

For All Who Call
Romans 10:5–13

Who do you think of when you hear this statement: *“He is so far from God,”* or *“She is so far from God right now.”* Do you ever describe someone that way, as being far away from God?

There’s a sense in which the description is biblical. Proverbs 15 says, *“The LORD is far from the wicked.”* And Psalm 138 says, *“He regards the lowly, but the haughty He knows from afar.”*

There’s actually more references in Scripture to people feeling like God is far away from them. Psalm 10, *“Why do you stand far off, O LORD?”* Psalm 38 and 71, *“O God, do not be far from me!”*

But, at the same time, Scripture describes God as not being far away at all from anyone. As Paul speaks to the men of Athens, he says, Acts 17, *“The God who made the world and everything in it...is actually not far from each one of us.”* So in a different sense, no one is far from God.

But we naturally assume some kind of insurmountable distance between God and people, don’t we? We have in mind certain hurdles or barriers standing that must be overcome for someone to be made right with Him.

In reality, though, the Bible teaches that all that God requires for a person to be made righteous is for the person to call out to Christ in faith. That’s it. Just call out.

God is full of grace and He receives sinners readily. We shouldn’t describe or think of coming to God as being hard work. There is no hard work for a person to do. There is no long distance to travel. That’s clear from the description of the work done for salvation. No mere human is capable of doing what needs to be done. It’s God who has done all the hard work in Christ.

But what kind of hard work? Notice the outline in the WG. In Christ, God brings righteousness to us and bestows righteousness on us. Bringing and bestowing His righteous record is the hard work God has done in Jesus.

And this is immediately applicable for every person here today, even if you might say you’re a Christian and perhaps have been one for a long time, and here’s why: because no matter what you’re facing in your life, whether you’re coping with something you’ve done or something that has been done to you, or if you are dealing with something difficult, something is making you fearful or frustrated, Romans 10 assures us that you can face those things with the knowledge that God is very near and He is very gracious.

Whatever you’re enduring, this is how you should view the one true God: He’s not far away, not uncaring, and His work in salvation demonstrates His compassionate character. And God is as purposeful and persistent in our sanctification as he is in our salvation; in other words, He’s the

same God after we come to faith as He is before and when we come to faith. So let's look at this passage together.

I've mentioned at the start of each of these past two Romans sermons that one goal in this short expositional series is to show that the OT and NT do not describe two different peoples of God and two different ways of salvation for two groups. Some preachers and believers wrongly distinguish Israel from the church today, and the book of Revelation is often wrongly interpreted based on that.

But in Romans 9-11, the apostle Paul explains that all the privileges enjoyed by ancient Israel as the covenant community did not save them. In fact, in Romans 9:6, Paul writes, *"Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel."*

Many of the Hebrew people believed they were right with God simply because of their ethnicity and upbringing and because of various laws they felt they had kept perfectly. Last week, we looked closely at chapter 10 verses 1-4. Look again at verse [3], *"For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. [4] For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."*

Jesus is the goal or point of God's law, and He fulfilled the whole law of God. No one can be saved by doing works of the law. It's impossible. We must have Christ. And now here, with verse 5, Paul begins to further compare and contrast righteousness based on the law and righteousness based on faith.

To do that, he gives examples from the OT law books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy to prove that the OT taught salvation by grace through faith. And he roots his explanation of the law in the law itself. Notice verse [5], he says, *"For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them."*

The last half of that verse is from Leviticus 18. In Leviticus 18, God tells the people of Israel not to follow the ways of Egypt or Canaan, but to follow His statutes and my rules, and *"if a person does them, he shall live by them."* When Moses uses the word "live" here, he means it in the sense that following God's ways is a better way of life because it's in harmony with the character of God Himself. Moses is not saying that a person who does these things will, by them, earn eternal life.

But this command was largely twisted and misinterpreted. Instead the idea was promoted that salvation came by doing works of God's law. However, Moses clearly anticipated that the people would not fulfill the whole. That's why the system of sacrifices was given.

And here, Paul quotes this verse in contrast to righteousness by faith. It serves as a warning. What is the warning? That if you're going to rely on keeping the law to make you right with God, you're going to have to keep the law perfectly. You have to be prepared to seek righteousness

with God through your own doing. And throughout the first 8 chapters of Romans, Paul explained that no one can actually do that.

The law of God has great value – moral living is beneficial – but no one does it perfectly. We all fall short.

Well, next Paul quotes from Deut. chapters 9 and 30. Look at verse 6, *“But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart.”* This first part is from Deut. 9, in which God tells the people when you go into the promised land, *“Do not say in your heart... ‘It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land.’”*

Moses plainly tells the Israelites, *“Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land.”* And Paul combines that Deut. 9 reference with one from Deut. 30, where Moses says of the law, [11] *“For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. [12] It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ [13] Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ [14] But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.*

Moses meant that the law was not too hard for them to understand. Again, he knew it was too hard to do perfectly. In fact, at the beginning in Deut. 30, Moses reveals that he knows they will fall short of it. It’s still good and they should still try to live by it, but again, no one is perfect.

And when Moses says *“neither is it far off,”* he means they don’t have to go on some long journey to discover the truth. God had brought them out of Egypt, God brought them to the truth, and He made it clear and simple for them. So the Israelites couldn’t argue that they didn’t know God’s will. He told them His will for them.

Now in Paul’s words, verse 6, he updates the words of Moses by saying, *“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). [8] But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim).* What does this mean?

Well, it means that we don’t need to go up to heaven to get Jesus for our salvation. He came down to us. And we don’t need to go down into the grave to get Jesus for our salvation. He rose up for us.

Paul’s point is that humans are not the ones who have put in the effort to be saved. God has put in the work. If you read the account in the book of Exodus about how the people of Israel were saved from slavery there, you see that God does all of it. And just as with the OT, so with the NT, *“the word (or message about what God has done and requires us to do) is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.”*

Have you ever been preparing to leave on a trip somewhere far away, and you kind of dreaded the travel, the distance? Where you were going seemed so far away!

How far away is salvation? How far away is righteousness for you in the sight of God? According to these verses in Romans 10, it correlates to how far away your words are. Aren't they right there in your mouth? How far away is the righteousness of God? Well, how far away is your belief? If a person has belief, isn't it right there in the heart? Salvation is never far away.

Now, look again at verse 8. When Paul says *"the word,"* which he then says is *"the word of faith that we proclaim,"* he means the good news they were preaching, the gospel of Jesus Christ. And then in verse [9] he writes, *because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. [10] For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.*

These are well known verses. They get quoted a lot with no reference to the point of this chapter. Often, these verses are cited as steps to being saved. But that's not exactly what he's talking about here.

This "mouth and heart" language comes from Deut. 30, and the point of them is that we're saved by faith and not by works. Notice the order in verse 9, "confess with your mouth...and believe in your heart." Chronologically that sounds backwards, doesn't it? Wouldn't you believe first, then confess?" But then in verse 10 he says, *"with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."* The order of "heart" and "mouth" is switched. Bible scholars point out that this lets us know that "justified" and "saved" mean the same here.

This is not a discussion of two different things. Confessing with the mouth is simply stating what's already in the heart. It is the belief – the faith – that is key. And we can't lose sight of the original argument that Paul is making: that the people in the OC community of Israel who were saved were saved by faith, which is in the heart.

All that a person needs to do to be saved is to receive God's gracious gift by faith. This does not naturally dawn on us. We imagine barriers that God has not set up for us. Even Jesus' own disciples didn't see this at first. John 6 describes how during his earthly ministry, the disciples came to Christ and said to him, *"What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"* Jesus answered them, *"This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."*

Believe in the One who does the hard work. One chapter earlier, in John 5, Jesus even told the Jews who were persecuting him, *"My Father is working until now, and I am working."* You and I can't work for the saving grace of God. Jesus Christ worked on our behalf.

You see, in Christ, God brings righteousness to us. God brings it. He delivers it. We don't solve some riddle. It's not a puzzle to put together. It's not a checklist of things to accomplish.

Do you make it out to be something that it's not, some distance people need to travel, some code they need to break? Is that who you believe God to be, the builder of a kind of nearly impossible obstacle course of laws and rules?

Imagine standing at the start of a course with some aspects that are doable, but on the whole, you know you can't complete it. But then someone brings you the award for completion. Salvation is like that. That's grace.

Now, verse [11], *For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame."* This refers to Isaiah 28. It was also quoted at the end of Romans 9. It refers to the shame awaiting at the time of judgment. Like a prisoner who is guilty and comes before the judge for sentencing. Everyone who believes in Christ will not be ashamed at the time of God's judgment.

You see there, the Savior is for "everyone" – not just for the Jews (as so many of them wrongly believed), and this leads to Paul's next statement, verse [12] *For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek.* Now, at this point in Romans, Paul has already explained that all people, both Jews and non-Jews, have the same problem: no one is righteous in themselves, no one can achieve righteousness, all have sinned and justification is only by God's free grace. Paul reiterates that here, and then he adds, *"for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him."*

There's something interesting in the Greek manuscripts that contain verse 12. Notice the verse says, *"for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches."* There isn't a corresponding Greek word which translates to "bestowing" in English, and also the word "Lord" only appears once in the Greek. So you could also translate it something like this: *"the same Lord of all makes rich all who call on Him."*

In Christ, God brings His riches to You and then He makes you rich. Not only through Jesus, but in Jesus. Not just the actions of Christ, but in His very person God bestows righteousness on us. And look at the last verse, verse [13], *For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

That last line is a quote from Joel, another OT prophet. The meaning is simple. No hoops to jump through or hurdles to clear. In Christ, salvation is free for all who call. And if God is so generous in salvation, why should we believe that He will be stingy in sanctification?

If God has done all the work to bring righteousness to us, then why would He not also do the work to carry us securely to the end? Here one more Romans quote for you, from chapter 8. Paul says, *"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"*

What are you facing today? What troubles you? You must know that the triune God – Father, Son, and Spirit – is near and full of grace. He stands to receive you today. He receives all who call. Will you trust in Jesus today?

Believer, as we go to this table, He stands to receive you once again today. Renew your faith and let him put your mind at ease. Take your concerns to Him, carrying with you nothing more than the belief that He is a kind and caring God and the words of humble faith.

Let's bow in prayer.