

The Just shall live by Faith

Volume 1 - Study 2 Romans 8 **For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.**

C. Ronald Johnson, Christian Wilderness Press: Jesus Christ had said **Let not your hearts be troubled.** In Romans 8, Paul taught 'your righteousness within discouragement, distress, trials, and troubles shall not be ashamed', for it is God's purpose of righteousness amid problems, suffering, tribulation, anxieties, weakness, weariness, and persecution.

Studies - The Lord thy God saith unto the righteous, 'Fear not'.

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These are brief studies, not  
"teachings" or "doctrines".

Volume 1, Study 2

## **Romans 8:35-11:2**

In this long passage, Christians consider a short section of it significant and we will discuss it in light of the whole. Paul preaches right out of the Bible texts (his Bible being the Old Testament) and he is trying to motivate the New Testament churches back to God's ways (i.e. Old Bible Basics). Therefore we shall follow Paul's line of discussion.

### **Introduction**

I am of the evangelical part of the Church, but here and always I trust that I am speaking to God's people in all of their walks. On the other hand, since I am an evangelical I can only see 'as through a glass darkly' from where the Lord has set my feet as I walk the path wherein He has placed me.

We evangelicals are so into our concepts regarding "salvation of the lost" that we miss many important things from the apostles directed toward Christians. Indeed, we shall see in the whole of the passage that Paul is speaking from a particular concern toward suffering Christians, of whom there were many in his day and in his circle of ministry.

This morning, before coming in to go through this little writing a second time, Barbara and I were discussing the prophet/priest, Samuel, and God's people Israel at a time when the people had finally tired of trying to solve their problem with the Philistines by their methods. It was at that time that the Lord indicated to Samuel to begin preaching 'repentance'; i.e. for His people to turn from their wearisome efforts unto the Lord and to His very simple and fundamental ways. This simple concept is the theme of this writing.

So let me speak briefly about that time: The story begins in 1 Samuel 4 and goes through 7. Most readers are in too much of a hurry and will not take the time now to deviate here and read through it (which is what I would like you to do) because we have deceived ourselves into thinking that "going through the motions of study" is beneficial to us, especially when we can do it with others or tell others that we have done it. However, it is "the going through study" that pleases God enough that His Spirit will actually take the time to look over one's shoulder to point out this and to point out that.

### **God, Samuel, and the People**

Israelites of the southern tribes were constantly being pestered by the Philistines that lived west of them. Over time Israelites had gotten into the habit of taking the arc of the Covenant from the tabernacle to accompany them to war. It was carried by levites and watched over by a priest or two. Though this was a significant misuse of God's holy things, they did it out of desperation and soon it became acceptable and in time *it became the thing to do*. God had mercifully helped His people in their battles and they mistakenly took His mercy as proof that they were on the right track in pleasing Him when in fact they were tempting Him to their peril. For this battle, then, they continued in the same foolish manner.

However, this time the Philistines routed the Israelites and captured the arc of the Covenant. Notice in the story how much the Philistines respected the God of Israel and this sacred item, in that they sought to use it along with the sacred items of their own gods, thinking that the

God of Israel would bless them because they would keep the arc safe and respect it. They hoped that the turning of Israel's God from Israel would result in Israel's God helping them. The Israelites when carrying the arc had defeated the Philistines before and now the Philistines had the arc and would treat it better than had the Israelites.

However, after experiencing the wrath of Israel's God, the Philistines returned the arc with a payment to Israel's God for their sin against Him (chapter 6). The cart carrying the arc entered a field near the town of Beth-shemesh. The people rejoiced greatly and some men of the family of Levi (i.e. levites) living nearby took charge of the arc of the Covenant. Joyfully the people decided to offer up a sacrifice unto their Great God right there in the field. They took the wood of the cart and sacrificed the oxen in thanksgiving unto Yahweh.

The wood and the oxen were Philistine wood and oxen; moreover no priest (i.e. of the family of Aaron) officiated in this sacrifice; therefore, it was done away from the holy place in the tabernacle and not in any sense according to the Law. Even so, in mercy God overlooked all of this, though the levites knew better and should not have allowed it.

However, in their joy they tempted God too much when they decided that they should take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to gaze into the arc's inner parts. By this time, only a few of the people knew what was inside the arc, and wanting to know more about God usually is good. But curiosity that leads to assumptions against a Holy God is another thing. Curiosity did not kill 50,046 Israelites; the Holy and Mighty God of Israel killed them.

In great fear, the people called for others to come and move the arc inland to a more secure location. These men, probably levites, brought it to a certain hill and to a particularly righteous man, likely one of their own who was highly respected. This man, then, was sanctified unto the service of keeping the arc, for the people of southern Israel were afraid of their God. The arc remained in that place (not carried further unto the tabernacle) for twenty years and God honored the man sanctified for the keeping of the arc. During those twenty years the people mourned for the men killed by God and they wondered about their Very Hard God.

With God's mercy seemingly held from them in those twenty years, the people had reverted more and more to trying whatever they thought might help them, for they still lived in fear of their enemies. With twenty years having passed, the people were hoping that perhaps God would forgive them and turn His mercy back upon them. So the Lord inspired Samuel to begin speaking to the people of 'repentance'...which meant for them to turn from the things they had been doing to help themselves (7:2-6). In Samuel's message, the thing which God wanted from His people was simple: each person should turn from what he or she has been doing in their need and prepare their hearts before the Lord. That is, they needed to turn from their path, which had strayed from the righteous law of Moses, and return to the righteous law of Moses.

## **God, Paul, and the Christians in Rome**

In the latter part of chapter 6 Paul speaks of how the Gentile Christians...in yielding to God...had also yielded to become servants of righteousness (verse 18). That is, the concept of yielding to God was supposed to have included their becoming His righteous servants. To say it another way, Paul was clearly teaching that God's ultimate purpose in "saving them" or "bringing them into the family of God" was 'righteousness'. Paul was not speaking of God's righteousness, but of something lesser and yet akin to God's righteousness; moreover, that God intended this righteousness for each of His children.

Indeed, each became 'accounted righteous' enough within Christ's sacrifice and resurrection to become a member of God's family, yet God wanted each to experience an 'active walk in righteousness'. By all the writings of the apostles we know that they were trying to motivate Christians within the churches to mature into righteousness.

Paul speaks of it as 'the new man'. He speaks of how his readers had been servants to uncleanness and iniquity, but that now they were servants 'pertaining to righteousness and holi-

ness'. In chapter 7 he continues in regards to the Law of Moses: that the law is 'of righteousness': and he proceeds to tell of his own experiences of sin and righteousness of the law, his experience with Jesus, and how these same things affected him after his experience with Jesus.

Beginning in chapter 8, then, he speaks of 'no condemnation to Christians who walk not after the flesh, but walk after the Spirit'. Therefore, Paul is distinguishing between Christians 'who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit' and Christians who do not so walk. He is concerned with the brethren and that many of them were slipping away from 'walking after the Spirit' to 'walk after the flesh'. All of the apostles wrote about this very concern. The little book of Jude is about this. At this point, I will leave it to the reader to finish chapter 8 up to verse 35.

In Romans 1 - 6 there are 21 passages containing the word 'righteousness'. In our study of three chapters, 8 through 10 there are 10 passages containing 'righteousness'. Paul is trying to motivate 'servants of righteousness' to truly be 'walking in righteousness' so they might become pleasing to 'the God of righteousness'.

In Romans 1 - 5 there are 22 passages containing the word 'faith'. In Romans 9 and 10 there are 5 passages containing 'faith'.

So bear it mind that the Apostle Paul is speaking of 'righteousness' and of 'righteousness that is by means of faith' throughout the book of Romans and especially in the chapters 8-10.

Here is the text where we shall end up.

**Rom 9:30-33) What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by [their working at] the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed** [i.e. as the Jews who were working by their own strength at the law were 'ashamed' because God was not working for them].

**Rom 10:6-11) But the *righteousness* which is of *faith* speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, *the word of faith* [pertaining to righteousness], which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man *believeth* unto *righteousness*; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever *believeth* [unto righteousness] on him shall not be ashamed.**

## Persecution

Paul's main theological concern of 'righteousness by means of faith' has been discussed, but now we must understand that the apostle is speaking from his heart to Christians in Rome and elsewhere, most of whom were in the throws of persecution of some sort.

Moreover, Jews too often were the cause or instigators of such persecutions. Therefore, he speaks at length about his ongoing love (agape) for his beloved family, the Israelites, and he refers to the particular Israelites who (like he had been) were modernly interpreting the Mosaic Law for their people of that day...yet interpreting wrongly on many religious points for the day to day living of the people of Israel and for the many scattered Israelites among the nations. Due to his complete turnaround (i.e. from Saul to Paul) he had come to realize that the intent of the

writings of Moses, the Psalmists, and the prophets had become increasingly misconstrued by Israelite leaders over the 400 years from the remnant-return from exile in Babylon to Jerusalem.

Just as exposure to Egypt for 400 years had become detrimental to the early Israelites, so exposure to Babylon had become detrimental to the mindset of many among the returning remnant to Jerusalem. In the gospels we see Jesus repeatedly pointing out to the modern Israelites, and especially to the Jews (who considered themselves “the guardians” of scripture), about how their interpretations had strayed from God’s true intentions of the righteous law. Of course, the Israelites were to follow, to obey, and especially to keep and guard the law...but as originally intended and not according to the modern concepts.

In the ages of Old (like today) mankind needed God’s word. Israel had been chosen to receive it and to guard it. Throughout all of that Old age, God had drawn many people of the nations unto that Word - the Righteous Law. The Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26 ff (ff meaning “and following”) is an example.

Paul, (as Saul) had risen to prominence amid these modern interpretations to the point that he sought out Christian Israelites for punishment, even death, for ‘disobeying the law’. Therefore, Paul understood the deception of “being in the law, living by it, and yet missing the law’s very intention...its goal of ‘righteousness, holiness, and sanctification by means of faith’. The modern concepts of the Jews, in their attempts ‘to please God’, were bound up in all of the religious actions of the law, but also *in their progressive interpretations of the law for their people in modern times*. Moreover, they consider the imposing of their interpretations upon the people as ‘keeping the law’. Sadly, their ‘works at the law’ had become twisted within their *evolving understanding of the law interpreted for their modern times*.

Oh, how dumbfounded and depressed Paul became during and shortly following his experience with Christ Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul never totally overcame his shame 1) of how fervently wrong he had been in his intelligent and studious ‘keeping of the law’, and 2) of how sorely he had maltreated the Christian brethren, even maltreating Christ himself.

Zealot men like Paul had been (especially those in leadership positions) were referred to as ‘Jews’. (Therefore, Saul had been not only an Israelite, but also a ‘Jew’). The word ‘Jew’ was taken from ‘Judaea’ because the Israelites who had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon were the ones (and their children after them) who rebuilt the city’s walls and the temple. They were the ones to ‘keep the sacred things and the law’ for “the Great God of Israel”. During the 400 years until the time of Jesus, such men had evolved from being humble and thankful to being prideful, offensive, and strict...for the cause of God, of course.

In those 400 years, Israel had been weak...under the heel of several strong kingdoms. Though there had been some good times, most of those years had seen many difficulties, especially when the remnant Israelites in Judaea experienced Persian rule replaced by Greek (actually Macedonian) rule. Then eventually the rulers over them came to be Roman.

The citizens of Jerusalem and nearby cities became known as ‘Judaites’ because they resented and often rebelled against many things imposed upon them, things which they took to be sinful and sometimes exceedingly sinful. All such rebellions were squashed, but the Israelite leaders in their “protectionist role toward the Mosaic Law” eventually became known as ‘Jews’, a shortened form of ‘Judaites’. This attitude of “protecting God’s law and the temple and the holy things” was carried around the world as more and more Israelites were being scattered. Many of them lived in cloistered communities among the nations, but as often as they could they would make a pilgrimage to the motherland and to Jerusalem the holy city. Invariably, those most fervent for the Mosaic Law and Jerusalem also took the title of ‘Jew’.

Like Paul, the writers of the New Testament repeatedly distinguished these fervent “guardians of the Mosaic Law” by referring to them by their preferred title, ‘Jews’. It seemed that ‘Jews’ were everywhere the apostles and the scattering Christians traveled. Around the world Jews were meeting in synagogues. The more fundamental force against “the Jesus movement” was bound up in these Jews, often men in various leadership positions like organizations

of elders, political groups of Pharisees and Sadducees, and the leading priests in Jerusalem (i.e. priests that were not of the house of Aaron but had been appointed by the Romans). They gave Christians, especially Israelite Christians a very hard time. However, there were many other religious entities that were jealous of the growth of the Christian movement.

Therefore, Paul introduced in his preaching “Christ-our-Intercessor” (34) because his theme of ‘righteousness and holiness by means of faith’ is directed towards Christians experiencing persecutions (35-39). Paul especially fit the role for such preaching because of his own experiences: when he was the persecutor and the many times when he was the persecuted.

Do God’s people (then and now) *work at God’s Word* or do they *simply and actively believe (i.e. faith) those words*. Paul would say, “Do they actually walk by faith?” We saw in Samuel’s day that God’s people had many troubles and it seemed that God was mad at them, or at least He was not hearing their prayers, and so they were trying to work out their salvation from the Philistines by varied means with no substantial success. After twenty years of trying, God through Samuel told them to return to His simple expectation of them - the ‘righteous law’. Note that the Book of James is almost entirely taken up with this topic as James writes to his Christian Israelite brothers. This entire passage is Paul’s address to Christians about this ‘walk of faith and righteousness’ which most of them did not ‘walk’. To God’s people (then and now) often it seems that “the heavens are made of brass” and that God is not responding.

Dear reader, there was a need to provide the background of what we shall now consider.



## Getting on with the study

**8:35-37) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.**

Paul always addresses the early Church with compassion because many brethren are experiencing tribulations from different forces: fervent Jews, fervent followers of other religions (of which there were many in Paul’s day and are becoming many and varied in America), government servants fervent for the agendas of their bosses, etc.

It is clear that America is in similar throws of *fervent people*, fervent forces fully involved in the work of their agendas. In the case of our passage, the believers were in Rome and/or in that city’s suburbs. America’s chaos is becoming obvious as it now is budding like a poisonous and beautiful tree in springtime whose fruit is attracting and will attract multitudes. Americans are eating of the fruit, liking it, becoming adjusted to it, and seeing little or nothing wrong with it, even as America is changing before our eyes.

However, in the Rome of Paul’s day the chaos was far greater. Today we cannot fathom the depths of Roman chaos. Even students of history and of Rome have but an idea of it. Without experiencing such “civilization” we do not really “get it”. Nonetheless, we may very well “get it” soon enough. Let us seek the Lord while we have time. If the reader thinks he does not have time to do so, then fervently ask God to grab hold of you and get your undivided attention.

**8:38) For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature [i.e. created thing], shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

We should focus on the clear intent of these words as they emphasize *hard hard hard* times. These Christians were going through difficult times and were coping as best they

could, using the good and familiar but worldly things and ideas mixed in with their new found faith and the Hebrew Scriptures. In having ‘yielded to God’, Paul says that these Christians had also ‘yielded unto righteousness’; ah, but they did not understand that God’s ways for them included very little of the ways of their familiar world.

Moreover, strong and capable Christians among them were taking the lead by compassionately trying to help many brethren from their troubles. As these strong ones found something that worked for them, they would teach it to others, thereby acquiring followers. Paul had been hearing about such leaders and their followers.

**9:31) But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.**

The phrase ‘the law of righteousness’ is better translated as ‘the law regarding or pertaining to righteousness’. The word ‘of’ is possessive and has to do with ‘being owned by or belonging to’. In other words, the Law given of God to His chosen people *belongs to or pertains to righteousness and to the faith which makes righteousness available*.

Elsewhere Paul speaks of it as ‘the righteous law’. In the case of Israel (the God-chosen nation) the nation had not attained unto the righteousness of ‘the righteous law’. The Jewish leaders, and so many of the Israelite people were trying to attain to the righteousness of ‘the righteous law’ by working hard (i.e. walking) within their twisted understanding of it. This is how they ended up killing their Messiah when he arrived to walk among them. Amid their fervent workings, they had become self-important and self absorbed...and as a result they became fervent defenders of the law-according-to-their-understanding-and-according-to-their-calculations.

Moreover, many Christians and would-be Christians had fallen into the same trap. Paul now describes the situation with these Christians by using a Biblical description, he speaks of a stumblingblock.

**9:32) Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the [righteous] law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone [i.e. prophesied to Israel in Isaiah 8:10-18];**

God had every intention of each Israelite ‘working the law’. But the law and his working in it was meant to lead him to dependence upon God, and *not into religious understanding and fervor for joining with others to work for God, thus leading searching and needful men astray*. Jesus told his disciples, ‘Pay them no mind and leave them alone (i.e. stop trying to straighten them out or to correct them). They will fall into the ditch along with those following after them.’

**9:33) As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.**

Christ Jesus, of course, is the Stumblingstone and Rock of Offence. Typically we think of ‘stumbling’ people as “people who do not believe or accept Jesus as savior”, but Paul is using this passage as it applies to God’s people Israel. Therefore he uses it as it applies to Christians.

**10:1-2) Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to [correct] knowledge.**

Paul uses ‘according to knowledge’ in the comparative sense; that is, he compares the Jews’ *knowledge of what they know* to Christians’ *knowledge of what they know* (or should know). His meaning is this: There is a *knowledge of having read about or heard about or having mental belief in something* and there is a *knowledge of personally being joined with, experientially close to, and truly reliant upon something*. Paul indicates that a zeal for *something you know about and ascribe to* cannot substitute for *being in direct company with that something*.

**10:3) For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their**

**own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness [that is only] of God.**

Their ‘being ignorant’ means that *in working hard for it they have missed it*. There are three kinds of righteousness. The righteousness by means of God is of two types: 1) by way of true steadfastness in the Mosaic Law for Israel, and 2) by way of God accounting a person as righteous by faithing in what God has said, and then giving one’s life to that way (as did Abraham and a great many Old Testament saints).

Paul is describing it by Isaiah’s prophecy: “faith in the Stumblingstone, to rest upon it”. For the people of God: they can rest upon the Stumblingstone or stumble against it. Indeed, the Stumblingstone (Christ) and all that the Father has done in him is set continually in the path of each Christian. Does one rest upon it or does one stumble upon it?

This brings us to 3) the third kind of righteousness is the self-righteousness of the Christian working hard at God’s Word instead of simply faithing upon it. This third kind of Christian stumbles on the Stumblingstone in *trying to do what Christ has already done*.

In 10:1 Paul is not speaking of “salvation *into* the family of God”. He is speaking of being saved from the error which led the Jews into God’s continuing chastisement, but also being saved into God-accounted-righteousness (like was Abraham). Sadly, Paul has observed little of the latter in the many Christian churches as they organize into their works for God. His continuing concern for them is ‘righteousness and the faith by which righteousness is accounted,’ which has been made available through Christ Jesus.

**10:4) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth [i.e. is actively walking by faith].**

We often mistake Paul’s words, thinking that suddenly he has turned from his theme of “righteousness and faith” to “salvation of the lost” because we are so attuned to the word ‘saved’, thinking that it always means “to join God’s family”. And in this verse is ‘the end of the law’, which we often think means “the law have been terminated”. However, when scripture uses the phrase ‘the end of’ it usually means *the end result of something* and not “the termination of something”. The ‘end result of the righteous law’ (i.e. its ultimate purpose) was to lead the people of the law to righteousness-in-God. God’s purpose included the Israelites and the many peoples of the nations who had become proselytes to the righteous law. Therefore, when Christ Jesus arrived he became the ‘fulfillment of the law’ ... ‘the end result of the righteous law’.

**10:5) For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law...**

Here, dear reader, is ‘righteousness accounted’ to the truly faithful Israelite. Today we consider ‘shall live by them’ as spoken in a derogatory sense. We think it means: “They *had* to live by the things of the law which were so hard and indeed impossible, such that Jesus had to come and make things easier. And so when Jews insist on living by the law they condemn themselves and are rejected by God.”

However, Paul means, “SHALL LIVE by them.” I will not go further into ‘the righteousness of the faithful Israelite’. Even so, in this study we needed to realize that Paul is continuing to speak about ‘righteousness and faith’ and that the study continues in the concept of ‘righteousness and faith for suffering and persecuted Christians’.



**10:6-7) But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)**

It is interesting that so many Christians think that this verse is about “saving the lost” when we know that it is nonsensical ‘for a person to go to heaven to get Christ and help him come down’ or ‘descend to bring up Christ from the dead’. What person could do any-

thing like this?

If Paul has turned from the topic of ‘righteousness and faith for suffering Christians’ unto ‘salvation of the lost’, then what is he saying? I have not a clue; but for many years (being a good evangelical) I simply skipped over these two verses to the “juicy verses” that come next.

**10:8) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;**

Finally: I allowed God to stop me long enough to ask me what I now ask you, ‘But what saith...’ What saith what? Just what is the ‘what’ that is speaking here? Paul has been quoting from his Bible (the Old Testament) in nearly every verse as he preaches to the New Testament Church and he is simply continuing along the same line of discourse: ‘the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise’. Dear reader, if you see this then you realize that Paul has not turned (in the evangelical sense) to “salvation theology”.



Here we stop to view the scripture from which Paul preaches.

**Deu 30:2-3) And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee.**

Shortly before his death Moses is speaking to a victorious, though recently humbled people. (Read about it in GOD’S ROCK.) He is prophesying that God’s people will stray from the true intent of the righteous law and that God will chastise them and scatter them among the nations...away from the land promised to Abraham.

Particularly it is prophesy about a return of an Israelite remnant from Babylon to Judaea (and also about a return of scattered Israelites at the End Times). They returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the city’s walls and the temple; these are the very people some 400 years later, having the title of ‘Jew’, to whom Paul is comparing the many Christians walking in error and not ‘walking in faith and righteousness’.

It is interesting that these are the very words of God through Moses shortly before Moses is taken up to his reward in heaven. These words are for God’s people when times of trouble arrive; and Paul of the New Testament is quoting the ancient words of Moses to his Christian brethren scattered amongst the nations.

**30:4) If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, *that thou mayest live.***

‘...that thou mayest live.’ Just above in Romans 10:5 Paul was quoting from this scripture in regards to ‘the righteous law’.

**30:9-10) And the LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers: If thou shalt hearken [faithfully] unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the [righteous] law, and if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.**

Here Moses is speaking, from which Paul is preaching.

**30:11-16) For this commandment [i.e. the righteous law] which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Nei-**

**ther is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?** [Paul turns this verse into bringing Jesus up from the dead.] **But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. See, I** [i.e. God speaking through Moses] **have set before thee this day *life and good, and death and evil*; In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.** [In the near term, the Israelites were about to cross the Jordan River to make war in Canaan.]

### **Back to Romans**

Paul applies the Moses-passage directly to Christians in the churches under his care. Why? The very sin-in-fervor which the Jews of Paul's day manifested is the same type of sin-in-fervor among many Christians. Though Paul has not yet visited among the Christians in Rome, he has heard many good and many not so good things...even as he has personally observed in so many other churches.

So much of such "working for God" is of the flesh, and therefore is not of 'faith', and therefore is not true 'righteousness', and therefore is not pleasing to God, and therefore is not energized by the power of heaven (rather by the power of earthy and organized man), and therefore God may well leave His people to their own devices, which eventually gets all such children of God into trouble with God.

So what can we say of this passage? In a time of trouble, whether brought on by one's self or by others, we do not need to seek out a special messenger from God. Nor do we need to enter into a self imposed state of "death to self". Christ Jesus did the dying. He was the special one to come down from heaven. He was the special one to enter hades and rise again. It has been done. God was merciful in the Old Age such that He told His people Israel the very same thing which later Paul tells us in the New Age.

**Romans 10:6-8) But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it** [i.e. the righteousness which is of faith]? **The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;**

When God seems not to be listening and we are hurting, there is something in us placed there by God. It is a hope in our hearts that, should we allow it to voice itself in us, will inspire us to humbly whisper or cry upward. This will please God enough for us to at least get His attention. It is not about instant gratification. It is about what Jesus spoke when he drew a child into his lap and taught his disciples about faith. Dear reader, you and I and all of us know these things...even as Moses told the people under his care and even as Paul told the people under his care.

There is nothing new under the sun: God's people suffer, especially when they take no pains to hide their kinship to the God of Heaven. Often it seems too simple. Too often it seems not to work. And we hear brethren speaking of their successes that came to them by "such and such a little book or such and such a pastor or such and such..."

The churches in which I grew up taught that God's child must seek the Lord on his or her own in secret and on their knees and in the Word...and then come to church ready to share and to help the brethren: they taught that this was Christianity. But today it seems that Christianity is *the local church and its programs*, or it is *the group meetings which have split off from such and such a church*, or it is *those special TV services with the special preacher and the special choir*. Whatever it is, it moves us. It makes sense to us. It is like balm to an aching heart, but it does not heal us.

Does the Lord forever speak to us His people? I suggest that you will find Him most often in the wonderful garden that is His Word. It is where nearly always I find Him; more correctly, where He finds me.

**10:9) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.**

When we see the word ‘saved’ in scripture we should automatically ask, “Saved from what?” There are many things from which Christians need to be saved. The Christians Paul addressed thought that they needed “saving”. Paul thought that they needed saving, too; but not nearly as much *from what they thought troubled them* as much as *what he could see was troubling them*. Consider: ‘God hath raised him from the dead’. Paul is trying to get them past life on this earth to gaze upward to Life above and its forever encouraging Promise of God Himself.

I repeat: You do not need to go out and suffer for God or Christ to have God become interested in your wellbeing. The kind of suffering-to-make-God-interested-in-you has been accomplished in Christ.”

On the other hand, when a Christian does not hide his relationship to God (perhaps speaking it in fear and trembling in front of his enemies should they demand it) then the commitment of this passage is that God has the Christian’s ‘salvation’ in the forefront of His wonderful Mind. Moreover, the Christian that is believing (i.e. faithing) in his heart that God did in fact raise Jesus from the dead knows (by his same perhaps quivering heart) that Jesus will welcome him with open arms in the resurrection.

Why ‘confess with thy mouth’? It is because ‘if you confess not Christ Jesus on earth then he will not confess you before the Father’...and our salvation from anything on earth or in heaven rests in the Father and in His Will and in His power. This kind of ‘confessing’ has nothing to do with confessing among the brethren. It has everything to do with finding one’s self among God’s enemies: perhaps in the office where no Christians other than you exist, or where confessing amidst your family may get you kicked out, or where confession in some places may get you excommunicated, or fired, or unable to play sports, or in some places killed.

Not confessing with the mouth does not get you excommunicated for God, but it surely is not pleasing to the Son who died for you, and not pleasing to the Father who sent him down to die and suffer the cross.

**10-11) For with the heart [bent upon God,] man believeth [i.e. ‘faiths’] unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation [out of trouble]. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth [i.e. ‘faiths’] on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich [i.e. abundant] unto all that call on him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved [out of trouble].**

Do you sense that Paul is quoting scripture after scripture after scripture from his Bible? Consider: ‘shall not be ashamed.’ This points directly to a person “calling for help” toward a parent or a friend, or the calling of a soldier in trouble to his companions, or the calling of 911. It means that ‘if you are calling upon God in your trouble’ then the little sheep (the one who is calling) ‘shall not be ashamed’ of his Lord and Master in the day of trouble or in ‘the evil day.

**10:14) How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed [i.e. ‘faithed’]? and how shall they believe [i.e. ‘faith’] in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?**

I know that this is constantly ascribed to Paul preaching about “being saved”, but think of it in terms of what Paul has been preaching about. I believe that Paul is speaking of the need of Christians to be more like Paul in going to *God’s scattered people* and speaking from the Word, which Word gives much comfort. Particularly needed is much comfort in

‘the evil day’. ‘Evil days’ scatter God’s people even more, such that the great majority may even become as sheep seemingly without a Shepherd.

We sheep can become so intent on just trying to help our families and friends and local brotherhood survive that we seek the kind of things and methods of which Paul warns us not to seek after.

And he tells us that even the littlest sheep has the ‘righteous word of faith’ already within him to speak upward and seek upward. And when God sees a truly needful and faithful sheep, then this kind of speaking upward with the *mouth from the heart* shall be met with help downward.

Have we heard? Yes. Do we already have an excellent preacher? Yes, for if Paul and all the writers of scripture are not excellent in preaching, then I do not know what is. Moreover, for those without a Bible, or any word preached to them, God can place His Word in their hearts.

**10:15) And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of [such] good things [to God’s people]!**

Paul uses scripture addressed to God’s people Israel. Though it is for any time of extreme trouble, the text specifically is directed toward the Time of the End when God’s messengers and His Spirit shall be beckoning His scattered people to the homeland and to Jerusalem.

I confess (though I have had more than a few opportunities to lead a person to my loving Lord and for them to join His family) it is the Shepherd’s sheep that draws my attention and my affection. I believe that, beyond the salvation of people, it was the sheep in the church-flocks which had Paul’s attention and his great love. And he was greatly concerned about them regarding ‘faith and righteousness’ in their daily walk.

**10:16) But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias [Isaiah] saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?**

Isaiah was *not witnessing and trying to win Israelites unto salvation*. He was prophesying God’s words to God’s people. ‘...believed our report’ is *not evangelistic preaching*. It is the passing on of *the word which the prophet had heard from God* to the people. A better way of saying it would be ‘Lord, who hath believed the things that I have heard and have repeated in reports to your people?’

**10:17) So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

The word ‘heard’ (10:14) by the prophet is ‘the word of God’ spoken first to the prophet. Therefore, ‘hearing’ such words from a prophet is ‘hearing by the word of God’. Such ‘hearing of God’s words’, then, can ‘energize faith’ in the one ‘hearing’.

Do we not expect our preachers to study the word and pray for the messages each Sunday? Do we not expect that God will speak through the preacher, and that hopefully someone in the congregation will be attune to what is meant for him ‘to hear’? Isaiah and most of the prophets sent to Israel were ‘hearing from God’ and ‘preaching reports of what they had heard’...which often was rejected by many of God’s people...and many would follow after leaders who preached what the people wanted ‘to hear’.

**10:18) But I say, Have they [i.e. Israel] not heard? Yes verily, their [i.e. the prophets’] sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.**

Paul is taking the words of the prophets and using them as his words to his brethren. He is explaining how the Israelites and the Jews had come to be in their trouble with God. The very fact that so many Israelites had ‘heard [the warning about their errors] but believed not’ proves that ‘faith toward God’ does not come *simply as a matter of hearing* preachers “preaching the gospel”.

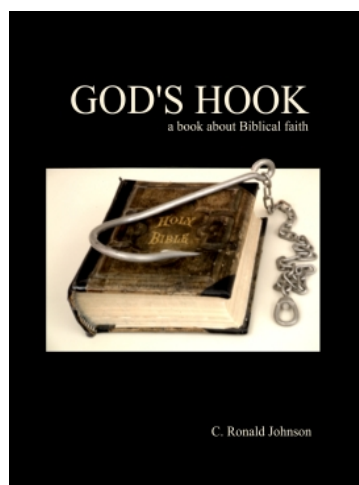
**10:19-21) But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are [a] no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias [Isaiah]**

is very bold, and saith, I [i.e. God] was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

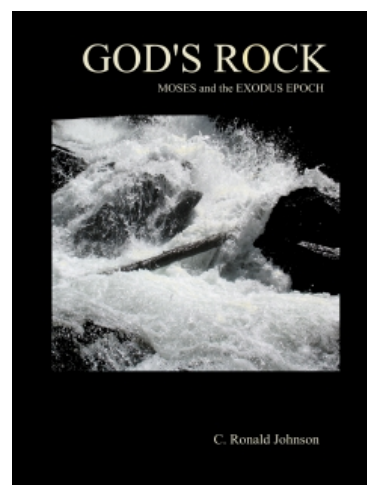
God has used Israel's rejection as the opportunity for Him to turn to the nations with such marvelous Salvation.

However (and thank you Lord), the promise of *God hearing the cries of His little sheep* extends beyond initial salvation, for the 'word initially put in us to call upon the Lord' still resides in the heart of each little sheep belonging to the Great Shepherd. Let us become as the little child crawling up into Jesus' lap...as Jesus so instructed his disciples.

**These are short Bible studies by C. Ronald Johnson at Christian Wilderness Press**



a book  
about  
Biblical  
Faith



the life of  
Moses  
and the  
Exodus