

Justified by Faith

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Romans 10:5-15

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5 Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: "The person who does these things will live by them." 6 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) 7 "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: 9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. 11 As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." 12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile-the same lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can anyone

preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

The idea of being justified simply by faith can be a bit of a struggle for some people to grasp. We have the mindset that we have to “earn” everything that we get, and in an earthly stance, that is absolutely true, but when it comes to a heavenly stance, it could not be further from the truth. We can say that we understand and recognize it to be true that all it takes is to profess Jesus as our Lord and Savior, but when it comes to actually flipping that switch in our brains, it can be quite tricky. I think that we get struck with the same confusion that we hold when we try to think of how to explain the Trinity or grasping the idea of God speaking everything into existence in creation. It all sounds just so far above our ways of thinking that it can be a struggle to believe that it is true. The reality is that we are so used to things being difficult, that when we have something simple like our faith in God, it feels too good to be true.

I can imagine how difficult it would be to believe that God was going to free the Israelites from slavery in Egypt during the time of Moses. All the complaining that Moses endured can make it difficult to believe that God would fulfill His word because it seemed too good to be true. However, when the plagues arrived, I think that changed Moses’ views just a bit. Moses’ faith could only strengthen the closer he came to God because of everything God allowed Moses to experience: the parting of the Red Sea, the pillars of fire and cloud, the manna from heaven, the

drinkable water when the tree was knocked in, and so much more. Moses was then given the law, and that is where we begin to see the downfall of the Israelites because there was much asked of them. Let's dive back into our verses to see the issues.

Verses 5-10. 5 Moses writes about the righteousness that is by the law: "The person who does these things will live by them."

6 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) 7 "or 'who will descend into the deep?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But what does it say?

"The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: 9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

When we look at just verse 5, we read about what it looks like to be righteous. We could be righteous only by doing what is in the law. We would be able to keep it 100%. I know that for me and you, that is simply impossible. We live in a broken world, and we are broken people. So, does that mean that none of us could be righteous? Was the law simply designed to hold us down? That description doesn't align with our views of God. We know that God is a holy God. We know that God asks us to be holy like He is holy. God also knows that it is impossible for

us to do it on our own. God knew that we would need someone who could completely fulfill the law without ever breaking it. When someone comes along who could do that, then they could be recognized as the perfect sacrifice when the time came to offer salvation to us all. Jesus came to do just that. When Adam was first made, it was possible for him to accomplish that, but then the fall came and messed that all up. Now it was down to Jesus to fulfill what the first Adam failed to do. It could only be done once the blood was spilt from this perfect sacrifice so that we could have the opportunity to be justified. Our faith justifies us only if we believe that Jesus was that perfect being who died and rose again. If we lived solely by the law, then it would mean that only by living the law perfectly could we be accepted by God. However, because we have grace due to the sacrifice of Jesus, now we can no longer have righteousness within us unless we choose to be right with God first. God has accepted us and desires to work in us. The law was never meant to be something to be followed forever. It was simply there to help show that Jesus would be one who was set apart, and we could recognize Him for who He was. My commentary offered a beautiful quote here: “Faith does not earn a Savior, faith accepts a Savior.”¹

Verse 11. 11 As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.”

There is not much to say with this verse. It is in reference to Isaiah 28:16. Let’s turn to that for a moment. ***So this is what***

¹ Accordance App, New Testament Study on Romans

the Sovereign Lord says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic. If we put our trust in God, then there is nothing that can ever truly bring us down. God will be there for us and provide for us. He will fight for us. If we don’t give anything power over us, then there will be nothing to draw us away from Him. He has provided the example, the cornerstone, if you will, to show us how to live like Him. We may lose people. We may have hard times, However, those situations should serve as proof of what God will do being worth more for us than any relationship that we have here on earth when it comes to the rewards that He will bestow upon us in heaven.

Verses 12-13. 12 For there is not difference between Jew and Gentile-the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

When we think of people who are saved, we may find ourselves thinking of someone we knew who has passed away. We think about how they conducted themselves and realize with 100% certainty that they knew the Lord and served Him all the days of their lives. We can think of people who mature in their faith as time goes on. We see it as this life-long process of someone being saved. However, was that the case for the very first Christian? By that, who would I consider the first Christian? That would be the thief on the cross who begged for forgiveness

just before death and was told he would be in paradise that very day. He didn't have a long time of growing closer with God. He had just one moment, and that faith was enough. We can have that same view of some who are on their deathbed. They may never have accepted Jesus when we were present with them, but if they cry out to Him and beg Him to save them from their sins, why would they be refused access to heaven?

There may have been struggles with Israelites accepting non-Israelites into the fold, but the message was for everyone. It can be hard to share the message today because of how dangerous the world has gotten. Ultimately, our job is to plant the seeds and let God do the rest. We may find ourselves being surprised by who we see when we leave this life behind and embrace the new one.

In fact, it may be possible to see people like Judas Iscariot in heaven. I don't know. Views on suicide aside, when we talk about Judas Iscariot, we often talk about how he had betrayed Jesus, but very rarely is it mentioned of the guilt that Judas felt when he went to return the silver. The betrayal was prophesied long ago and needed to be fulfilled. Without Judas fulfilling his part, would salvation be possible? I'm sure God could have done something else to get Jesus arrested to lead to the crucifixion, but the mere fact that Judas had a role to fulfill, as terrible as it was, shows just how much in control God truly is. No one would wish to take that role, but if Judas truly felt remorse and sought forgiveness, and lost his mind to a point that

he was truly no longer Judas any longer, then could Judas have been accepted into heaven? After all, Judas was infused by Satan, so could you imagine what that did to the mind of Judas? By that thought, you could even make an argument that Judas was not the one who betrayed Jesus, but rather, Satan did it like when Satan tricked Eve in the Garden of Eden. Ultimately, God gets to make that decision and thank Him for that. I couldn't imagine making that decision.

Verses 14-15. 14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Was it possible for any of us to know God without someone telling us about Him? I was hit by a car and that is how I came to know God. The doctors told my mom that I would be paralyzed for the rest of my life. I was never supposed to walk again. As you can clearly see, that is not the way it happened. In fact, I was walking that very night leaving everyone completely stumped since it shouldn't have been possible. Does that make any of you wonder just what transpired? A pastor that I had only met once from the church where I was attending youth group remembered me and came to pray with me at the hospital. When the miracle of my legs working too effect, well, the rest is history.

We may not all have a being ran over story, but we all know that there is someone who came to tell us about God. That is necessary for us to have salvation. “The only way, however, that the pagan can ever find salvation is to hear the Word in some way.”² We had to be told about Jesus offering up His life for us. We had to be told that He rose from the dead. We had to be told that He would be with us until the very end of the age. We had to be told of His ascension back to the Father and sending of the Holy Spirit to be our guide.

Now comes our part. We are justified by faith. We can’t earn our way into heaven. However, because we have been given access to heaven and have our names written down in the Book of Life, we can respond in appreciation. We aren’t supposed to tell people about Jesus so that we can get into heaven. Rather, we tell people about Jesus because we have already been cleared to enter heaven. We should have a desire to want others to join us there. That is the responsibility that we must take on. Sadly, not everyone will listen to our words, but we can’t control that. Jesus said to go and tell, so we do just that. If you are not ready to take on this challenge, you can still be in heaven by your faith alone, but it may be harder to grow in your faith if you don’t tell others about Him. Talking about Him to others helps you feel His presence so much more. I know that means a lot to me. I hope that it does you as well. Amen?

² Accordance App, New Testament Study on Romans