

Romans 10:1-13 Salvation by faith in Jesus

The Bible teaches us that we have been saved (Romans 8:24), that we are being saved (1Corinthians 1:18), and that we will be saved (Romans 10:13). Our biggest problem is in knowing we are in need of this salvation. If we were to be caught up in a disaster such as 9/11 we would be more than aware of our need to be saved. But our eternal need is to be saved from our sins (Proverbs 18:10). This is the reason Jesus came; indeed His Name means salvation (Matthew 1:21).

Our passage begins (Romans 10:1) and ends (Romans 10:13) with this need for salvation, and everything in between is about this salvation.

Imagine a family member being caught up in a disaster such as 9/11, or with a terminal illness. We would pray they might be saved, or healed. Sometimes all we can do is to pray. This is Paul for Israel. The fact that he prayed proved that he did not consider the unbelief of Israel to be a final or a closed matter. And nor should we. God is doing something new in our day. It is estimated that more Jews have come to faith in Jesus in the last 5 years than in the last 2000 years. Maybe God is beginning to answer Paul's prayer! But nor should we consider the unbelief of our loved ones and friends a closed matter, because God is able to do amazing things, even if we don't live to see the answer. It was not that God had rejected Israel, but Israel had rejected the Lord's Messiah. It is amazing that a tiny piece of land hardly bigger than Wales is the focus of so much world attention and is barely out of the news. Why is this? Because Israel is key to God's endtime purposes, and the Lord is getting ready to return!

But as we know, this salvation wasn't just for Israel but was for *all nations* (Genesis 12:3, Matthew 28:19). Paul makes this point in Romans 10:12, *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him*. Although this is obvious to us we should realise when reading the Bible that it wasn't obvious in the 1st century.

Nevertheless a small band of Jewish believers, the Apostle Paul included, understood the call to be a light to the nations, and took the gospel to the nations. It is believed that the gospel arrived in Britain very early on, not from missionaries, but most probably via Romans soldiers who had become Christian. The church historian the Venerable Bede recorded that in 156AD the British king Lucius wrote to the Roman church asking for instruction in the Christian faith. There has been a lot of church history between then and now, and some of it hasn't been very pretty. Nevertheless, in spite of failures, this gospel, which is the *power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes* (Romans 1:16), remains alive and is still preached in this country.

But exactly what kind of believing are we talking about? Is this any kind of faith? Do all faiths lead to God? Is it faith in faith? Israel had faith, but it was not a faith that led to salvation; Israel has zeal, but it was a misplaced zeal (Romans 10:2-3).

I think there is a tendency in human beings to want to do things the right way. The problem is that we think the right way is our way rather than the Lord's way. For example, the new morality we are being subjected to (through the vehicle of 'British values') is an attempt to do things the right way, our way! Israel sought to establish her own morality through the pursuit of endless purity laws, while often completely ignoring what the Bible actually said.

Paul has taught in Romans that the law condemns us (Romans 3:20, 7:7). If we take the Ten Commandments seriously it won't be long before we realise we are sinners. However, an understanding of sin was not the only purpose of the law. Paul shows us the ultimate purpose of the Law/Torah is to reveal the Christ, through whom we receive forgiveness and new life:

Romans 10:4 *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*

This is probably the most disputed verse in Paul's letters! Many have understood this verse to mean that Christ came to put an end to the law, i.e. abolish it. If this was the case then Paul is contradicting himself (Romans 3:31, 7:7) and also contradicting the teaching of Jesus (Matthew 5:17-20). In whatever way we are to understand the law we cannot say it has been abolished. The more natural meaning to 10:4, which is equally supported by the Greek text, is that the *end purpose* of the law is Christ. It's like saying, "The end of all training is to do your job well."

The faith Paul is talking about isn't just faith for faith's sake, but faith in Messiah as revealed in the Scripture and now made manifest in the flesh in the Person of Jesus.

Paul has already given two prime examples in Romans 4 of people saved by this kind of faith, one before the law was given, and one after. The first was Abraham (Romans 4:3). What kind of faith was it that Abraham had? Well, Jesus said, *Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad* (John 8:56). It seems very clear from this that Abraham's faith was specifically faith in Messiah to come. (NB A good case can be made that Abraham also knew of the resurrection of Messiah.) The second was David (Romans 4:6-8). David speaks of the resurrection of Messiah in Psalm 16, which means he must have known about His death as well. David's saving faith wasn't any old faith; it was faith in the Lord's Messiah (Psalm 110:1). I think we can conclude that the death and resurrection of Messiah was known in Israel, and at least to some extent anticipated. Maybe this is why Peter was able to say so confidently before the Sanhedrin, *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to man by which we must be saved* (Acts 4:12).

In Romans 10:5-6 Paul shows further the way in which Messiah is revealed in the Scriptures. *Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: "The person who does these things will live by them* (v5). In other words, Moses writes about this righteousness (this being put right with God) of which we are speaking: it's no good just thinking or talking about it, and so deceiving ourselves, we must be doers of the word (James 1:22). But this righteousness is a righteousness that comes by faith (as for Abraham and David.) Paul then in v6 explains this righteousness that is by faith using the Scriptures, from Deuteronomy 30:12-13.¹

The previous verse, Deuteronomy 30:11, says, *For this commandment that I give to you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off.* The problem is that we often think this 'faith thing' is just too hard and way beyond me. Paul can be hard to understand, like in this passage. But, do I have to ascend to heaven, or go to Cambridge University(!), to make Christ my own? No! In fact it is the humble poor who usually accept Jesus the most easily. Or do I have to grovel and do penance, to try and wake Jesus up and get His attention? No! You already have His attention, and He loves you. So do not say, *It is too difficult.*

But where exactly is this righteousness? It is right near you: *the word is near you!* But where is it? *It is in your mouth and in your heart.* It is within the reach of everyone, with no exceptions. This is the faith of Abraham, the faith Moses wrote about, the faith of David, and the faith in Jesus' resurrection we proclaim: *That if you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, YOU WILL BE SAVED!*

¹ 10:6 is translated as, **But** *the righteousness that is by faith says.* However Youngs Literal Translation has, **And** *the righteousness that is by faith.* Christian theology has traditionally assumed Paul is making a contrast between the law and faith at this point. However many now consider that Paul's use of *but* (*de*) at the beginning of v6 was instead to build his argument, not to make a contrast. Rather the contrast comes at the beginning of v8, where a different word for *but* (*allá*) is used, which is without doubt a contrastive *but*. A lot can hang on one little word!