

~Script: Frank R. Johnson~

## Christians and Israel: *"Why Can't I Do It All by Myself?"* Or, *"The Special Case of Israel in Salvation-History"*

Romans 9:30-10:21

~Take a first look~

I. JOSEPH STOWELL WAS SPEAKING A FEW YEARS AGO ON *MOODY PRESENTS*, A RADIO PROGRAM PRODUCED BY THE MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE IN CHICAGO FOR THE MOODY BROADCASTING NETWORK. He reported how Harry Ironside, a great pastor-teacher of the early 20th century, read works of religion by non-Christian authors. He drew this conclusion: every religion except Christianity teaches salvation by works. Christianity, on the other hand, teaches salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.

II. Consider that popular evangelical question: What if we were standing before God this very night and God asked us, "Why should I let you into my heaven?" What would we say?

1. Would we start reeling through our memory to recover good deeds you have done— participation in Christmas Baskets, donations to the hospital fund, voting regularly? Military service? Pastoral service!?

2. Would we stand speechless and unable to come up with any defense?

3. Or would we say, in the spirit of the hymn, "Our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. We dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name"?

There is only one right answer to the question, and Paul makes it crystal clear in this passage.



III. IN WHAT ARE WE TRUSTING AS WE FACE PASSAGE INTO ETERNITY AND AS WE STAND BEFORE THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH?

~Take a closer look Romans 9:30-10:4~

### I. WE MUST ADMIT THE FUTILITY OF SALVATION BY WORKS. 9:30-33

1. *The crux issue in our relationship with God is not our performance.* This is the historic error of Israel, spiritually speaking. Paul contrasts sharply the pursuit of a *law* that will bring righteousness (salvation by works, by human obedience alone), on the one hand, and the pursuit of righteousness by *faith*, on the other hand.

2. *Israel (as a whole) was relying on performance, the keeping of the law that would make them righteous.* Paul says, "They stumbled over the Stumbling Stone, Christ Himself."

A—I hope by now all of us will give up the notion that we are able to perform to a high enough level to earn acceptance with God.

I—I met a former Muslim [Slide of Qur'an] man at California Baptist College (now, University) back in the late 1970's. He told me that he was deprived of many childhood experiences, because his mother kept him inside learning the Koran by rote memory. He claims that he was forced to learn it all before he grew to manhood. When he met a Christian

missionary, he treated the missionary with contempt, mocking both the man and his message of salvation by grace. But he watched the man's life and the response he made to the persecution that Christian missionary received from him and his friends. He was impressed. One day this ardent Muslim picked up a tract off the street, a little booklet that explained the way of salvation through faith in Christ. It was entitled, "Why I Became a Christian," and was written by a man he recognized as a former Muslim. It struck him with curiosity, and he read it. God spoke to his heart through it, and he came to faith in Jesus Christ. That began a progression of events that finally led him to California Baptist University to study.

The crux issue for this man was this: *Can you learn enough, memorize enough, obey enough, to really gain acceptance with Allah?* He was one of the strictest of his religion, but he knew in his heart that self-effort was destined to fail.

We are responsible before God to recognize this truth as well. It is the inexperienced infant that says, defiantly, "do it all by myself!" This is neither the manly nor the womanly approach. Responsibility includes the ability to accept one's own limitations and to seek the help that one must have to succeed.

## II. WE MUST ACCEPT THE WAY OF SALVATION REVEALED BY GOD. 10:2-13

1. *The people of Israel were sincere in their zeal for God.* v. 2a

2. *But their zeal was not based on what God had revealed.* v. 2b

3. *They were trying to perform well enough themselves to earn a standing with God.* v. 3

4. *Christ came to bring such attempts at self-made righteousness to an end.* v. 4. This is a curious statement that has been interpreted in a variety of ways. The Greek word is τέλος (*telos*). A. T. Robertson says this about the statement, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (ESV, v. 4):

*"Christ put a stop to the law as a means of salvation (6:14; 9:31; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14) as in Lu. 16:16. Christ is the goal or aim of the law (Gal. 3:24). Christ is the fulfilment (sic) of the law (Mt. 5:17; Ro. 13:10; 1Ti. 1:5). But here (Denney) Paul's main idea is that Christ ended the law as a method of salvation for "every one that believeth" whether Jew or Gentile. Christ wrote finis on law as a means of grace."<sup>1</sup>*

A—The Old Testament Law was not an end in itself; it was meant to guide us to Christ.
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**I—C.S. Lewis once wrote: "The road to the promised land always leads past Mt. Sinai."** What he meant by this was, we must recognize the validity and the justice of the demand of the moral law upon our lives. What will be the result, however, is this. We will realize the futility of ever keeping the moral law by self-effort alone. At that point, we are ready for the offer of grace and not before. The promised land of God's acceptance and love is found when we give up self-effort and trust in Christ alone.

**I—Paul calls the Old Testament law a "child-guide." Galatians 3:23-25 are parallel to this idea here.**

**Galatians 3:23-25 (NIV):** <sup>23</sup> *Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed.* <sup>24</sup> *So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.* <sup>25</sup> *Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law."*

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<sup>1</sup> A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, at Romans 10:4, as published in BibleWorks, version 7.

The words translated “the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ” are the key ones for our proper understanding of the Old Testament law. It was not an end in itself; it was a means toward the ultimate End, Who is Christ Himself. Sometimes the translation indicates that the law was our “tutor,” but this is a slight miss of the meaning of the word in its ancient context. The παιδαγωγός (*paidagogos*, from which our word *pedagogue* comes) was the slave in the Roman household that was in charge of taking the child from the front door of his home to the front door of the school. He was not the one who did the teaching; he was the one who led the child to the teacher. So it was with the law.

Christ alone can teach us what humanity is meant to be in its fullness. The law can only lead us to Him.

**The law can drive the bus that gets us to the school, but it can't give us the education.**



**I—Have you seen those TV commercials from Southwest Airlines of a few years back advertising the advent of football season that are repeated often in August?** They were a crackup for me. Two female executives get ready to enter the conference room where they will make their presentation, stop, look at each other, and then give each other a head butt before entering. “Must be football season” says the announcer. The groomsmen douse the bride and groom at their wedding reception as with a Gatorade cooler and then give each other a chest butt. “Must be football season.”

Before football games begin there are a lot of practices. Outside of those practice sessions, what are all the players doing? The good ones are going over the play book, over and over and over. But here is the parallel. No matter how good the play book is, no matter how free from mistakes, no matter how accurately it describes the way of scoring goals, it is powerless to run even one play itself. It takes the team to do this.

The law has a similar limitation. It can only describe the character of God as it would be expressed in human relationships and behavior. It doesn't have the power to take one positive human action itself.

### **Romans 10:5-8**

5. *Paul uses various Old Testament quotations to illustrate the difference between a works-based righteousness and a faith-based righteousness.* vv. 5-8. He shows clearly that self-effort could neither bring Christ down from heaven nor could it raise Him from the dead. Rather, Christ did these things on His own initiative by the power of God.

### **Romans 10:9-13**

6. *Then, he calls everyone to faith in Christ alone.* vv. 9-13.

A—We must recognize the invariable sequence presented here:

(1) *Christ* has come.

(2) We must *believe* in His death and resurrection.

(3) We must *confess* our faith in Him as Lord (This is simply recognizing the objective truth about His person and work and our desire that this be true of our relationship to Him).

(4) We receive *assurance* of our acceptance with Him—Isaiah 28:16 (“Everyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame”) and Joel 2:32 (“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”).

Jesus is what we would call in our culture “an equal opportunity Savior,” offering life and wholeness to all who call upon Him.

**I—He sets up the salvation-scenario and compels us to Himself.** “In 1913,” according to Ken Burns in his book *The Civil War*, “the Federal Government held a fiftieth anniversary reunion at Gettysburg. It lasted three days. Thousands of survivors bivouacked in the old battlefield, swapping stories, looking up comrades.

“The climax of the gathering was a reenactment of Pickett’s Charge. Thousands of spectators gathered to watch as the Union veterans took their positions on Cemetery Ridge and waited as their old adversaries emerged from the woods from Seminary Ridge and started forward toward them across the long, flat fields. Philip Myers, [who witnessed the event as an 18 year old] wrote, ‘We could see not rifles and bayonets but canes and crutches. We soon could distinguish the more agile ones aiding those less able to maintain their places in the ranks.’

“As they neared the northern line, they broke into one final, defiant rebel yell. At the sound, ‘after half a century of silence, a moan, a sigh, a gigantic gasp of unbelief’ rose from the Union men on Cemetery Ridge. ‘It was then,’ wrote Myers, ‘that the Yankees, unable to restrain themselves longer, burst from behind the stone wall, and flung themselves upon their former enemies ... not in mortal combat, but reunited in brother love and affection.’”<sup>2</sup>

Here is a scene of salvation in Christ. We are by nature in conflict with God, but He breaks forth from heaven and initiates reconciliation. He throws Himself with seeming reckless abandon into the onrush of sin and death. He sheds His own blood for our sins. He embraces our rebellious selves and draws us into His love instead.

### III. WE MUST ANNOUNCE THE WAY OF SALVATION TO THE WORLD. vv. 1, 14-21

1. *The initiative of God is given expression through the cooperation of human agents.* vv. 14-15. Here again is the sequence that occurs before anyone comes to faith in Christ.

- a. God sends witnesses, ambassadors, emissaries.
- b. Those witnesses proclaim the message He has sent them to proclaim.
- c. Others hear and the Holy Spirit helps them to understand.
- d. Some believe.
- e. Those who believe call on the name of the Lord for salvation.

2. *The reality of Israel’s experience is this: they heard, they understood, and they rejected the message.* vv. 16-21

A—Our part in the salvation of others is to go and tell; God’s part is to bring them to faith.

**I—Paul knew by experience what this meant. He had been on a defiant course to persecute Christians.** He had been there when Stephen was martyred for His uncompromising testimony to what Paul was writing here: “Christ is the end of the law for everyone who

<sup>2</sup> *Leadership*, F 98, p. 71.

believes.” But God reached down and saved him despite himself. Paul’s religious zeal had done nothing except drive him farther from God. Jesus finally found him. This made him all the more zealous to report the truth to his own people and to anyone who would listen.

**I—I owe a lot of my success as a student to a man named Bill Nichols.** Mr. Nichols was teaching Junior High English grammar in the Davenport, Washington, school system when I was in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. He was a squarish and stout man with a gruff low voice. He drilled us like an Army sergeant until we understood English grammar, parts of speech, kinds of clauses, the whole catalog. What made him so zealous? He had flunked English in high school, but somehow he wound up attending college anyway. While there, he learned the English that he had missed while in school up to that point. He was a *convert* to English grammar. He didn’t want any of us to struggle like he had.

Does this not speak to your heart too? If you have felt the power of grace surging in your life does this not motivate you to share this truth with others?

3. *Paul was committed to pray for His people, even though they were not responsive at present.* v. 1. His heart went out to them to the degree that it broke over their hardness of heart. He would not stop hurting nor praying for their salvation.

A—Are we committed to pray consistently and earnestly for those in our lives that are not made whole by God’s grace in Christ?

**I—In *Point Man*, Steve Farrar tells the story of George McCluskey.** When McCluskey married and started a family, he decided to invest one hour a day in prayer, because he wanted his kids to follow Christ. After a time, he expanded his prayers to include his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Every day between 11 a.m. and noon, he prayed for the next three generations.

As the years went by, his two daughters committed their lives to Christ and married men who went into full-time ministry. The two couples produced four girls and one boy. Each of the girls married a minister, and the boy became a pastor. The first two children born to this generation were both boys. Upon graduation from high school, the two cousins chose the same college and became roommates.

During their sophomore year, one boy decided to go into the ministry. The other didn’t. He undoubtedly felt some pressure to continue the family legacy, but he chose instead to pursue his interest in psychology. He earned his doctorate and eventually wrote books for parents that became bestsellers. He started a radio program heard on more than a thousand stations each day. The man’s name was James Dobson. Through his prayers, George McCluskey affected far more than one family.<sup>3</sup>

~Take it home (applications)~

- I. We must give up all illusions of self-made salvation.
- II. We must put our faith in Christ without reservation.
- III. Then, we have the privilege to share the faith with a seeker.

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<sup>3</sup> Loyal J. Martin, Newton, Kansas. *Leadership*, Vol. 16, no. 4.