

BIBLE & BAGEL

Romans – Our Common Faith

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Some people think that being a Christian is “too easy” just say a simple prayer and you are a Christian, in some sense this is true, but in the context of when the Apostle Paul wrote, proclaiming Yeshua as Lord was a very dangerous thing, one could literally lose one’s head if they did that. In chapter 10 Apostle Paul continues to discuss salvation that comes by faith and not by works and says that this is the same for Jews and Gentiles.

Romans 10:1-4

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

Apostle Paul’s previous remarks about only a remnant of Israel being saved seemed a little harsh, so he assures them that in his heart he desires and prays for the salvation of the Jewish people. He says to the Gentiles that the Jews are genuinely zealous unfortunately they are ignorant of God’s way of righteousness and in seeking to become righteous they have formulated their own way to find it through keeping the Torah. What they do not understand is that the Torah is meant to point them to Messiahⁱ (Yeshua).

Remember that Apostle Paul was speaking to people who were meeting in the synagogue and among them there were Pharisees, in fact these Pharisees would have been the leaders of the synagogues and they were the ones who were zealous for the Torah. Their understanding was that to be saved a person had to convert to Judaism and keep the Torah to be saved, Apostle Paul refuted this saying that salvation comes by faith and therefore Gentiles do not have to become Jews to be saved. He was upholding the decision of the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 and this is also based on the cornerstone prayer of the Jews, the “Shema” which says that God is oneⁱⁱ. This means He is God of both Jew and Gentile and neither should become the other.

Religious people can be genuinely zealous, but whatever the religion may be zeal alone is not enough, zeal cannot save. Religion requires that man follow a set system to attain righteousness. The righteousness of God however does not come by following a system, even a system that is based on the Bible as is Judaism or any other Christian religion. The Torah was given to point people to Christ by showing us our weakness and need for a savior. When Apostle Paul says here that Christ is the end of the Torah, it does not mean that Christ put an end to the Torah rather the meaning here is that He is the destination of it. Yeshua himself said that He did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill itⁱⁱⁱ. In fact Isaiah, in prophesying about the end times says that the “law” will go out from Zion during the reign of King Yeshua^{iv}. The Kingdom of God is based on law, without it we would not know right from wrong. God’s laws are already written for us in the Bible, it was given to teach us how to live in His Kingdom.

Romans 10:5-13



5 For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." 6 But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down from above) 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 which we preach): 9 that 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. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."* 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."*NKJV*

Apostle Paul then quotes Deuteronomy 18:5 wherein God says that whoever keeps all the law would be saved. He then quotes from Deuteronomy 30^v which says that salvation is near and attainable, one need not go to the heavens or to hell to seek it is in one's mouth and heart. This shows that it is not by works, one does not have to move heaven and earth to find salvation but it is a matter of the heart and the mouth. The he says that if we believe with our heart and confess Yeshua with our mouths we will be saved. He says that this is true for both Jew and Gentile there is no difference because scripture promises that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved^{vi}.

Why does God say that a person who keeps the law shall be saved? God is setting a goal for the people which is beyond them, to show them their need of Him. The book of James tells us that if we break one law we break them all thus we are shown our weakness. Yet salvation is near when our hearts are full of the revelation of Messiah then our mouth will proclaim it^{vii}.

Whilst this is a simple matter in our day, in the days when Paul was writing it was a very dangerous thing to proclaim that anyone other than Caesar was Lord. Roman religion was primarily based upon the worship of the Emperor and anyone who resisted it would lose their life. So this call to confess Christ was a call to make a bold stand. Today we must make a bold stand as believers of Yeshua, to stand for him and His Kingdom in the midst of a world that may ridicule us and persecute us. Let's make a stand

ⁱ John 5:39, Luke 24:44

ⁱⁱ Deuteronomy 6:4

ⁱⁱⁱ Matthew 5:17

^{iv} Isaiah 2:1-3

^v Deuteronomy 30:12-14

^{vi} Joel 2:32

^{vii} Matthew 12:34

