

Romans 12 - So Close Yet So Far

We have looked at the mechanics of the Gospel in Romans 1-8 from the conviction of sin, to salvation by faith, to spiritual growth, and the ultimate victory in the Resurrection. All of that was presented to us in the context of how the Law only serves to convict us of our sin, but has no part in our actual salvation. Our salvation is dependent only on our faith.

We began the next section, Romans 9-11, to look at what was to become of the Jews, the people of the Law. There was a warning to the Jews and, by extension, to anyone who thinks they are exempt from God's judgment *just* because they belong to an identity group. We can't presume that we are a child of God just by being born a Jew, had Christian parents, were baptized and added to a church roll, or brought up in a "faith tradition." The Jews are presented as an example that you have to have something else to be a true Israelite. You could be an Israelite according to the flesh, meaning you were genetically Jewish, or you could be part of true Israel as a child of God by faith. In our time, a true child of God is one who had accepted Christ as their Savior by recognizing they are a sinner and praying to God to save them forever by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. We are going to look at God's plans for the Jews when we get to chapter 11.

For today, we are going to look at what God provided for Jew *and* Gentile to receive the Gospel...*if* they are willing to admit what is so evidently set forth before them

1. The heart problem -

The problem that Paul identified that will stand in anyone's way is in someone's heart attitude. Paul raised the problem of having a zeal, but not according to knowledge.

Rom 10:1-6 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be

saved.

2For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

There are so many who have a zeal for God. The Moslems, the Mormons, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Romanists, the Hindus, are all very zealous in their faith. The problem is that their faith is misplaced. Their faith is placed in anything and everything else besides what God has prescribed. This is the old problem of putting the emotions before the intellect. We are not called to have a blind faith based on how strongly we feel about something. We have faith in what God has said.

3For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

People want to be right, but not necessarily righteous. So many are more concerned about winning an argument rather than be right. This is how people establish their own self-righteousness. Being self-righteous is always understood to be bad because people will use what is convenient for them as an excuse to do anything they want. It is like the meme that says there are only two rules in life: 1. I am always right. 2. If I am ever wrong, see rule no. 1. The only use people have for the Bible is to use it as long as it agrees with them. This serves to give them a facade of Godly righteousness. They miss entirely God's plan for righteousness or will not submit themselves to it if they ever discover it at all.

The end of the law is to have Christ's righteousness.

4For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

When we come to Christ by faith, He will *make* us righteous.

Rom 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

5For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

The Law demands that we do all the works of the Law. It is too late for you to try to keep the Law perfectly. Even if you thought you could, that ship has already sailed. In fact that ship never even could have sailed. Each of us have already failed at keeping God's Law. But the good news is that Christ has fulfilled the demands of the Law and has accepted the judgment that you deserve. Our righteousness comes by faith.

2. The preparation to receive the Gospel -

We need to jump ahead in the chapter for a moment and take note that the faith we have is an *informed* faith. It is not a *blind* faith. God asks us to trust in Him and tells us *why* we should trust Him. That is why He gave us His Word. So much of what has been said especially applied to the Jews who had been given so much preparation to know Christ. We have already, back in the first several chapters of Romans, demonstrated that there is no one on the earth who has not received enough to get saved.

Rom 3:20-23 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

21But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

23For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

God draws us to Him, but especially by His Word, the Bible, that He has given us.

Rom 10:17-18 So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

18But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

Our ability to believe is strengthened by God's Word.

Ps 19:7-11 The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple.

8The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes.

9The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether.

10More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

11Moreover by them is thy servant warned: *and* in keeping of them *there is* great reward.

Ps 119:130 The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

Prov 12:15 The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel *is* wise.

Prov 18:15 The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.

Pro 1:5 A wise *man* will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto

wise counsels:

3. So close yet so far -

The words to call out to Christ are so close, they have moved from your heart to your mouth. When it comes to getting saved, the words can be there, but people let their pride get in the way. Paul presses on.

Rom 10:6-13 But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*.)

7Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

Don't look for excuses saying, just one more thing and *then* I'll believe. The formula is simple.

8But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

9That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

11For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

12For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

13For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

How simple it is! It actually takes about 2 seconds to secure an eternity in heaven. Getting the information to know how to be saved takes some time, but when the time comes to get saved, it

takes about two seconds. The publican cried out, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner," and Jesus said that he went down to his house justified, made righteous, rather than the Pharisee who boasted about his righteousness before God. The thief on the cross cried out, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." That one takes a half second longer, but Jesus told him that that day he would be with Jesus in paradise.

Preachers are pressed to spend so much time explaining all kinds of things about the Bible to help people be convinced to do the right thing. We are happy to do it. The more you know from God's Word the more confidence you have about the truth. However, at some point we have to ask, "Would you like to be saved?" The answer is in your mouth and the answer is "Yes," but you have to be willing to get over your own convenient self-righteousness, you have to get over just wanting to win the argument, you have to admit you are a sinner and need Jesus to save you. All the clever arguments that people have for resisting God will be of no comfort in Hell. No one will be kicking and screaming "No fair," because in Hell they will realize that, aside from Christ coming to earth to die on the cross taking our judgment, there is nothing more that could have been done to provide an opportunity to be saved.

4. Beautiful feet -

We are so blessed today to have the Word of God so abundantly available. There was a time when unscrupulous church leaders would destroy copies of the Bible that had been translated into the common tongue. The Lollards in 14th century England had families memorize chapters of the Bible so that when they were persecuted they could produce a new copy from memory when they got back together. People reveal how ill-mannered they are when they ridicule the Bible because they don't understand it. There are parts of the Bible that are harder to understand, but the parts that teach salvation are easy if someone takes

a little time to carefully read. The real problem is that people do not actively *seek* understanding because of the sinful human nature.

Prov 1:7 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Ps 53:2 God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were *any* that did understand, that did seek God.

Rom 3:10-11 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

Are people without hope? Only if we wait for the government to create a Bible literacy program. Only if we depend on the American Psychiatric Association to come up with a counseling standard for spiritual redemption. Only if we expect Facebook to come up with a solution. This becomes *our* problem because *we*, God's *church*, have been assigned that task.

Rom 10:14-16 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

We are inviting God's judgment if we are not faithful to the task of sharing the Gospel. Paul recognized this in *his* life.

1Cor 9:16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

This is not something that is offered for a church member to do in case they are interested. This is a command that is laid upon God's church.

Matt 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

Our obligation does not simply stop with evangelism. In the Great Commission, Jesus calls on us to follow up with discipleship. Sometimes people are put off by the pressure to participate in evangelism and discipleship. You have to ask, when we got saved, was it not because we recognized that we were rebellious against God and wanted to *submit* ourselves to Him? Why is it, then, that we balk when God calls on us to serve Him in the Gospel? Covid restrictions can only be blamed for so much of why attendance in churches is down. It's true that, in our age, people are increasingly distracted and disinterested. The only reason there is any hope of reaching people depends on our willingness to do what we have been plainly commanded to us. We can't force people to believe, but that doesn't mean we should deny them the opportunity because we are unwilling to do what it takes to reach them.

Acts 20:20-21,27 *And* how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly,

and from house to house,
21 Testifying both to the Jews,
and also to the Greeks,
repentance toward God, and faith
toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

...

27 For I have not shunned to
declare unto you all the counsel
of God.

We not only rob people the
opportunity of hearing the Gospel, we
also rob ourselves of the joy of seeing
changed lives.

Rom 12:15 Rejoice with them
that do rejoice, and weep with
them that weep.

You can't put your arm around a
shoulder and weep with someone if you
are not there when they are weeping.
You can't properly rejoice with someone
in just a text, an email, or a greeting
card. Getting a dozen smilies while you
sit in front of a birthday cake by yourself
is just such a sad picture. If you want
heavenly joy, you need to be part of the
change in a person's life.

Luke 15:7 I say unto you, that
likewise joy shall be in heaven
over one sinner that repenteth,
more than over ninety and nine
just persons, which need no
repentance.

Our Challenge:

Don't put off getting your life right
with God because it looks like a little bit
of work goes with giving your life to
Him. Laboring with the fruit of sin is far
harder. The word of faith that we preach
is nigh thee, it is even in your mouth. It
takes less than three seconds to gain an
eternity in heaven. Say "Yes" to God.

If you are a child of God, then you
can have the joy that comes from serving
Him. Is there some sin so dear that you
cling to that is worth missing the
heavenly joy that comes from serving the
Lord? Is your lifestyle so important that
you just can't bring yourself to help
others know God and escape Hell? Are

you afraid to be out of your comfort zone giving up some time and talent for God's work? Is there a fear of failure? God knows you and calls you to His service knowing more about you than you do yourself. Do you have health problems you think are keeping you from serving Him?

1. The heart problem - Rom 10:1-6, 5:19
2. The preparation to receive the Gospel - Rom 10:17-18, Ps 19:7-11, 119:130, Prov 12:15, 18:15, 1:5
3. On the tip of your tongue - Rom 3:20-23, 10:6-13
4. Beautiful feet - Prov 1:7, Ps 53:2, Rom 3:10-11, 10:14-16, 1Cor 9:16, Matt 28:18-20, Acts 20:20-21,27 , Rom 12:15, Luke 15:7