

## LENT LECTIONARY

**Christ Fulfills the Word  
(Rom. 10:1-21)**

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**A. Introduction**

Throughout Romans, Paul has been carrying on a dialogue with both Jews and Gentiles. In chapter 9, Paul stresses the sovereignty of God. Paul used the image of a potter and clay. God is the potter and humanity like clay. God is sovereign and God chooses what God chooses. That is the thrust of Romans 9.

Now, in Romans 10, Paul shows us the other side of the coin—human responsibility. Like the Bible as a whole, Paul affirms both divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

**B. Christ is the goal of the law (10:1-4)**

**Rom 10:1-4.** <sup>1</sup> Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. <sup>2</sup> I can testify that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. <sup>3</sup> For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to God's righteousness. <sup>4</sup> For Christ is the end [*telos*] of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. (NRSV)

1. Paul recognized that many of his Jewish brothers and sisters had a real zeal for God. But he also saw that their zeal was misdirected. He even says their zeal was not enlightened and based on ignorance.

2. Paul's criticism is directed at Jews who used the law to accentuate their ethnic identity. That is, they were meticulous in keeping circumcision, dietary, and festival practices, which distinguished them from Gentiles. But these practices, which were marks of Jewish Identity, became a barrier for Gentiles worshiping God. In other words, Paul is criticizing fellow Jews for excluding people from coming to God.

3. The Jews had religious zeal, but zeal alone will not suffice. There are people today have a spiritual zeal—they are sincere in their religious and moral practices—but they are lost (not eternally lost), but lost in the sense of doing the very thing God does not want them to do... yet they do it in the name of God!

- A zealous Muslim, who in the name of Allah, blows himself up and kills innocent people has not found God; he or she is lost.
- A zealous, Jewish settler, who opens fire on a group of Palestinians for the sake of Israeli land, is far from God; he or she is lost.
- A zealous Christian, who shoots an abortion doctor, has not done God's work; he or she is lost.
- When people make up our own religion in their heads; then they boast of their own spirituality—in their heads or to others—to bolster their ego or sense of identity; they have not found God in this; they are lost.
  - We do this when we tell ourselves "we're better" Christians, or better people, than others because ... you fill in the blank...
  - Because we have a seminary education
  - Because we think we give more than others
  - Because we speak in tongues or have mystical experiences
  - Because we "live simply, so others may simply live"
  - Because we have a cleaner house than someone else
  - Whatever it is... you fill in the blank

We make up our own standards of spirituality, or what is human greatness .... and then surprisingly ... we are one of the few able to attain that superlative standard.

That is what many Jews were doing in Paul's time. They kept circumcision, dietary laws, and the Jewish festivals. They were God's insiders and that made Gentiles outsiders.

Paul is making the case that God has made Himself known—the righteousness of God has been revealed (in the faithfulness of Jesus)—and our task is to listen, understand, and respond to God's standards, not ours.

Listen to what Paul says: There is a "righteousness that comes from God," but most of his Jewish brothers and sisters sought "to establish their own [religion]" and they did not "submit to God's righteousness."

The law was given to lead the Jewish people to the Messiah and to embrace his mission. However, most of the Jews thought the purpose of the law was to bolster their distinct national or ethnic identity to the exclusion of non-Jews. That missed God's plan for all nations.

Notice what Paul says in verse 4: "Christ is the end/goal (*telos*) of the law." Creating separate national identity was never the goal of the law. Rather, Christ is the goal or fulfillment of the law.

The law leads to Christ, who calls us into unity together with God. Unity together—Jew and Gentile—with God is God's plan. It's a message for our world today.

- The goal is not building a dividing wall between the court of Jews and the court of Gentiles in the Temple

- The goal is not building a great wall dividing Israelis from Palestinians, or building a great fence between Americans from Latin Americans.
- Certainly the goal is not ethnic cleansing, as we saw in the Rwanda War of the mid-1990s or the Yugoslav War in the late 1990s.

The goal is unification, not separation, building up, not destroying. We can do that only by adhering to the standards set by God.

Adhering to the standards set by God—as Paul brings out very clearly—means “faithful obedience,” trusting God (faith) and practicing the righteousness exemplified by Christ (obedience).

## C. God’s righteousness is near (10:5-8)

### 1. Righteousness of the law (Lev. 18:5)

**Rom. 10:5-6a.** <sup>5</sup> Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law that “the person who does these things will live by them.” <sup>6</sup> But [and] the righteousness that comes from faith says ...

In verse 5, Paul quotes Lev. 18:5: “The person who does these things [namely, the righteousness/justice of the law] will live [or benefit] by them.”

In verse 6, Paul quotes Deut. 30:12-14. Paul says “and” (*de*)—not “but” (*de*) as the NRSV—and this righteousness that comes by faith or trusting God says, “Do not say in your hearts....”

Traditionally, verse 5 and 6 have been read as saying contrary things. Law in verse 5 was contrasted with faith in verse 6. However, both can be read together. Keeping the law (obedience) and trusting God (faith) go together.

### 2. Faith that God is near (Deut 18:12-14)

**Rom. 10:6-8.** <sup>6</sup> But [and] the righteousness that comes from 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). <sup>8</sup> But what does it say? “The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim). (NRSV)

So here Paul quotes Deut. 30:12-14. Simply stated, we do not have to go to Heaven or into the world of the dead to find Christ. Faith tells us that God in Christ is near us. We don’t have to exert superhuman effort, taking mystical journeys into heaven or die before we encounter Christ.

How is Christ present? Christ is present in the word of faith.<sup>1</sup> The word of faith refers to the announcement of what God has done—the righteousness and faithfulness revealed in Jesus Christ—and a corresponding human response in heart and tongue.

## D. Christ is Lord (10:9-13)

How do we know Christ is present or near us? We know because we feel compelled to confess that *Christ is Lord* and we believe *Christ lives* even now!

**Rom. 10:9-13.**<sup>9</sup> because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.<sup>10</sup> For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.<sup>11</sup> The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame."<sup>12</sup> For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him.<sup>13</sup> For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (NRSV)

### 1. Confess that Jesus is Lord

What does it mean to confess that Jesus is Lord?

The word for lord is *kyrios*. This was the key word for early Christians. It has several meanings: (a) It was used as title of respect like the English word *sir*; (b) it was the title of Roman Emperors; (c) it was the title of Greek gods, like Kyrios Serapis; and (d) in the LXX it was the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible it is used for the divine name, Yahweh.

To confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord is to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Lord/Master of the World, the church, and your life.

Confessing Jesus is your Lord/Master corresponds to the obedience required of Lev. 18:5. It is to acknowledge your commitment to obey Christ (Rom 1:5; Matt 7:21-23), your loyalty to Christ; that Christ owns you; that you are his servant.

To confess Christ as Lord is to say you are, or desire to be, free from all other masters. SIN is no longer your master. Caesar is not your lord nor is another other earthly master. (Of course, you are free to do what other earthly masters request, but only if it is congruent with obeying God in Christ.)

### 2. Christ was raised from the dead

What does it mean to believe that Christ was raised from the dead?

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<sup>1</sup> Toews 264.

Believing that Christ was raised from the dead corresponds to the faith required in Deut. 30:12-14. It means you believe Christ lives, even now! Christ is present with us. It means you believe you can pray or talk to Christ right now and he hears you.

It means you can experience Christ through other people, within yourself, and in the word of faith (the preaching of the Gospel).

It means you not only know about Christ, but you know him. You know about him through the Gospels, but you also know him personally because you walk on his path, you follow him, you imitate him.

### **3. The results of believing and confessing**

What are the results of believing and confessing? Righteousness and salvation.

**Rom 10:10.** For one believes with the heart and so is justified/rightwised, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. (NRSV)

Belief and confession leads one to be declared justified and saved. Here is the logic: (1) If Christ is your Lord/Master, then you will live in a right relationship with God, yourself, others, and the created order, which is the meaning of righteousness (*dikaiosunē*). (2) To live in right relationships is salvation; it is harmony, peace, and justice. (3) With belief and confession of Jesus as your Lord/Master, God declares you to be justified or righteous.

This is why in some contexts righteousness and salvation are viewed synonymously.

**Isa 45:8.** Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the skies rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation may spring up, and let it cause righteousness to sprout up also; I the LORD have created it. (NRSV)

**Isa 61:10.** I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, (NRSV)

### **4. Does this include everyone?**

Does this include everyone? "Yes." Is anyone excluded? "No."

There are two kinds of people in the world, according to Paul. There are Jews and Greeks (Gentiles). When Paul says God makes no distinction between Jews and Greeks, he means everyone is on equal footing before God.

God is impartial when it comes to God's generosity. God does not favor Jews or Greeks, Americans or non-Americans, Muslims or non-Muslims. All people are equal before God.

Everyone has equal access to God. Four times Paul uses the term *pas*, which means all or everyone. Paul believes that God is accessible to everyone in the world, because there is only One God and One Lord of all.

This is a call for Jews—and everyone else, you and I—to abandon nationalism and ethnocentrism and seek the good for all people. This is coming to God on God's terms.

## 5. What does it mean to "call upon the name of the Lord"?

What does it mean to "call on the name of the Lord"? This is a quotation from Joel 2:32.

<sup>NJB</sup> **Joel 3:5** All who call on the name of Yahweh will be saved, for on Mount Zion will be those who have escaped, as Yahweh has said, and in Jerusalem a remnant whom Yahweh is calling. (NRSV)

<sup>LXX</sup> **Joel 2:32** And it shall come to pass *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved: for in mount Sion and in Jerusalem shall the saved one be as the Lord has said, and they that have glad tidings preached to them, whom the Lord has called. (NRSV)

There is some debate about whether the term "Lord" in verse 13 refers to Christ or to God. If it is a reference to Christ, then Paul is identifying Christ with Yahweh. Christ shares in the divine identity of Yahweh. That is possible.

Rom 10:13 probably refers to God, not Christ. The subject of verse 9 is God and it carries over to verse 13. In the OT, calling upon the name of the Lord is a technical term for calling upon the One True God.<sup>2</sup>

## E. Everyone has heard!

### 1. Note the connections

**Rom. 10:14-20.**<sup>14</sup> But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? <sup>15</sup> And how are they to proclaim him

<sup>2</sup> Toews 266.

unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

<sup>16</sup> But not all have obeyed the good news; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" <sup>17</sup> So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.

Notice what verse 14-15 link together. Calling on God requires believing. Believing requires hearing. Hearing requires proclaiming/teaching. Proclaiming requires someone being sent. Verse 17 puts it succinctly. Faith requires hearing the message of Christ.

## 2. Have they not heard?

<sup>18</sup> But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have; for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." [Psa. 19:4]

In verse 18, Paul essentially asks the question: If it possible that some people have not heard of Christ? He uses a rhetorical question: "Have they not heard?" His question assumes a "Yes" response.

How does Paul justify saying that everyone has heard the message of Christ? He quotes Psalm 19, which concerns God's universal revelation to all human beings. No one have an excuse. All have heard of Christ through the universal revelation of God. Both Jews and Gentiles have God's revelation; either through the law (Jews) or in the heart (Gentiles) (see Romans 2).

### *Excursus on Inclusivism:*

**1 Tim 2:4.** God desires everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth. Then salvation must be available to everyone, even if explicit knowledge of Christ is not available. (NRSV)

**Acts 17:23.** Paul was in Athens and said, "I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, "To an unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. (NRSV)

**Gen 15:6.** Abraham believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness. Without overt knowledge of Christ, Abraham experienced salvation. (NRSV)

**Acts 10:34-35.** Before Peter preached the gospel Cornelius, he said, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (NIV). Thus, Cornelius was saved believer before he heard the gospel and then he became a saved Christian after hearing the message. (NRSV)

*Clarifications regarding Inclusivism:*

All Christians are believers; but not all believers are Christians. Trusting God is most important. Knowing of how God achieves salvation is less important. Just as OT believers were saved by faith without explicit knowledge of Christ (chronologically B.C.), so are believers today (informationally B.C.). God saves those not usually thought to be part of the people of God.<sup>3</sup>

**F. Israel has not responded**

<sup>19</sup> Again I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry." <sup>20</sup> 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."

In the remainder of chapter 10, Paul addresses the question: Why has Israel has not responded to the Messiah Jesus? Is it possible that Israel has not "heard" the gospel (10:18)?

As we just saw, Paul responds "of course they have" (10:18). He cites Psalm 19:4, which originally proclaimed the glory of the Lord "told" in the heavens (cf. Rom 1:20), and applies it to the worldwide proclamation of the gospel by Christians.

The problem with Israel is they have "not obeyed" (10:16) or "believed" the good news. The problem with Israel is they have "disobeyed" (10:21). Yet Paul has hope that eventually "all Israel" (a representative group) will be saved.

**G. Conclusions**

1. Paul calls us to have zeal for God, but on God's terms, not ours. God's plan is to unit all people in Christ, people who respond faithfully to Him, irrespective of the differences amid the human race.

2. We must confess Christ as Lord, which means giving utmost loyalty to God in Christ. That loyalty itself liberates us. It saves us from SIN and any other earthly lords.

3. Christ is alive now. He is present with us and through Him we have access to God here-and-now. We don't need a guru, a spirit guide, or another messiah. Christ has already come and can be experienced here-and-now in the word that is preached as well as through each other.

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<sup>3</sup> **Amos 9:7.** God performed similar events as the Exodus for other nations. "Are you not like the Ethiopians to me, O people of Israel? says the LORD. Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?"

4. God is accessible to all people everywhere who trust Him. They do not need to know any special names or special religious mumbo jumbo to experience God in Christ, who is universally available to all.