Jesus existed

- Saving faith is the confession of Jesus as alive from the dead

This is because the resurrection is such a crucial element of the Gospel

- Without the resurrection, there would be no Gospel

“But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; 14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. 15 Moreover we are even found *to be* false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; 17 and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied” (1 Cor 15:13-19)

- No one can say that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a superficial, secondary issue

The physical and literal resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was the Father's validation of His Son⁷

- It was His stamp of approval

you shall be saved:

So what happens for those who fulfill what Romans 10:9 requires?

- “if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord”
- If you “believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead”

The promise given in the last part of Romans 10:9 is astounding and reassuring, “you shall be saved”

- Not a maybe
- Not I hope so
- But a firm promise from God!

This makes perfect sense, if you think about

- God delights to save those who agree on the essence of who Jesus is
- God delights to save those who believe in the very mission and purpose of Jesus coming to this Earth

10 for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness.

In verse 9, Paul's order was confession, then believing

- He was following the order found in Deuteronomy 30

⁷ John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur NT Commentary, Romans 9-16*, 75.

But here in verse 10, the apostle Paul follows the normal, chronological order

- First, we believe
- Then, we confess

We are reminded that it is “**with the heart**” that “**man believes**”

- The “**heart**” stands for the spiritual “hub” of who we are
- It is the rational, intellectual, and emotional center of our being⁸

We must not confuse the physical heart with the spiritual heart

- I see people point to their physical heart when speaking of belief

If this was the case, then a heart transplant would transfer saving belief, right?

- If the deceased was a believer, then his/his belief would be transferred to the new patient

No, the heart is the sum total of all that we are spiritually

- This is why we are told in Proverbs 4:23, “**Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it *flow* the springs of life**”

When we believe, the result is “**righteousness**”

- This is what happened to Abraham
- This is what happens to every sinner who believes

and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

“**with the heart man believes**”

- “**and with the mouth he confesses**”

It is with our mouths that we give verbal agreement to the essence of who Jesus is

- That may not sound necessary, but it is

Many profess to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ

- Remember, even the demons believe
- They have accurate information about who Jesus is

But true belief must be confessed

- Outward confession must result from inward conviction⁹

When a sinner believes in his heart, the result is righteousness

- When a sinner confesses with his mouth, the result is salvation

These are not two different results

- They are the same, simply expressed a little different

⁸ Hendriksen, 345.

⁹ Mounce, 209.

Panning out a little, let's consider what Paul is telling the Jews

- Don't think that salvation comes through being a physical Jew
- Don't think that salvation comes through partial obedience to the Law
- Don't think that salvation comes through being moral

Let's suppose that a criminal is minutes away from his execution

- He has committed a crime that is punishable by death

But this criminal begins to feel the weight of his sin

- Not just that his sin has brought consequences on himself and others
- But that his sin is an offense against the holy God

The criminal believes in his heart that Jesus is the Christ

- He confesses with his mouth that Jesus is the resurrected Lord

Does this criminal have the hope of eternal life?

- Can he face death with assurance that he will be with Jesus?

Unbelieving Jews might respond, "No"

- He hasn't been circumcised
- He doesn't have a proper understanding of the Torah
- He isn't from the right physical lineage

But Jesus said, "Yes"

- The thief on the cross was told, "**Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise**" (Lk 23:43)

The great patriarch Abraham and the vile criminal on the cross were both declared righteous in the sight of God by faith alone

God has made His Word known

- It is accessible
- It is available

Don't think that you will go to heaven just because¹⁰

- You have sound theology
- You lead a moral life
- You desire eternal life
- You are religious
- You have prayed a prayer, walked a church aisle, or filled out a commitment card

"if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; 10 for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." (Rom 10:9-10)

¹⁰ MacArthur, 73.