

Bible Study Romans 10

“10:1 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.”

As you can see, these verses emphasize salvation (mentioned once) and righteousness (mentioned three times).

Fr. Panayiotis writes:

“What is the proper understanding and the original Greek meaning of 'justified' and 'saved' in Romans 10:1–10?

From an Orthodox perspective, the proper understanding of "justified" and "saved" in Romans 10:1–10, as well as their original Greek meanings, involves a nuanced view of salvation that encompasses both initial justification and ongoing sanctification (theosis). Here's an exploration of these terms:

Original Greek Terms

- **Justified (δικαιώω, *dikaioō*):** The term δικαιώω in Greek means "to be declared righteous" or "to be made righteous." It conveys both a legal declaration and a transformative process.
- **Saved (σώζω, *sōzō*):** The term σώζω means "to save" or "to deliver," or "to make whole" (to heal). It implies rescue from danger and the granting of safety, health, and well-being.

Orthodox Understanding of the terms Justification and Salvation

Justification (δικαιώω)

In Orthodoxy (the Patristic writings), justification is not seen merely as a legal declaration of righteousness but as the beginning of a transformative process. It involves being made righteous through participation in the life of Christ. This process includes:

1. **Initial Justification:** This is the point of entry into the Christian life through faith and baptism, where one is cleansed from sin and united with Christ.
2. **Ongoing Sanctification:** This is the continuous process of growing in holiness and being transformed into the likeness of Christ (theosis). It

involves cooperation with God's grace through the sacraments, prayer, worship and good works.”

“⁴⁵ For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, “The man who does those things shall live by them.”

As we have seen, keeping the law of Moses was the path to salvation in Old Testament times. It implied an entire lifestyle. The Old Testament commanded what had to be done to baby boys in order for them to be Jewish (circumcision), laws that governed day-to-day morality (the 10 commandments), governed what you ate (kosher laws), when you could work and when you must rest and not work (Sabbath laws), who you could marry (fellow Jews), where you must worship corporately (the Temple in Jerusalem), when you were required to travel there, what types of sacrifices you must offer to cover your sins (Passover and sabbath in the home, mostly animals in the Temple), who must offer those sacrifices in the Temple (the priests), etc.

The Gospels describe the mindset of “keeping the law” among devout Jews.

Christ then revealed to him the fundamental flaw in Old Testament law keeping as the way to salvation:

“Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” ...You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’ ” And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.”

Christ was in the process of redefining the entire system of law keeping. Jewish law keeping was all about obedience to 613 rules and regulations. Christianity was all about love. The 613 laws were now to be reduced to two. Matthew’s account includes this detail:

“Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40).

Anyone with a strong will can be trained into mechanical compliance. Even animals can be trained to perform certain tasks. But the New Testament version of law keeping requires us to love others, and put that love into action. This is much harder.

“So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” “But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich” (Luke 18:18, 20-23).

If the rich young ruler really “loved his neighbor as himself” as he claimed, then giving all his possessions to the poor would have been easy – like putting our money from one of our

account to another one of our accounts. By this new, higher, New Testament standard of law keeping this young man failed. He was not nearly as righteous as he believed.

With the arrival of the two-commandment, love based, New Testament standard of law keeping, the 613 commandment, mechanical obedience based, Old Testament law keeping was abolished. It no longer has any hope of saving anyone. Sadly, most Jewish people do not accept this paradigm shift. *⁶³ For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God."*

Now Paul briefly mentions the two events upon which our New Testament salvation is based. These two mighty acts of God are essential to human salvation. The first is the Incarnation.

⁶⁶ 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)..."

This is a paraphrase of Deuteronomy 30:12, *"It is not in heaven, that you should need to ask, 'Who will ascend into heaven to get it for us and proclaim it, that we may obey it?"* From the very beginning God told the Israelites that they could not elevate themselves to heaven. Their salvation had to come down to them from heaven. This descent of salvation from heaven to earth took place in the Incarnation of Christ. He said: *"I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness"* (John 12:46). The Church acknowledges: *"...Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man..."* (The Nicene Creed). Without this Incarnation, salvation is impossible.

⁶⁷ or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)".

The Scriptures repeatedly asserts that Christ descended into Hades (the place of the dead) after His crucifixion: *"Now that He ascended, what is it, but because He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?"* (Ephesians 4:9). *"Now that He ascended, what is it, but because He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?"* (Acts 2:24). *"...being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison..."* (1 Peter 3:18-19).

⁶⁷ or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)".

This is the second mighty act of God which is essential to human salvation. Resurrection of Christ is the centerpiece of Christianity. Without this belief, there is no Christianity.

"Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen...For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable" (1 Corinthians 15:12-13, 16-19).

The Church confesses: *“He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried; and He rose on the third day, according to the Scriptures...”*

“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):

The Greek word translated into English as “word” here is “rhema” (ῥῆμα). This Greek word emphasizes the spoken word, and is where the English word “rhetoric” derives. It is less theologically packed than “Logos” - another Greek translated into English as “word.” The use of the word “rhema” (ῥῆμα) is appropriate in the context of the rest of the chapter, where preaching is a significant theme.

“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.”

Fr. Panayiotis writes:

“In Romans 10:9–10, ‘you will be saved’ and ‘with the mouth one confesses and is saved’ highlight that salvation involves both an inward faith and an outward confession. It is a dynamic relationship with God that includes initial belief and ongoing commitment.”

“In Romans 10:10, ‘with the heart one believes and is justified’ emphasizes that faith is not just intellectual assent but a deep trust and commitment to Christ, resulting in a transformative relationship with Him.

Salvation (σῶζω)

Salvation in the Orthodox Church is a comprehensive and ongoing process that includes:

1. **Deliverance from Sin:** Initial salvation through baptism and faith where one is cleansed from sin.
2. **Healing and Restoration:** Salvation as a process of being healed and restored to the original image and likeness of God. It is ongoing and involves the entire life of the believer.
3. **Eschatological Fulfillment:** Ultimate salvation and perfection in the image and likeness of God that will be fully realized in the Kingdom of God.”

This verse says that to “confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus” is essential to salvation. It is noteworthy that to “confess with your mouth” is a work. This conflicts with the Protestant belief in “salvation by faith alone.” More significantly, the Orthodox Church

put this literal, physical confession of Christ with our mouth is a vital part of the Orthodox baptismal service. The candidate verbally professes their faith in Christ several times.

Priest: Do you join Christ?

Candidate and sponsor: I do join Him.

Priest: Do you join Christ?

Candidate and sponsor: I do join Him.

Priest: Do you join Christ?

Candidate and sponsor: I do join Him.

Priest: And do you believe in Him?

Candidate and sponsor: I believe in Him as King and as God.

[All recite the Creed]

Priest: Have you joined Christ?

Candidate and sponsor: I have joined Him.

Priest: Have you joined Christ?

Candidate and sponsor: I have joined Him.

Priest: Have you joined Christ?

Candidate and sponsor: I have joined Him.

Priest: Then bow before Him and worship Him.

Candidate and sponsor: I bow down before the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit; Trinity. One in essence and undivided.

¹¹ For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”

This a quote from Psalm 18:16, “Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed; Let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause.”

Christ confirms the importance of confessing Him:

“Therefore, whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32-33).

This means confessing Christ not only with our lips, but also with our lives. It is significant that in Orthodoxy a saint who is a “confessor” has witnessed to the faith and suffered for it, but not to the point of death, and thus is distinguished from a martyr.

Now the text returns to the recurring theme of no ethnic differences in the Church:

“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.”

This is the 6th time in Romans that Paul has stated this. His repetition indicates a point of special emphasis. He wanted make sure the Jewish Christians did not maintain their former sense of superiority of Gentiles, and the Gentile Christians did not feel inferior to their Jewish brothers and sisters.

At the end of this chapter, Paul exalts those who share the “Good News.”

*“¹⁴ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?
¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:*

*“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,
Who bring glad tidings of good things!”*

In Orthodoxy, telling others of our faith is often considered the duty of the priest. However, these verses remind us that all are called and qualified to be “confessors” in our actions to everyone around us every day of our lives.

“¹⁷ So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Christ said, “Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” (John 4:35).