

How to be Right

Romans 10:1-4

Online Sermon:

http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

“The Story is told of farmer Dale and farmer Pete. These were two neighbors. They really did love one another as neighbors and as fellow farmers, and these two would always compete with one another, every year they would enter some kind of competition where one would seek to outdo the other one. The problem was farmer Pete always won. Farmer Dale rarely ever won. Farmer Dale got tired of losing to farmer Pete, and so what farmer Dale decided to do was come up with something he could win at. They both had horses on the farm and so farmer Dale challenged farmer Pete to a horse race to see which horse would win for that year’s competition. What farmer Pete didn’t know was that farmer Dale hired a



professional jockey to ride his horse, figuring that would give him the edge, that would give him the little extra that he would need. The race started and the two horses shot out and farmer Dale’s horse took the lead. Farmer Dale thought finally, finally, finally I’m going to beat Pete at something. As they hit the stretch ready to bring it home, the horses legs got tangled up with one another and both horses fell over. Both jockeys fell over. Both farmers were hollering, “get up, get up!” Farmer Dale’s jockey, the professional, was the first to get up. He got on the horse and started running again, right behind him was farmer Pete’s jockey, he got on his horse and started riding again. They crossed the finish line and farmer Dale’s jockey crossed first. He was ecstatic. He was ecstatic, he was laughing and dancing and then he looked and started crying. Farmer Pete said, “Dale, how you going to be sad, you won. You’ve been trying to beat me all these years, you’ve never won, you’ve started off happy, now your sad, I don’t understand, why are you so sad?” Farmer Dale looked at farmer Pete and said, “Because my jockey got on the wrong horse.” He crossed the finish line, riding the wrong horse.”¹

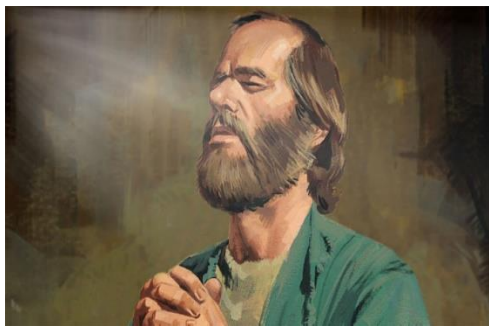
Apostle Paul’s Prayer for Salvation

How tragic and truly awful it will be for those who had great passion to serve the Lord while on this earth only later to hear Jesus tell them upon their death “I never knew you, away from Me you evildoers,” because they were on the wrong horse!² Despite being an Israelite and earlier in his life a

¹ Tony Evans, “[How to Be Right with God.](#)” in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Ro 10:1–13.

² Tony Evans, “[How to Be Right with God.](#)” in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Ro 10:1–13.

Pharisee prodigy (Galatians 1:14), his own people persecuted Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 11:23-26) because his zeal for the traditions of his fathers and the Mosaic law was replaced with



a new track towards salvation, faith in the atoning sacrifice of God's very own Son, Jesus (John 3:16)! Instead of Paul becoming bitter because his own saw him as a "turncoat"³ or

frustrated because they were fulfilling Moses' assessment of them being stiff necked (Deuteronomy 9:6, 13) and unwilling to submit to a sovereign God's right to rule as He sees fit; Paul did not write them off as being unworthy⁴ or unredeemable but instead prayed that Israel would one day receive God's gracious gift of salvation.

Even though Paul knew that telling Israel they were on the wrong horse would possibly offend them⁵ he was still willing to take the chance for in his heart he desperately wanted Israel to have zeal for the way, truth and life that is found only in Jesus (John 14:6)!

³ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Zealous, but Wrong,](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 32 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1886), 253.

⁴ James Montgomery Boice, [Romans: God and History](#), vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991–), 1149.

⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Zealous, but Wrong,](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 32 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1886), 257.

As I go through Paul's argument to Israel to accept Christ as their Savior, please be making intercessory prayers for anyone whom God lays upon your heart who is on the wrong horse of works-based, unattainable righteousness and desperately needs to accept the truth that salvation is a gift to all those who believe in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus!

Passionate but Wrong

Paul told the Israelite people that while they were commendable for their zeal for God⁶ it would not lead to righteousness because it was not based on knowledge (verse 2). Since they did know what God's righteousness was, Paul says



Israel sought to establish their own righteousness through goods works and by following the Mosaic Law (verse 3). Since before encountering the risen Savior on the road to Damascus Paul

also had been a Pharisee and thought as they did (Galatians 1:14; Philippians 3:4-9)⁷ he was in a good position to "accuse the Jewish people" of the same ignorance he once had. Paul explained that righteousness to God means holiness and perfection. Since God is light and in Him there is no darkness

⁶ Douglas J. Moo, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 632.

⁷ James R. Edwards, [Romans](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 248–249.

at all (1John 1:5),⁸ those who want to please and be accepted by Him must be sinless! Giving money, going to church, feeding the poor, taking care of the widows is not good enough for the moment one breaks a single command of the law one has broken them all (James 2:10)⁹ and rightly deserves the wages of sin which is death (Romans 6:23). Paul who had a zeal for following the law that was unmatched by any Pharisee of his time¹⁰ told the church of Rome that “no one is righteous, not even one, there is no one who seeks God, all have turned away, they have together become worthless” (3:10-11).

To be like God who hates sin, injustice and untruth is an unattainable goal for who could ever by their own efforts please He who is infinitely holy and without blemish?!!

Since God alone defines what is right in His sight¹² with great humility and hope Paul explained to Israel that their attempts to be saved by their own righteousness was futile for the best they could attain by following the law was a knowledge of sin by which they would be condemned, not saved (Romans 8)!

⁸ Tony Evans, “[How to Be Right with God.](#)” in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Ro 10:1–13.

⁹ Tony Evans, “[How to Be Right with God.](#)” in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Ro 10:1–13.

¹⁰ James Montgomery Boice, *Romans: God and History*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991–), 1153.

¹¹ C. H. Spurgeon, “[Zealous, but Wrong.](#)” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 32 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1886), 257.

¹² Tony Evans, “[How to Be Right with God.](#)” in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Ro 10:1–13.

While no other nation of Paul’s day had near the zeal of Israel to be right in God’s sight,¹³ Paul wanted them to know that they were still under the terrifying judgment of God¹⁴ and far from the true path to righteousness! With the words “Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me” firmly ringing in his mind Paul boldly told Israel what he had learned on the road to Damascus. No matter how sincere one believes and earnestly



one performs the works of the law one will not be saved though such efforts for righteousness¹⁵ cannot be purchased by human effort but only through faith in the atoning sacrifice of God’s very own Son, Jesus! While Paul knew asking Israel

to place their eternal destiny in the hands¹⁶ of the chief cornerstone whom they rejected (Matthew 21:42-44) and crucified might meet some resistance and even stir up hard feelings towards him, he boldly implored Israel to not oppose the will of God¹⁷ in this life and death matter but instead accept His gracious gift!

¹³ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 378.

¹⁴ R. C. Sproul, *The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 177–178.

¹⁵ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 379.

¹⁶ Tony Evans, “[How to Be Right with God.](#)” in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Ro 10:1–13.

¹⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, “[Zealous, but Wrong.](#)” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 32 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1886), 255–256.

Even though Paul knew it was “easier to get a sinner out of his/her sin than a self-righteous person out of his/her self-righteousness”¹⁸ his love for Israel compelled him to lovingly explain that only Christ was sinless and kept the law to perfection and as such it would only be through His righteousness imputed upon them through faith that they could ever be right in God’s sight.¹⁹

Paul was basically saying that the “two-penny garment of rags”²⁰ of their works of self-righteousness was pure vanity for only sinless Lamb of God who was slain before the creation of the world (Revelation 13:8) could ever purchase and redeem (1 Corinthians 6:20) those of whom could never stop falling short of His glory! So, Paul invited Israel to believe in Jesus and in turn have Him place His robes of holiness upon their shoulders and their hearts!

The Function of the Law Under Christ

Knowing that the function of the Law had become a stumbling block to the Jewish people Paul boldly stated, “Christ is the culmination of the law so that there might be

¹⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Zealous, but Wrong.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 32 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1886), 256.

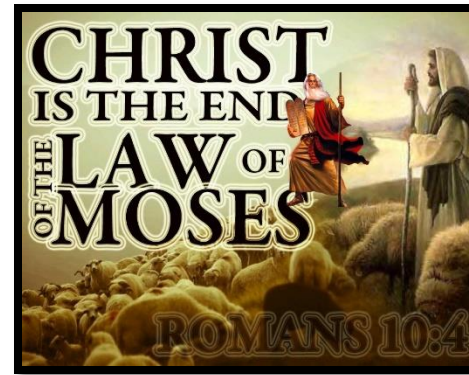
¹⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Zealous, but Wrong.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 32 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1886), 258.

²⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Zealous, but Wrong.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 32 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1886), 258–259.

²¹ James R. Edwards, [Romans](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 248.

²² Douglas J. Moo, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 637.

righteousness for anyone who believes.” Being a former Pharisee Paul knew full well the incredible zeal Israel had to



read, interpret, and memorize the Torah, the larger Mishnah and even larger Talmud!²¹ He masterfully explained in his letter to Rome that the function of the Mosaic Law through obedience was not to secure righteousness with God²² but merely

to be a guardian defining holiness until the Messiah arrived! From the time of Abraham onward being right in God’s sight was not through legalism but through faith (Romans 10:5-6).²³ The Law for Paul had come to an end or the completion of its goal²⁴ which was to point to Christ who fulfilled the Law by living a sinless life. The Law which used to be the “epoch of God’s dealings with human beings” who were under its supervision (Galatians 3:24-25)²⁵ had come to its end. Paul is not saying that the Law has been abolished²⁶ for that would contradict Christ’s own testimony of the longevity of the Law (Matthew 5:17-20) and Paul’s own statement to Timothy that

²³ James R. Edwards, [Romans](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 249–250.

²⁴ Douglas J. Moo, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 641.

²⁵ James R. Edwards, [Romans](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 250.

²⁶ Douglas J. Moo, [Romans](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 330.

“all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

Paul implores the Jewish people to remain “bound to God’s law as it is now mediated in and through Christ (Galatians 6:2; 1 Corinthians 9:19-21)²⁷ not as the source of their salvation, for that can only be received through belief and not purchased, but merely as the means of pleasing a holy God.

In summary what Paul is trying to say to his own people is that by believing in the atoning sacrifice of Christ who fulfilled the Law one has righteousness imputed upon oneself as a free gift, graciously and mercifully given by the One who purchased one’s very life!

Praying for the Lost

To finish let me ask you a very personal question: do you know someone who is a works-based righteous person that desperately needs your intercessory prayers to break free from their legalism and embrace God’s gracious gift of salvation? While today’s passage was intended for the Jewish people, we have many today who read their Bible, pray, worship, feed the poor and the widows of this word and truly believe them being a “good person” is their ticket to get into heaven! Surely the

comfort that you have received from God compels you to share the knowledge of the Gospel (2 Corinthians 1:3-5) with them so that upon completion of the race of life they might not be found upon the wrong horse and hear dreadful words “I never knew you, away from Me you evildoers” (Matthew 7:23)! And lest we become like the Pharisees, hypocritical, legalistic, self-righteous pretenders of the faith; may I boldly suggest that you invite God this very minute to examine your hearts to make certain that you are saved! If you lack zeal and find Christ’s commands a burden, if you do not love your neighbor, if you are busy doing God’s work but not letting Him rule your heart then these works might be an indication that you have never accepted His gracious gift of salvation. If this is the case, then please pray this prayer with me either for yourself or others:

Lord Jesus, please forgive me for not accepting Your death on the cross in my place as the only means of me being right in Your sight. I surrender my life to you in the glorious truth that through my faith and by your grace I will be born again and sealed with God’s very own Spirit! So, Lord, I give you what I cannot keep receiving salvation that I cannot lose. In Your name and through Your atoning sacrifice I will forever live in Your glorious presence! Amen

²⁷ Douglas J. Moo, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 641.