

# Romans 10 - To Everyone Who Believes

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Romans chapter 10. We're going to read the first 4 verses and then we're going to pray. It says:

*“Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them (he’s speaking of Israel here) is that they may be saved. <sup>2</sup> For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. <sup>3</sup> For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. <sup>4</sup> For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” (ESV)*

Stop there. We are going to do our best to continue on with more, but for right now, let's just pray:

Jesus, fill us with understanding. Lord, the Book of Romans is challenging to us—challenging to understand, challenging to really assimilate. We pray that You would open our ears, open our eyes, open our understanding.

We humble ourselves, Lord, before You, that Your Word might speak volumes to us today about the things that You are saying here through the apostle Paul. Guide us, we pray, in Jesus' name, amen.

These first 4 verses constitute the first thought that the apostle Paul is making here in Romans chapter 10. The first thing Paul says about Israel is that, in verse 2, they have a zeal. They have a zeal for God, but it's without knowledge. And then he explains what he means.

If you go on and look at verse 3 in your Bible, it says: *“For being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own (meaning their own righteousness), they therefore did not submit to God's righteousness.”*

Let's talk about what that means just a little bit. So, the first thing he says is that Israel never lacked zeal. They were very zealous. What does zealous mean? Well, just very energetic, very passionate—very passionate about things. But he said that they lack knowledge. Interesting sort of a thing here, to be zealous without knowledge describes just about every new believer I think I've ever met.

I remember when we were pastoring up in Washington for a while. We had a young guy who came into our fellowship who had been raised in Catholicism. A lot of the things that went along with his whole Roman Catholic upbringing came with him into his relationship with Jesus. He had gotten away. He'd walked completely away from God and gotten into drugs and a lot of other weird things. And then he came back to the Lord. When he came back, he was very passionate, very passionate, very energetic, very on fire for Jesus.

But unfortunately, some of his Roman Catholicism came along for the ride. And so, he would buttonhole people. Whenever he saw someone wearing a cross, he would come up to them and say, is that cross blessed? That cross needs to be blessed. And he—I mean, like everybody—and we thought it was cute, honestly, because he wasn't, although he was intense, he wasn't mean or anything like that. He was just passionate.

And, of course, it's sort of a Roman Catholic concept of blessing articles and things like that. There's nothing in the Word of God about that, but he was passionate about it. I mean, that was his ministry.

Whenever I think about the idea of being zealous without knowledge, I think about that guy. I've even forgotten his name in the years since—it's been a long time, 30 years ago—but that's what Paul says Israel was like. A lot of zeal—boy, were they passionate about the things of God—and yet they lacked knowledge. They were ignorant specifically of God's righteousness.

Now, when Paul says, when he refers to God's righteousness and says that the people of Israel were ignorant of it, he's not talking about the righteousness that is God's. He's talking about the righteousness that God gives. Okay.

What they were ignorant of is the righteousness that God bestows. Did you know that God bestows righteousness on people? He declares people righteous. The Jews believed that. We Christians believe it. The difference is the basis on which God bestows righteousness.

Well, how does God bestow righteousness? Paul actually dealt with this way back in the third chapter of Romans. Let me put this on the screen for you just to remind you. He told us way back in chapter 3:

**Romans 3:21-22 (ESV)**

*But now the righteousness of God has been... for all who believe.*

*But now the righteousness of God has been... (and it should have the word revealed there) for all who believe.*

The righteousness of God has been made manifest, or it's been revealed. And who does it come to? It comes to all who believe. That is the basis on which God bestows righteousness. Now, you know that God gives a righteous standing to people who believe. You with me?

Now, you and I say it like it's common and whatever. But to the Jews, this was a huge issue because, for them, that was just too easy. It's just too easy to be declared righteous according to how a person believes.

Israel insisted on a righteousness they had to work for. And I mean, it better be laborious, and it better be hard, and it better take a great deal of effort, or it's probably not going to be real. And all that was so completely unnecessary.

Look what Paul says in verse 4 in your Bible: *"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."* So what does Paul mean when he says Christ is the end of the law? Does he mean there's an end of the law from the standpoint that there is nothing left significant to be learned or grasped or understood from the law?

No, he's not saying that. The law continues to be a reflection of the standard of God's perfection and holiness. What he's saying, people, is that the law is finished for the believer in the sense that our obedience is no longer based on keeping the law. Does that make sense?

Your righteous standing before God is not based on keeping the law. And that's what Paul means when he says, *"...Christ is the end of the law for righteousness..."* Christ is the completion. He completes the law for righteousness. To who? To all who believe. To all who believe. Okay, all right.

Now again, you and I say these things in such a way as to go, well, yeah, of course. To the Jews, that was enormous. This was difficult stuff, and they stumbled over it.

Now, the next several verses here—the next nine verses, actually, 5 through 13—are going to reiterate. Paul is going to reiterate here in these verses that righteousness can only be obtained through a genuine faith, okay? But he's going to say it in a very strange way, I have to say.

Verse 5: *"For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them."*

Now, when Paul makes this statement, those who do the commandments will live by them, he's quoting a verse, actually, in the book of Leviticus. It's in the 18th chapter. Let me put it on the screen for you so you can see it. Leviticus chapter 18 goes like this:

**Leviticus 18:5 (ESV)**

*You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.*

*You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.*

What is God saying here in the Old Testament? He's saying that if you keep His laws that you will be declared righteous; ...if a person does them, he shall live by them...

Listen, if you keep the law, you will live. And you know what? That's never been disputed. In the Old Testament, it was never disputed. In the New Testament, it was never disputed.

When Jesus was asked, what is the most important part of the law? He said, the most important is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and so forth, and to love your neighbor as yourself. Do these, and you will live (Luke 10:25-28). That's never been disputed. You keep the law, you will live.

The problem is, no one could perfectly keep it. That's the problem. And they understood that in the Old Testament. That's why God instituted a sacrificial system for all the people who couldn't keep the law perfectly.

And that is also why God sent His Son to die on a cross for you and I, because someone had to bear the curse of the broken law. There's a curse that goes with the broken law. And that's why Jesus had to come and redeem us from the curse.

I love how the Apostle says it when he wrote to the churches in Galatia. Let me put this on the screen. This is one of the best descriptions:

**Galatians 3:10-13a (ESV)**

*For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." But the law is not of faith, rather, "The one who does them shall live by them." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—*

*For all who rely on works of the law (in other words, all who rely on keeping the law, they) are (going to be) under a curse; for it is written, "Curses (is everyone or) be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book*

*of the Law, and do them."* (Paul says) *Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them."* (This is wonderful) *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—*

Isn't that a great passage? There is a curse that goes along with breaking the law. Jesus became that curse for you and I. And that's why Paul goes on to say—if you keep reading with me here in your Bible—about righteousness by faith, he said, it's not about working for your salvation.

Here's what he said in verse 6: *"But the righteousness based on faith says, 'Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'' (that is, to bring Christ down) <sup>7</sup> 'or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."*

Strange way of making a point. But what Paul's saying here is that righteousness based on faith is not about going into heaven to bring Jesus down, or going into the depths to bring Jesus up, because those things speak of having to work to make it happen. It isn't about having to work. What is it about?

Verse 8: *"But what does it say? (Paul asks) The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);"*

You see, righteousness by faith is not about effort and works and doing things and meeting standards and the effort that it takes to make your salvation happen. It's not about that. Righteousness by faith is about believing. He says it's as close as the word that's in your mouth. It's as close as your heart. I believe. Confessing.

That's why he goes on to say in verse 9—many of you probably memorized this verse back when you were in AWANA: *"because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. <sup>11</sup> For the Scripture says, 'Everyone (who works hard, oh wait, that is not in there. It says, everyone) who believes in him (right?) will not be put to shame."*

That's what righteousness by faith is all about. It's not about all these great lengths that we have to go to earn a righteousness by the law. Instead, we receive this righteousness that God gives by simply trusting in the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

I know this is stuff most of you know. Do you know how easy it is to slip back into an idea of being righteous before God by what we do? Do you know how

easy that is, even for Christians who've put their faith in Jesus, to begin to try to work for God's approval?

And you know what's interesting too? Whenever—have you ever invited someone to church and heard them say something like this: I probably should start going to church, but I need to get my life squared away and get things in order, and then I'll start coming to church.

You ever had someone say that to you? That comment is very interesting because it belies the same attitude that Israel had. It's the same error that Israel had. It's basically saying, in essence, as soon as I get the effort squared away, as soon as I do the effort, as soon as I get things taken care of, then I'll come to church.

And they're missing the whole point. They're missing the point that church is a hospital for sick people. It's saying, as soon as I get better, I'll go to the doctor. Or, as soon as I'm healed, I'll go to the hospital. Excuse me! But it makes about as much sense.

But the essence of what they're saying is, it needs to be an effort on my part. And that person who makes that statement probably believes that righteousness is something they have to earn. I've got to be good enough. I'm going to try to be good enough, and then I'll start going to church.

Well, number one, you'll never be good enough. And so that means you'll never come to church. I mean, if you're really going to be honest with yourself, you never will darken the doors of a church because you can't be good enough. You can't attain that level of goodness where God is going to look on your life and say, boom, you've arrived. I am now bestowing righteousness on you because you are the picture of perfection. It's just not going to happen.

You might recall the words that Paul spoke as he closed out the last chapter, because this is what people are saying when they say to you, I'll come to church once I get my life cleaned up. Let me put this on the screen so you can remember from the end of the last chapter. Paul wrote:

**Romans 9:31-33 (ESV)**

*...Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they didn't pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."*

*...Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness (actually) did not succeed in reaching that law. (or the righteousness that goes along with it) Why? Because they didn't pursue it by faith (Remember?), but (rather they pursued it) as if it were based on works. (and so here's Paul's conclusion) They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written, (and this is prophecy from Isaiah) "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."*

Isn't that interesting? Paul is quoting this Old Testament prophetic picture of Jesus. And what is Jesus depicted as for Israel? A stumbling stone. Isn't that crazy? The Messiah, the one they thought they were really looking forward to, but they missed Him when He came. Why? Because they stumbled over Him, just as Isaiah said they would.

He is going to be a rock of offense. They're going to be offended by Him. Why? What about Jesus is so offensive? I'll tell you what's offensive: Jesus—let me just flat-out say this—Jesus is offensive to our human pride. Because He comes along, and He says, you will never be good enough, and you must trust in Me for the righteousness that I give because you will never be righteous in and of yourself.

I'm offended! Aren't you? What are you trying to say to me, God? That I'm never going to be good enough—ever? That's exactly what I'm saying to you. Well, I'm offended. Exactly. Jesus is the rock of offense—the stumbling stone. It's too easy.

See, with Israel, it was all about effort. It was all about what they could do. And so they pursued a righteousness by works—by doing things. You've got to keep the law. The Pharisees kept them in line, let me tell you. Here's what you've got to do. And they even made up rules that God didn't give. We're going to take what God did, and we're going to make it harder.

Oh, the Pharisees—everybody needs a Pharisee in their life just to remember how good God's grace is. But the Pharisees were constantly making things harder. And this is what you've got to do to toe the line.

And what did Jesus say to them? He said, you guys keep heavy weights on the backs of people that you yourselves, really, honestly, aren't willing to carry. But that's what you do. You heap this huge weight—this burden—on the backs of people who are trying to come to God, and you keep them from entering. You keep them from entering the kingdom of God.

But I tell you, when we begin to feel like God's approval is based on an effort and a labor of our own doing, we've stumbled over the same issue that Israel

stumbled over. We've talked about this so many times. And yet, as long as we've talked about it, people still come to me and make statements that betray the idea that they believe their actions are keeping them from God's love and forgiveness, and that somehow they've got to get it right. They've got to get it—they've got to do better—so God will love them and accept them.

Listen, God loved you. God loved you when you were the farthest away from Him that you possibly could have been—when you were enemies of the cross. God loved you, and He showed the highest expression of that love by sending His Son.

And what does it say to Him when we think we have to get our lives in order so that He'll love us? What are we communicating to Him?

So how is a person saved? Paul reiterates it again, beginning in verse 12. Look with me in your Bible: *"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; (in other words, salvation comes to one, as the same as it comes to another) for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. <sup>13</sup> For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

Okay, how are you saved? Calling on the name of the Lord. That's it. That's how you're saved—by calling on the name of the Lord. Lord, I need You. Save me. Save me from my sin. I believe in You. I believe that what You did for me on the cross was enough. And I call upon Your name, which is to call upon all of His character, promises, and power. I call upon You, Lord—not by doing good works, but by calling upon the Lord.

Then Paul asks in verse 14: *"How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? <sup>15</sup> And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'"*

Paul correctly observes that preaching the good news about Jesus is vital—for people to hear and to believe. And for preachers to share the Word, they need to be sent out. And when they are, it's a beautiful thing.

I had a kid—I've got to be careful because a lot of people who write me through the internet, I know they're watching online too—so when I talk about them, I have to be careful. But I had a kid write me, about 19 years old, who said, I want to be an evangelist.

And I am blessed by that. I'm blessed by someone wanting to be an evangelist. However, the language is misconstrued a bit. You don't become an evangelist. You are an evangelist by gifting.



Now, the Bible says we're all to do the work of an evangelist. That means we should all be prepared to give a reason for anyone who asks us for the hope that we have. In other words, even whether you're called to be an evangelist or not, you and I are supposed to be ready to share our testimony and the love of Christ with people.

But for those who are evangelists, they are so by gifting—not by training. They're gifted by the Lord. This is Jesus giving some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, and then the pastor-teacher, as Paul said in Ephesians chapter 4. So this is something that Jesus gives to the church—this ministry, this gifting of evangelism.

And you might say, well, how do I know if I have the gift of evangelist? It's your passion. It's what you want to do. You want to tell people about Jesus, and you just can't get enough of it. And you see people in situations that are difficult and stressful and burdensome, and you want to go to them and say, do you know about Jesus Christ? Do you know that He's the burden-lifter? Do you know that He died on the cross?

And this just comes rolling off your tongue, and I love it—how that happens with people who have that gift of evangelism. I look at them like guys like Greg Laurie and others. Billy Graham—I used to love watching Billy Graham share the Gospel. And I just—it makes it look so easy.

Billy Graham was never one of these guys where you'd get done listening to him and go, whoa, that was heavy. It wasn't heavy. It was simple. Do you remember that? Billy Graham had this ability to just simply share the gospel. But it was so effortless.

And I remember thinking at one point, Oh, I want to learn how to do that. Well, you can't. It's a gifting. If you're gifted with the gift of evangelism—or if you think you are—then pray it through and start doing it. I mean, get out there and share Jesus. I mean, time is short. Get out there and do it. Because you know what? God considers it a beautiful thing: *“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” (Romans 10:15)*

And that's what you have to give. We have really good news to give to people. And yet God looks at you—the one who brings that good news—in just a beautiful light.

Verse 16, Paul says—actually, in the form of a question: *“But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?’”* Quoting again Isaiah. Great question. *“...who has believed what he has heard...?”* So we know that for people to hear the gospel, somebody's got to preach. And for somebody to preach, they've got to be sent out.

But then Paul reminds us that Isaiah, that Isaiah through the Lord, asked the question: “...*who has believed what he heard...?*” And that’s an interesting and very important question, because it reminds us that you can hear without believing.

Look what he goes on to say in verse 17: “*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*”

I love this. But he’s not just talking about hearing with ears, is he? He’s talking about hearing with faith. He’s talking about hearing and receiving at the same time. Because if everybody who heard got saved, wow—yeah, we’d have a lot more people in the kingdom of God.

Do you remember what the writer of Hebrews had to say about this whole idea? Look at this, Hebrews 4:2. I quoted this out of the NIV because I like the wording. He says,

**Hebrews 4:2 (NIV84)**

*...we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as [Israel] did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard it did not combine it with faith.*

*...we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as [Israel] did; but the message they heard* (look at this) *was of no value to them, because those who heard it did not combine it with faith.*

So when the Bible says *faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*, that’s not this blanket promise that whoever hears the gospel is going to automatically mingle it with faith and benefit from the message.

Listen, we’ve shared the Gospel many, many times. And even at Billy Graham crusades, some of the people never came down to respond to the Gospel. Why? What was the difference?

They didn’t mingle the message with faith. They didn’t believe what they heard. They heard it just fine, but they didn’t believe what they heard. So Israel didn’t exercise faith.

So has God done with them? Look at verse 18: “*But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, (And he quotes the Psalm) for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."*”

Now stop there for just a moment. Some of you might be a little confused by this because you might know that this passage he’s quoting—the quotation from Psalms here—is used originally to speak of the universal voice of creation.

But Paul is borrowing the phrase and applying it to the proclamation of the gospel. And I get it—under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he has the right to do that. And he says that the voice of the gospel has gone out into everywhere.

Verse 19: *“But I ask, did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, “I will make you jealous of those (who are a nation who, excuse me) who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry.””*

Now Paul is quoting a passage in Deuteronomy, and he’s explaining to them that way back during the time of Moses—because you guys know that Deuteronomy is just one long sermon that Moses preached. You think I preach long? I’ve got nothing on Moses. He did the whole Book of Deuteronomy.

And what he said way back then was that God was going to take a nation that did not know God and use it to make Israel jealous because they should have always known God. They should have recognized God, and they should be in the center of His blessing. But they’re not. Why? Because they stumbled over the stumbling stone, and they didn’t exercise faith when they heard the message.

Actually, let me show you this passage from Deuteronomy to give you some good context:

**Deuteronomy 32:21 that says: (ESV)**

*They have made me jealous with what is no god; they have provoked me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are no people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.*

*They have made me jealous with what is no god; they have provoked me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are no people; (in other words, not a people of God) I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.*

Isn’t that interesting? So Paul says that way back during the time of Moses, God told Israel that He was going to make them jealous by bestowing His blessings upon a nation that never sought Him.

And by the way, when we say nation, we’re not talking specifically about a nation like the United States of America. We’re really talking about a people. And we are those people. The Gentiles have been those people for a couple of thousand years. We are those people, and we are the ones—crazy as it may sound—who have found God, even though we weren’t looking for Him. And we are called by God, even though we were never the people of God before that time.

Look what he goes on to say in verse 20: *“Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, ‘I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.’”* <sup>21</sup> *But of Israel he says, ‘All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.’”*

This is an interesting way to look at your salvation, isn't it? Now, remember, when Paul says that the Gentiles have been brought to faith to make Israel jealous, he's talking about how he's looking at it from Israel's perspective. You and I don't look at it that way. I don't go around telling people I'm a Christian so I can make Jews jealous. I don't say that. And neither do you.

You know what we say? We say, I'm a Christian because God loved me so much that He gave His Son, and if I would put my faith in Him, He would make me a child of God. That's what I say, because I'm a Gentile. And that's how I look at my faith.

But Paul, remember, is talking here from Israel's perspective because he's a Jew. And so, he says, from their perspective, when they look at you, God is doing a work from their perspective to draw them into a place of jealousy, to say, wait a minute, this is our place. This is the blessing that we should have in our lives. This is the glory that we should be having in our lives, in our nation. And yet these Gentiles, they are children of God.

Now, Paul's going to talk about this in the next chapter, which we won't get to today, but he's going to get further into this whole idea of our having been grafted in contrary to nature. But the point is that the whole grafting process that God has done with you and I as Gentiles has a purpose beyond our own salvation.

And that purpose is that Israel might see it. And they might say, wow, look what God has done. You know what's interesting, and I think it's interesting anyway, that even today, even though the nation of Israel is largely atheist, they know, Israel knows, that their best friends in the world are evangelical Christians. Do you know that?

Israel knows without a shadow of a doubt the people who love them and love their God are evangelical Christians. That's a testimony, you guys. That is a testimony to Israel. And I think it's a powerful testimony.

What's the theme of this message here? Don't make the same mistake that Israel made and don't feel like you have to work for your salvation because your salvation is a free gift. And don't fall into that idea, even after you're saved, that somehow you have to work hard to make the grade. You can't work hard enough.

And if you don't believe me, just get married. Because there's nothing like marriage. There's nothing like marriage to convince you that it's too hard. When you really have been, when you've been married for a period of time. And you see what God calls us to as husbands and wives—the beautiful yet out of our reach calling, first of all, for men to love their wives as Christ loved the church, for women to honor and respect their husbands, for the calling that Christ has given to their husband as the head of the home.

And you try to walk that out over a protracted period of time. You should come to a place of finally saying, I can't do this personally. And then you come to this conclusion: I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength, right? But boy, there's nothing I—and I use marriage as an example just because there's nothing closer in this world than a marriage relationship between a man and a woman.

There's no other relationship on the face of the earth God calls one flesh. And if you're going to step on anybody's toes, it's going to be that person, and they to you. You will learn soon enough that you're a big fat failure, mostly, when it comes to really fulfilling the calling that God has placed upon you.

If marriage doesn't convince you that you just don't have the goods, probably nothing will. But eventually, we have to come to that place as it relates to everything with God and just say, I don't have the goods. I don't have the ability to save myself. I don't have the ability to walk out God's Word in my life. I don't have the ability to be a testimony to my neighbor. But through Jesus, He can make me strong. Through Jesus, I can be the husband that my wife has need of. Through Jesus, I am saved.