

Seeking to Please God By Works or By Faith

📖 Romans 10:5-8

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I didn't sense good comprehension of the material last week in Romans 10:1-4. Maybe it was me who didn't have comprehension and so it was poor communication or maybe it is just difficult material. Either way I want to try to shed some further light about what happened when Christ came to the nation Israel and why they rejected Him. I'm just going to speak in modern theology so that we can understand easier. In 9:3-4 you note that the nation Israel had been given many advantages during the OT period; the adoption as sons, the Shechinah glory dwelling with them, the covenants, the Law, the Messianic promises, the temple, etc...all these were given uniquely to that one nation and they all pointed to the ultimate consummation in Christ and His earthly kingdom when Gentile kingdoms have run their course. When the Christ came and offered His kingdom to the nation they rejected Him. Paul's reasoning for why is that the Law that had been given to them at Mt Sinai in order to prepare them for the Christ, in order to show them that they could not keep the Law perfectly and the sacrificial system at the Temple and the priests were there to enable them to experience atonement and forgiveness of sins so they could walk and be a holy people unto God and that the Law and the Temple and the Sacrifices, all pointed to One who would keep the Law perfectly, who would Himself be a Temple and who would be the ultimate Sacrifice for their sins so that they could derive perfect righteousness from Him. Yet when He came they had so perverted these institutions that they did not recognize Him as the righteous fulfillment of the Law.

There was this tremendous perversion brought in by the scribes and Pharisees. All they were doing was keeping the letter of the law, mere externals, and they were not at all keeping the spirit of the law, the internal, heart intent that Jesus came to fulfill. So because they had not been keeping the spirit of the law they had piles and piles of sin that had built up in the nation. And what does sin do to the minds ability to think correctly? It destroys it. Sin always starts off some little thing but if you don't confess that little thing and get back on track before you know it there are more little things and it gets harder to confess and it isn't long before there's a whole pile of sins and you're doing really crummy things and it's almost impossible to confess at that point because you're so blinded by your sin. That was where the nation was when the Christ came. That's why John the Baptist comes with the message to the nation, "Repent!" They needed to repent of the sinful system of the

scribes and the Pharisees. To repent means have a change of mind and they needed to have a change of mind about the scribal and Pharisaic system of righteousness. It wasn't righteous at all, which is why Jesus says, unless your righteousness surpasses the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees you will not enter the kingdom of God. The kingdom would not come if the nation did not get in shape in terms of the Law, in terms of the Temple, in terms of the Priests, in terms of the Sacrifices and all the shenanigans going on. It was a totally different religion. So with all that sin the nation was clearly out of fellowship with God and so blinded by their sin that they weren't going to repent. Instead they just trudged forward doing their religious thing and it stunk to high heaven. God hated it. They were ignorant of what God really expected of them. What He really expected of them is that they had been following the Mosaic Law and dealing with their sin by the proper means of offering sacrifices in hope that the Messiah would come and fulfill the Law and atone for their sins. It was all there in the OT; Isa 53; the Messiah would atone for their sins. But they hadn't been following the Mosaic Law and dealing with their sins with the proper offering of sacrifices and they didn't have a Messianic expectation and so they were just trying to do it all themselves and establish righteousness with God, which is impossible. So the Messiah left and the kingdom, from our point of view is delayed until Israel recognizes that Jesus is the Messiah and calls upon Him to be saved. That's, in our terms, what Paul is talking about in 9:30-10:4.

If we look at this in terms of the OT, and that largely is what Paul is looking at, the big picture is God's plan for the nation Israel as defined in the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants and why when their Messiah came they stumbled over Him so that the promised kingdom did not come. What we have to understand is these two covenants and their relationship. They are different covenants but they do have a relationship. Remember, Paul said in Galatians that they had the Abrahamic Covenant and then four hundred and thirty years later God gave them the Mosaic Covenant and that the Mosaic Covenant did not invalidate the Abrahamic. So if one did not invalidate the other how did they relate so that both were in force at the same time. Well, the Abrahamic Covenant is a grace covenant. It was all of grace. God just promised unilaterally to give them an inheritance in the land, with a seed ruling over them and that they would be a worldwide blessing. So the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant rests entirely upon the grace of God and basically it looked to the ultimate destiny of history; an earthly kingdom centered in the land of Israel governed by a descendant of David who will bring blessing to the whole world. Then 430 years later God added the Mosaic Covenant. The Mosaic Covenant is a works covenant. It was all of works. God promised blessing in the land if they obeyed and cursing and exile from the land if they disobeyed.

The problem then was, if the Abrahamic Covenant guarantees ultimate blessing in the land and the Mosaic Covenant conditions blessing in the land on obedience then how are they ever going to get to the ultimate blessing. Because it becomes quite obvious that they can't crank out the obedience. They're sinful. That's the whole story of the OT. They could never generate perfect obedience to the Mosaic Covenant and so consequently they went into exile. The resolution of how ultimate blessing in the land will be enjoyed by Israel is a third covenant revealed in Jeremiah called the New Covenant. It's not like the Mosaic Covenant because it's

not a works covenant, it's a grace covenant like the Abrahamic. And in it God promised unilaterally to forgive the nation Israel of their sin and to put His Spirit within the nation to enable them to live in perfect obedience so that they could enjoy blessing in the land forevermore.

In the Gospels the problem ended up being that since Jesus was their Messiah who was the One who was going to pour out His Spirit upon the entire nation and they were not prepared to meet Him then He never poured out His Spirit on the nation. He only poured it out on the individual Jews and Gentiles who believed in Him and are now forming the Church.

What they were supposed to be doing as a nation, and particularly the leadership, because in Israel the people always follow the leadership, was getting prepared to meet their Messiah by learning about Him and His righteousness through the Law, the Temple and the Sacrifices. That's why Paul says in Gal 3:25 that the Law was a tutor that led them to Christ. The Law was given to prepare them to meet their Messiah. Paul is saying the same thing in Rom 10:4 where he says Christ is the end of the Law. **End** meaning the "goal or termination point" in the sense that the Law was given to prepare them to meet and identify Him so that the Law would come to an end and the New Covenant would be fulfilled and the age of the Spirit would begin in conjunction with the kingdom. That's why the disciples are wondering in Acts 1, is it at this time you are going to restore the kingdom to Israel? Jesus had said he was going to pour out the Spirit but in their mind that was connected with the kingdom. Jesus splits it off in Acts 1 so that there is a giving of the Spirit not many days from now but as for the kingdom, the timing is only known by the Father. They were confused but Israel as a nation had a much bigger problem. They didn't recognize their Messiah. The nation Israel has often had a problem identifying their Messiahs. Messiah just means anointed one and all the leaders and kings of Israel were messiahs, anointed one's who looked toward the ultimate Messiah, the one who is prophet, priest and king and will take away their sin. But think about Israel's history. They had a problem recognizing Joseph as the one God anointed to deliver them from famine, they had a problem recognizing Moses as the one God anointed to deliver them from Egypt. Over and over Israel has had trouble recognizing their messiahs and that is why God always sent a prophet before the messiah in order to point out the messiah. That is why God sent the prophet John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus the Messiah. John was not the Messiah but he pointed to Jesus as the Messiah. He was the prophet that precedes the Messiah. And he was the greatest prophet of all because of his role in preparing the nation to meet their ultimate Messiah. But again, they didn't recognize Him. The second time around they will recognize Him but it's going to take them coming to the end of their rope in the Tribulation time, which is the ultimate discipline on the nation and punishment for the nations. But when that time comes they will believe in Him and then call on Him to be saved, delivered, rescued away from their enemies which will be all the Gentile kingdoms of the world...

Let's work with the analogy Paul uses in Gal 3:23-25 again. Turn to Gal 3:23. This is cultural background that is necessary to fully understanding the Law and one of its purposes for the nation Israel. Paul's analogy comes from

Greek and Roman culture. When a Greek or Roman father had a son it was an occasion for great joy. As the son grew and reached age six the father would hire a tutor. The Greek word is *παιδαγωγος* from which we get the word "pedagogue." The pedagogue was the "child trainer." He was usually a family slave and so he was close to the family and he would take the child into custody and train the child so that when the child grew to the age of sixteen he had become like his father. That was the whole goal. If the training was successful then on the sixteenth birthday the father would come to the son and place his toga on the son, signifying he was a man, and he would be released from the custody of the pedagogue to live freely as a responsible Greek or Roman citizen.

With that background we read verses 23ff. "But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. ²⁴Therefore the Law has become our "pedagogue" *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. ²⁵But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. ²⁶For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." It's a perfect parallel. By parallel, when God's son was born out of Egypt it was an occasion for great joy. As the son grew God gave them the Law at Mt Sinai. On that day the Law took the nation into custody and trained the son to become holy like God, their Father, so that when God came to meet them in the Messiah, the son had become holy like Him. If the training had been successful God would clothe them with the Messiah Himself and therefore release the son from the custody of the Law in order to live freely as responsible believers by faith. It's a perfect parallel with the custom from Greek and Roman culture for how to raise a son.

But that's not all. Paul is doing the same type of thing in Gal 4. Keep the same analogy in mind and look at what he says here, "Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father." It's the exact same picture. The child in Greek and Roman culture was put in custody under guardians to be trained until the date set by the father, which was usually the sixteenth birthday. Verse 3, "So also we, while we were children, were held in custody under the elemental things of the world. But when the fullness of the time came," that was the date set, "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." The purpose of God sending His Son at the time He sent the Son, the Son born under the Law, was so that the nation Israel would believe in His Son and receive the full rights of sonship, which is to have full rights to the inheritance and go into the kingdom. The nation did not believe, but those individuals who did, verse 6, became sons and "God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Being clothed with the Spirit is like being clothed with the toga. Verse 7, "Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God." The picture then goes on to rebuke those believers who had become full sons and heirs of God and were now putting themselves back under the Law from which they had been freed. That would be like a son who had become a man putting himself back in custody under the pedagogue. Why do that when you've already learned all that the pedagogue can teach you and you've already been set free to live a responsible life? There was no need to put yourself back

under the Law, it would be going backwards in the spiritual life, they were set free to live by the Spirit. That's why we are not under the Law. We've graduated to living by the Spirit, move on!

So that's the idea of the Law being a pedagogue that took the nation into custody at Mt Sinai and trained the nation to become holy like God so they would be prepared to meet their Messiah at the designated time. That's what Paul is talking about in Rom 10:4 when he says, "Christ is the end or goal of the law for righteousness..." in that He was who they were being trained to recognize when He came. But when He came the nation had not received the training of the law and therefore did not believe in their Messiah and were not clothed by Him with the Spirit of God. If they had it would have occurred because the New Covenant was fulfilled, it has the provision of the Spirit and then they would have walked into their covenanted kingdom!

Today he explains this further in 10:5 and 6. There were two ways the nation could respond to the Law; by works or by faith. Verse 5 is works, they could have tried to practice righteousness based on law, that is strict legalism, or works, which is never a good way to train because if you're growing up as some kid and you're just obeying your parents simply because you have to, you don't trust that they have your best interest at heart, so the moment mom and dad aren't around you're going to break it. It's trying to be obedient not because you want to but because you have to, and that's the wrong attitude. Verse 6 is by faith, they could approach living righteous lives by faith, which is the proper way to train, and it's doing it because you trust your parents have your best interest at heart, so that whether mom and dad are around or not you're going to obey because you know that they know. In this case the nation would obey God and that's the best way and it is a joy. And so again, we're back to something similar to 9:32 where he says that the nation Israel did not attain to the righteousness of the law because they pursued it as though it were by works, legalistic self-effort, and not by faith. They were supposed to pursue the Law by faith, trusting that God had their best interest at heart and would carve out a destiny for them. Getting to that destiny involved training them in righteousness under the Law in order to be ready to meet their Messiah.

Let's look at the works approach in verse 5. **For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.** This is actually a quote from the OT. If you look in your margin where does it come from? Lev 18:5, Neh 9:29, Ezek 20:11, 13, 21. Several passages. Let's look at the one in Ezek 20:11, 13 and 20 because it follows the analogy of the pedagogue nicely. In Ezek 20:10 you see that God "took them out of the land of Egypt," that's the birth of the nation, "and brought them into the wilderness." This is about the wilderness generation. Verse 11, "I gave them My statutes and informed them of My ordinances." He gave them the Law at Mt Sinai, "by which, if a man observes them, he will live." That's what Paul quotes in Romans 10:5. What it means is that for Israel to enjoy life in the land depended upon them positively responding to the Laws of God. Verse 12, "Also I gave them My Sabbaths to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them." The Sabbath was the sign of the Mosaic Covenant and that covenant and its laws were given to the nation for sanctification or growth. It was a child trainer; designed to

enable them to enjoy life in the land and prepare to meet their Messiah. Verse 13, "But the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness. They did not walk in My statutes and they rejected My ordinances," They were like kids that didn't trust that God had their best interest in mind. Thus they were not enjoying life. Then he notes what Paul quotes in Romans 10:5, "by which, if a man observes them, he will live;" Again, for Israel to enjoy life required walking in God's statutes. That's always the way it is. Authority comes first and then obedience to that authority results in blessing. He continues, "and My Sabbaths they greatly profaned." They profaned the sign of the covenant, keeping Sabbath. "Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them in the wilderness, to annihilate them." It sounds frightening. It is frightening. What does He mean annihilate? He means kill them. Death. Physical death. Remember how few from that generation entered the land? So you see that under the Mosaic Covenant the nation could either choose to obey and enjoy life in the land or disobey and face death and exile. The contrast is between enjoying the land and being exiled from the land. None of this is about going to heaven and hell. It's all about the land. So in verse 13 God had resolved to wipe them off the map before they even got to the land. But notice verse 14, "But I acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, before whose sight I had brought them out." In other words, the only reason God spared them was because it would be bad for His own name. Verse 15, "Also I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands, ¹⁶because they rejected My ordinances, and as for My statutes, they did not walk in them; they even profaned My Sabbaths, for their heart continually went after their idols." That's why that generation wandered around in the wilderness for forty years. Verse 17, "Yet My eye spared them rather than destroying them, and I did not cause their annihilation in the wilderness. ¹⁸"I said to their children in the wilderness, 'Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers or keep their ordinances or defile yourselves with their idols. ¹⁹"I am the LORD your God; walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and observe them. ²⁰'Sanctify My Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the LORD your God.'" So the next generation had an opportunity to change, trust and obey, but verse 21, "...the children rebelled against Me; they did not walk in My statutes, nor were they careful to observe My ordinances, by which, *if a man observes them, he will live;*" there it is a third time, the exact expression Paul quotes in Romans 10:5 that "if a man observes the law he will live." But "they profaned My Sabbaths. So I resolved to pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them in the wilderness." And so all that generation 20 years old and older was wiped out except Joshua and Caleb. The point is that for Israel to enjoy life in the land they had to obey the Law. It was given for their sanctification. It was a child trainer. It was given to prepare them to meet their Messiah. That generation was in its formative stages and we see that they failed to pursue the law by faith, instead they pursued it by self-effort, by strict legalism and because of that they rebelled and God disciplined them, that generation did not enter the land, later generations would enter but they would be exiled.

So we go back to Romans 10:5 and we see that is exactly what Paul is talking about but with his generation. His generation actually saw the Messiah come but the problem with his generation was that they were just like the

wilderness generation, they pursued the righteousness of the law by self-effort, strict legalism, they didn't trust God, and because of that they disobeyed and were not prepared to meet their Messiah and they rejected Him and did not enter into blessing in the land. Instead they were exiled in AD70.

In 10:6 we see the opposite approach to the righteousness of the law. This is how they should have pursued it, by faith, and it shows how faith speaks, how it approaches the facts of history under the interpretive lens of Scripture. **But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: "DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, 'WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?' (that is, to bring Christ down),⁷ or 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."** **⁸But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching.** There's a lot going on here that is not easy to follow. Fortunately in verse 6 he gives the parenthetical note that he's referring to the incarnation, **Christ coming down** from heaven. And in verse 7 the parenthetical note that he's referring to the resurrection, **Christ coming up from the dead**. So we know that Paul has in view the incarnation and resurrection of the Messiah and how a righteousness based on faith would respond to those two events of history.

If we didn't have those two parenthetical remarks I don't know what we'd do because they are giving a very different application of these quotes from the OT that Moses never dreamed of. If you check your margin where do the quotes in verse 6-8 come from? Deut 30:12-14. Let's turn to Deuteronomy. When we see a NT author quote the OT they do so in one of four ways. It could be a *literal prophecy being fulfilled* or it could be a *historical citation with typological fulfillment* or a *literal passage being applied* to a new situation or simply a *summary*. What Moses is saying here is a literal passage about the ease of accessing the Law and the ease of following the Law. He says this in verse 11, "For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach." It's not difficult if you live by faith. He then expands on the idea that the Law is not out of reach in verses 12-14 which are what Paul loosely quotes in Romans 10:6-8. He says, "It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' ¹³"Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' ¹⁴"But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it." Moses' point is simple, an Israelite who was living by faith would not say that the Law was inaccessible and difficult to follow. It was something God had revealed and which was so near to them that it could be discussed with the mouth and thought about in the heart. So to act as if the Law was inaccessible and difficult to follow is to doubt. It is like saying, "How do we know what the word of God is that we may do it?"

Why does Paul quote this passage? Paul is taking the language used by Moses applying to the Law being near and accessible and applying it to Christ's being near and accessible. The words of faith, in verse 6, would not say that Christ's incarnation was inaccessible. In verse 7, the words of faith would not say that Christ's resurrection was inaccessible. Christ's incarnation and resurrection were very accessible. They had just happened! Faith does

not say, what are we going to do, go up to heaven to bring Christ down? What are we going to do, go down to the grave and bring Christ up? No. That's all doubt.

Verse 8 is what faith does say. **THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"—this is the word of faith which we are preaching.** In other words, if they had faith the preached word of Christ's incarnation and resurrection were topics ready at hand. They would put their faith in Him. The incarnation and the resurrection were not private events; they were well known events. So well-known that one could use his **mouth** to discuss them and one's **heart** to thinking about them. The heart is the thinking center of man. The incarnation and the resurrection were as close to them now as the Law had been to Moses's generation. And yet neither generation responded by faith. That was the big problem and that's why when Christ came they were not saved, not saved physically from Rome. All they had to do was respond by faith and Jesus would have poured out His Spirit on the nation Israel and they would have called on Him to be saved and He would have come to them and destroyed Rome, annihilated Caesar. But no, they would have no king but Caesar. The gospels are full of irony. It's amazing what happened and we'll continue looking at what happened and what will happen in the future. It's a great story.