

Romans 10:6-8

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/rom/rom-10/romans-106-8/>

Paul uses the words of the Lawgiver Moses to demonstrate that even the law shows that true righteousness does not come by the law, but by faith.

Here Paul turns to another book of the law for a picture of true righteousness, *the righteousness based on faith* (v 6). Using Leviticus 18, Paul has demonstrated that the righteousness of the law fails to produce righteousness, which is living in harmony with God's (good) design. No matter how many rules we make, and how many loopholes we plug up, the law does not alter the human heart, therefore it does not lead to real righteousness. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30 to show a picture of the righteousness of faith, which brings true righteousness.

In Deuteronomy 30, Moses is close to his looming death, and is giving the law to the second generation of Israelites just prior to their entering the Promised Land. The first generation of Israelites, who were rebellious, has died after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 2:16). (For more, read our [Deuteronomy 2:16–23](#) commentary here.) Likely this is part of the metaphor, that the rules of Leviticus given to the first generation did not change Israel's heart; although they remained the elect of God, they did not receive the reward of the inheritance of the Promise Land.

So now in Deuteronomy 30:11–20, Moses tells the Israelites that the path to gaining the blessing of God is not difficult to understand. It is simple (Deuteronomy 30:11), “For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.” They don't need someone to go up to heaven and get a divine revelation in order to understand how to be blessed (Deuteronomy 30:12). Why? Because it is simple; no heavenly explanation is needed.

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), or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)” (vv 6–7).

In the original passage from Deuteronomy, Moses told the people they don't need a missionary, or an expert, to come from “beyond the sea” to explain it (Deuteronomy 30:13). Why? Because it is simple, and does not need an expert's explanation.

What do they need? To listen to the word that is in their heart. To listen to that word, speak that word, and do that word (Deuteronomy 30:14).

While Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:12–14, he parenthetically applies each verse to Christ. In order to find true righteousness, the righteousness of faith, we don't have to get Jesus to come down from heaven again and explain it (*that is, to bring Christ down*). And we don't have to get Jesus to come over the sea, the abyss of death, and come back to life in order to explain it to us (*that is, to bring Christ up from the dead*). Why? Because it is simple. It is a matter of faith.

We have the word of the preaching of the gospel in our hearts. *But 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*

(v 8). To gain true righteousness, we simply need to listen to that word, speak or think that word, and do that *word of faith which [Paul] is preaching*.

The *word* is the gospel of grace, the true gospel Paul preaches. The gospel of grace is the pathway to true righteousness. It is not the law preached by Paul's slanderers.

It is important to remember the full context of Romans, that Paul is writing a defense of his gospel against slander from competing Jewish "authorities" (Romans 3:8). This letter to the Roman believers

will also help Paul's ministry partners Aquila and Priscilla, who host a church in their house in Rome,

to counter the arguments of the competing Jewish "authorities" (Romans 16:3; Acts 18:2, 18, 26). These competitors claim that Paul's gospel of grace is a gospel that *encourages* unrighteousness. They claim it is necessary to *follow the law* in order to gain righteousness.

These competing "authorities" object to Paul's teaching. Paul teaches that believers are made righteous in the sight of God solely through faith in the finished work of Jesus—apart from the law. The objectors have essentially claimed, "Paul sets aside the law, so Paul teaches that we ought to sin." In fact, they claim that Paul teaches we ought to "do evil so that good may come," in that by sinning more we show God to be even more gracious (Romans 3:8). Paul calls this report "slanderous."

In chapters 1–8, Paul has vigorously defended his gospel of grace. He has demonstrated that although God's grace completely covers believers when we sin, it's in our best interest to avoid sin. Sin may look good to our worldly eyes, but if we can see with the eyes of faith, we can see that sin brings death, slavery, and earthly condemnation, but the gospel grants us the power to deliver or save us from sin and its consequences (Romans 6:21-23).

Furthermore, sin leads to a loss of the rewards we may inherit. "Who wants that?" Paul has asked, expecting the Roman believers whose faith is "spoken of throughout the entire world" (Romans 1:8) to answer, "Not us!"

Paul has already demonstrated that the argument of the competing "authorities" conflicts with scripture. Abraham's righteousness came apart from the law, and apart from circumcision simply through faith (Romans 4:1–4). King David wrote in the Psalms that righteousness comes through faith (Romans 4:5–8). Now, Paul concludes the defeat of his opponents' slander with an argument from the lawgiver himself, Moses. The Law of Moses demonstrates that righteousness comes by faith, not by adherence to laws.

Deuteronomy 30 ends with an invitation by Moses to "choose life, that you might live" (Deuteronomy 30:19). Life and blessing come from loving God (Deuteronomy 30:16, 20), and loving God is a matter of obedience from the heart. Moses exhorted Israel to love the Lord and walk in His ways so that they would find success and prosperity in the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 30:16).

Paul makes the same argument. God never disowned disobedient Israel. Although the Israelites did not inherit the blessing of the Promised Land, they were still cared for. Throughout 40 years

of wandering in the wilderness, God fed them, protected them, and kept their clothing intact. Being a child of God is an unconditional inheritance, but receiving the promised reward of Christ's inheritance requires the same obedience Jesus learned through the suffering of faith (Romans 8:17b).

If we want to be righteous, then we must do what we know in our *heart* to be right—we must follow the leading of the *word* in our *heart*. And, since believers have the Spirit of Jesus dwelling within, it could be said that *righteousness* comes by following the *word* of the Word. The Spirit is always leading, and when we walk in the Spirit, we walk in obedience and are loving God. When we walk in the obedience of faith, we actually fulfill the law, for the law was given to instruct us how to love God, which is the first and greatest of commands (Romans 8:4).

Biblical Text

6 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).”

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