



The Epistle to the Romans

Lesson Number 33



A HOPE-DRIVEN PRAYER FOR ISRAEL

^{10:1} Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. ⁵ For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." ⁶ But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down from above) ⁷ or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. ¹³ For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

– Romans 10:1-13 ^{NKJV} –

INTRODUCTION

The mind that is *"controlled by the Spirit"* (Rom 8:6 ^{NIV}) faces the hard realities related to people being alienated from God. It acknowledges that those who have not attained to the righteousness of God have **not sought it** by faith. Yet, this perception does not cause the heart to grow cold and indifferent toward such people. Particularly in the case of Israel, Paul demonstrates what it means to love our enemies and do good to those who despitely use us (Matt 5:44).

OPPOSED BY THE JEWS

The Jews had been aggressive in

their opposition to Paul. Early In his ministry, the Jews in Damascus *"took counsel to kill him,"* watching the gates of the city *"day and night to kill him"* (Acts 9:23-24). In Antioch of Pisidia *"the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul,"* causing him to be expelled from the city (Acts 13:50-51). In Thessalonica, certain Jews stirred up such an uproar in the city, that Paul was forced to leave (Acts 17:4-10). When he came into Berea, *"the Jews of Thessalonica came,"* stirring up the people and forcing him to leave that area

also (Acts 17:13-14). When he preached in Corinth, *"the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat"* (Acts 18:12). When he returned to Jerusalem, *"certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul"* (Acts 23:12).

"Five times" they beat him with *"forty stripes minus one"* (2 Cor 11:24). Jews from Antioch caused him to be stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19). He declared he was frequently *"in perils by mine own*

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. A HEART'S DESIRE AND PRAYER (10:1)
- II. ZEAL WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE (10:2)
- III. THE EFFECT OF IGNORANCE (10:3)
- IV. THE END OF THE LAW (10:4)
- V. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW (10:5)
- VI. WHAT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH DOES NOT SAY (10:6-7)
- VII. WHAT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH DOES SAY (10:8-9)
- VIII. RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SALVATION (10:10)
- IX. WHAT DOES THE SCRIPTURE SAY? (10:11-13)

countrymen” (2 Cor 11:26). With a tone of grief Paul said of the Jews, “*Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men*” (1 Thess 2:14).

It would be exceedingly difficult to endure more opposition from your former associates than Paul did from his! When we experience contrariety from those with whom we have traveled, we should run to this passage of Scripture to gain encouragement. There is no need for us to retaliate, or to conduct ourselves against people with harshness and inconsideration. While rebuke and correction are often necessary, and even strong denunciation, our hearts must remain tender and supple.

A CHANGE IN THE MAN

Prior to being in Christ, Saul of Tarsus was aggressive against those who were in conflict with his perception of devotion to God. Confessing to his shameful conduct he said, “*I persecuted the church of God*” (1 Cor 15:9). He is presented as “*breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord,*”^{NKJV} even seeking permission to hunt them down like wild animals, bringing them bound to Jerusalem (Acts 9:1). He wrote to the Galatians, “*I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy*

it”^{NKJV} (Gal 1:13).

In regard to that segment of his life, Paul said he was “*a persecutor, and injurious*” (1 Tim 1:13). And again, “*I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women*” (Acts 22:4). He was convinced he “*must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*” (Acts 26:9).

But when Saul of Tarsus knowingly confronted the glorified Christ, he was changed! He did not seek out the Jews to persecute them, but to deliver the Gospel to them. He did not return hatred to his enemies, as he did when a Pharisee. He had received a “*heart of flesh*” (Ezek 11:19; 36:26), and it was supple in the hands of the Lord. Now he viewed the Jews as Jesus did, whom the Jews had opposed even more than they did him.

Rather than the oppressive hatred of the Jews driving him to despise them, Paul rises into the heavenly realms by the Holy Spirit. He views them with “*the mind of Christ,*” and thus brings himself into harmony with God’s eternal purpose. He refuses to write them off, but rather enters into a certain fervency for their salvation. What is more, he is not ashamed to confess to this desire, showing that it is in perfect accord with both the nature and the purpose of the Living God.

THE COMPULSION OF LEGALISM

There is a certain compulsive nature in legalism – a propensity to be justified by Law. When dominated by this mentality, the individual becomes aggressive against those who oppose him, descending into the realm of flesh and blood to do battle. False religion will drive people to do things against other believers that are astonishing.

It moved the Roman Catholic

hierarchy to mandate the death of hundreds of thousands of believers because they did not subscribe to the “*laws of the church.*” It has constrained others to, in the name of Christ, cast faithful believers from their midst because they could not accept the traditions of men. Others have been maligned and their names smeared because they would not embrace the institution as though it was the solitary representative of the living God.

A legalistic mind-set frequently yields a heartless religion. Its constituents become more zealous of conforming people to the manners of the organization than to the image of God’s Son. Many of us have drank from the bitter cup of legalism, and can testify to the truth of these observations.

SOVEREIGNTY AND COLDNESS

It is also necessary to briefly comment on another misconception. Many have opposed the teaching of God’s Sovereignty, as declared in this section of Romans, because it seems cold and lifeless. Indeed, some who proclaim the Sovereignty of God, and “*the election of grace,*” appear to justify this conclusion. They think nothing of writing off the souls of men as though the Lord delighted in “*the death of the wicked*” – which He does not (Ezek 33:11). Such individuals often leave people thinking God is actually willing for some to perish, or is not willing that all men be saved. Both of these are complete misconceptions (2 Pet 3:9; 1 Tim 2:4). God is not heartless, and it is out of order for any of us to be.

Our text will confirm these conclusions. Moved along by the Holy Spirit of God, the same man who spoke of God choosing Isaac, loving Jacob, hating Esau, and raising up Pharaoh, will declare the desire of his heart – that Israel be saved. Lofty truths, when perceived, do

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not make hearts hard! **Knowing and believing that God has mercy on whomever He wills, and hardens whomever He desires, does not dash hope to the ground!** We will find in this text that the true apprehension of these realities kindles in the heart hopes and desires for others – especially in regard to the Israelites.

It is necessary to thrust from our minds any notion that knowing God does what He desires, creates coldness and a sense of futility in the hearts of men. Doctrines that, when embraced, leave men and women cold and indifferent cannot be true! When known, *“the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32). That

freedom involves tenderheartedness, and makes no provision for insensitivity. How gloriously this is seen in the text before us. **Here is a human response that brings great glory to God!**

TWO KINDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

This chapter will develop for us the difference between the righteousness that comes from faith, and that which comes from keeping the Law. It is a critical distinction, for one is possible and the other impossible. One brings Divine acceptance and the other does not. One is the ordained means of becoming righteous, the other is the ordained means of showing righteousness cannot be achieved through human discipline.

It is imperative that the people of God see this distinction. They must not view this as some form of profound theology, intended only for the intellectually elite, or positionally superior. Such distinctions belong to the order of flesh, and have no place among God’s people. Faith is the distinguishing trait in God’s kingdom. That is what gives prominence to the individual, as attested by the eleventh chapter of Hebrews.

The uniqueness of the righteousness that comes from faith puts the salvation of Israel within reach, just as it put it within the reach of the Gentiles. That, of course, is the point of this passage. It reveals with wisdom of God.

A HEART’S DESIRE AND PRAYER

“¹⁰¹ Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.” These are the not words of the mind, but of the heart. They are not the expression of mere sentiment, but of faith and love. This is the way the Apostle speaks to *“the household of faith”* (Gal 6:10) concerning the Israelites, His *“kinsmen according to the flesh.”* Because he is being moved by the Holy Spirit, we can conclude this is how the Spirit speaks to the churches about the Jews.

The Promise to Abraham

God, who cannot lie, made certain promises to our father Abraham. The following words are included in those Divine commitments. *“And I will bless thee that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee”* (Gen 12:3). Through Isaac, the child of promise, the promise was repeated to Jacob, *“cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee”* (Gen 27:29). Even Balaam could not refrain from repeating the words to wicked Balak, who sought to have Israel cursed: *“Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee”* (Num 24:9).

Words Through David

Knowing the covenant of the Lord to the houses of Judah and Israel (Jer 31:31-44), David was moved by the Spirit to speak of their chief city. *“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee”* (Psa 122:6). In his penitential pray, recorded in Psalm 51, he prayed, *“Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of*

There is no record of Him weeping over any other city, people, or country. When Jerusalem rejected Jesus, He wept. When the Gadarene’s begged Him to leave their country, “He got into the boat and returned”

Jerusalem” (Psa 51:18). The 137th Psalm records these touching words. *“If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy”* (verses 5-6).

Jeremiah’s Admonition

Jeremiah admonished those who escaped the sword during the ravages of Jerusalem, *“Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind”* (Jer 51:50).

Jesus Wept Over Jerusalem

Before His death, Jesus came near to the city of Jerusalem, beheld it, and *“wept over it”* (Luke 19:41). There is no record of Him weeping over any other city, people, or country. When Jerusalem rejected Jesus, He wept. When the Gadarene’s begged Him to leave their country, *“He got into the boat and returned”* (Lk 8:37). Jesus went about *“all the cities and villages”* (Matt 9:35), but He only wept over Jerusalem.

Jesus Prayed for the Jews

The Lord Jesus Himself displayed this attitude from the lowest realm ever occupied by a man in the flesh – the cross. From the depths of His spirit He cried out, *“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”* (Lk 23:34).

Stephen Prayed for the Jews

Stephen prayed in the same manner

when his life was being pounded out of him with stones: *“he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”* (Acts 7:60). Like that of Paul, his prayer was driven by his acquaintance with Scripture and fellowship with Jesus. At the time he prayed these words, he had witnessed Jesus standing on the right hand of God (7:56), was calling upon God, and asking Jesus to receive his spirit (7:59). It is inconceivable that a human spirit bathed in such glory could pray something foolish or out of harmony with the will of God.

All of this confirms there is an unquestionable foundation for seeking the good of the Israelites, Paul’s *“kinsmen according to the flesh.”*

A DESIRE OF THE HEART

“... my heart’s desire...”

Unless it can be established to be otherwise, this is a desire of Paul’s *“new heart.”* It surely is not the desire of a stony heart, which was removed in that he might obtain a new heart, tender and supple in the hands of the Lord.

I know of no Word from God that speaks of illegitimate concerns erupting from the renewed heart. Further, if this was a wrong and futile desire, the Word of the Lord would have searched it out, exposing it (Heb 4:12). In such a case, the Holy Spirit would not have allowed Paul’s desire to be stated without an explanation of some sort.

This is doubtless one of the results of Paul loving the Lord with all of his heart (Deut 6:5; Matt 22:37). I have no doubts that those who deny this is the case will find it utterly impossible to prove otherwise. The textual context of these words allow for no other conclusion. The doctrinal content of the passage demands that we take this view, else the passage is nothing more than the outburst of carnality. I would consider such a conclusion to be blasphemous.

A PRAYER TO GOD

This is more than a mere human

desire. It is a *“prayer to God.”* In this case, the desire of the heart has been wed to the purpose of God. Paul is doing more than letting his request be made known to God (Phil 4:6). Knowing the promises of God, he brings his heart into accord with

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them. He realizes it is God’s manner to divulge His intentions in order that His people might implore Him to do what He has promised. As it is written, *“Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock”* (Ezek 36:36-37).

Jeremiah spoke of the same spiritual reality. *“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you”*^{NKJV} (Jeremiah 29:11-12).

This is an aspect of the Kingdom of God that could do with a great deal more exploration. It reveals an aspect of the Divine nature that allows for the

redeemed to become integrally involved in the outworking of God’s purpose. While much of contemporary prayer is self-centered, here is a prayer that is totally selfless, swathed with the light of Divine glory and bathed in God’s eternal purpose. Paul’s desire reflected the mind of Christ and the will of the Father.

THAT THEY MIGHT BE SAVED

The expression *“be saved”* equates to *“attained to righteousness”* (9:30). Salvation, from this view, is becoming acceptable to God by having His righteousness imputed to us. That is the very theme that is being developed in Romans – the reception of God’s own righteousness. While that righteousness does impact upon our conduct [thoughts, words, and deeds] it is not our conduct that constitutes us righteous before God. Our faith is counted to us for righteousness, not our conduct (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3,5). Paul prays that Israel might attain to *“the righteousness of faith”* (4:13). That is salvation!

When Saul of Tarsus was called to the Apostleship, the scope of his ministry was revealed to Ananias. *“But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, **and the children of Israel**”* (Acts 9:15). Paul entered into his labors with zeal.

Later in this book, the Apostle to the Gentiles will confess his ardent intention to reach his kinsmen with the Gospel of Christ. He preached to the Gentiles *“inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: **if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them**”* (Rom 11:13-14).

The labors of Paul, therefore, were wedded to his prayers. His prayers were also substantiated and assisted by his labors. Blessed is the person who brings action and prayer together, and does so in strict harmony with the will of God!

ZEAL WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE

“² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.” The tenderness and sensitivity of Paul is revealed in this text. Although his kinsmen according to the flesh vigorously opposed him, yet he was able to acknowledge something commendable in them. It was not something that would obtain the righteousness of God. Neither, indeed, was it something that would rescue them from darkness and deception. Nevertheless, it was like a small crack in the door that permitted the light of hope

judge and even remove them, He was careful to cite their comely qualities.

□ **EPHESUS**, who had left their first love. *“I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast labored, and hast not fainted . . . But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the*

commendation of any sort to the church in Laodicea (Rev 3:14-18). But where there was any evidence of hope, the Lord acknowledged it, commended the people, and urged their full recovery.

This is the sort of spirit Paul has when he speaks of the zeal of the Israelites. It is a comely quality, though it was being misdirected.

WHAT IS ZEAL?

“They have a zeal for God . . .” Zeal is more than hype or carnal excitement. It involves a fervent mind, and a certain jealousy for the object of the zeal. It includes pursuing a perceived advantage, and opposing all that is considered against that advantage. Thus, zeal is seen to have two sides. **Ardent affection for and a keen interest in what is sought, and indignation and fierceness toward those opposed to what is sought.**

It is a good thing to be able to see tokens of hope in the individuals for whom we pray. They will help to drive our desires and prayers to be more fervent and consistent.

to shed an encouraging ray upon the heart of the Apostle.

The presence of the quality mentioned causes Paul to be even more ardent in his desire for their salvation. It is a good thing to be able to see tokens of hope in the individuals for whom we pray. They will help to drive our desires and prayers to be more fervent and consistent.

BEARING WITNESS

“I bear them witness . . .” A sectarian spirit cannot acknowledge comely qualities in those of other persuasions. Such an one imagines that to see anything appropriate in those perceived as being in error is to approve everything about them.

When the Paul had to rebuke the Galatians for their reversion to the Law, he was careful to bear witness to comely things they had done. *“For I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me”* (Gal 4:15). When the glorified Christ rebuked the wayward churches in Asia, threatening to

Nicolaitanes, which I also hate” (Rev 2:2-7).

□ **PERGAMOS**, who had some among them who held to the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which Jesus hated. *“I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth”* (Rev 2:13-15).

□ **THYATIRA**, who allowed a false prophetess to teach Christ’s servants to commit fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols. *“I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first”* (Rev 2:19-20).

□ **SARDIS**, who had a name they were alive, but actually were dead. *“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy”* (Rev 3:4).

Confirming that there are some in which no good can be found, Jesus gave no

In our text, Israel did not simply have zeal, but a *“zeal for God.”*^{NKJV} They were aggressive in their devotion to their perception of Him. They also vigorously opposed those whom they considered to be against Him. Paul knew well of this kind of behavior, for he himself was once zealous in this way. He aggressively sought to serve God. He also energetically opposed and persecuted those he considered to be against God.

One of the dampening effects of a pedantic, or merely academic, approach to the things of God is the diminishing of zeal. In our time, zeal in Christian circles is exceedingly rare. People have grown accustomed to giving only a fragment of their persons to anything pertaining to God. This includes their time, resources, and influence, together with their hearts and minds. Too often, a person who is zealous for the Lord stands out like the proverbial *sore thumb*.

ZEAL WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE

“ . . . but not according to knowledge.” The zeal of the Israelites was not driven by a proper knowledge of God. Nor,

indeed, did it flow from an understanding of the reality and nature of true righteousness. That circumstance removed the effectiveness of their zeal.

Scripture affirms that *“it is good to be zealous in a good thing always”* (Gal 4:18), but only so! **It will never bring advantages to the individual to be zealous for the wrong thing!** Misdirected efforts are never the means of appropriating Divine benefits!

Knowledge = Enlightenment

The *“knowledge”* of reference is not scholastic or theoretical. Rather, this is the knowledge that comes with enlightenment. The NRSV emphasizes this: *“I can testify that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened.”*

Here, the word *“knowledge”* comes from the Greek word ἐπίγνωσις, which means *precise and correct, or true knowledge*. This word is used ten other times in Scripture, and always refers to a supernatural knowledge – one that is given by God.

- ❑ *“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding”* (Col 1:9).
- ❑ *“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God”* (Col 1:10).
- ❑ *“That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ”* (Col 2:2).
- ❑ *“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him”* (Col 3:10).
- ❑ *“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the*

truth” (1 Tim 2:4).

- ❑ *“In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth”* (2 Tim 2:25).
- ❑ *“Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth”* (2

progress, producing a zeal that is right.

Our new birth is referred to as the time when we *“were illuminated”* (Heb 10:32), or *“were once enlightened”* (Heb 6:4). When *“the eyes of your understanding”* are *“enlightened”* (Eph 1:18), zeal for the things of God is the

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Tim 3:7).

- ❑ *“Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness”* (Tit 1:1).
- ❑ *“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins”* (Heb 10:26).
- ❑ *“For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Pet 1:8).

The meaning of the expression, therefore, is this: **The Israelites have a zeal for God, but it is not the result of being enlightened by God. It is not the outcome of comprehending Him, or being convinced of the availability of His righteousness in Christ Jesus.**

The Effects of True Knowledge

Among other things, this confirms the impact that new creatureship has upon the person who is born again. The *“new man”* is created in order to the attainment of, and progress in true knowledge (Col 3:10). That knowledge moves the individual along the road of spiritual

result. As never before, that is when men and women will seek *“first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness”* (Matt 6:33). Examine your own heart and see if this is not precisely what happened to you!

Profitable Zeal

To be profitable, zeal must proceed from spiritual enlightenment. When it is *“not according to knowledge,”* it always comes short of the purpose of God. As you can see, enthusiasm and fervency are not ends of themselves.

INSTITUTIONAL ZEAL

It is not uncommon in our day to find people dominated by institutional zeal, or fervor. They are aggressive to maintain and propagate the party line. Many of us have fallen victims to this approach in the past, and are exceedingly thankful we have been delivered from it. Mark it well, those within an institution created, ordered, and condoned by God Almighty fell short of Divine objectives in their zeal. Therefore, you can rest assured that those giving themselves to mere human institutions have absolutely no hope of attaining to righteousness, particularly the righteousness of God. The level of their zeal is of no consequence whatsoever.

THE CAUSE AND EFFECT OF IGNORANCE

“³ For they being ignorant of || God’s righteousness, and seeking to || establish their own righteousness,

have not submitted to the righteousness of God." The Spirit speaks candidly about the failure of the Israelites to appropriate the righteousness contained in the Law. Remember, they were NOT seeking God's righteousness, but the righteousness set forth in the Law of Moses. It looked to them as though it was attainable, and thus they pursued it with zeal. The Spirit now makes three pungent observations, confirming why the Israelites did not attain to the righteousness of the Law.

IGNORANCE OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

"For not knowing about God's righteousness . . ."^{NASB} Other versions read, *"Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God."*^{NIV} *"Not having knowledge of God's righteousness."*^{BBE} *"For, in their unawareness of the righteousness that comes from God."*^{NLT} *"For they don't understand God's way of making people right with Himself."*^{NJB}

Here, what the Israelites did NOT know moved them into inappropriate action. The world says, *What you do not know cannot hurt you.* How wrong is that foolish aphorism!

Keep in mind "God's righteousness" refers to the righteousness He GIVES. It is not only His in the sense of belonging to Him. It is also His in the sense of coming from Him to men. The righteousness of which Israel was ignorant was the righteousness God gives to men because of their faith. Had they known about that righteousness, they would have sought it. However, they did not know about it. They were ignorant of it, having no understanding of it.

Why Did They NOT Know?

How is it that the Israelites, chosen and tutored by God, did not know about His righteousness – the righteousness that He gives? **It is because the Law gave no hint about this righteousness!** In regards to righteousness, it spoke only of man's

doing, never of God's giving.

Within the code of Law, the Lord spoke of giving commandments (Ex 24:12,22), rest from enemies (Ex 33:14), and the land of Canaan (Lev 20:24). He spoke of giving rain (Lev 26:4), peace in the land (Lev 26:6), and flesh to eat (Num 11:21). **However, He NEVER spoke of giving them righteousness!**

The Lord gave workman for the tabernacle (Ex 31:6), portions to the Levites from the offerings (Lev 6:17), and the gift of the priesthood (Num 18:7). He said He gave them cities (Deut 3:19), and

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a possession to every man (Deut 3:20). **But He never said He had, or would, give them righteousness.**

In the Law, righteousness ALWAYS had to do with what men did. In all of the Law (Exodus 20 - Deut) God never referred to "My righteousness." The phrase "righteousness of God" is never mentioned. One time it is said of the Lord, "Righteous and upright is He" (Deut 32:4), but there is no hint that it would be given to men.

The Law, therefore, did NOT enlighten men concerning God's righteousness. It only held forth a righteousness that resulted from men's doing. Thus it was written, "And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day. **Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us**" (Deut 6:24-25).

With all of the words in the Law, there was not sufficient information to conclude there was a righteousness to be received from God! That is precisely why the Israelites were ignorant of "God's righteousness."

Academically, It Was Plain Enough

Although the Law held out remarkable promises for keeping it (Deut 28:1-14) and frightening curses for failing to keep it (Deut 28:15-68), it gave no hint that its demands exceeded natural abilities. That reality would only be realized by a fervent effort to fulfill the Law, coupled with an honest heart. The blessings were strictly contingent upon perfect conformity to the Law: observing to "DO ALL His commandments" (Deut 28:1). The curses would be incurred if they failed "to observe to DO ALL His commandments and His statutes" (Deut 28:15).

Notwithstanding this clarity, fallen man overlooks the word "ALL." He insists on viewing the demands as goals to be attempted. Correspondingly, he imagines that a lot of effort fulfills the demands of the Law. But it does not. That is only a delusion of the flesh. The Law demanded perfection, and would take nothing less!

The Bane of Legalism

"Legalism," as I am using the word, is a propensity for Law. It is the result of the misconception that men can become right by doing. While this may appear harmless to the sophist, it is actually a most lethal view. When men look to the Law—any law—for righteousness, they are not able to see the "gift of righteousness" (Rom 5:17). **Ignorance of God's righteousness flourishes in the soil of Law.** Those who seek Divine approbation by a system of doing are, by that very approach, blinded to the righteousness that comes by faith. You will observe a perfect consistency in this wherever Law is preferred over grace.

SEEKING TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS

" . . . and seeking to establish their own righteousness . . ." The KJV reads, "going about to establish their own

righteousness.” By this expression, the Spirit means that the Israelites engaged in a hearty effort to fulfill the Law, which promised life to the doer (Lev 18:5). It is another way of saying, “*For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge*” (v 2). This seeking was not a casual inquiry into the subject of righteousness, but an aggressive effort to do what the Law demanded.

Because of the Law, coupled with their fallen nature, the Israelites were persuaded they could make themselves suitable to God. Armed with information and willpower, they would establish, or originate, their own righteousness. In so doing, they revealed they had overestimated their own strength and underestimated the requirements of the Law. **They did not know how wicked they were, or how righteous God is.**

At the very moment people set out to establish their own righteousness, the righteousness of God becomes inaccessible. It is at once obscured, and the veil of spiritual ignorance is spread over the mind and the heart.

The truth of the matter is, “*There is none righteous, no, not one*” (3:10). That being the case, it is not possible for an unrighteous man to make himself righteous. A sinner cannot “*establish*” his own righteousness, because you cannot establish what does not exist! The only way to become righteous is to have ones sins remitted that the gift of righteousness may be received by faith.

This submission is nothing less than our consent to receive what God gives. That consent is found in the form of our faith, which, as a hand, reaches out to take hold of “*the gift of righteousness.*”

I cannot leave this point without observing that those with a penchant for Law have learned nothing from the Israelites. There remains within the religious community the imagination that men can establish their own righteousness by keeping a code. Like Israel, such individuals are ignorant of God’s righteousness. That is the sole reason why they continue to seek to establish their own.

SUBMITTING TO GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS

“ . . . *have not submitted to the righteousness of God.*” To “*submit*” to the righteousness of God is to subject oneself to it, or take a subordinate place to it. More precisely, it is to renounce any claim to self-righteousness, and acknowledge an absolute need for the righteousness of God.

Paul expressed the truth of this verse in regard to his own enlightened desire. He acknowledged that he discarded anything and everything that was of personal gain to him. He did this, he confessed, “*that I may gain Christ and be*

found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith” ^{NKJV} (Phil 3:8-9). That is submitting to “*the righteousness of God,*” or the righteousness that comes from God.

This submission is nothing less than our consent to receive what God gives. That consent is found in the form of our faith, which, as a hand, reaches out to take hold of “*the gift of righteousness.*”

It goes without saying that we can only submit ourselves to something that already exists. The Jews were going about to “*establish their own righteousness,*” convinced that was the only way to become righteous. They did not see that righteousness does not come from keeping the Law. Nor, indeed were they aware that God has a righteousness to be given to men upon the basis of their faith. The testimony of such a righteousness was provided in father Abraham, who received it upon the basis of his faith (Gen 15:6). But they did not see it.

THE END OF THE LAW

“ ⁴ *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*” Here there is a divergence in the reading of the various translations. The principle statement involved is “*end of the law for righteousness,*” as represented in the KJV, NKJV, and NASB. Other versions choosing this reading include the 1995 New American Standard, Websters, Darby, BBE, and Young’s Literal. The older ASV reads, “*end of the law unto*

righteousness.” The New American Bible reads, “*end of the law for the justification.*”

Other versions read as follows. “*Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*” ^{NIV/NIB} “*For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*” ^{NR/SV} “*For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified.*” ^{RSV} The New

Jerusalem Bible provides yet another twist. “*But the Law has found its fulfilment in Christ so that all who have faith will be justified.*”

Why Mention This?

There is, in my judgment, good reason to point out these readings. Although the true meaning of the verse can be derived from any of the translations, it can be more easily seen in the majority of them. If we read “*end of the Law for*

righteousness,” the meaning is that the Law has been concluded as a means to righteousness. If we choose the other readings, the meaning is that the Law itself has been concluded, and no longer exists. Let us reason on the matter.

CHRIST IS THE END OF THE LAW

There are two possible meanings of “*end of the Law*.” Men have argued about these views, and even formed whole

Once Paul recognized his own spiritual impotence, and knew the truth of the Gospel, he ceased from trying to establish his own righteousness, which was of the Law. For him, Christ was “*the end of the Law for righteousness.*”

bodies of theology around them.

- The first emphasizes **the fulfillment, or objective, of the Law**. In this sense, Christ is the “*substance*” of which the Law was a shadow (Col 2:17). In this case, once the substance came, the shadow was done away. This is NOT the meaning of the passage. The Law, unlike the shadowy sacrifices, was not done away when Jesus died, rose again, and returned to heaven. It still remains “*for the lawless*” (1 Tim 1:9). The “*knowledge of sin*” still comes from the Law (Rom 3:20). It has not been terminated or rendered totally obsolete or useless. Christ Jesus has not erased the Law of God.
- The second underscores the termination of the Law in a certain capacity. It is no longer the appointed means to a certain end, or objective. While it still remains, it cannot be used to arrive at the following goal: i.e., “*for [or in order to] righteousness.*” This is the meaning of the verse. Christ has concluded the

Law as a means to righteousness.

FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Men cannot become righteous by keeping the Law of God! Although the Law held out that promise, more light has now been shed on the matter of righteousness. In the blazing glory of the Gospel it is now affirmed, “*Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight*” (Rom 3:20). And again, “*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified*” (Gal 2:16).

Until Jesus, it appeared as though the Law was “*ordained unto life*” – i.e., that men could become righteous and acceptable to God by simply doing what He said to do, and abstaining from what He forbade them to do (Rom 7:10). Those who take the promise of the Law seriously (“*which if a man do, he shall live in them*”) will soon find what Paul found. “*And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me*” (Rom 7:10).

Once Paul recognized his own spiritual impotence, and knew the truth of the Gospel, he ceased from trying to establish his own righteousness, which was of the Law. For him, Christ was “*the end of the Law for righteousness.*” That is, he no longer sought to become righteous by keeping the Law. That is the meaning of this text.

EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES

Our text is not speaking of something realized by certain superior people. It does not represent an alternative to becoming righteous, or a way to realize righteousness in a more easy way. This “*gift of righteousness*” is for “*everyone who believes.*”

This very truth has been iterated before. Reasoning upon the marvelous reality of Abraham being made righteous, the Spirit declared, “*For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*” (Rom 4:3-5). Again it is written, “*And therefore it [his faith] was imputed to him for righteousness. [Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification*” (4:22-25).

Our concept of believing must allow for this expression: “*everyone who believes.*” With great zeal, we must avoid stuffing this statement into a theological mold that makes it say something more suitable to stilted and lifeless views. Some would prefer that the Spirit had said, “to everyone who believes **and obeys.**” They could say that more easily. Others would favor the Spirit saying, “everyone who believes and keeps the commandments.” They conceive of that as being more precise. Still others would like it to read, “everyone who believes and remains faithful.” That, they imagine, would be more exact, and would better address the subject.

To be sure, the Holy Spirit knows how to use the words “obey,” “keep the commandments,” and “be faithful.” after all, He is the One who develops those very concepts in Scripture. But he does not use those words here, for they would not be proper. True obedience, the keeping of the commandments, and faithfulness flow out from believing. **But none of them are the foundation of our righteousness.** Rather, they are all the result of it.

The matter to be believed is the Gospel, or good news, of Christ, as stated earlier. “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.*” (1:16). What is there about

those words that would cause any soul to be discontent with them? Ponder the frequency of their mentioning.

- ❑ *“That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:15,16).
- ❑ *“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him”* (John 3:36).
- ❑ *“And Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst’”* (John 6:35).
- ❑ *“And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day”* (John 6:40).
- ❑ *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life”* (John 6:47).
- ❑ *“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water”* (John 7:38).
- ❑ *“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?’”* (John 11:25-26).
- ❑ *“I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness”* (John 12:46)
- ❑ *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father”* (John 14:12).
- ❑ *“To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins”*

(Acts 10:43).

- ❑ *“And by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses”* (Acts 13:39).
- ❑ *“As it is written: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame’”* (Rom 9:33).
- ❑ *“Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, ‘Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame’”* (1 Pet 2:6-7).
- ❑ *“Whoever believes that Jesus is the*

familiar expression. It should not sound strange to the people of God to hear of the blessing of the Lord being dependent upon faith. Where it does sound strange and unacceptable, the minds of people have been corrupted with false and erroneous views of both God and His salvation.

Those who imagine that this allows for disobedience and a lack of faithfulness only reveal their ignorance. They also bring dishonor to Jesus who spoke so frequently in this manner. They grieve the Holy Spirit who moved holy men of God to speak of believing in this way.

It should not sound strange to the people of God to hear of the blessing of the Lord being dependent upon faith. Where it does sound strange and unacceptable, the minds of people have been corrupted with false and erroneous views of both God and His salvation.

Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him” (1 John 5:1).

- ❑ *“Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”* (1 John 5:5).
- ❑ *“He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son”* (1 John 5:10).

I have taken the time to provide this listing to confirm the Spirit is using a

They also come close to blaspheming God Himself, who inspired them to be both spoken and written.

To allay the fears of the sophist and the qualms of the legalist, **there is no such thing as a faith that does not obey, or a faith that is not faithful.** Disobedience and unfaithfulness both proceed from unbelief, not from believing. When men believe in the sense of Scripture, they **will** obey. They **will** pursue righteousness. They **will** remain faithful. There are no exceptions to these things. Those who doubt this must rethink the matter.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW

“⁵ For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, ‘The man who does those things shall live by them.’” Although this has been stated before, it is reaffirmed. This is done because of the great difficulty men have in cutting loose from the notion that

righteousness comes by doing. Remember, our text has reminded us that Israel did not attain to the righteousness of the Law—even though they pressed hard after it. Their efforts extended officially over a period of 1,500 years, or until Christ. That was adequate time to accomplish

righteousness by means of Law.

Even now, 2,000 additional years later, they are still engaged in this futile effort. Still, when they read the Law of Moses, their minds are *“blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in*

the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart” (2 Cor 3:14-15). As if this were not bad enough, vast segments of Christendom have joined in the futile effort to obtain righteousness by fulfilling Divine demands rather than believing the record God has given of His Son. Having once been deceived myself on this matter, I know of the futility of trying to be righteous apart from believing. I also know that such a mentality totally ignores the words of this verse.

RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS OF THE LAW

This is the righteousness that results from the perfect keeping of the Law. It is promised only to those who keep and obey ALL of the commandments ALL of the time (Deut 5:29). Not a single infraction of the Law is allowed. There can be no deviate or wayward thought – not one! The Law makes absolutely no promise of blessing to anyone who fails in but *“one point”* of its demands or prohibitions (James 2:10). The result of perfect and flawless compliance with every jot and tittle of the Law is *“the righteousness which is of the Law.”*

THE MAN WHO DOES THOSE THINGS

Doing the Law is carrying out all of its demands with both perfection and consistency. It is **never** failing to do what is right, and **always** abstaining from what is wrong. This must be done with every aspect of ones being: heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). This includes a preference for God’s Law, as well as a hearty love for it. It includes the marshaling of all thoughts and affections. Zeal is involved, together with strong desire and alertness.

When the Law says *“does,”* it is not referring to mere external conduct, as the legalist imagines. The Law did not consider behavior to be mere bodily actions. The Lord was to be sought *“with all of your heart and with all of your soul”* (Deut 4:29). He was to be loved in the

same way (Deut 6:5; 10:12). God was to be served *“with all your heart and with all your soul”* (11:13). His judgments were to be kept and executed *“with all your heart and with all your soul”* (Deut 26:16).

Any doing that was not so characterized was not “doing” at all! The person who did not *“do”* everything with heart and soul did nothing at all. He was excluded from the promise.

SHALL LIVE BY THEM

In 1816, Robert Haldane wrote this of living by the righteousness of the Law. It is most precise, and expresses the sentiment of our text. *“To live by the Law requires, as Moses had declared, that the Law be*

The Law makes absolutely no promise of blessing to anyone who fails in but *“one point”* of its demands or prohibitions (James 2:10). The result of perfect and flawless compliance with every jot and tittle of the Law is *“the righteousness which is of the Law.”*

perfectly obeyed. But this to fallen man is impossible. The law knows no mercy; it knows no mitigation, it overlooks not even the smallest breach, or the smallest deficiency. One guilty thought or desire would condemn forever. Whoever, then, looks for life by the law, must keep the whole law in thought, word, and deed, and not be chargeable with the smallest transgression.” Haldane’s Commentary on Romans

To *“live”* is to be recognized by God Almighty as righteous. It is to live without the curse of God hanging over your head. To *“live”* is to have your name *“written in heaven”* (Lk 10:20; Heb 12:23), in *“the book of life”* (Phil 4:3; Rev 13:8), which registers everyone who is *“alive unto God”* (Rom 6:11).

And do you hope to be received and recognized by God because of what you have done? Will you stand before God and boast as the Pharisee who *“prayed with himself,” “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess”* (Lk 18:11-12). Do you imagine you will be able to stand before the throne and shout, *“Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?”* (Matt 7:22).

What you have done will only be a basis for acceptance if you have done all the right things all of the time. It will only count if you have refrained from doing all the wrong things all of the time. You must not have stepped aside from perfect obedience a single time, or for a single moment. Is that not quite a challenge.

Allow me to take the matter one step further. Imagine that it actually was possible for you to be justified by what you have done – by your works. You still could not boast before God. As it is written, *“For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God”* (Rom 4:2).

Further, imagine that in the day of the Lord you shall have managed to do every single thing you were commanded to do. Would that not bring the conferment of life and blessing upon you? Hear the words of Jesus. *“And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat?’ But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink?’ Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do’”* (Lk

17:7-10). That is surely enough to stop the mouths of all boasters.

The very need for Law confirms the need for righteousness. The fact that men had to be told what to do confirmed they were ignorant and

unrighteous. Thus, the Law said “*life*” would be substantiated in the keeping of the commandments, not to show that it was possible, but to confirm we were already dead in trespasses and sins. The “*life*” it promised was not resurrection life, like bringing a spiritually dead man

back to life. It was not speaking of recovery, but of the recognition of someone who was NOT dead. It should be very apparent to us that, apart from Jesus, no such person existed. The Law persuaded us we were dead and in need of righteousness.

WHAT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH DOES NOT SAY

“⁶ *But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, ‘Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down from above)* ⁷ *or, ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).”*

Here is a classic example of the proper use of Scripture. Yet, it sharply conflicts with the notion that “the context” of Scripture is the secret to its understanding. Some very principle thoughts will be established by this remarkable utterance.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH

Again, this is the righteousness that is appropriated by faith. Faith is its basis, or foundation, like being “*born of God*” declares God to be the One accomplishing the new birth. Other versions read, “*the righteousness based on faith*,”^{NASB} “*the righteousness that is by faith*,”^{NIV} and “*the righteousness that comes from faith*.”^{NRSV} How does this righteousness speak? How does it compare with the saying of the Law: “*The man who does those things shall live by them*”?

What does “*the righteousness that comes from faith*” have to say about doing? Or, does it have anything to say on that subject? Indeed, it does speak to the subject, and that with great power and conviction.

DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART!

The Spirit first declares what the righteousness based on faith does NOT say. Here an appeal is made to the words of Moses, even though he did not at all mean what our text will affirm. Here is what the Lord said through Moses. “*For this commandment which I command you*

today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ or is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and

If our doing is to be the basis of our righteousness, then here is what WE must do. We must bring the Savior down from heaven in order that He might take away our sins and reconcile us to God. Then, we must bring Him back from the dead, in order that we might be saved by His life.

multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess” (Deut 30:11-16).

What Was Moses Saying?

Moses was telling the people there was no question about what the Lord demanded of them. They did not need to send an ambassador into the heavens to bring down the Lord’s requirements. Nor, indeed, was the word of the Lord to be found cross the sea, in some foreign land. God brought the word to them, they did not go to Him to receive it. Additionally, both of these places were too difficult for

the people to access. If God did put the word in those realms, challenging the people to go and get it, they would not be able to do so.

Further, what He said was plain – plain enough that they declared they would do it all (Ex 19:8; 24:3,7). The people admonished Moses, “*You go near and hear all that the LORD our God may say, and tell us all that the LORD our God says to you, and we will hear and do it*” (Deut 5:27). That is not, however, how the righteousness of faith speaks! It does NOT say, “Get the word for us!”

Now the Spirit gets to the heart the matter, showing the deeper and more foundational meaning of Moses’ words. Rather than ascending into heaven to get a word from God, it must be to “*bring Christ down from above*.” Rather descending into the abyss to obtain a word, it must be to “*bring Christ up from the dead*.” The righteousness that comes from faith does not demand that you do these things.

WHAT IS REQUIRED

We must not miss the point of this verse! Jesus coming down from heaven was essential to our salvation! He had to willingly come in the form of a man, offering Himself for the sins of the world (Heb 10:5-10). He also had to come back from the dead, leading captivity captive, and ascending back to the Father. If both of these did not occur, it would have been impossible for us to be saved!

The Point

The point is this. If our doing is to be the basis of our righteousness, then here is what WE must do. We must bring the

Savior down from heaven in order that He might take away our sins and reconcile us to God. Then, we must bring Him back from the dead, in order that we might be saved by His life. If we cannot do those things, our works cannot save us, for we are incapable of doing the most critical things, both of which are required if men are to be "made the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21)!

Only God could send Jesus into the world! Men could not climb into heaven and bring Him down. Nor, indeed, could seraph, cherubim, and holy angels compel Him to come into the world. That work belonged to God alone, with no man participating in any way in it. That should not be difficult to see.

Only God could bring up Christ again from the dead. No man could shout Him

Only God could send Jesus into the world! Men could not climb into heaven and bring Him down. Nor, indeed, could seraph, cherubim, and holy angels compel Him to come into the world. That work belonged to God alone, with no man participating in any way in it. That should not be difficult to see.

out of the tomb! No heavenly principality or power could enable Him to come back from the regions of the dead! That work also belonged to God alone, with no man having any part whatsoever in its accomplishment. That also is very evident.

Those who insist that man's works make him righteous must be faced with the responsibility of bringing Christ from heaven, and bringing Him back from the

dead. If they cannot do that, then let them cease to speak of their abilities, for they have none that can effectively change them.

The foundation of becoming righteous cannot and does not rest with men. It is a work accomplished by God Himself! The "wonderful works" belong to Him, and to Him alone. That is the consistent proclamation of the Gospel.

WHAT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH DOES SAY

"⁸ *But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith which we preach):⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*" How does "the righteousness based on faith" speak? What kind of appeal is made to the hearts of men? What will it challenge the people to do? The righteousness that comes from the Law demanded that every commandment, precept, and statute be kept flawlessly and consistently. What kind of demands will the righteousness of faith make upon us?

THE WORD IS NEAR

"The word is in you, in your mouth and in your heart." Again, an appeal is made to the words of Moses, with a unique application being made of them. Moses said, "But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it" (Deut 30:14). The words "in your mouth" refers to the people's confession of the Law. The words "in your heart" means the communication of the Law was so impressive they could

not forget it when they heard it. Through revelation, they had become acutely aware of the commandments of the Lord. It was in their mouth and in their heart when they said, "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do" (Ex 19:8). Now the Spirit will show us what words has been brought near to us, and how those words effect us.

Of particular relevance here is Isaiah's prophecy about the appropriation of righteousness. "*I bring My righteousness near, it shall not be far off; My salvation shall not linger. And I will place salvation in Zion, For Israel My glory*" (Isa 46:13). Our text will elaborate upon this blessed commitment.

THE WORD OF FAITH

"... that is, the word of faith which we preach." The word delivered through Moses was NOT a word of faith, for "the law is not of faith" (Gal 3:12). That is a matter of revelation. How is it that what we have received is designated as "the word of faith."

This is not a word only delivered BY faith, but one which **produces** faith. It is

a message to be believed, not a message of commandments, as was the Law. "The word of faith" is the appointed means of putting righteousness within reach of the people. It is nothing less than the Gospel of Christ, in which is revealed the righteousness that comes from God through faith (1:17). It is not possible to have true faith without this word of the Gospel, and it is not possible to be righteous without believing it.

Which we Preach

NOT only does the Gospel induce faith in those who receive it, it is spoken in faith by those who effectively preach it. What men preach reveals what they think saves a person. It is the overflow of their inner persuasion. "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak" (4:13). As will be confirmed later, God has ordained the preaching of the Gospel as the appointed means of saving people. To say it another way, this is the means chosen to produce faith, which brings the righteousness of God to us.

The Law of Moses is NOT "the word

of faith.” It is to be believed, to be sure, but it is not intended to produce the faith that saves the soul (1 Pet 1:9). As valuable as they are, the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are not “*the word of faith*.” While both of them are highly instructive concerning wise living, neither of them produce faith. That is a ministry belonging exclusively to the Gospel of Christ! No one should be intimidated or offended by these words. Nor, indeed, should they conclude the books of reference can be neglected. They have come from God, and are profitable. However, they are **not** the means of producing faith in Christ, and appropriating the righteousness of God.

Essentially, “*the word of faith*” is a word of promise – a word of salvation and deliverance to those who will receive it!

CONFESSING WITH YOUR MOUTH

Two critical matters relating to the appropriation of righteousness are mentioned. They contrast sharply with the requirements of the Law. The word under the law is “*DO!*” – do ALL of the commandments. The word given by Moses was in the mouth of the people when they replied, “*All that the LORD hath spoken we will do*” (Ex 19:8). Notice how differently “*the righteousness of faith*” speaks. It brings a unique and superior message to us.

“*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus . . .*” This is the acknowledgment that we have believed “*the word of faith*.” We receive the fact that the Lord has done what was necessary for God to make us righteous! And what is it that is “*confessed*”? It is not that we have done all that was commanded us to do! It is not that we are sinful people. Rather, it is that “*Jesus is Lord*” – not that He will be, but that He is! It is admitting that we see and delight in the fact that God has made Him “*both Lord and Christ*” (Acts 2:36). Furthermore, we are depending on Him, in the capacity of Lord, to save us.

This is a confession “*with the mouth,*”

where what has been received is joyfully acknowledged. This confession is made initially when we come to the Lord. As with Simon Peter, it is the result of God revealing the Son to us (Matt 16:16-18). This confession is not confined to the time when we were delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Col 1:13). This is an ongoing confession, declared when persecution arises, and when conflict with the world erupts. It is made when coming in contact with other believers, and when we approach the throne of all grace.

This is not a casual or lifeless admission. It is a confession that can only be made under the influence of the Holy Spirit. As it is written, “*no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit*” (1 Cor 12:3). This is the

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acknowledgment that Jesus is the manager of one’s life. He is not only “*Lord of all*” by the commission of God, but perceived to be the exclusive reason for the life of the one making this confession.

BELIEVING IN YOUR HEART

“*. . . and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead.*” Believing in the heart goes far deeper than admitting with the mind. When the Ethiopian eunuch asked what was hindering him from being baptized, Philip responded, “*If you believe with all your heart, you may*” (Acts 8:37).

To believe “*in your heart*” is to embrace the Gospel at the point where

you are motivated. Your heart is where the issues of life are formed, and from which they are expressed (Prov 4:23). When one believes in the heart, a certain aggressive to obtain the promises of God is realized. That is why those who believed cried out, “*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*” (Acts 2:37), and “*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*”

And what is it that is to be believed? Other texts indicate that believing Jesus is the Son of God is the principle thing (Matt 16:16; John 20:31; Acts 8:37; 1 John 5:10). Why is the resurrection of Christ the focus in this text. Simply because His resurrection confirmed He **is** the Son of God. As it is written, “. . . *His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*” (Rom 1:3-4).

Believing that God raised Jesus from the dead is essential to our salvation because the power to save and keep us is resurrection power. It is “*the power of His resurrection*” that faith constrains us to appropriate (Phil 3:10). That is the power that is presently devoted to believers (Eph 1:19-20), and that is at work in them (Eph 3:20). This truth – that God has raised Jesus from the dead – must not drift from us. Nothing must be allowed to supercede it in our thinking, or rob us of believing it in our heart. Should those things happen, we will not be saved.

YOU WILL BE SAVED

“*. . . you will be saved.*” It is not that you **may** be saved, but that you **WILL** be saved! There is not the slightest chance the confession that Jesus is Lord, and believing in the heart that God has raised Him from the dead, will not issue in salvation!

There is a threefold sense in which we are saved. From the standpoint of our personal makeup, our spirit, soul, and body will be saved (1 Thess 5:23). That takes us from our initial entrance into

Christ through the resurrection of the dead. A salvation that is not this broad is no salvation at all.

Another threefold view of salvation relates to time. It is expressed in the words, *“who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we*

trust that He will still deliver us” (2 Cor 1:10). This includes our deliverance from the guilt of sin, the power of sin, and the presence of sin. It covers our initial deliverance from the clutches of the devil, our daily deliverances by the grace of God, and our final triumph over death. A salvation that does not include all of these

is not a salvation at all. And it is all effected by confessing Jesus is Lord and believing God has raised Him from the dead. As you can see, this word is marked by both simplicity and profundity. The Spirit will now briefly expand on the glory of what has been affirmed. A strong appeal will be made to your faith.

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SALVATION

“¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Remember, becoming righteous and being saved pertain to the same glorious reality. One speaks of what we attain (*“righteousness”*), and the other of deliverance from all sin has caused (*“salvation”*).

BELIEVING UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS

“For with the heart one believes unto righteousness . . . ” In a sense, righteousness gets into us. In another sense, we get into it. In the first, righteousness is *“imputed”* unto us. In the second we come into a state of righteousness, or are *“made the righteousness of God in Him [Christ]”* (2 Cor 5:21).

There are some edifying renderings of this verse in other versions. *“For with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness.”*^{NASB} *“For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified.”*^{NIV} *“For one believes with the heart and so is justified.”*^{NRSV} and *“For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God.”*^{NLT} Keep in mind that being made righteous is the same thing as being justified. One speaks of **what** is done (righteous), the other of **how** it is done (justified). From the standpoint of being justified, everything against us is removed. From the standpoint of being made righteous, what we need is given to us. These are the two sides of the coin of salvation.

Those who insist that we are justified by works must contend with this expression: *“For with the heart one*

believes unto righteousness.” Faith conducts us, as it were into a state of Divine approval. We believe into

the mind is powerless to change the heart. This is why a fundamentally cerebral religion is not a blessing. It cannot

Those who insist that we are justified by works must contend with this expression: *“For with the heart one believes unto righteousness.”* Faith conducts us, as it were into a state of Divine approval.

righteousness. We do not work ourselves into it.

Believing with the Heart

Note that the belief is *“with the heart,”* not with the mind! When men are hesitant to believe, it is because they are *“slow of heart,”* not slow of mind (Lk 24:25). Jesus said a troubled heart would be offset by a believing in Him. *“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me”* (John 14:1).

Some of the things that distinguish believing with the heart from the assent of the mind include, *“the joy of faith”* (Phil 1:25), *“the hearing of faith”* (Gal 3:2,5), the *“shield of faith”* (Eph 6:16), and the *“assurance of faith”* (Heb 10:22). The consent of the mind cannot produce inner joy (*“joy of faith”*), the cognizance of God (*“hearing of faith”*), protection for the soul (*“shield of faith”*), or strong confidence (*“assurance of faith”*).

The heart can sanctify the mind, but

eliminate doubt, questions, or fear. However, when men *“believe with the heart unto righteousness,”* all of these marvelous changes come to pass.

CONFESSING UNTO SALVATION

This is too difficult for the person enslaved to law. Confession is not perceived as capable of inducting one into salvation. However, our text declares this to be a precise statement of the case. “. . . and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Other versions read, *“and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation,”*^{NASB} *“it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved,”*^{NIV} *“and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.”*^{NRSV}

The purpose of this text is not to ascribe to the confession of Christ as Lord the total cause for our salvation. Rather, it is to show us that **the faith that saves always manifests itself in shameless confession.** The confession that saves is prompted by the faith that brings righteousness. Confession is to salvation

what the resurrection of Christ was to His Sonship. The resurrection confirmed Jesus to be the Son of God with power.

The “*confession*” of our text verifies that we have believed unto righteousness. Faith without confession is not possible.

Confession without faith is spurious. Faith always confesses, and confession always follows genuine faith.

WHAT DOES THE SCRIPTURE SAY?

“¹¹ *For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’* ¹² *For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.* ¹³ *For ‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’*” Because the Spirit intends to put the knowledge of salvation well within our reach, He again appeals to the Scriptures. It is by them that the man of God becomes “*perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*” (2 Tim 3:17). The effect of faith upon both man and the Lord will now be briefly expounded.

WHOEVER BELIEVES ON HIM

“*As the Scripture says, ‘Anyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.’*”^{NIV}

Not ashamed to Confess Christ

The person believing on Christ will never be ashamed to confess Him. Whether one is being stoned like Stephen, standing before Ananias the high priest like Paul, or standing before the council like Peter and John, faith constrains shamelessness. It moves the person to confess Christ is Lord – the ONLY Lord.

The multitudes of professing Christians who are ashamed to acknowledge Christ are confessing to their lack of faith. They must have the promise of God shouted in their ears, for it is true: “*WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.*”^{NASB}

Trusting Brings No Shame

But there is another sense in which the believer will never be put to shame. God will never allow faith to prove to be an embarrassment to the believer. It is

never vain to trust the Lord! The one who trusts that God will save, will himself be saved! The one who depends on the Lord to keep him will be kept! Those who depend upon the Lord for their daily bread will not be put to shame. Let no one imagine that faith induces idleness or indifference. Neither, indeed, does it bring shame.

No person who is living by faith will be frightened by the return of Jesus. Those who have counted all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ will not be disappointed when they stand before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account for the deeds done in the body

Shame At Christ’s Coming

In yet another sense, the person who believes on the Son will not be put to shame in the day of judgment. Such will not “*shrink away from Him in shame at His coming*”^{NASB} (1 John 2:28).

No person who is living by faith will be frightened by the return of Jesus. Those who have counted all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ will not be disappointed when they stand before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account for the deeds done in the body (2 Cor 5:10).

NO DISTINCTION

“*For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile.*”^{NIV} Although the Jews were a favored people and the Gentiles a rejected people, yet faith eliminates any lasting differences between them. By the grace of God, and through their faith, believing Jews and Gentiles are made “*one body.*” Faith has removed the distinction between them.

How thoroughly this is stated by the Holy Spirit. “*For he is our [Jew and Gentile] peace, who hath made both [Jew and Gentile] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us [Jew and Gentile]; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain [Jew and Gentile] one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both [Jew and Gentile] unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off [Gentiles], and to them that were nigh [Jews]*” (Eph 2:14-17).

The fact that the salvation of God is appropriated by faith removes the distinction between Jew and Gentile. As it is written, “*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Gal 3:26-28). The fact that believers have “*the same Lord*” makes them “*one body.*” Therefore, in Christ, “*there is no difference between Jew and Gentile.*”

The fact that in Christ “*there is no difference,*” makes division within the

body of Christ a grievous sin. **Wherever there is faith in Christ, division must not be allowed.** If faith makes us acceptable to God, it can do no less for us. That is one reason we are admonished, *“Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them”*^{NASB} (Rom 16:17).

THE SAME LORD

“ . . . for the same Lord over all . . . ”
The truth of the matter is that every person has the same Lord. It is that some know it and some do not. Men speak of having a different faith. The Spirit speaks of having a different master or Lord (Matt 6:24), and serving diverse masters (Rom 16:18).

The particular emphasis here is redemption, or the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. The point is not merely that the Lord is *“over all,”* which He surely is, but that the salvation of God is common to both Jew and Gentile.

CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD

“ . . . is rich to all who call upon Him.” Salvation is truly life *“more abundantly”* (John 10:10). In it, the Holy Spirit is *“poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior”* (Tit 3:6). The power of God is devoted to those in Christ Jesus (Eph 1:19), and God *“is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us”* (Eph 3:20). The Gospel announces *“so great a salvation”* (Heb 2:3). It brings *“all sufficiency in all things”* (2 Cor 9:8). All of this, and more, is involved in the Lord being *“rich to all who call upon Him.”*

The word *“rich”* does not refer to earthly resources, although the Lord is fully capable of supplying such things. Rather, this refers to the abundant adequacy of salvation. The righteousness that we need is supplied, and the acceptance we require is realized. Our liabilities are removed, and we are granted access to *“all the treasures of*

wisdom and knowledge” that are hidden in Christ Jesus (Col 2:2-3).

From the standpoint of what we need to meet the test of time and stand before the Lord without fault, the Lord is rich toward us. He *“shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus”* (Phil 4:19).

All that Call Upon Him

Calling upon the name of the Lord is a most holy activity. Men began to *“call upon the name of the Lord”* in the days of Enos, the son of Seth, whom Adam begat

Men speak of having a different faith. The Spirit speaks of having a different master or Lord, and serving diverse masters.

in his own image (Gen 4:26). David, a man after God’s own heart, said, *“I will call on the LORD”* (2 Sam 22:4). When Elijah engaged in a contest with the prophets of Baal he said, *“you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD”* (1 Kgs 18:24). Joel prophesied of a day when *“it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered”* (Joel 2:32). When the day of Pentecost *“had fully come,”* Peter announced the day Joel promised had begun (Acts 2:21). Those who are in Christ Jesus are described as *“those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart”* (2 Tim 2:22). Those who *“call on the Father”* are admonished to *“pass the time of your sojourning here in fear”* (1 Pet 1:17).

Our text boldly announces that God is *“rich”* to everyone who calls upon Him. What does it mean to *“call upon Him?”* Those who call upon the name of the Lord

are casting themselves upon His mercy, seeking to experience by faith what He has promised. Faith sees the Lord as He really is, and moves the believer to seek His promised blessing, particularly His great salvation.

Those who *“call upon the name of the Lord”* search for Him with the *“whole heart,”* and in expectation of finding Him (Jer 29:13). Some of the words used when men called upon the name of the Lord include the following.

- ❑ *“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”* (Acts 2:37).
- ❑ *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”* (Acts 16:30).
- ❑ *“Lord, save me!”* (Matt 14:30).
- ❑ *“Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; Save me, and I shall be saved, For You are my praise”* (Jer 17:14).
- ❑ *“Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your tabernacle”* (Psa 43:3).
- ❑ *“Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity”* (Psa 118:25).
- ❑ *“But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me!”* (Psa 22:19).

These are pleas for the Lord to act in our behalf, and in strict accord with His nature. Calling upon the Lord presumes some knowledge of Him, as will be confirmed in the next section of this chapter (vs 14-17). It also reveals a perceived dependency upon the Lord. The one who calls upon Him knows *“My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth”* (Psa 121:2).

Whoever Calls

“For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” This is a marvelous promise. As all Divine commitments, it is to be believed. As will be developed in the next few verses, this has particular reference to deliverance from the guilt and power of sin. To put it another way, it is a promise relating to the imputation of righteousness.

Calling upon the Lord involves a profound desire for what He has promised in Christ Jesus. It reveals a discontent with what the world offers, and a driving compulsion to rise above the flesh.

Because of these realities, this promise guarantees salvation and the righteousness of God to all who desire it. That, of course, is the purpose for the promise. It brings strong confidence to

those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness. If you fervently desire the righteousness of God, you can have it. It is well within your reach! The Gospel announces that to be the case.

CONCLUSION

This marvelous section of Scripture justifies Paul's fervent desire for the salvation of Israel. He knows they have received the promises of salvation, and a commitment from God that He will make

a new covenant with them. He also knows why they have not attained to the righteousness of God -- because they are ignorant of it. Therefore, Paul has devoted himself to declaring the righteousness of

God, the Gospel that reveals it, and the faith that obtains it. None of these are popular in the contemporary Christian world, yet all are foundational in the Apostles' doctrine.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 5/4/2001. Continuing in our overview of the book of Romans, we will be covering verses 14-21 of the tenth chapter. The theme will be, **"THE INDISPENSABLE GOSPEL."** The Gospel of Christ is indispensable if men are going to be saved. That includes their entrance into Christ as well as remaining in Him. The faith through which grace saves cannot be sustained without hearing the Gospel of Christ. The truth of this circumstance will be confirmed by the effect the Gospel has upon you. Our meeting will convene at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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