



When in Romans Do as the Righteous Do

"Who's a Whoever?"

Romans 10:1-4

Max Lucado, in his book *3:16* about John 3:16, has a great discussion about the comment people sometimes make that "all roads lead to God."

You wouldn't for a moment put up with a statement like that from your travel agent! If you want to go somewhere specific, you can't just get on any plane, train or automobile, and follow any road and expect to arrive at your destination.

If that's true of earthly destinations, doesn't it stand to reason it would be even more critical to follow the right road to get to Heaven?

You've probably heard of the Romans Road to Salvation. It is a set of verses from the Book of Romans that 'lead' a person to faith in Jesus Christ.

The 'signposts' on the Romans Road to Salvation are these:

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 10:9 ... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:13 For "WHOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED."

Since we are Gentiles reading the Book of Romans we might miss the fact that the final signpost on the Romans Road to Salvation, is actually a quote from the Old Testament. It's from the rather remarkable Book of Joel which, you might recall, was quoted by Peter on the Day of Pentecost when God sent His Holy Spirit upon the disciples and the church was born.

If you were a Hebrew or a Hebrew Christian, this would be an eye opener, to say the very least. It establishes, from the Old Testament, that salvation *was* and *is* by faith and that it is freely offered to Jew and Gentile alike.

“Whoever calls on the name of the Lord.” Are Jews “whoever’s”? Are Gentiles “whoever’s”? Yes on both counts.

What is the one requirement of a “whoever”? “Calling on the name of the Lord.” It's a statement of belief, of trust, in the Lord. *No works allowed!*

What is commonplace for us was and still is revolutionary to someone with a Hebrew worldview. Keep that in mind as we examine the opening verses of chapter ten.

Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.

I've indicated that in chapters nine, ten, and eleven we are looking at God's past, present, and future dealings with the nation of Israel. This, then, is the present - meaning what is happening in the time after Jesus ascended into Heaven until He comes in the clouds to resurrect and rapture His church.

Let's start at the end of verse one. Paul did not consider “Israel” to be “saved.” That means, among other things, that a person was not saved simply by being born a Jew, being a citizen of Israel. They were sons of Abraham, for sure, but not automatically his spiritual descendants.

Most of us understand that salvation is not inherited. But many of us do come from religious traditions that teach it is inherited. And much of the world thinks they are ‘saved,’ or at least on the right path, because of their physical birth into a particular religious or social situation.

Paul wanted Roman Jews to get saved. His reasoning, his arguments, his explaining of doctrine, his use of Scripture, **was all with the purpose of seeing Jews get saved.**

We would do well to keep our spiritual focus on that which is most important. There is certainly a place for believers to debate, or argue about, nonessential points of doctrine. But what is most important, what is critical, is that we minister grace to those who are in need of salvation.

I know Christians who spend all their effort and energy trying to get other Christians to believe the nonessential things they believe. They are always inviting believers to change churches and almost never inviting nonbelievers to church or to Christ.

This translates into their church planting as well. A lot of new church plants are just down the street from another good, evangelical church. The new church plant is essentially a split as believers leave other churches to join it. Some in the church planting movement are referring to these kinds of church plants as ‘splants,’ a church *planted* that’s really nothing more than encouraging believers to *split*.

One of the most enlightening books I’ve ever read on Bible doctrine is called *Evangelical Theology*, by Dr. Robert Lightner. The content is superb but what I like most about the book is that Dr. Lightner takes a doctrine, like salvation, and he gives a positive statement about what every evangelical Christian must believe about it in order to be accurate and orthodox. Then he cites major areas of disagreement on the parts of the doctrine that are not essential to believe.

It really opened my eyes and helped me to be able to navigate the turbulent waters of everyone’s nonessential opinions.

The apostle Paul never lost sight of the lost! Neither should we.

In verse one you also encounter the mystery of prayer in its relation to evangelism.

- Does prayer, my prayer, save anyone? No - only God saves.
- Does lack of prayer, my lack of prayer, damn anyone? No - only their own decision to reject Jesus as their personal Savior damns anyone.

Then why should I pray for anyone to be saved?

There are many reasons we could give. Paul, after all, prayed for the lost and we are told to follow his example.

One important reason you pray for the lost is that it puts your heart in alignment with God's heart. Scripture reveals God as having a heart for the lost. He is "...longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

Churches have a tendency to become a stagnant pool rather than a life flowing stream. Prayer for the lost helps keep us focused on eternal issues.

I've started to pray, and I'd ask you to join me, that the Lord would bring many nonbelievers to our church to be saved.

Romans 10:2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

Paul was the perfect example of "zeal... but not according to knowledge." Before his conversion on the road to Damascus he thought he was serving God by persecuting the church. No one had more zeal, and less knowledge, than Saul of Tarsus!

Zeal and knowledge ought to match one another.

- A zeal to serve God that is not based upon His Word is harmful. It leads to burn-out and bitterness. People with zeal but without proper biblical knowledge can be combative, cruel, and legalistic.
- Those who seek knowledge for its own sake, apart from its value in ministering to others, are sterile and cold in their walk. They can become "puffed up" in their pride and look down upon those they are called to build up in love.

You should be both a serious student of God's Word *and* a sincere servant to God's people.

What “knowledge” did the nonbelieving Jews lack?

Romans 10:3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

The major doctrine in the Book of Romans is “God’s righteousness,” meaning how you can be righteous before God and have a right relationship with Him. We’ve seen over-and-over again that God’s way of righteousness is to declare a believing sinner righteous based on faith in the finished work of Jesus on the Cross.

The Jews were “ignorant of God’s righteousness.” There are two ways (at least) that we can understand this:

1. The word “ignorant” might be indicating a lack of understanding. Paul was writing to give them the understanding that God’s righteousness must be received by faith.
2. At the same time, there were *always* Jews who understood that God must declare you righteous, that salvation was by grace through faith and not by works. Paul had shown them from their own patriarchs and from passages of Scripture that God was clear on faith versus works. And now, with the preaching of the Gospel and the evidence that Gentiles were getting saved, any “ignorance” must be willful.

Plus Paul seems to be saying that they are currently refusing to submit to God’s way of salvation.

Truth is, people start out ignorant because they don’t understand, then after the Gospel is presented to them, many choose to be willfully ignorant thinking they can get to Heaven on some other road, that “all roads lead to God.”

The Jews willfully ignored this and sought to become righteous by keeping God's law. They refused to submit to the righteousness that God made available to them in Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

He is its end in two ways:

1. He is the “end” can mean He is the *goal* that the law pointed toward. The law was never intended to make anyone righteous; it only exposed indwelling sin, it only showed you how very unrighteous you really were before God. The law was intended to show you your need for a Savior.
2. “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness” can also mean that His life, death, and resurrection bring an end to anyone thinking they could ever attain a right relationship with God through works. I mean, seriously, why would God have to become a man and die on the Cross if there were any other way of attaining salvation?

Jesus is "the end of the law for righteousness" for believers in the sense that the law is not to be looked at as a means for becoming more righteous after you are saved, either. Look to the Lord, not to the law.

This righteousness, both in position and in practice, comes by faith, "to everyone who believes."

It's sad to me that so many people read those last four words and then immediately begin to define very narrowly who it is among the human race that *can* believe.

Some say **no one** can believe unless God saves them first. They say that regeneration, being born-again, precedes faith in Jesus Christ, and that only a very, very few individuals will be regenerated by God while the vast multitudes have no choice and no hope.

I see no delimiting in Paul's thinking. He started this chapter by sharing his desire that Israel would be saved. He had every Jew in mind. There was no footnote in his thinking that only a tiny few among the Jews *could* ever be saved. He doesn't mean, "I wish all Jews could be saved, but I know that most cannot because that's the way God planned it."

Regardless you view of salvation, think of **everyone** as "whoever."