

Romans 10:1-13

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Date: 30 September 2012

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[0 : 00] So, the book of Romans, Paul's great case is the case for justification, right standing before God, the pardon of sin by faith alone.

And as a result, he kind of meanders back and forth, talking strictly to the Jews and then talking to the Gentiles. And at times it can be a tad confusing. But speaking in general to the Christians in Rome, he addresses us and says, chapter 8 and talks about how this life will be difficult. Both from internal struggle with sin and from external means it will be difficult. And he goes on to praise God, that God is working all things for our good because he is sovereign and in control. He is working those things for our good that we might praise him and exalt his name. So even when we struggle, we know that God is in control.

And he turns in chapter 9 and it seems a little bit random, but we get the following arguments going through 10 and 11 to grieve over the fact that most of Israel, not all his evidence that he himself had believed in Christ, but that most of Israel had rejected Christ.

[1 : 19] That they were given all of these privileges, these windows into God's heart, and yet they missed the ultimate point. And that was that they desperately needed a Savior.

And that Savior is Jesus Christ. They missed that. But that in no way discredited the gospel. And that's what he goes on to tell us in the rest of chapter 9, that in fact, was consistent with God's plan. God's sovereign purpose of salvation to include the Gentiles as well into the fold. That's us, I think, probably all of us, benefit greatly from God's sovereign plan to include us in his people.

So then we get to chapter 10. And he turns once again to speak of the Israelites. Let's read together the first 13 verses. Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

For I bear the witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of the righteousness of God and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

[2 : 34] For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. But the righteousness based on faith says, do not say in your heart who will ascend into heaven, that is to bring Christ down.

Or who will ascend into the abyss, that is to bring Christ up from the dead. But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.

That is the word of faith that we proclaim. 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. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

For the scripture says, everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame. 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.

For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. And so he takes us in chapter 9 to this great depth, this unfathomable truth about God's sovereign election, his sovereign purposes for his people.

[3 : 41] Right? It's this kind of stuff in chapter 9, the weight of it, that causes our minds to kind of rent in two. We can't quite make sense of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility.

It's this kind of teaching that leads him to chapter 11, verse 33, where he says, Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. It's that movement.

But he seems to pause for us here, doesn't he? As he's talked about how God is completely sovereign over the election of his people, that he's calling his own to himself.

We see him cycle back once again to his people, Paul's people, the Israelites. Right? Beginning of chapter 9, he lamented them.

He wished that he himself could be cut off from Christ for the sake of his brothers. He desperately wanted them to receive this gospel truth. Then he goes on to tell us that it's God's sovereign control.

[4 : 38] It's God's power. God works faith in people so that he can show mercy on whom he will show mercy. So that no one can boast in their salvation. And he comes back here in chapter 10, verse 1.

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God is for them that they may be saved. And here's the great evidence, the great culmination, the understanding of Paul's love for people.

We know that Paul loved the Gentiles. Paul was sent to them and he was actively pursuing them. Actively preaching the gospel to them. But even those whom he had turned from, the Israelites, he still had a desperate desire for them to come to Christ.

Because he loved them the way Christ loved them. He grieved the fact that they were rejecting the gospel. So here's Paul as he's presented to us, fully understanding that God is sovereign over these things, yet brokenhearted that these people might come to Christ.

And so therefore he prays for them. He's moved to pray for his people. Ought we not to do the same? So then he says, I bear them witness they have a zeal for God.

[5 : 59] But not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of the righteousness of God and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. So here's a people who, with all their effort, was pursuing God.

For all that they knew, they were pressing after him. But it was the wrong zeal. It was focused in the wrong place. It was not according to knowledge.

Being ignorant of the righteousness of God. These people didn't understand what the righteousness of God looked like.

They had missed the fact that God was holy and that they were not. Certainly men can try to do good things. And we may try to define that as righteousness.

But it is not the righteousness of God. All of our good works are as what? Filthy rags. Right? It's not the righteousness of God.

[6 : 58] There are many, many people in this world that with great zeal are pressing toward what they think is going to put them in right standing before God. And yet, it's not according to knowledge.

It's according to their own working. And he juxtaposes that way. Their efforts to establish their own righteousness.

Their own version of the righteousness. But yet, it's not the righteousness of God. D.G. Barnhouse, John Overton, let me borrow a commentary.

He's an influential 20th century preacher, commentator. Tells a neat analogy about this. About little dolls. Have you ever seen little dolls that are weighted at one end so they always stand upright? Our modern day version of that is the weeble. Are you familiar with the weeble? Weebles wobble, but they don't fall down? I have a weeble with me today. This is...

[7 : 56] Cade doesn't play with this, but it's in his room, just the same. So it's weighted at the bottom. So no matter what you do to it, it stays... This is really bad, because I don't have any place to set it. But no matter what, it's weighted really heavy at the bottom. You put it upside down, it turns back over.

Back this way. Right? Weebles makes a clown that stands on its head. Okay? So it would be opposite. It would be upside down. And that is us, prior to Christ.

That is the Israelites, working, trying to work out their own righteousness. And yet, no matter what, no matter what they do, no matter how hard they try, no matter how zealous they are, they'll always land on their heads.

But we, as Christians, are turned around. 1 Corinthians 2.14 says, The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The natural man, those without Christ, those without the Spirit of God abiding within them, no matter what they do, doesn't matter how hard they try to do it, they cannot gain their own justification before God.

[9 : 14] And that's what the Israelites were trying to do. They missed the point. Ezekiel 36.26 and 27. Ezekiel writes, And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you.

And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and be careful to obey my rules.

2 Corinthians 5.17, Paul writes, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come.

The lead that was once in our heads, that always kept us upside down, has been placed in our feet. So that no matter what we do, we always land on our feet.

Because we're found in Christ. We could paraphrase this to say, They, being ignorant of the Lord Jesus Christ, and going about to establish some other method of acceptance and approach to God, have not submitted themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[10 : 24] They're standing on their heads. Because man's natural inclination is not to submission. Meaning, literally, the word submit means to hand over oneself, to enslave oneself.

That's not kind of our normal mode, our modus operandi, our MO. We don't tend to do that naturally. Look at Adam and Eve in the garden. What was the original sin?

They wanted to be like God. The action that was the evidence of their heart was that they took of the fruit. But it was because they wanted to be like God.

They wanted to be their own masters. And that is how we naturally are. We have been tainted from there on to serve our own ends.

We don't readily submit in this way. And what is it that we're meant to submit to? God's righteousness.

[11 : 31] God's righteousness. So what is he saying? Are we meant to submit to the law? Is that what he means when he says God's righteousness? Certainly, we can think of righteousness in that way. A right standing.

A proper way of living. I don't think so. This obviously is an argument. We're going to argue this. But if you want to later, we can debate this if you'd like.

But I don't think so. Because in the very next sentence he says, For Christ is the end of the law. So it's Jesus Christ who is God's righteousness.

The perfect holy example. The one without sin. That we're meant to submit ourselves to. Because the text says, He's the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Christ came not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. Matthew 5.17. It's from the Sermon on the Mount.

[12 : 30] Came not to abolish it, but to fulfill it. The law has great importance in our life.

Prominence as Christians. God's moral law still is meant to be obeyed.

We are meant to keep that law. So it's very prominent in our life. However, it's not preeminent. Christ is preeminent.

And Christ is the means by which we fulfill the law. He comes to fulfill it. In Him are the promises of God. Yes and amen.

It's because we're clothed in His righteousness that God sees that we have upheld the requirements of the law. So our lives, as we're being perfected, as we're being moved, are being perfected and worked out.

We're looking more and more like God because we're doing a better job at keeping the law. That is the result of our life in Christ. And ultimately, we have already been perfected because we're found in Christ.

[13 : 39] Is your head spinning? Mine too. Right? The kingdom has come and is still coming. We have been sanctified and are being sanctified.

We've been made perfect and we're being made perfect. It's the language of the Bible. Blow your mind. Right? James 2.10 says, For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

So what is James saying to us? In all of human effort, if somebody could possibly, and this would never happen, but if somebody could possibly keep the entire moral law but only fail at one point, they would be held just as accountable for the person who keeps none of those laws.

Right? Whoever keeps the whole law but fails at one point has become accountable for all of it.

There is nothing you can do apart from Christ to be found justified before God, to stand before him and not be condemned.

Church, this is the metanarrative of humanity. All of us are under the curse of sin. All of us. No one gets to avoid this.

[15:03] Paul's made that point repeatedly to us. Both the Jew and the Gentile, all are under this curse. Galatians 3.10 says, For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse, for it is written, Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them.

So we all need a Savior. Every single one of us. And my prayer has been, throughout this week and this morning, that everyone sitting in this room has a Savior.

Jesus Christ. The way. The truth. The life. We don't get options. Oprah's horribly wrong at that point. There's not lots of ways to go.

And boy, is somebody zealous for good works. We could say Oprah is. Oprah's going to hell. She has not placed her faith in the one who fulfills the law.

Verse 6. But the righteousness based on faith, not on works. On faith. Says, Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven?

[16:17] That is to bring Christ down. Or who will descend into the abyss? That is to bring Christ up from the dead. What is Paul saying to us? As he quotes from Deuteronomy chapter 30.

He's saying there's no great journey you have to go on. There's no massive effort that has to be put into play for your salvation to be worked out.

Jeffrey Wilson wrote, The sheer perversity of unbelief is shown by the many who choose to undertake an impossible odyssey rather than put their trust in an acceptable Christ.

Deuteronomy is saying to us, We don't have to build a tower to the heavens or find a way to dive to the bottom of the sea in order that we might be righteous. So what does it say?

What does the righteousness based on faith say? Verse 8. But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. That is the word of faith we proclaim.

[17:19] That is the one, Jesus Christ. Because, 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.

On the tail end of all of this talk of God's sovereign election of his people, Paul comes back to the simple profundity of the gospel.

Simple because it's just that. If you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord, you will be saved. It's factual. It's stated very emphatically here.

What does that mean in light of God's sovereign election? You believe in your heart, you confess with your mouth, guess what? Sovereignly elected. Great. Let's live the Christian life together. I think that's what it means.

Profound. Because why would God show mercy to anyone who has set themselves up as an enemy, as a hater of him? Why would he do that?

[18:31] Because he's good and he's God. It's profound that God would love us that much that he would call us out of darkness, who willingly put ourselves in darkness, who have said to him, I don't like your light.

In fact, I hate it. I'm going to a different place, a dark place. Well, I don't have to be in your light. God grabs us by our ankles and he drags us, kicking and screaming by grace, through faith, into his light.

He begins to work in us the things that are dark in us. He begins to work that out that we might be light to this world. It's an absolutely profound, profound word.

Verse 10 says, for with the heart one believes and is justified. And heart doesn't mean the beating muscle, pushing blood to your extremities right now, right?

When the Bible talks about the heart, it's talking about the center of who we are, our very being itself. It's with that heart that one believes and is justified. And with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

[19:40] And he's not saying that it's a two-step action, but that if you believe, you will confess. I would imagine that as the author of Hebrews, who we don't know who that was, but was writing this, they had this kind of thought in mind in chapter 7, verse 19.

He writes, for the law made nothing perfect, but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. And that is the one, Jesus Christ.

If you believe in your heart, the Greek term for believe doesn't quite shape out the same way our term does. When we think of belief as Americans with the English language, it's just simply believing something's true, right?

Believe that's true. This is black. Yep, I believe that. My life experience has told me that I'm not colorblind, so when somebody tells me when I order the podium, the podium is black, I expect it to arrive black.

I believed him. It's black. There it is. A mental ascent. Yeah, that's right. The Greek term looks differently. It's not only a mental ascent, but it's a belief that connects to your heart.

[20 : 58] It's a guttural belief, the center of who you are, and it necessarily flows into action. Here, believing in your heart flows into confessing with your mouth.

If you believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, that he is the Son of God, that he was sent on the behalf of sinners, lived a sinless life, died a death, bore the wrath of God on our behalf, buried, resurrected, ascended, seated at the right hand of the Father, now interceding for us, that we might be the righteousness of God in him.

If you believe that, you're going to talk about it. If you don't talk about it, you may not believe it. And that doesn't necessarily mean you're not a Christian, it just may mean that you don't believe it in that day.

You've turned your back on the gospel. You've ceased to confess. There are certainly in all of our lives a time of regeneration. That heart of stone is taken out and the heart of flesh.

The Spirit of God comes and abides in us. Repentance and belief, but yet, the life of a Christian is a life of repentance and belief. Turning from sin, turning to God.

[22 : 15] Turning from sin, turning to God. That's the evidence of what's happening inside of us. I've used this example before, so I apologize if you're getting tired of it, but it's such a perfect one.

My son, Cademan, who is two, a little over two, really likes trains right now. I kind of hope he loves trains the rest of his life for how much he likes trains right now. It's probably a phase, but the kid loves trains, and he talks about them all the time.

I understand almost nothing he says right now except train. I get them. Train and caboose, I get those words. We were at, our community group met at a park a couple of weeks ago.

Those of you who are there will remember this, and we were interrupted by a train not far from downtown Gainesville blowing its horn and going by, and then Cade standing up on the hill behind us yelling about the train, telling us everything he could think to tell us about the train, which we understood only the word train, and he's so excited.

And I don't believe that his joy is actually complete until he begins to tell people about it. He doesn't just like stand quietly on the hill thinking, I love trains.

[23 : 31] Trains are the greatest. But he involves us in that joy. We're taking Cade today, this afternoon, actually, we're going to hop in the car right after the service and take him all the way to Chattanooga because they have an amazing train ride just tailored for a boy like him that goes over bridges and through tunnels and turns around on a turntable.

It's going to be awesome. And I'm so looking forward to it. Hopefully he'll survive the afternoon. The kid loves trains. And I'm afraid that sometimes Cade loves trains more than I love Jesus because I don't talk about him the way he talks about trains.

How often do I miss the opportunity to praise my Lord with my mouth? And I miss it. With you guys even, how quickly does our conversation after the service, the service is all about Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, yeah, and right after the service, what do you talk about?

Just a little place for that in your life, a little place for Jesus. We relegate him off to the 10.30 to 12 o'clock hour and then we're done beyond that. Is this not the greatest thing that has ever happened to you?

You may not have ever really felt the weight of your sin and the, gosh, I hope you do. I hope it doesn't mean that you sin great in the coming weeks.

[24 : 55] But I hope you recognize how holy God is, how perfect he is, and how really wretched you are. This just epiphany hit me when I was in college and I was driving to pray with a group of students from the BSU and I honestly don't remember what I was praying about.

I don't remember what was going on in my head and I was struck with how incredibly holy God was in comparison to myself because I realized that I was worshiping my own idea of who I was in Christ.

Is that, can your head wrap around that? I had set up in my mind Nathan who serves Jesus Christ and that's who I was worshiping, not Jesus.

I think the layers of our sin and how absolutely sinful I am. And in that moment, I had to pull over. I was crying. I had to pull over because I just couldn't believe how deluded I had been for so many years and had missed the fact that God is perfect and even when I think I'm really on a good path, when I'm the most zealous I can be in my Christianity, that yet still I fall so desperately short of his righteousness.

And then I praised him because in Christ I'm perfect. Right? Praise God it doesn't depend on us. Praise God it depends all on him.

[26 : 28] So if you believe in your heart, you will necessarily confess with your mouth. And that's what Paul is saying to us.

For the scripture says, and he's quoting Isaiah 49, 23, everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame. He's drawing us back to the Old Testament constantly in the book of Romans.

Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame, 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.

for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. There we have it again. That's Joel 2, 32 that he's quoting from. As a church, and I hope as a Christian who believes in the scriptures, you hold up high the sovereign election of God.

You see that he is ultimately in control. He is all powerful over all things, including the salvation of his people. I hope that you believe in that. And we've talked about all the great reasons that you should. It's an encouragement to your soul.

[27 : 33] It's a movement to evangelism. You ought to believe in that. But what does Paul talk about next, right after he got done talking about that? He doesn't say, therefore, brothers, build large buildings, wear nice suits, drive fancy cars, come together and say to each other, good morning, brother, I've been praying for you.

He doesn't say, form holy clubs so that you can come together and pat yourselves on the back because you're God's people. He doesn't say that at all, does he?

He says instead, I have a desperate heart to see the Israelites come to Christ. I pray for them because anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Charles Spurgeon, a great champion of the doctrine of election, was asked one time, why do you even preach the gospel? And he said, because the elect don't have a yellow stripe painted up and down their back. If they did, I would go around lifting up shirt tails.

God has called us to be the means to his ends and we ought to be about that work. Next week we'll talk at length about the following verses.

[28 : 53] The gospel comes to us through words.

How are people going to believe if they don't hear the good news of Jesus Christ? This is on the tail of one of the great chapters on God's sovereign election.

Why? Because it has to be put in proper balance. So many of the doctrines of scripture are like walking a tightrope to get it right.

I used this analogy before. We need to be on the tightrope between God's sovereign election, man's responsibility. What part do we play in carrying the gospel to the world?

Both things are fully true. They're apparent paradoxes. In our little minds the two don't quite match up. However, in God's magnificent mind it makes perfect sense and we just can't completely understand it.

[29 : 58] So we're meant to walk the tightrope in between and that's why Paul does this for us here. This is why we believe in verse-by-verse exposition of the text.

We could skip over chapter 10, couldn't we? We could skip over chapter 9 and just focus on 10.

There's a perfect balance for us in the scriptures. And so what is the charge today as Paul kind of steps back from this kind of deep look at the doctrine of election and salvation?

He kind of takes a step back from that. What is the charge to us today? I think you're going to be in one of two positions. You either have, with all your effort, with all your zeal, you've been pressing to be righteous before God.

Christianity for you has been a list of rules, new laws. You've just jotting them down and you have the do's and you have the don'ts, the sins of commission and the sins of omission.

You're really, really working at it. You're really trying the best you can to be a good person because you think that's going to accomplish something ultimately for you. You're lost.

[31 : 14] You haven't placed your faith in Christ. If you haven't come to the end of yourself and realized that there's nothing good in you and that all your goodness is found in him, you're lost.

Destruction is your end. Today, believe in your heart and confess with your mouth. Turn from your sin and turn to Christ.

You may have deluded yourself all this time. You may have bought lies set your life right this morning. Nothing special has to happen for that.

You know that, right? I don't have to, I'm not a special purveyor of God's grace to you. This is not an altar. You don't need to come up here and sacrifice. Christ has already fulfilled that.

It is finished in him. Yes and amen. I hope that phrase is getting stuck in your head from the last couple of weeks. all you have to do is repent, believe, confess with your mouth, come talk to somebody, it's going to flow out of you.

[32 : 21] Grab somebody, look at the person next to you, grab them and tell them, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and I believe that he died for my sins. There's nothing I could have done to be in right standing with him. I've placed my faith in him. That's it.

Simple. Profundity. That's it. Believe this morning. I plead with you. Believe. If you're a Christian and you're not confessing with your mouth, believe today.

It's the same call. Repent. Believe. Have the simple profundity of the gospel work into you so that it'll work out of you.

Have a heart for your people. Who are your people? Gentiles? Gentiles. They're all around you. It's the people that you go to school with, who live on your hall.

It's the people that you work with. It's the people that you live in a neighborhood with and probably don't know their names. I can be guilty of that. Those are your people.

[33 : 24] Do you break for them? Do you desire to be the means to the end? Knowing that anyone who confesses, anyone who believes in their heart and confesses with their mouth, will be saved?

saved. Great motivation to share. I hope that some of you who are found in Christ this morning can just say amen to everything that I've said.

Say, man, Nathan's bringing it today. I am so glad that I'm not under fire this morning for this. But I don't think that's really the case. I know many of you well, and I love you, and I love your devotion to Christ.

I'm encouraged, I'm spurred on by you to serve him more, but none of us have arrived. It can't not be said of any of us, that's the example.

Run, run after that one. He's got it down, or she has it perfect. Right? So examine your hearts this morning. do you believe the gospel?

[34 : 36] If you do, it's going to change the way you live your life. Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Let's pray Let's pray Let's pray Let's pray together. Let's pray Let's pray Let's pray Let's pray together.