

# “Righteousness for Everyone Who Believes”

## Sermons on Romans # 26

*Texts: Romans 9:30-10:13; Leviticus 18:1-5*

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In order to answer the question, “why is it that Israel is under God’s judgment, even though the gospel went to Israel first and only then to the Gentiles?” Paul has pointed out that God is working out his mysterious purposes through the election of a believing remnant (“true Israel”) chosen from among the whole of Israel (“all Israel,” cf. Romans 9:6). The apostle will now address Israel’s responsibility for rejecting her own Messiah, despite God’s sovereign and merciful purposes. Paul will then draw a sharp contrast between two kinds of righteousness (a justifying righteousness that is by faith), and human righteousness based on works (which condemns).

The main issue with which Paul must deal is Israel’s present condition of unbelief (*apistis*). In Romans 9:6-29, Paul emphasized God’s sovereignty in showing mercy to all those whom he wills in order to explain why there is a believing remnant of elect Jews (true Israel) with the larger body, national Israel. But now Paul will demonstrate that Israel’s unbelief stems from her own unwillingness to believe. As John Murray once put it: “The emphasis upon the sovereign will of God in the preceding verses does not eliminate human responsibility, nor is the one incompatible with the other.”<sup>1</sup> The reason that all Israel does not believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah is because the people of Israel do not want to believe that Jesus is the Messiah! Instead, Paul’s own beloved people tragically sought righteousness through works of law flowing from a zeal not based upon knowledge.

As Paul has made plain, only those chosen by God and called to faith through the gospel, believe the promise. Those not chosen, willingly remain in their sins, counting upon the supposed righteousness of their own good works to justify them on the last day. Ironically, however, the godless Gentiles embraced the gospel because of God’s mercy, even as the believing remnant among Israel has done so. But sadly, “all Israel” does not believe and as Paul continues to flesh out the fact that while Israel received all of the blessings described earlier in the chapter (vv. 4-5), the nation as a whole stands condemned and under God’s curse. As Paul sees it, Israel, not God, is to blame.

Israel’s willful rejection of her own Messiah can be seen in three important ways which Paul will spell out in relationship to Israel’s understanding of faith and righteousness.<sup>2</sup> First, in Romans 9:30-31, Paul will contrast “the righteousness based on faith” with “the law of righteousness.” Israel sought the latter. Second, in Romans 10:3, Paul will contrast “the righteousness of God,” with “their own righteousness.” Israel sought the latter. Third, in Romans 10:5-6, Paul will contrast “the righteousness based on law” with “the righteousness based on faith.” Israel sought the former. Thus Israel does not believe the gospel even while the Gentiles do. And it is because of this tragic failure to understand their own Scriptures, that Israel is responsible for their present condition of unbelief.

**A**s we turn to the first part of our text, Romans 9:30-33, Paul makes the point that the gospel of Jesus Christ, sadly, became a stumbling stone for Israel.

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<sup>1</sup> Murray, *Commentary on Romans*, Vol. 2, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 619.

Many writers see in verse 30 a break from Paul's prior line of thinking, since Paul's familiar question (*"what then shall we say"*) often introduces a new thought throughout Romans (4:1; 6:1; 7:7; 8:31; 9:14). Furthermore, Paul moves away from the themes of divine mercy and God's sovereignty to discuss "righteousness" and "faith" which are largely missing from the preceding in Romans 9:1-29 and which follows in chapter 11:1-36. Paul will follow up the issue just raised, namely, how did a people not God's people (the Gentiles) become his people? Why does Israel now find itself under God's curse? Why are the Gentiles included and Israel excluded? Why the great reversal? The answer is found in the person of the stumbling stone, Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah. Seeking righteousness through good works and obedience, Israel did not see the need for the righteousness of Christ.

In Romans 9:30-33, Paul writes, *"What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone." As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."* After indicating the change in topic by means of his question, Paul goes on to contrast the way in which the Gentiles sought the righteousness of God with that of unbelieving Israel.

According to Paul, at first, *"the Gentiles did not pursue righteousness."* This is a rhetorical argument, since Paul knows full well that there were countless Gentiles who sought external righteousness exactly as Israel was doing. Paul must be speaking of something else, specifically that righteousness which justifies—a forensic righteousness, the righteousness of Christ, about which he had been speaking earlier in the letter. As Israel was adopted as God's son, saw the divine glory, participated in the covenants, received the law, possessed the temple and all that went with it including true worship, the Gentiles, on the other hand, had none of these things. As Paul puts it in Ephesians 2:11-22, the Gentiles were strangers and foreigners to all of the covenant blessings of God. How did the Gentiles come to believe in Christ, when, prior to his coming and the dawn of the Messianic age, they walked in darkness and had no interest whatsoever in this justifying righteousness?

The answer is plain. The Gentiles sought God's righteousness only because God poured out his mercy upon them. As a result, they have obtained righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. They simply received it when God extended it to them, because such righteousness was based upon God's mercy, not a misunderstanding of the Law of Moses. This basic principle of mercy was set forth by Paul in Romans 8:28-30: those whom God has chosen, he has also called and also justified. But one would think that given Israel's glorious history, God's chosen nation would have seen these gifts as sign-posts, pointing them to the perfect righteousness that God offers to all who trust in Jesus Christ. Sadly, they did not.

The sharp contrast Paul draws between Israel and the Gentiles is dramatic. Israel pursued a *"law of righteousness."* The same people who were given all of God's gifts throughout redemptive history, sought to earn favor with God through means of external conformity to the commandments. Thus the people of Israel did not obtain what they were seeking. As Paul puts it, while the Gentiles believed the gospel and were reckoned as righteous, what the Jews so earnestly pursued (personal righteousness through good works) they did not obtain. The situation is both tragic and unexpected.

But why is it that Israel did not obtain the righteousness they sought? The answer is spelled out in v. 32. The Jews sought righteousness *"not by faith but as if it were by works."* The sad fact is that the people of Israel thought righteousness was something earned or gained by keeping the law. By means of external conformity to the commandments of God they believed that God regarded people as "righteous." Under

the terms of the original covenant of works, there was the possibility of Adam earning a covenantal righteousness. There is also the promise of blessing for obedience under the terms of the Sinaitic covenant God made with Israel. But since Adam sinned, all people, Jew and Gentile alike, are under sin and guilty before God. By the time of the coming of Christ, the Jews mistakenly believed that what God required of them was mere external conformity to the commandments, an error which Jesus corrects at the end of the Sermon on the Mount: *“be perfect as your father in heaven is perfect!”*

Rather than do as Abraham had done (believe God’s covenant promise and be reckoned as righteous), the Jews read the account of God’s dealing with Abraham through the lens of Moses and the covenant of Sinai. Through this lens, which distorts everything, obedience to the commandments is understood as a means of earning justification, and circumcision, the sign and seal of the covenant of grace, became a meritorious work. Thus Israel sought righteousness by means of sinful human effort (good works) and not through faith. And for this, Paul believes Israel is guilty before God. The great tragedy is that Israel has *“stumbled over the `stumbling stone,”* i.e., her own Messiah, Jesus Christ. By trusting in personal obedience as the ground of one’s standing before God, Israel did not know what to do with Jesus when he came to save them from their sins. What use is a Savior from sin if righteousness comes through good works and external conformity to the commandments?

Picking up on the language of Isaiah 8:14 when God declares, *“See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall,”* and again in Isaiah 28:16, *“the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame,”* Paul now says it should be clear that Israel’s stumbling over her own Messiah was foretold in the Old Testament. The people of Israel should have realized what the Gentiles did, namely *“what God demands of us under the law, he freely gives us in the gospel.”* Since the Jews believed that obedience to the commandments earns sufficient righteousness to escape judgment, what is the need of Christ? And this sad occasion of Israel’s stumbling over the one God sent to provide the very righteousness Israel sought but did not obtain is likewise foretold in the Old Testament.

In the first thirteen verses of Romans 10, Paul now contrast the two ways of righteousness.

In Romans 10, Paul’s concern for Israel, once again comes to the fore. His emotions bubble to the surface as he continues to work through the ramifications of the fact that his beloved Israel sought to be righteous by means of works and was fully responsible for her rejection of Christ. But not only do we see Paul’s concern for his people, we also see his razor-sharp logic when Paul contrasts the “two ways” of righteousness; righteousness which comes through faith v. righteousness earned through good works.

In verse 1, Paul expresses his feelings for his countrymen (cf. Romans 9:1-3). *“Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.”* Paul’s words are warmly expressed to his brothers in Christ—not his brothers in Israel. The Greek word for brothers (*adelphoi*) is placed forward in the sentence for emphasis and probably signals the introduction of new elements into Paul’s argument, as well as the beginning of a line of argument he will make to the effect that God is not yet finished with Israel. Although Paul laments Israel’s present state of unbelief, Paul also expresses his prayerful desire and hope for his own people, namely that one day before the end, Israel may be saved and delivered from God’s wrath which is coming upon the earth.

Having been mercifully called by God to become the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul fully understands why Israel has stumbled over Christ. In verses 2-3 Paul tells us why: *“For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.”*

Paul knows what it is like to possess great zeal for the law, but yet be completely misguided in terms of a proper understanding of the gospel and how it is that someone obtains a right standing before God. Again, Israel's problem is not indifference to the law of God. It is not as though the people were trying to get by on their laurels, or that they were just apathetic. In fact, the exact opposite is the case.

This zeal without knowledge can be seen in several places in the New Testament. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks of the need for a righteousness that surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law (Matthew 5:20). These men were extremely zealous, yet it was not enough. Jesus goes on to speak the importance of doing acts of righteousness in secret before God, not in public before men to be seen by others (Matthew 6:1-4). Furthermore, Jesus warns us of certain hypocrites, who love to pray so that people will see them and think they are righteous, but yet, who do not pray in secret when no one is looking (6:5-15). In addition, Jesus cautions us about fasting in such a way to demonstrate an external piety by contorting our faces and making our stomachs growl (6:16-18). All of this clearly indicates that the Jews of Paul's day were zealous and meticulous in their pursuit of external righteousness. But this is the problem and explains why it is that Israel did not embrace Jesus as the Messiah.

Zeal is not a bad thing. It is a quality praised throughout the New Testament (cf. John 2:17; Acts 22:3; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Philippians 3:6). The problem is that this zeal for a legalistic righteousness is based upon a lack of knowledge, specifically, as Paul points out in verse 3, a lack of knowledge of the righteousness of God. Not knowing about this perfect righteousness from God (which justifies), the Jews sought to establish their own righteousness (which doesn't) through a zealous conformity to the law of God and through possession of the sign and seal of circumcision. And by seeking righteousness in this way, the Jews would not submit to Christ's righteousness, who, sadly, became their rock of offense.

This tragic situation leads to Paul's very important assertion in verse 4. "*Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*" This is one of the most critical and disputed texts in contemporary New Testament studies. On the face of it, Paul is saying that by not submitting to God's righteousness in Christ, the Jews missed the fact that Christ is the end of the law (in the sense of being the one to whom it pointed and who fulfilled all of its righteous demands through his active obedience). Now that Christ has come, God justifies all those who believe, that is, all those who through faith submit to Christ's righteousness and renounce their own.

The various disputes among Paul's interpreters complicate this subject greatly. One dispute centers around the meaning of the word *nomos*, or law. Some understand this to mean "law in general" (Gifford, Denny) or "Old Testament revelation, broadly conceived," (Campbell, Badenas) "legalism," (Bultmann, Moule) or the Mosaic law (the ten commandments), which is the meaning I think is demanded by the context here, and by Paul's usage elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> Thus Christ is the end (or the goal) of the law given to Moses. God gave us the law to point us to Christ, and that the law reaches its goal (is fulfilled) in Christ. The other dispute centers around the meaning of Christ being the end (*telos*) of the law. Does Paul mean that Christ is end of the law in the sense of the termination of the law, that the law is no longer binding or in effect? Or, does Paul mean that Christ is the goal of the law in the sense of connecting the ultimate purpose of the law to the coming of Christ. Both of these interpretations are exegetically possible and both capture something of Paul's overall argument.

Some Reformed writers (Murray, Hodge, Morris) take Paul to mean the end of the law to refer to the

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<sup>3</sup> See the discussion in Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 636.

false understanding of the law as a means of justification, i.e., once Christ has come, the Jewish understanding of the old covenant (legalism) evaporates.<sup>4</sup> Non-Reformed writers such as Dunn (covenantal nomism) take a similar view, that this refers to the end of misunderstanding of the law and its righteousness being confined to Israel, i.e., Christ removes barriers between Jew and Gentile. But I think it best to understand Paul's assertion in light of the works principle underlying the original covenant of works. Christ is the goal (end) of the law, because the law reveals the righteousness of God even as Christ fulfills these commandments through his own perfect obedience. Since Christ's obedience is the basis (or ground) upon which sinners are justified through faith, we should read Paul's assertion here in light of Romans 5:12-21, "through the obedience of the one, the many were made righteous." But to what was Christ obedient? The covenant of works and the commandments God gave at Sinai. This is why the coming of Christ is connected to the end or the goal of the law. Through his own perfect and personal obedience, Christ fulfills that which God demands of his people, i.e., the demands of the law.

Certain dispensationalists are attracted to the former interpretation (Christ ends the law—cf. Romans 6:14). They believe that with the coming of Christ, Gentiles are not under law, but under grace, hence, Christ is the end of the law because we are no longer in the dispensation of law, but are now in the age of grace.<sup>5</sup> This is antinomianism, plain and simple, since the ten commandments, supposedly, are not binding upon Christians. The irony is that when dispensationalists speak of walking in the Spirit instead of obedience to the commandments, they become far more legalistic than those they criticize. God's law is limited to "ten commandments" not the countless list of blue laws and house rules which characterize much of American fundamentalism.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Murray, The Epistle to the Romans, Vol. 2, pp. 49-51; Hodge, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, pp. 335-337; Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, pp. 380-381.

<sup>5</sup> One such example of the older dispensational view can be found in the work of William R. Newell (Moody's hand picked Bible teacher). "The words Christ is the end of the Law cannot mean Christ is 'the fulfillment of what the law *required*.' The law required obedience to precepts—or death for disobedience. Now Christ *died*! If it be answered, that before He died he fulfilled the claims of the law, kept it perfectly, and that this law-keeping of Christ was reckoned as over against the Israelites breaking of the Law, then I ask, Why should Christ *die*? If the claims of the law were met in Christ's earthly obedience, and if that life of earthly obedience is 'reckoned to those who believe' the curse of the law has been removed by vicarious 'law-keeping.' *Why should Christ die?* Now this idea of Christ's keeping the Law for "us" (for they will include us among the Israelites! although the Law was not given us Gentiles), *is a deadly heresy, no matter who teaches it*. Paul tells us plainly that the curse of the Law was removed: 'Christ redeemed us,' (meaning Jewish believers), from the curse of the Law . . . It is because Reformed theology has kept us Gentiles under the Law,—if not as a means of righteousness, but as "a rule of life," that all the trouble has arisen. *The Law is no more a rule of life than it is a means of righteousness*. Walking in the Spirit has now taken the place of walking by ordinances. God has another principle under which he has put his saints: "*Ye are not under law, but, under grace!*" Cf. William R. Newell, Romans: Verse by Verse (Moody Press, 1938), pp.392-394.

<sup>6</sup> In fairness, it should be noted that most contemporary dispensationalists take a different tact. According to Charles Ryrie: "Christ is the termination of the law. It could not provide righteousness based on merit, but Christ provides righteousness based on God's grace in response to faith." While this is an exegetical possibility and captures an important truth (namely that with the coming of Christ, we enter a fundamentally new period in redemptive history), there is no need to import the entire

The best way to understand this is as follows. When Christ fulfills both the law and the demands of the covenant of works through his own obedience, he ends the old redemptive economy and commences a new one. Since the Jews thought the law was an end in itself, their allegiance remained to Moses, rather than to Christ, that one to whom Moses should have pointed them, had they understood him correctly. The coming of Christ is the hinge upon which the redemptive drama turns. God's purposes are now universalized from a narrow focus upon Israel to a broad focus upon the Gentile nations. But being so preoccupied with the law and national interest, the Jews did not see the significance of the coming of Christ who is the end of the law, and that a justifying righteousness is now available to all through faith.<sup>7</sup>

One point surely needs to be addressed. How does Christ end the era of the law and provide a righteousness for all those who believe? Does God reckon faith as righteousness (the Arminian view), or is faith the means through which we receive the righteousness of another (the historic Protestant position). According to Paul, Jesus brings about this redemptive-historical shift by fulfilling the righteous requirements of the law through his own perfect obedience to the commandments. In doing so, he fulfills the original covenant of works and the demands of the law, providing that righteousness which is reckoned, accounted or credited to all those who believe the gospel (cf. Romans 5:12-21) This is what it means for Christ to be the end (goal) of the law (of Moses) and why there is righteousness (Christ's) for everyone who believes. Understanding this is vital in understanding the gospel!

That this is essentially Paul's meaning becomes crystal clear in Paul's appeal in the next verse to the Old Testament (Leviticus 18:5 part of our Old Testament lesson) to make this very point. God demands perfect obedience of his people under the works principle which underlies both the original covenant of works as well as its re-publication in the Sinaitic covenant. "*Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: 'The man who does these things will live by them.'*" As Paul sees it, this is what God demanded of us from the very beginning. This is not some Pauline novelty as Moses taught this very thing. In order to be reckoned as righteous before God through the law, one must "live by these things" in the sense that one must obey all of the commandments, and not in the sense of mere outward

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dispensational system and all of its faults into Paul's thinking. By understanding Christ as the goal of the law (in the sense that Christ is the one who fulfills its righteous requirements) we not only stress the important change brought about by the reality of the New Covenant, we are not forced to the logical conclusion of the dispensationalists who leave us with the theological antinomianism—practical legalism paradox.

<sup>7</sup> According to Moo, "as Christ consummates one era of salvation history, so he inaugurates a new one. In this new era, God's eschatological righteousness is available to those who believe; and it is available to everyone who believes. Both emphases are important and reflect one of the most basic themes of the letter (1:16; 3:22; 28-30; 4:16-17). Because the Jews have not understood that Christ has brought the law to its culmination, they have not responded in faith to Christ; and have therefore missed the righteousness of God, available only in Christ on the basis of faith. At the same time, Christ, by ending the era of the law, during which God was dealing mainly with Israel, has made righteousness more readily available to the Gentiles. Verse 4 is, then, the hinge on which the entire section 9:30-10:13 turns. It justifies Paul's claim that the Jews, by their preoccupation with the law, have missed God's righteousness (9:30-10:3); for righteousness is now found only in Christ and only through faith in Christ, the one who has brought the law to its climax and thereby ended its reign. It also announces the theme that Paul will expound in 10:5-13: righteousness by faith in Christ for all who believe." Cf. Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, pp. 641-642.

conformity. If someone doesn't "live by these commandments," in the sense of obeying them perfectly, that same person dies by them, since violating even one of the commandments, brings us under God's curse (cf. James 2:10). It is an all or nothing situation. We either obey the law or we do not!

But in verses 6-7, a righteousness earned through human obedience—an impossibility for Adam's fallen race—is contrasted with the perfect righteousness of Christ, which is received solely through the means of faith: "*But the righteousness that is by faith says: 'Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down) or 'Who will descend into the deep?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).'*" Paul's use of "but" (*de*) tells us that there is a marked contrast between that which precedes and that which follows, namely the righteousness that is by law in verse 5 (and which is therefore based upon perfect obedience), and stands in contrast with the righteousness that is by faith. The former (a righteousness from law) is based upon works (an impossibility for sinners) while the latter is received through faith (Christ's righteousness under the covenant of works).<sup>8</sup>

Based upon Deuteronomy 30 (especially verses 11-14) Paul's point is that God brought his word near to Israel through type and shadow so that the people might know and obey him. In the messianic age, God brings his word near to both Jew and Gentile in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ is that one who fulfills the law, which is the subject of the original passage in Deuteronomy. This is what Reformed Christians are getting at when they speak of the two words of "law" and "gospel," and why they point out the redemptive-historical contrast between Moses and Christ as type and shadow and reality and fulfillment. God drew near to his people through the types and shadows of Moses and the law, before the coming of Christ, who is God with us. Christ's role as end of the law, marks a fundamental redemptive-historical shift. God is near us in the person of his son, not through stone tablets and animal sacrifices.

The point Paul is making by citing these verses is simply this—No sinful human can ascend into heaven. It is impossible. To even think this way, is to "pull" Christ down from heaven, who alone ascended on high. So too, no one can go into the abyss, save one, Jesus Christ, who alone has risen from the dead. The person who is justified by faith, sees his own fulfillment of the law as an impossibility since it demands perfect obedience, something only Christ has done. He does not think that he can rise or descend. He looks to another. He looks in faith to Jesus Christ for a righteousness which justifies.

Having shown what Deuteronomy 30 does not say, in verses 8-10, Paul now tells us what it does say: "*But what does it say? 'The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,' that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.'*" The opening question is connected to Paul's earlier comments about the righteousness that is by faith and which was mentioned in verse 6.

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<sup>8</sup> A problem of sorts exists with Paul's citation of the two passages from Deuteronomy 30 and a fragment from Deuteronomy 9 and volumes have been written as to how to reconcile this apparent problem. Neither of these verses is a direct citation from either the Hebrew text or the LXX and it looks to some that Paul isn't clear in his application drawn from these texts. Perhaps Paul is citing the verses imprecisely capturing the main thought of them, even if he does not quote them verbatim. This is a common practice for many of us. As some commentators have pointed out, it is noteworthy that Paul doesn't say, "Moses says," and then misquote the verse (Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 382). I think the solution is relatively easy. I think it quite likely that Paul is running as he writes and is simply using a free citation of sorts.

How do we understand what Moses said in Deuteronomy 30 in light of the coming of Jesus Christ? How do we understand the word of God which is near us and about which Moses had been speaking?

According to Paul, we understand Moses' words in the context of the covenantal framework we find throughout the Scriptures, namely the covenant of works and grace, which are now to be viewed in light of the coming of Jesus Christ, not through the Old Testament lens of type and shadow. The message which Paul and the apostles are proclaiming to us is that in Jesus Christ the word of promise draws near. In Jesus Christ, who is Emmanuel, God is with his people. In fact, this word is now in our mouths and in our hearts. And what word is this? It is the word of the gospel and the declaration of the forgiveness of sins and of God's righteousness, not the word of the law and the declaration of God's condemnation!

The specific contents of this word of faith are set forth by Paul in verses 9-10. The nearness of the word of promise is such that we confess and believe that Jesus is Lord (i.e., that Jesus is the one to whom the promise points and in whom God draws near, revealing his righteousness) and that God raised him from the dead. This belief is connected to the simple confession that Jesus died for our sins and was raised for our justification. All those who believe this word of promise will likewise confess it. Saving faith will manifest itself in confession. And this confession of Christ is the sign of our deliverance from the wrath of God which is coming upon the world. Paul is not saying that we must believe *x* and then confess *y* audibly in order to be saved as though Paul were describing some kind of a magical incantation. Rather, we should take Paul to mean that believing *x* will manifest itself in the confession of *y*. Saving faith will necessarily lead to a confession of Christ's Lordship.

Given the importance of these two verses, we should not be surprised that they have served as both as an elementary Christian creed as well as an evangelistic invitation. These statements ably function in both capacities. They also help define the contents of saving faith as well. How much must one know and understand of the gospel to be saved? What are the minimal requirements for entrance into the kingdom of God? While we ought not take a minimalist approach and seek to lower the bar, nevertheless, this is a real pastoral and practical question. Here we are given part of the answer by the apostle. In order to be saved someone must believe that Jesus is Lord. To a Jew who was familiar with the LXX translation of the Old Testament, this meant that Jesus is God, since the translators of the LXX used *kurios* in many passages which directly referred to God. Similarly, when Paul speaks of Jesus as Lord in Philippians 2, he goes on to say that this is the highest title which may be given in heaven or on earth. He is clearly connecting Christ's Lordship to his deity. Given the frequent use by Paul of the phrases, "God our Father" and "the Lord Jesus Christ" throughout his writings (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2), it is clear that for Paul, "the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord meant the acknowledgment that Jesus shares the name and the nature, the holiness, the authority, power and majesty and eternity of the one and only true God."<sup>9</sup> When we confess that Jesus is Lord, I take Paul to mean that we confess a rudimentary belief in the deity of Christ.

But Paul also speaks of the necessity of belief that God raised Jesus from the dead. This means that in order to exercise saving faith, we must believe that Jesus died on a Roman cross and that he was bodily raised from the dead on the third day in real human history. We must believe the basic historical facts of the New Testament, and not think them to be mythological or allegorical or taking place outside the realm of human history. As we have seen throughout the Book of Romans, we must believe Jesus to be Lord and that God raised him from the dead. And through this act God provides for the forgiveness of

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<sup>9</sup> Cranfield, Commentary on Romans, II.529.

our sins and provides us with a perfect righteousness which alone can pass his scrutiny.<sup>10</sup> That we must believe in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead and confess him as Lord, completely eliminates the idea that salvation can be earned and that God rewards human effort.

To cinch this point, in verse 11, Paul cites a passage from Isaiah 28:16: “*As the Scripture says, ‘Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.’*” There are two reasons why Paul does this. According to Douglas Moo: “First, it provides further scriptural support for his critical connection of faith to salvation. For ‘not being put to shame’ refers to deliverance at the time of judgment. Second by adding the word ‘no one’ at the beginning of the quotation, Paul is able to cite the text to support his contention that the salvation now made available in Christ is for anyone who believes. This verse therefore finally picks up the element of universality in 10:4b: ‘for everyone who believes.’”<sup>11</sup> This assertion goes a long way in defining the place of true Israel and believing Gentiles in redemptive history, especially in light of “all Israel’s” present condition of *apistis* (unbelief).

This statement also reinforces Paul’s point that in Jesus Christ, the word of God is near us. God sent Jesus to die for our sins and raised him from the dead. If we believe in our hearts and confess Jesus Christ as Lord with our mouths, we will be saved. We will never be put to shame. This applies not only to those members of true Israel, but to anyone who believes, including the Gentiles, a point Paul rams home in verses 12-13. “*For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’*” These two verses unpack the meaning of “anyone,” cited above in the Isaiah passage. Thus Paul’s universalism now comes out into the open. Paul is a universalist (not in the sense that everyone will be saved, nor in the Arminian sense that God makes salvation hypothetically available to everyone), but in the sense that in the messianic age, the blessings of the gospel extend to all races, tribes and tongues, to all the Gentile nations. The gospel is universal in its scope because God will call people to faith from every nation and culture and form them into a new society which is the church of Jesus Christ.

In Romans 3:23, Paul used the phrase, “there is no difference,” to make the point that Jews and Gentiles alike were condemned by sin—there is no one righteous, no not one. In Romans 10:12, Paul uses the same phrase to make the point that in the New Covenant, Jews and Gentiles who believe and confess that Jesus is the risen Christ, will be reckoned as righteous. There is no difference in the blessings of the gospel for the Jew and for the Gentile. In fact, the prophet Joel foretold this universal scope of the gospel as being a key feature of the messianic age when he stated: “*Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*” It is in this sense that Paul is a universalist and this universalism is a key feature of prophetic revelation regarding the coming messianic age and underlies the church’s missionary endeavor.

And so the application we must draw from this section of Romans is crystal clear. In Jesus Christ, God offers a justifying righteousness to everyone—Jew or Gentile, without exception—who believes in their hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead and confesses him to be Lord. Indeed, everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. And so what will it be—a perfect righteousness which can withstand the judgment of God and the rich blessings of God? Or will you suffer the fate of Paul’s unbelieving countrymen, Israel, who sought to be righteous through personal obedience to the law.

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<sup>10</sup> This also becomes a bit clearer in light of several other critical Paul texts which treat this same subject, I Corinthians 15:1-6 and Ephesians 2:8-10.

<sup>11</sup> Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 659.